

LONG ON ART ...

MARYANNE LONG

Raku: A 'Burning' Desire To Keep Tradition Alive



Armed with group names like "Krack Pots" and "Burn-Outs," pottery enthusiasts flock every year to the annual Raku Ho'olaule'a, a community raku ceramics workshop, firing and campout hosted by Hawai'i Craftsmen.

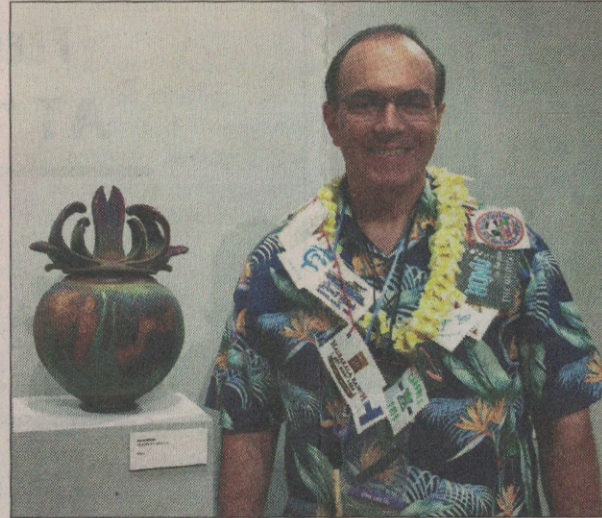
The 41st annual event took place this summer at Camp Mokulēia, and nearly 70 potters from Hawai'i, the Mainland and Thailand participated. Now, their best works are on display at Gallery 'Iolani at Windward Community College.

"Our mission is to increase public awareness and appreciation of fine craft and provide opportunities for continuing education and regular exhibition of our members' works," explained Terry Savage, Hawai'i Craftsmen acting president. "This event is a

perennial favorite. As many as 150 artists, including many from other countries such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand and France, have participated in past Raku Ho'olaule'a activities."

Pottery produced at the event was juried in traditional and contemporary categories. Traditional raku pottery dates back to 16th-century Japan, an effort by potters to create work used in tea ceremonies. Contemporary, or Western-style, raku has evolved over the past 50 years, and gives potters more opportunities for freedom of form, technique and expression.

Traditional raku pieces for this exhibition were juried by Marilyn Sochi Naka, a member of Chado Urasenke Tankokai Hawai'i Association and Urasenke Foundation of



Mark White poses with his first-place entry in the contemporary raku category: *Magnificent Iridescence*. MARYANNE LONG PHOTOS

Hawai'i. She has been a student of Chado (Japanese tea ceremony) for 19 years, and currently teaches Chado at Hongwanji Mission School and Seikōan Teahouse, located

at Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i.

What impressed her most in this first experience as a Raku Ho'olaule'a juror was "the quality of the work submit-

ted. It was difficult to decide which should be included in the exhibit or even win an award."

The role that the raku pieces play in the tea ceremony is an integral part of the entire experience. She explained, "The role of the guest at a tea ceremony is to feel the oneness of it all — one time ... one opportunity, a unique experience that will not be repeated."

Although Naka did not grow up with wide exposure to tea ceremony, she became interested in later life. She sees the locally made raku utensils as very useful in preserving the traditional ways of the tea ceremony.

"There is a spirituality about these pieces; the potter puts his whole self into his raku ware."

The juror for contemporary pieces was Shigeru Miyamoto,

head of Leeward Community College's ceramics department. He periodically gives workshops on wheel throwing, pit firing and ceramic sculpture for schools and community art centers across the island. His work is in several collections, including the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Miyamoto was instrumental in bringing the beachside-firing concept to Hawai'i from California, where he helped develop it as a college student. He feels certain that "Hawai'i is the only place in the country where beachside firing is still practiced."

Cash awards totaling \$1,950 were given out to 10 winners in both categories. The overall Ginny McGargahan Award of Excellence, sponsored by the Timothy Y.C. Choy Fund,

Gallery 'Iolani Hosts Raku Show

went to Russell Wee for his piece, *Precision*.

Wee is the longest-participating potter in Raku Ho'olaule'a. "I've never missed one," he exclaimed with pride, and then added with a sigh, "but now I'm tired." He teaches raku in adult education at Leeward CC. His is one of the few raku classes on O'ahu.

Mark White won first place in the contemporary category for *Magnificent Iridescence*. White, retired from the U.S. Air Force, explained his enthusiasm for raku is powered by knowing that what goes into the kiln is often totally different from what comes out. "There's a certain amount of serendipity and unpredictability in each piece."

Taking first place in the traditional raku category



Russell Wee's *Precision*

was Gary Yokoyama, an in-house attorney for Hawaiian Dredging. His entry was *Winter Solstice*. He is relatively new to raku, this being his third year.

Youngest of all the potters was Kao Wongbusarakum, a 10th-grader at Punahou.

He won honorable mention in the minor category. According to his mother, Supin Wongbusarakum, "Kao learned pottery before he was born. I was pregnant with him when I attended my first Raku Ho'olaule'a."

Raku Ho'olaule'a is on display at Gallery 'Iolani at Windward Community College now through Oct. 7. The exhibit is open weekdays and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m.

MaryAnne Long is an artist, board member of Windward Artists Guild and the Association of Hawai'i Artists, volunteer instructor of art with the Ko'olaupoa Kūpuna Club, and e-newsletter editor for paintbasket.com. Reach her at malong@hawaii.rr.com or longlostart.weebly.com.