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 in 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 efforts 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...
of streaky cobalt and others filled in with opaque ecru glaze or reflective enamel, with transparent plique-a-jour cloisonné and semi-spherical lids that serve as cups. These cups—inspired by the morphology of Islamic coffee pots—are pierced out on the flat sides, as in 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 perennial 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 conducivement 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 the site of repeated events that bind familial groups together and tie the site of repeated events that bind familial groups together and tie.

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 shows implicitly emphasizes the nomadic nature of functional pottery: its tendency to move in space rather than be tied to a single location like a museum or a church. By the motif of Islamic pottery as well as by its diagnostic color scheme, the vessels composing Dreaming from Garden to Sky—an array of pitchers, teapots, and tumblers on stumps, black bowls and a scattering of ramekins, 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 perennial 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.
one generation to the next. In a domestic space, functional pottery plays 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."

The author Glen R. Brown, a frequent contributor to Ceramics Monthly, is a professor of art history at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas.
RECIPES

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-on glaze: a glaze of straight color. It’s extremely reliable and what you see is what you get, over and over again. The Karras 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 mixes the high alkaline glazes from early Roman pots. Third is the phenomenon glaze: a glaze that changes when it’s 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 love to soft cone 5 in a soda kiln. During the glaze firing, I introduce very little soda. My life is two shelves deep (12x24 inch shelves) and I spray the soda solution into the kiln when cone 5 gets soft. I use about two 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.

KARRAS BASE REVISED

Cone 5 Oxidation or Reduction

Basalt Carbonate ................. 16.49 %
Whiting .................... 7.57 %
Zinc Oxide .................. 7.14 %
Custer Feldspar .............. 3.67 %
Mepique 200 Feldspar ....... 2.06 %
Ball Clay ........................ 2.06 %
Add: Bentonite ................. 0.00 %
Add: Copper Carbonate ...... 2.06 %
Add: Copper Oxide ............ 3.00 %
Add: Tin Oxide ................. 3.00 %
Add: Cobalt Carbonate ...... 0.26 %
Add: Rutile .................... 3.09 %

The original recipe for this glaze came from Kim Dickie, and it was a cone 10 glaze. This is a high-burn, 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 because, in addition, I put spots or lines of chartreuse frit glaze on top of this glaze to make it run like crazy. I fire it to cone 6 as an soda kiln.

KARROSA BASE REVISED

Cone 5 Oxidation or Reduction

Gentilly Bentonite ........... 10.71 %
Lithia Carbonate ............. 12.62 %
Lithium Carbonate .......... 3.57 %
Foro Frit 3124 .................. 5.36 %
Mepique 200 Feldspar ....... 2.06 %
Nepheline Syenite ............. 4.44 %
EPK Kaolin .................... 8.94 %
Feldspar ..................... 3.57 %
Soda Ash ...................... 3.57 %
Add: Bentonite ................. 0.00 %
Add: Cobalt Carbonate ...... 0.00 %
Add: Copper Carbonate ...... 0.00 %
Add: Copper Oxide ............ 0.00 %
Add: Rutile .................... 0.00 %

This is an older variation of Karros Base. It is a richer 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 stains with an additional 2-4% metallic oxides to get different colors. I fire this glaze to cone 5 in a soda kiln.

CHARTRUSE BASE

Cone 4 Oxidation

Basalt Carbonate ................. 15.51 %
Lithia Carbonate ............. 12.62 %
Whiting .................... 3.57 %
Foro Frit 3124 .................. 7.17 %
Nepheline Syenite ............. 4.44 %
EPK Kaolin .................... 8.94 %
Feldspar ..................... 3.57 %
Soda Ash ...................... 3.57 %
Add: Chrome Oxide .......... 0.24 %
Add: Bentonite ................. 1.79 %
Add: Encapsulated Red Stain ...... 8.03 %
Add: Rutile .................... 1.79 %
Add: Orange .................... 7.14 %
Add: Degussa Orange Stain .... 7.14 %
Add: Rutile .................... 3.57 %

This is a low-fire glaze that is not food safe due to excessive fuming. Generally I use it in small amounts to accent knops, spouts, and handles. I apply it thin with a brush, and over fire it to cone 4 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 runs better if I do a quicker firing.

METALLIC BLACK

Cone 6 Oxidation

Gentilly Bentonite ........... 15.51 %
Lithia Carbonate ............. 12.62 %
Whiting .................... 3.57 %
Foro Frit 3124 .................. 7.17 %
Nepheline Syenite ............. 4.44 %
EPK Kaolin .................... 8.94 %
Feldspar ..................... 3.57 %
Soda Ash ...................... 3.57 %
Add: Cobalt Carbonate ...... 0.22 %
Add: Copper Oxide .......... 0.44 %
Add: Manganese Oxide ...... 0.44 %
Add: Rutile .................... 1.79 %

This is a flat matte black glaze that is heavy looking and not food safe, it is excellent for sign-painting decoration. I add the manganese dioxide after I sieve the glaze, so it’s a little fussy. 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.

WATER BLUE GLAZES

Cone 4 Oxidation

Gentilly Bentonite ........... 10.71 %
Lithia Carbonate ............. 12.62 %
Whiting .................... 3.57 %
Foro Frit 3124 .................. 7.17 %
Nepheline Syenite ............. 4.44 %
EPK Kaolin .................... 8.94 %
Feldspar ..................... 3.57 %
Soda Ash ...................... 3.57 %
Add: Copper Carbonate ...... 0.27 %
Add: Red Iron Oxide .......... 1.82 %
Add: Rutile .................... 2.73 %
Add: Barium Carbonate ...... 1.82 %

This recipe came from Jeff Oestreich, it’s a deep satin emerald green that fumes beautifully when you add copper oxide to it and fire it in a soda kiln. It is like Apis glaze 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.

SOME BRIGHT GREEN (REVISED)

Cone 6 Oxidation or Reduction

Strontium Carbonate ........ 28.18 %
Whiting .................... 6.30 %
Zinc Oxide ................. 9.09 %
Ferro Frit 3134 .......... 3.64 %
Custer Feldspar .......... 40.91 %
Ball Clay .................... 11.82 %

Add: Copper Carbonate ...... 0.27 %
Add: Red Iron Oxide .......... 1.82 %
Add: Rutile .................... 2.73 %
Add: Barium Carbonate ...... 1.82 %

I do my pots in this slip when the day is a stiff leather hard.

Some Bright Green is an example of this kind of glaze. Often a glaze will fit into two of these categories. Some Bright Green is a high-burn, satin glaze. I do not use this glaze in 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 because, in addition, I put spots or lines of chartreuse frit glaze on top of this glaze to make it run like crazy. I fire it to cone 6 as a soda kiln.

I use this glaze as a base glaze and with a variety of metallic oxide colorants and stains to get strong colors. In general I add 5-10% commercial stains with an additional 2-4% metallic oxides to get different colors. I fire this glaze to cone 5 in a soda kiln.

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

5. A water drover with blue iridescent glaze on the outside and Karros Base with 3% Degussa orange stains and 3% native oxide on the foot. The top is painted and the handle is fired with Karras Base with no colorant. Chartreuse Base (clear) is brushed on top of the slip on the very top of the cup.

4. Potters with blue slip inlaid cloud pattern on one side. All is bisque fired. 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 colorline 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 the one before, because it was exposed to more soda during the firing.

3. A water drover with blue iridescent glaze on the outside and Karros Base with 3% Degussa orange stains and 3% native oxide on the foot. The top is painted and the handle is fired with Karras Base with no colorant. Chartreuse Base (clear) is brushed on top of the slip on the very top of the cup.

2. A water drover with blue iridescent glaze on the outside and Karros Base with 3% Degussa orange stains and 3% native oxide on the foot. The top is painted and the handle is fired with Karras Base with no colorant. Chartreuse Base (clear) is brushed on top of the slip on the very top of the cup.

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