

# CUPS ON LOAN

by Alleghany Meadows, Ayumi Horie, and Mary Barringer



**A cup by Alleghany Meadows, shown here with its catalog-numbered box. Boxes for the library were created by Andy Brayman of the Matter Factory.**

The Artstream Ceramic Library is a social-outreach project whose mission is to connect contemporary functional ceramics with ordinary people. Similar in structure to a literature-based library, the Ceramic Library loans out unique handmade cups made by thirteen nationally recognized potters, for a period of seven days. Most crucial to the aspect of social exchange is that the Ceramic Library requires the borrower to submit a digital photograph of the cup in use, and encourages submission of other art forms as well, including writing, music, video, and visual art. The submitted photographs and creative reactions become a part of the content of the project, are catalogued in the website, and are used for other educational purposes.

Each cup has been assigned a library catalog inventory number. This number is permanently fired onto the cup as a ceramic decal. The number also corresponds to a protective custom wooden box, which is embossed with the silver Artstream logo and padded on the interior. The catalog number uniquely identifies the cup online, along with the art that has been contributed in response to it. By tracking the interchange between Ceramic Library cups and the reactions they have inspired, we hope to understand and explore the day to day impact that handmade functional ceramics have in people's lives, and the amazing creativity that can be generated from this give and take. We hope that our cups will stay in circulation for many years and that the creative interactions will grow and deepen over time.

The Artstream Ceramic Library is an extension of the Artstream Nomadic Gallery, and created in collaboration with the 13 participating artists and with Matter Factory of Kansas City. Based in a vintage 1967 silver Airstream trailer, the gallery and the Ceramic Library can be found during the summer months at the Aspen Farmers Market in Aspen, Colorado every Saturday from mid-June to the end of September. In the winter months, the Ceramic Library will travel independent to the trailer and gallery, and will be hosted by libraries, universities and other organizations. Our goal is to allow people in diverse communities to participate in this ground-breaking cultural interchange, and to be able to experience art in their own homes without being required to purchase the pieces. Please contact us



I still yearn for the Elizabeth Robinson tumbler my wife and I stole from each other for ten days." —Gavin Brooke



. . . it is the opportunity to checkout a variety of lessons in making the mundane elegant."

—Amanda Brooke

if you are interested in hosting. And hey! No need to sip quietly in this library. Food and drink are required.

#### From the Artists

"One of the often-mentioned pleasures of functional art such as pottery is its ability to bring heightened awareness to ordinary acts – to intensify and "make special" the fundamental human activities of eating, drinking, and cooking. But it is equally wonderful that functional art has the power to disappear. Thus a handmade cup can tamp down the art experience, push it below the threshold of attention, where it enters the user through the portal of the senses, rather than through the focused eye and conscious mind. It sneaks into your day and becomes part of the texture of your bodily life." —Mary Barringer, Shelburne Falls, Vermont

"The mug I've contributed to the Artstream Ceramic Library represents my latest inquiry into a synthesis of Tang Dynasty Sancai pottery, 20th century American Painting and an interest in low fire ceramic process and materials. This particular piece was a departure from the traditional yellow/green palette of sancai and the happenstance of its composition

**Left top: The library as installed at Studio for Arts and Works (SAW), Carbondale, Colorado, November, 2009. Left middle: "circulation desk" at SAW, where cups were checked out, with typewriter, date stamp, and card catalog. Left bottom: The Artstream Nomadic Gallery outside the Museum of Art and Design in New York City, Xxxx, 200X. Right: Steven Colby arranging the library inside the Artstream Nomadic Gallery on first day, August, 2009, at the Aspen Saturday Market.**

ends up alluding to early glam rock stars. That this mug would look comfortable in the hands of Ziggy Stardust feels like a real accomplishment – and I'm terribly interested to have it travel in and out of homes and in and out of lives." —Steven Colby, Carbondale, Colorado

"For the past five years or so, I've grown more interested in the social function of pots. My curiosity lies in what they mean to their users, what role they play between people as gifts or meaningful objects, where they live in the world, and even whether they are at the front of the cupboard. The annual postcards I print have pots in real-life situations and on my website I have many pages of candid images of my pots in use from people all over the world.



Because the cup was brought into the house on loan and had to be returned in a week, it garnered special attention. Because it's time in my life was limited, it didn't just sit there and get absorbed into the other things that had been purchased/collected over time.

—Linda Girvin

**Top row (left to right):** Cups in use by Ayumi Horie, Elizabeth Robinson, Ayumi Horie, and Linda Sikora. Lisa Orr cup with library box.  
**Bottom row (left to right):** Cups in use by Alleghany Meadows, Ayumi Horie, Julia Galloway, Michael Connolly, Christa Assad, and Mark Pharis.

“When the Artstream was established eight years ago by Alleghany, it was revolutionary in the way it brought pottery directly to people in a context outside the gallery and forged a connection between users and makers. It was a spectacle of the best kind, giving functional ceramics a hip visibility it had been sorely lacking to that point. The combination of great pottery, a unique buying experience, and media attention did amazing things to open up to a new audience that before that time either didn't care for pots or thought they were all round, brown, and ugly.

“Once again, the Artstream is leading the way by establishing the Library as a context in which potters can dialog with people who love what they do and believe in the power of a good pot to create positive interchange. The Library is pioneering a new relationship between craft and new technology and I am very excited to be part of this social experiment. For this project, I have purposefully chosen cups that are good representatives of my standard work. They are not part of a limited edition; they are ordinary in their uniqueness to me. And I can't wait to see what happens!”—*Ayumi Horie, Cottekill, New York*

“This lending library idea was sprouted during a brainstorming session about the Artstream Nomadic Gallery between Christa Assad, Mary Barringer, Andy Brayman, Ayumi Horie, Linda Sikora, and myself in April 2009. Ideas ranged from “collectives” to topic-specific curated shows connected to particular locations. For instance, if it were in the

financial district of lower Manhattan, an exhibition could focus on pots for ‘office’ spaces and functions.

“As we left that meeting, we knew the library had to become a viable project. The potential for learning and for communicating is so immense. A large part of the excitement is that we really don't know what this library is. Only through time and collaboration with the artists, the library hosts, and the borrowers will we understand the meaning and the layers of the project. The potters who have contributed work are authors, articulate in their visions, accomplished in their ideas, published widely. Different than the authors of printed books, our individually unique pieces will be ‘read’ again and again, day to day, and the meaning of the works will change through time, as they acquire their history of use and interaction.

“As a maker, I have long been fascinated by the way pots go into people's daily lives, and become familiar, and live with them for years. Over time, the perception of the work changes, forming a patina of memories, like when a distant friend visited and we used a particular teapot in the late afternoon, our conversations, the quality of light on the snow outside, the stories. I am excited to see what the cups in the library get to experience through their lives and travels, the people they meet, the adventures, the conversations they get to have with borrowers, the reactions borrowers have to their experiences. It is an incredible learning opportunity.”—*Alleghany Meadows, Carbondale, Colorado*

“Being required to produce something creative about the cup in exchange for borrowing it forced me to really consider why I love hand-crafted tableware. . . . It made me feel an even greater connection to the artist, and it reinforced my love for the potter’s craft.”  
 —Trina Ortega



“I have been making functional pottery for over thirty years. During this time I have been engaged in the history of clay, craft, aesthetics, studio process, and the semiotics of vessels. I am particularly interested in the wide range and vigor of objects used in domestic environments. The themes provided by function are familiar: vases, cups, teapots, etc. These functions are shorthand for a longer and, perhaps less obvious, list of concerns which include, in no particular order: interactivity, material, metaphor, formal constitution, social and cultural context, the object’s relationship to fine art, and utility as idea.

“The endless variation on functional forms is fascinating. These objects service our everyday existence; their form celebrates, gives meaning and contributes to our cultural identity. Regardless how familiar, these themes have the potential to enrich our everyday lives, with endless variation. Archeology and history suggest that humanity’s need for functional clay vessels is nothing short of eternal. Our own culture is no exception. However, industry’s’ assumption of manual tasks, and our basic utilitarian needs have refocused the efforts of contemporary artists working in clay.”—Mark Pharis, *River Falls, Wisconsin*

To learn more about Artstream Nomadic Gallery, or to host the Artstream Ceramic Library contact the Artstream at PO Box 781, 73 Rocky Road, Carbondale, CO 81623; [www.art-stream.com](http://www.art-stream.com); [artstreamlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:artstreamlibrary@gmail.com).

## How the Ceramic Library Works

1. Cups are checked out for 1 week. Borrower agrees to return on time or earlier, or be charged \$2 per day late until the cup is returned. Please call or email if the piece will be late, as others may be waiting for the piece.
2. Required exchange for borrowing is an image of the cup in use, emailed to [artstreamlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:artstreamlibrary@gmail.com).
3. Optional exchange for borrowing is a creative reaction, also emailed to [artstreamlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:artstreamlibrary@gmail.com). Can be video, music, writing, painting, ceramic, etc. No limits.
4. Borrower agrees to release to Artstream Library the rights to use the submitted images and creative works for articles, lectures, publications, website, blog, etc. Artstream Library will not sell the images or profit from their use.
5. Breakage. If the borrower breaks the piece, and returns the damaged piece in the catalog box, borrower agrees to pay cost of the cup. Cups range from \$30 to \$90, depending on the artist. If, however, the borrower does not return the cup and the catalog box, borrower must pay \$400. The goal of this project is to have the pieces remain in circulation for years. Theft of the pieces is highly discouraged, thus, the high price for non-return.
6. Recommended use. We highly recommend that borrowers use the cups, research the artists, react creatively to the experience. We also recommend hand-washing and hand-drying, and storing the cup in the box when not in use.