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Anne Meyer '04 exhibits at Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance Gallery

Summary: Wood fired ceramics and ink paintings exhibited at the PRCA reflect artist Anne Meyer's experience at St. John's Pottery and her travels to Japan.

(February 9, 2007)-The Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance (PRCA) in Morris is featuring an art exhibit by University of Minnesota, Morris alumna Anne Meyer through mid-March. Works on display at the PRCA gallery include pottery and paintings created during an internship at St. John's University with noted potter Richard Bresnahan and during recent travels to Japan.

"I was very excited when the board members of the PRCA asked me if I would be interested in doing a solo show, because I hadn't had that opportunity before. I was delighted that my first show would be in Morris," says Meyer, a studio art major and 2004 graduate.

All of Meyer's pottery exhibited is wood fired. The majority of the pots were fired in a friends' kiln outside of Omaha, Nebraska, as recently as January 2007. The show also includes pieces Meyer created in Japan last summer, and pottery that she made at St. John's Pottery last fall, when she helped with the annual firing of the famous Johanna Kiln. The St. John's University kiln is the United States' largest wood-burning kiln. It is named for Sister Johanna Becker who was Bresnahan's mentor.

Five ink paintings are also on display at the PRCA gallery. "I am excited about the ink paintings," shares Meyer. "They are the first two-dimensional pieces I have made since my approach to art has been changed by my apprenticeship at St. John's under Bresnahan."

Bresnahan, Meyer's mentor, is a renowned potter, distinguished for his unique style. After he completed an apprenticeship with Nakazato Takashi Pottery in Japan, where Nakazato's family has produced pottery for 13 generations, his teacher, the son of a National Living Treasure of Japan, named Bresnahan a "master potter" notes the St. John's Website.

Meyer learned of the opportunity for an apprenticeship with Bresnahan from Kevin Flicker '74, UMM ceramic instructor and also a student of Bresnahan. She applied for an apprenticeship, noting that helping with one of Bresnahan's firings was part of the application process for the apprenticeship. Bresnahan believes observing applicants at work at the kiln is a "revealing test of character," shares Meyer.

As an apprentice, Meyer helped with all aspects of the St. John's Pottery studio, from giving tours to groups of people to processing and testing raw materials. She and a fellow apprentice spent evenings working on throwing and painting disciplines as designed by Bresnahan. "Some of the most important things I took away," she notes, "were the discipline and habit of making art daily, the ability to approach natural materials and figure out how to make them work, lessons learned about interpersonal relationships, and learning to be more patient."

While working with Bresnahan, Meyer had the opportunity to meet Koie Ryoji and Goro Suzuki, two of Japan's leading ceramic artists, who also spent time working at St. John's. She was invited to Japan by the two ceramic artists and stayed with the Koie family for a month and one half last summer. In addition to creating a few pots of her own, Meyer helped fire kilns, assisted wherever she was needed, and visited Suzuki's studio. Reflecting on this opportunity, Meyer says: "Ryoji, wife Sono, and son Akira welcomed me like family and are some of the most gracious people I've met. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had these experiences."

Drawing from her own experiences, Meyer describes how UMM students are able to be successful in their endeavors: "The most powerful way that UMM shapes its students and prepares them for opportunities like I have had after leaving is not always the most obvious. It's simply contagiousness—faculty and staff's passion and work ethic caught by their students who follow their example."

Meyer, a working artist, is currently serving as a substitute ceramics teacher at Benilde-St. Margaret's High School in the Twin Cities. The PRCA gallery, where her work is on exhibit, is located at 630 Atlantic Avenue in Morris.

Photo above: Anne Meyer at the opening reception for the PRCA exhibit. Photo credit: Lori Borowski '03.

Photo above: Tea pot by Anne Meyer.

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