



theCLAYSTUDIOofMISSOULA

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The Clay Studio of Missoula is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion, education and provision of resources in the ceramic arts.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on another year at the Clay Studio of Missoula, I am filled with immense gratitude for the vibrant community we have cultivated together. This year has been one of resilience, creativity, and growth—both for the organization and for each individual who has walked through our doors. This is a place where art, connection, and education intersect, offering a safe and inspiring space for artists of all ages and skill levels. Whether you're an experienced ceramicist or someone just beginning their artistic journey, the Clay Studio of Missoula is a nurturing environment where creativity thrives.

In 2024 we were able to offer more outreach workshops to under-served youth, ensuring that the transformative power of clay is accessible to all. Through collaborations with local schools and organizations, we introduced ceramics to children who may not have had access to such opportunities otherwise. It is incredibly rewarding to see the positive impact these programs have on participants, not only in their artistic development but also in their confidence and sense of community.

This year we also saw the completion of several exciting projects and upgrades to parts of our facility—including a new soda kiln! With these improvements, we've enhanced the overall experience for everyone who utilizes the Clay Studio of Missoula as a resource.

As many know, we had a rocky start to 2024 due to the unfortunate robbery of our space on Christmas Eve 2023. Much of our energy following this incident focused on facility repairs, security upgrades, and property recovery and replacement. The outpouring of financial contributions, donated items, and general moral support was tremendously helpful throughout the ordeal. This support underscored just how amazing Missoula and the greater ceramics community truly are.

On behalf of the Clay Studio of Missoula, I extend my deepest gratitude to our incredible donors, dedicated volunteers, and loyal members who have played a vital role in our success. Your generosity, time, and commitment have allowed us to make a meaningful impact, and we couldn't have done it without you. Whether through financial support, hands-on involvement, or ongoing advocacy, each of you has contributed to our mission in invaluable ways. Together, we will keep shaping a community that celebrates the power of ceramics to bring people together, spark creativity, and foster positive change.



Shalene Valenzuela, Executive Director

AN AMAZING GIFT



Decades ago, before the term “maker” had come into widespread use to describe those who are committed to making objects with their hands, my friend Kent Perleman had a vision for a tucked away, industrial corner of Missoula. He envisioned a place where he could continue to create beautiful, well-crafted furniture and be surrounded by others who were masters of, or students of, their own crafts. He and his partner Mary Shaffer (a master maker in her own right) began to implement that vision and in 2006 they invited the Clay Studio of Missoula to join in their project and move to our current space at 1106 Hawthorne Street. This move allowed us to expand our programs and better serve our mission to provide accessible clay facilities to the Missoula community and surrounding area.

I’ve thought a lot about “legacy” over the past couple years—how the actions of individuals and groups inform the future. Often “legacy” is associated with “gift” or “inheritance.” But I think it has a deeper tie to memory and how we embody historic perspective in the work we do moving forward. Although Kent wasn’t able to see the ultimate fulfillment of his dream, last year Mary gave the studio a gift that will impact our ability to move forward in profound ways: she gifted 1106 Hawthorne to the Clay Studio of Missoula.

I remain fortunate and grateful to be involved with people and organizations who make “legacy” happen—individuals who actively, consciously, and most often unselfishly work towards realizing our world as a better place, even if that is only one small action at a time. In this case, however, the gift is significant, generous, and as Mary often states, “freely given.” As we move forward, we can honor this gift by continuing to do good work, respecting our craft, and considering the rippling impacts of generosity.

Mike Kurz

One of our founding members & current board member

FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

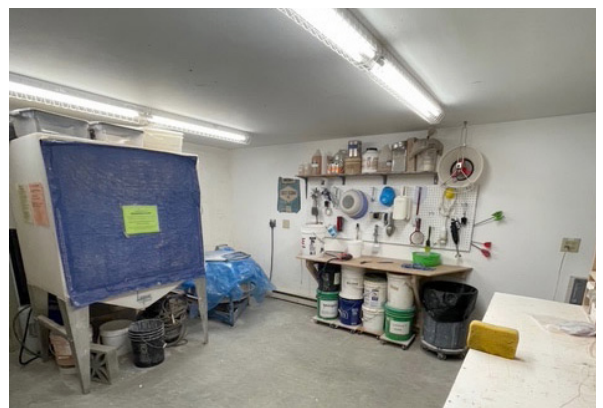
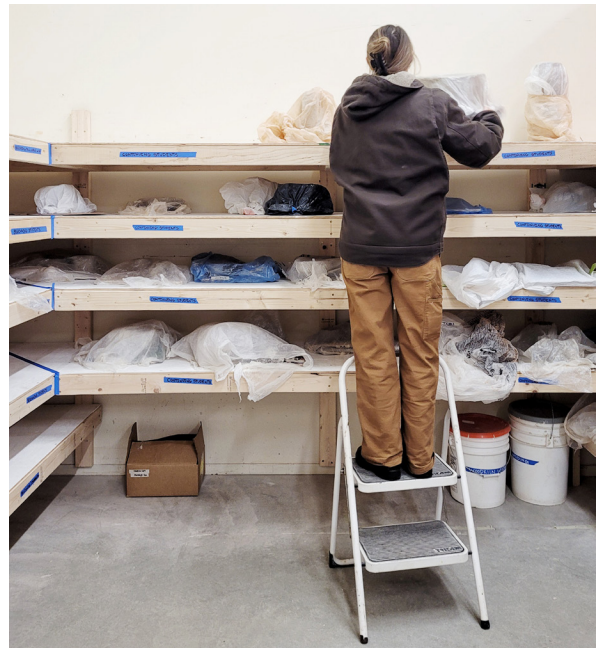
The Clay Studio of Missoula made many outstanding facility improvements in 2024. Thanks to generous material donations from Boyce Lumber, we were able to improve two areas of the studio. In March, the mixing room was redesigned with greatly improved organization, shelving and accessible material storage. Also, a new classroom shelving system was built in December, so students can more easily store projects and move unencumbered through the area.

The biggest improvement in 2024 was the addition of our new soda kiln. Nearly nine months of planning culminated in a kiln-building workshop led by artist Scott Ross from Michigan, who designed a kiln to suit our specific needs. With the help and hard work of Scott, Joseph Pesina, eight workshop participants, resident artists, and community members, the kiln was built in one week. The soda kiln is now an integral component of the Clay Studio of Missoula and we are happy we have a new one for our members to use and enjoy. This was funded through a generous private \$5000 donation, our Potsketch 2024 Moment of Giving, and a Northwestern Energy Community grant. Donations were also given in the form of welding and fabrication.

Through a very generous donation the kiln pad roof was extended to accommodate another kind-hearted gift: a small gas kiln. This kiln will be available for members to fire this coming spring.

Our wood kiln saw some much-needed updates this past year. Improvement included addressing structural issues, making new side stoke covers, and updating the electrical wiring to accommodate more lights and power outlets. Pavers were laid to mitigate dust and provide a safer standing place for participants stoking the kiln.

Joseph Pesina, Studio Manager



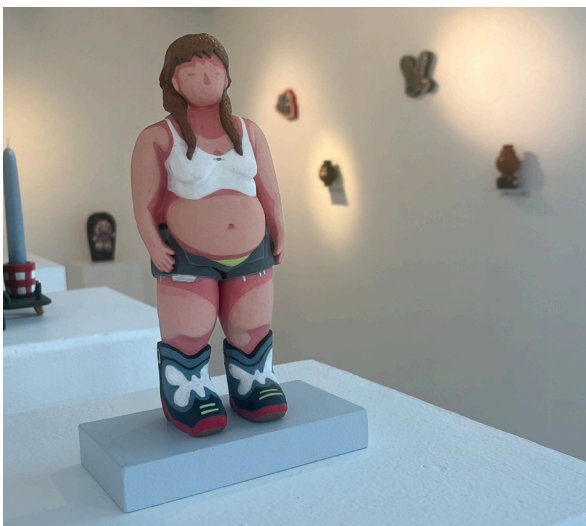
RESIDENT ARTIST PROGRAM



In Fall 2024, we welcomed three new long-term residents to the Clay Studio of Missoula. Ethan Arias, a potter focused on atmospheric firings who just completed undergraduate studies at University of North Florida; Heather Lepp, a Canadian potter who received her MFA at West Virginia University in Spring 2024; and Yve Holtzclaw, most recently from Michigan, who largely focuses on sculpture utilizing mixed media elements. Both Krissy Ramirez and Kayla Noble are continuing residents who entered their second year in the fall; they have been busy making work and preparing for their exit exhibitions in Summer 2025. Thanks to generous support from the Sippy Foundation, we were able to once again grant fellowships to all long-term resident artists for the year.



In Summer 2024, we bid farewell to three long-term resident artists who had been at the studio since Fall 2022. Each rounded out their residencies with ambitious solo shows that took place between June and August in the Clay Studio of Missoula gallery. Both Tessa Hoenig and Grace Orwen are currently still working in Missoula and making decisions regarding their next adventures. Matthew O'Reilly departed in October to be the Residency Arts Technician at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, NE, where he and his partner Rio are expecting their first child in March.



For the first time since starting the University of Montana Residency in 2012, we were able to offer the opportunity to more than one deserving UM undergraduate for the summer. Tatum Ernst and Fletcher Henderson joined us from May to August, immersing themselves in their work and the Clay Studio community. Also joining us this past summer as short-term residents were Avi Farber (June), a multi-disciplinary artist from New Mexico, and Cori Crumrine (July), who currently resides in Cincinnati, OH and was a graduate of the MFA program at University of Montana.



AFTER SCHOOL & OUTREACH



The Clay Studio of Missoula's After-School Program continued to thrive and create arts access for kids. Our program regularly visited Lowell and Franklin elementary schools, as well as C.S. Porter Middle School, in partnership with the Parks and Recreation program, running five days a week. These after-school sessions focused on learning practical art skills, and because of the community nature of clay, helped reinforce social emotional learning in young students. Students viewed artwork by local, national, and international ceramic artists for inspiration, and learned to tap their own creative brains for ideas. The after-school program served an average of 75 students per month, for a cumulative total of over 230 students. Students took on projects such as creating cups tailored to a best friend, and collaborative monsters to foster social emotional skills among pairs and groups of students. They also made pieces inspired by ceramists in the field today, giving them great opportunities to grow their connections and responses to artwork while creating something special of their own.

The Outreach Program created more opportunities for local children in need—those burdened by factors like financial insecurity, transportation barriers, and other hardships. This program brought in a total of 71 diverse young students, and we hope to grow this number in future years to bring more arts access to kids and adults alike. We are helping to grow the next generation of ceramic artists by giving children much-needed exposure and practice with clay. This gives students the tools to express themselves and learn introspectively; clay builds community wherever it is, and the outreach and after-school programs are no exception. Kids gain valuable practice in cooperating with one another in a studio environment, helping them on their journeys to become kind, amazing human beings, whether or not they become clay artists.

Our After-School and Outreach Programs remain free of charge to participants. The funding we receive is critical in maintaining the good work we do and keeping these programs accessible. Major funders for our 2024 program included the National Endowment for the Arts and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. In late 2024 we were awarded a Missoula Community Foundation LoLA (Legacy of Living Art) Grant to continue outreach workshops in 2025.

Kelly Seitz, Education & Outreach Coordinator

2024 STATISTICS

EDUCATION

of Multi-Week Adult Classes: **43**
of Workshops: **59**
of Youth Camps & Classes
+ Family Programs: **15**

of Adults in Paid Programs: **795**
of Youth in Paid Programs: **105**

AFTER SCHOOL & OUTREACH

We worked with an average of
75 students each month, with
233 unique students total

GALLERY & SPECIAL EVENTS

of Artists Featured in Exhibits: **98**
of Attendees at First Friday
Art Receptions (Feb-Dec): **787**
of Potsketch Auction Artists: **120**

FACILITY, SERVICES & OTHER PROGRAMS

of Kilns Fired: **629**
of Current Members: **288**
of Monthly Access Studio Artists: **50**
of Resident Artists: **12**
of Interns: **10**

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

DATABASE MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

In Fall 2024 we migrated our database to Neon CRM. This new system is helping us streamline membership and donor management, contact lists, communications, and class enrollment. Prior to this we relied on multiple systems and a homegrown database that we'd outgrown. We are already seeing the benefits of moving to this more comprehensive CRM.

GRANT & FOUNDATION SUPPORT SUMMARY

In 2024 we received funding for current and future projects from the **Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation**, **National Endowment for the Arts**, **Montana Arts Council**, **Sippy Foundation**, **Missoula Community Foundation's LoLA Fund**, and the **NorthWestern Energy Community Grant Fund**.

NEW STAFF

We brought on Kaitlynn Webster as our new Office & Reception Coordinator in September 2024.

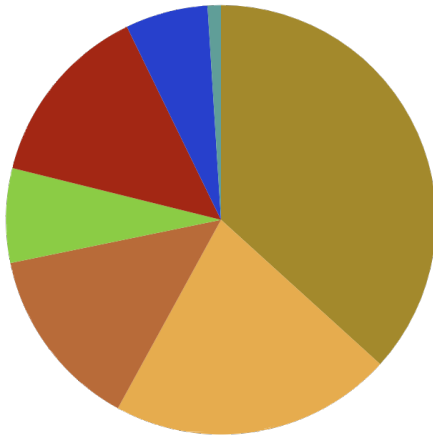
FUNDRAISING EVENTS

At Potsketch 2024 we had record-breaking attendance with over 230 attendees as well as enthusiastic support for auction items and the Moment of Giving to support our soda kiln. Our Summertime High Tea event occurred on a glorious August day and was hosted by artist Adrian Arleo on her beautiful property in Lolo, MT.

We are looking forward to **POTSKETCH 2025** on **Saturday, April 26**
Theme: *Now Entering Clay Country*
Summertime High Tea (tentative date): **Sunday, August 24**

2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

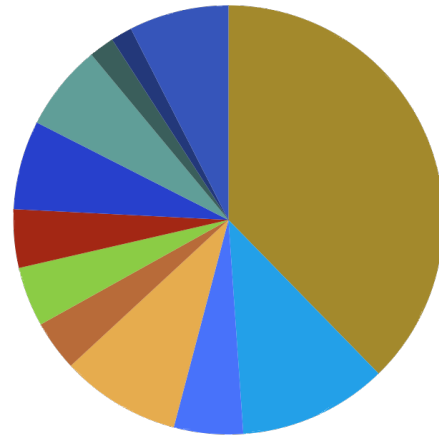
REVENUE



- Class Tuition (36.7%)
- Contributions (21.2%)
- Fundraising Events (13.8%)
- Gallery (7.1%)
- Studio Access Fees (13.9%)
- Studio Income - Other (firing fees, clay & materials, gift certificates) (6.2%)
- Other (Misc) (1%)

2024 REVENUE TOTAL
\$467,374

EXPENSES



- Payroll (Staff) (37.7%)
- Payroll (Instructors) (11.2%)
- Payroll (Taxes, Retirement) (5.2%)
- Rent (9%)
- Fundraising Events (3.8%)
- Gallery (4.5%)
- Resident Funding (4.4%)
- Studio + Class Supplies (6.7%)
- Utilities (6.5%)
- Card & Bank Fees (1.9%)
- Insurance (1.6%)
- Other (Contractor & Prof Fees, Maintenance, Office, Advertising, Misc) (7.5%)

2024 EXPENSE TOTAL
\$481,534

Significant expenses related to wood kiln site improvements and the soda kiln project were paid for using previously saved restricted funds, rather than new 2024 revenue..

Clay Studio of Missoula Staff

Shalene Valenzuela
Executive Director

Joseph Pesina
Studio Manager

Kelly Seitz
Education and Outreach Coordinator

Kaitlynn Webster
Office & Reception Coordinator

2024 Board of Directors

Jason Neal (President)
Courtney Murphy (Vice President)
Kathie Dewitt (Treasurer)
Richard Smith (Secretary)
Susan Carlson
Liz Dybdal
James Heath
Mike Kurz
Cathryn Mallory
John Paoli

In addition to photos provided by staff, we would like to thank Clay Studio of Missoula members **Jesse Brinkerhoff** and **Rebecca Smith** for providing us with images of studio events and activities!