



# Stretching the limits of CLAY



A USM exhibition explores the medium in figurative, abstract and vessel expressions

By BOB KEYES / Staff Writer

**G**ORHAM — A new exhibition at the University of Southern Maine attempts to change the way we look at clay.

Three dozen artists from around the world are showing their work in “Pushing Clay,” a juried exhibition that advances the medium from function to fine art.

## “PUSHING CLAY”

**When:** Through Dec. 7

**Where:** University of Southern Maine Art Gallery, Gorham

**How much:** Free

**Hours:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Friday, 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday

**What else:** Call 780-5009 for information about the workshops, symposium and juror’s talk related to the exhibit, all scheduled between Nov. 7-9.

“Clay has become a more significant material in recent years,” said Ray Chen, a USM ceramics professor who organized the exhibition in tandem with the college’s art gallery curator, Carolyn Eyler. “And it’s not just because of the long history of functional pottery. Clay has become a very common material in a lot of art forms. People are using clay as a creative material.”

“Pushing Clay” provides evidence of that evolution. Ten widely known artists – eight from the United States, one from Australia and one from Taiwan – provide the foundation for the exhibition. Jurors selected 26 others from among 492 entries that came in from around the United States and abroad.

The resulting exhibition is a mixture of figurative, abstract and vessel ceramic forms. “Pushing Clay” includes several reliefs, a tile mural and two installations.

“When you look at these pieces, you don’t think about clay,” Chen said. “These artists are pushing clay to limits, and you can see in their



work the different types of thinking that have gone into these pieces.”

The exhibition anchors a series of ceramics events on both the Gorham and Portland USM campuses that include a juror’s talk, workshops and a daylong symposium with demonstrations by internationally recognized artists.

The goal, Eyler says, is to heighten the cultural, educational and social awareness of international ceramic aesthetics in New England.

“We think this is the most significant contemporary ceramics series of events in Maine,” Eyler said. She expects artists and those who appreciate the art form to visit the gallery from



Exhibit organizer Carolyn Eyler, top, looks over ceramic figures by Kukuli Velarde at the USM Art Gallery in Gorham. Just below is a porcelain work titled “Captured Moment” by Diane Eisenbach. At left is “Adelomporhic,” by Rebekah Bogard, and above, “Hurry Up!” by Teresa Carvalho Rey.

Staff photos by Doug Jones

across the country before the exhibition closes Dec. 7.

Among the most engaging pieces in the show is “Adelomporhic” by Nevada artist Rebekah Bogard that looks something like an exotic insect, with a robust torso and delicate limbs and a massive tail. Her piece is complex, colorful and delicate – and highly non-functional beyond its obvious role as eye candy for the viewer. And that’s precisely the point.

“I create objects that are rich in complexity of form and that mimic the soft and subtle quali-