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# JULIA GALLOWAY

## Vessel, Vault, and Sky

by Glen R. Brown



1 *Sky Vault* installation (detail of cups on the wall), at the Clay Studio of Missoula, 2012. 2 Salt and pepper pot with gold clouds from the *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* series, porcelain, blue slip inlay, soda fired to cone 6, luster, 2012. 3 Julia Galloway altering a wheel-thrown form.



The sky as an inverted bowl, a vast concavity beneath which life plays out moments of triumph, pathos, and the prosaic alike, is an ancient metaphor that is as useful to reflection on the multiple functions of pottery as it is to characterization of human conceptions of space and the events unfolding within it. For Julia Galloway the metaphor has been especially productive. In her work of the past five years an implicit conflation of vessel interiors, architectural domes, and the overarching presence of the sky has provided the basis not only for a refined aesthetic—with its roots in a consonance of nature and culture—but also for elucidation of some of the properties of functional pottery that can make it a unique blend of utility and art. For more than 25 years as a potter, Galloway has contemplated the conceptual functions of pots as well: the ways in which they define universes large and small, make history tangible as concrete links between generations, and contain and convey the stories of their users.

### Change of Scenery

Galloway's recent works draw upon experience in both senses of the word: experience as the accumulation of insight and as a specific instance in which insight was acquired. In this case the latter proved to be a trigger. A simple change of scenery sometimes has been known to crystallize inchoate thoughts into artistic insight even more effectively than effort expended in long and disciplined investigation. For Galloway such a change came in 2009 when she left her position as chair of the School for American Crafts at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Upstate New York to fill the role of Director of the School of Art at the University of Montana in Missoula. "When I first got here," she remembers, "I was finishing up previous work involving all the birds of North America. There was about a year when I didn't know what to make. Then I noticed that I spent a lot of time here looking up. So much of the time on the East Coast you spend looking down, and I realized that I was looking up at the sky all the time."

Evidence of this realization in Galloway's vessels emerged first in terms of surface detail, both the specific representation of clouds and a more general feeling of ethereality generated by color. In the *Searching for Skyline* series, for example, the warm hues of soda-fired porcelain—blooms of orange and ochre over an off-white ground—were paired with patches of celestial blue to convey the impression of earth and sky. The series was more than a consequence of inhabiting Big Sky Country, however. In January of 2009 Galloway had led a study-abroad trip to







5



6

4 Pitchers and plates from the *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* series installed at Harvey Meadows Gallery, porcelain, slip, glaze, 2012. 5 Water ewer and cup with clouds from the *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* series, porcelain, slip, glaze, 2012. 6 Tumblers with numbers and falling letters from the *Talking* series, 2014. 7 Cups from the *Still Life* series showing all four sides, porcelain, slip glaze, 2014. 8 Three views of a small covered pitcher with blue and white flowers from the *Still Life* series, porcelain, slip, glaze, 2014.

Istanbul and Rome and been struck by the similarity between gazing at the sky and "walking into those old mosques, temples, and churches. You walk in and you look up instantly; you just physically respond. I became interested in why that was."

Other inspiration from Galloway's travels originated in historical pottery. In Istanbul she observed numerous examples of Iznik tiles and vessels, with their cool-to-warm palette of cobalt, cerulean blue, green, and the distinctive orange-red of heaped Armenian bole. These colors, complemented by gold and silver lusters that recalled the glistening of Byzantine mosaics in Istanbul and the dull glow of gilt stucco in the lofty domes and vaults of Roman churches and cathedrals, were employed in the tumblers, creamers, sugar bowls, and pitchers of Galloway's *Searching for Skyline* series in the dual contexts of landscape and architectural representation. On most pieces, incised clouds—some highlighted with a raining

of streaky cobalt and others filled in with opaque ecru glaze or flat and dully reflective silver luster—drift over some sides of a vessel while the columns and pointed arches of Gothic and Islamic architecture, picked out in lines of cobalt, spread like blueprint elevation drawings over the remaining sides.

Perhaps the most complex blending of architectural and landscape elements in the *Searching for Skyline* and *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* series can be found in the water ewers: handleless vessels with curving gutter spouts reminiscent of those on Islamic coffee pots and semi-spherical lids that serve as cups. These cups—inspired by the clerestory windows at the base of such domes as those of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and Hagia Sophia, the colossal Byzantine-basilica-turned-mosque, in Istanbul—are pierced with rows of tiny holes filled, as in *plique-à-jour cloisonné* enamel, with transparent glaze. "When you're done drinking," Galloway notes, "you look

into the cup and the effect is not unlike looking into those big domed ceilings. The ewers are meant to sit by your bed. You'd get up in the morning and you'd hold the cup; there's an intimacy to that act that makes the bottom of the cup, with its piercing, so important."

If the ewer cups produced the effect that Gaston Bachelard (author of *The Poetics of Space*) famously described as "intimate immensity," the impact of Galloway's experiences with big skies and colossal domes would be played out on a larger scale as well, specifically in the 2012 installations: *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* and *Sky Vault*. Both built on the precedent set in previous installations of employing functional vessels as chief components specifically for experience-based discovery. "I feel that by installing my pots I set them up in a way that helps the viewer to understand the ideas in the pots," Galloway explains. "The display helps the viewer to see how rich and complicated they are. I'm not trying to deny the function of any of those pots. After the installation is taken down, the pieces are sold separately and used."

#### Pottery and Community

Facts of which viewers of Galloway's installations are immediately reminded are that functional pottery is rarely designed to be autonomous and that it generally benefits, both practically and aesthetically, from its employment in groups. *Dreaming from Garden to Sky* also implicitly emphasizes the nomadic nature of functional pottery: its tendency to move in space rather than be tied to a single location like a monument on a plinth. Inspired by the motifs of Iznik pottery as well as by its diagnostic color scheme, the vessels composing *Dream-*



7

*ing from Garden to Sky*—an array of pitchers, teapots, and tumblers on short, black shelves and a scattering of rimmed, pentagonal plates above them on the walls—suggest a floral garden beneath a sky of drifting clouds and rising birds. Though ceramic vessels are composed of earth, Galloway seems to suggest that the sky—in a perpetual motion of birds and clouds as well as falling precipitation, rising convection currents, and floating pollen, dust, and seeds—is a more effective metaphor for the active environment of functional pottery than is inert ground.

The conduciveness of functional pottery to community, in addition to its general gregariousness and inherent nomadism, is a tacit theme of Galloway's installation *Sky Vault*, in which scores of white, concave, and irregularly shaped dishes bearing cobalt-outlined motifs of cumulous clouds are suspended by ribbons from a blue-painted ceiling. The effect is not illusionistic but rather—like the famous sky-colored barrel vault of Giotto's Arena Chapel—analogistic. In the analogy, the sky that overarches the amphitheater of daily life is compared to the ceilings of spaces in which more formal ritual is enacted. Like a church, Galloway tacitly argues, a dining room is the site of repeated events that bind familial groups together and tie



8





9

one generation to the next. In a domestic space, functional pottery plays as material a role in that process as voussoirs do in maintaining the integrity of architectural vaults.

The importance of functional pottery as a catalyst to social bonding is stressed by Galloway in her two most recent series, *Still Life* and *Talking*. In the former, still life imagery has been painted or incised on the exteriors of pitchers, tumblers, mugs, and bowls in such a way as to be fully comprehensible to a viewer only when the vessels are raised and tilted in use by another. This subtlety is a reminder that unlike sculptures, functional pots contain information only knowable through use, but it also constitutes a form of sharing that, as in a tea master's presentation of bowls during the tea ceremony, could be considered a mute version of conversation. Such conversation is perhaps the most complex of pottery's many functions. More literal conversation is invoked by the series *Talking*, in which functional vessels have been stamped like cuneiform tablets with letters that seem to march in ranks, swarm in the manner of insects, precipitate like drops of water, or tumble and accumulate as if they were grains of sand in an hourglass. In some instances the letters actually convey coded messages. Inspired by Galloway's reflection on the volume of communication—oral, written, and digital—in which she had engaged over her ten-year career as a higher-education administrator, the series tacitly expresses the conviction that pots function as natural repositories for communication. "When you use pottery," she observes, "it brings meaning to situations and events, and those situations and events in turn bring meaning to pottery. It becomes part of your story."

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10



11

9 Pitcher from the *Talking* series, porcelain, blue slip inlay, glaze, soda fired to cone 6, 2014. 10 Creamer and sugar container from the *Searching for Skyline* series, porcelain, blue slip inlay, soda fired to cone 6, 2011. 11 Small pitcher on saucer from the *Searching for Skyline* series, porcelain, blue slip inlay, soda fired to cone 6, 2011.

## JULIA GALLOWAY



Artist in residence at Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts.

1997–1999



Tumblers from the exhibition "If I Were Atlas."

2002



Cream and sugar set from the exhibition "Crepuscular."

2004

1995–1996  
Artist in residence at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, Colorado.



1999

Begins teaching at the School for American Crafts at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. Developed bodies of work based on home, travel, and personal experiences.

2003  
Teapot with saucer from the exhibition "Gilded."



2005

*Cup of Hours*: Approximately 800 cups installed in a 25-foot shelving unit similar to library shelves.



Cream and sugar set from the exhibition "Searching for Skyline," part of a series from 2010 to 2013 influenced by Montana, focused on cloud imagery.

2011



Pitchers with Iznik inspired patterning from the *Dreaming From Garden to Sky* series.

2012



Cream and sugar set with inlaid blue slip patterning depicting falling letters from the exhibition "Still Life/Talking."

2014

2009  
Dinnerware with mishima drawings of birds of North America.



2009  
Moved to Missoula, Montana to teach at the University of Montana. "Quiescent," installation of 1400 cups, chalk wall drawings of garden and fence imagery.



2015  
View of pots being glazed in the studio in Missoula, Montana.





# versatile cone 6 glazes

Julia Galloway layers glazes over and next to each other to create depth and support the ideas in her work.



I put glazes into a few different categories to help me better understand color and surface to develop ideas for surface decoration. First is a paint-chip glaze: a glaze of straight color. It's extremely reliable and what you see is what you get, over and over again. The Karros Base that I use is a great example of this. Second is a historical glaze: a glaze with strong historical ties. The glaze itself can influence the content in the work. The Water Blue Glaze I work with mimics the high-alkaline glazes from early Iranian pots. Third is the phenomena glaze: a glaze that changes when it is fired. From this type of glaze, you gain a sense that the material has had an experience of firing or time passage. When it fumes and develops crystal growth, Some Bright Green is an example of this kind of glaze. Often a glaze will fit into two of these categories.

I fire to a soft cone 6 in a soda kiln. During the glaze firing, I introduce very little soda. My kiln is two shelves deep (12x24-inch shelves) and I spray the soda solution into the kiln when cone 5 gets soft. I use about 2 pounds of soda ash mixed with two gallons of hot water. I fire in as clean an atmosphere as possible; however, I always get a little reduction when I spray in the soda.

## HAMADA BASE (REVISED FOR CONE 6)

Cone 6 Oxidation or Reduction

Barium Carbonate	16.49 %
Whiting	9.28
Zinc Oxide	9.28
Custer Feldspar	54.64
Minspar 200 Feldspar	8.25
Ball Clay	2.06
	100.00 %

Add: Bentonite 2.06 %

For Dark Green

Add: Copper Carbonate	3.09 %
Red Iron Oxide	3.09 %
Rutile Oxide	2.06 %

For Light Blue

Add: Copper Oxide	2.06 %
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For Blue

Add: Cobalt Carbonate	0.26 %
Rutile	3.09 %

The original recipe for this glaze came from Kim Dickey, and it was a cone 10 glaze. This is a high-barium, satin glaze. I do not use it in any areas that come in contact with food. It produces beautiful blues and greens with copper, iron, and rutile.

I often use many variations of coloring oxides in this base together. In addition, I put spots or lines of Chartreuse Base glaze on top of this glaze to make it run like crazy. I fire it to cone 6 in a soda kiln.

## KARROS BASE REVISED

Cone 5 Oxidation or Reduction

Gerstley Borate	10.71 %
Whiting	3.57
Wollastonite	7.14
Ferro Frit 3124	5.36
Minspar 200 Feldspar	9.82
Nepheline Syenite	18.75
EPK Kaolin	8.94
Silica	35.71
	100.00 %

Add: Bentonite 1.79 %

For Red

Add: Encapsulated Red Stain	8.93 %
Rutile	1.79 %

For Orange

Add: Degussa Orange Stain	7.14 %
Rutile	3.57 %

This is an older variation of Karros Base. It is a reliable and consistent glaze. I use this base glaze both as a clear glaze and with a variety of metallic oxide colorants and stains to get strong colors.

In general I add 5–10% commercial stain, with an additional 2–4% metallic oxides to get different colors.

I fire this glaze to cone 5 in a soda kiln.

## CHARTREUSE BASE

Cone 04 Oxidation

Barium Carbonate	15.53 %
Lithium Carbonate	12.62
Whiting	4.85
Ferro Frit 3124	7.77
Nepheline Syenite	24.27
Ball Clay	2.92
Silica	32.04
	100.00 %

Add: Chrome Oxide 0.24 %  
Bentonite 1.94 %

This is a low-fire, cone 04 glaze. I only use it on top of other glazes. When I put it on top of Hamada Base or Some Bright Green and fire to cone 6, it helps the glazes run beautifully. This glaze will bubble if fired alone to cone 6. In addition, I use this glaze applied lightly over slip inlay to encourage a streaky blue running glaze.

## FLASHING SLIP

Cone 6 Oxidation or Reduction

Whiting	10 %
6 Tile Kaolin	70
Grolleg Kaolin	20
	100 %

I dip my pots in this slip when the clay is a stiff leather hard.

## SOME BRIGHT GREEN (REVISED)

Cone 6 Oxidation or Reduction

Strontium Carbonate	28.18 %
Whiting	6.36
Zinc Oxide	9.09
Ferro Frit 3134	3.64
Custer Feldspar	40.91
Ball Clay	11.82
	100.00 %

Add: Copper Carbonate 2.73 %  
Red Iron Oxide 1.82 %  
Rutile 2.73 %  
Bentonite 1.82 %

This recipe came from Jeff Oestreich. It's a deep satin emerald green that fumes beautifully when you add Epsom salts to it and fire it in a soda kiln. I mix the glaze thick and apply it with a slip-trailing bottle. This glaze is very sensitive to the atmosphere in the kiln. I do not use this glaze in areas that come in contact with food.

## WATER BLUE GLAZE

Cone 04 Oxidation

Gerstley Borate	6 %
Ferro Frit 3110	77
EPK Kaolin	7
Silica	10
	100 %

Add: Copper Carbonate 4 %  
Bentonite 3 %

This is a low-fire glaze that is not food safe due to extensive crazing. Generally I use it in small amounts to accent knobs, spouts, and handles. I apply it thin with a brush, and over fire it to cone 6 in a soda kiln. This glaze bubbles if fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln, and I only use it in a soda kiln, as the extra flux from the soda smooths out the glaze. It also turns out better if I do a quicker firing.

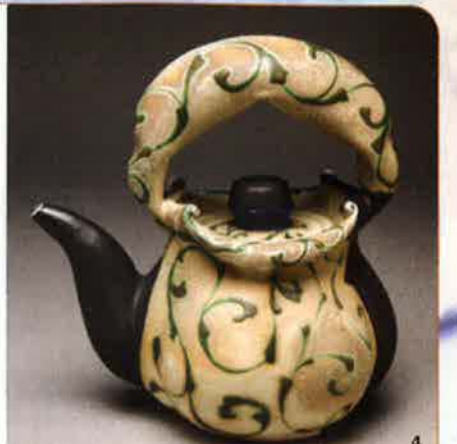
## METALLIC BLACK

Cone 6 Oxidation

Gerstley Borate	16.67 %
Whiting	5.56
Minspar 200 Feldspar	73.33
EPK Kaolin	4.44
	100.00 %

Add: Cobalt Oxide 2.22 %  
Copper Oxide 4.44 %  
Manganese Dioxide 4.44 %  
Bentonite 2.00 %

This is a flat matte black glaze that is very heavy looking and not food safe. It is excellent for slip-trailing decoration. I add the manganese dioxide after I sieve the glaze, so it's a little clumpy. I like the unevenness of the glaze. I fire it to cone 6 in a soda kiln, and depending on placement in the kiln and the amount of soda it is exposed to, the surface can become slightly shiny during the glaze firing.



1, 5 Water ewer with blue inlay slip, water blue glaze on the outside and Karros base with 8% Degussa orange stain and 2% rutile oxide on the foot. The cup is pierced and the holes are filled with Karros Base with no colorant. Chartreuse Base (clear) is brushed on top of the cloud on the very top of the cup.

2, 3 Pitcher with blue slip inlaid cloud pattern on one side. After the bisque firing, Chartreuse Base (clear) was applied with a slip-trailing bottle over the incised slip lines, and a layer of Hamada Base with 2% copper carbonate was painted inside of the cloud lines. The Chartreuse Base pulled the cobalt from the slip and the copper from the Hamada Base glaze. The other side of the pitcher has flashing slip as the base layer with Metallic Black glaze applied using a slip trailer to create the arch pattern. It is not as matte as on the teapot (4), because it was exposed to more soda during the firing.

4 Teapot, dipped in flashing slip at a stiff leather-hard stage before bisque firing. It has Some Bright Green glaze slip trailed on the sides, handle, and lid, and Metallic Black glaze on the knob, spout, and back of pot.

