

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Joe Molinaro

August 21, 2008

Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz. I'm interviewing Joe Molinaro at his home in Winchester, Kentucky. It is for the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association on, August 21, 2008. Thank you for doing this Joe. We appreciate it.

MOLINARO: You're welcome.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me if you can, in a sentence or two, what it is you do?

MOLINARO: Gosh (laughter). In a sentence or two, huh (laughter)?

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

MOLINARO: Well, I'm a pottered ceramist, and I work primarily in porcelain. And, for years I have kind of been exploring issues that are around vessel making, 'cause my early roots were that of a functional potterer, and I got interested in functional pots...more abstract...and you know how these forms can work as works of art...and beyond utility. And along side of that, I have also taken on the making of these more architectural...I call them house forms, or dwellings, and they are very different on the surface, but at the same time, they're very connected to the porcelain work that I do...which are tea pots and bowls and cups, and things of that nature, which are more sculptural in nature. Now that's much more than one sentence, but that's as much as I can condense it down to.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter. We're scratching the surface here. I understand.

MOLINARO: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now this piece next to you is a tea pot? Is that what it is?

MOLINARO: It is a tea pot, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And tell me how that's functional (laughter). I'm not sure.

MOLINARO: Well, you know, I look at function maybe differently than a lot of people do when they look at pottery, and so far as I look at function, at a lot broader context. For example, you can have a bowl that holds mashed potatoes, but a bowl can hold ideas. It can be more of a spiritual nature. It can hold things that you think about, that are beyond the physicality of the form itself. And, I think that exploring function in a more abstract sense is for me more exciting, even though I love to make functional pots...the only one I do. There was a term, years ago, I read in a book describing the functional, but not quite so

functional, work of potter Lucy Reed, who is deceased, but she was a well known British potter. And, in the book they referred to her pieces as spiritualized functionalism. And, I like that term because I understand it. It has more of a spiritual context. It's more metaphorical and it's referenced to things outside the pot itself. But I think pots are functional. I think that when you look at a piece of pottery and it makes you think of something, makes you feel a certain way, reminds you of an experience, that's a functional attribute that the pot brings. And, it can also nourish you physically through the food that it holds, but maybe more spiritually, or emotionally, or even intellectually, and I'm interested in that as well.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, thank you. Tell me a little bit about your growing up. Were you born in this area? Did you grow up here in Kentucky?

MOLINARO: Well I'm from Northern Indiana, from a large Italian Catholic family. And, my father worked in a brewery, and my mother was a secretary at the University of Notre Dame. And, my parents' goals were to send us all to college...which they did. And, but, I was the one in the family that my parents used to refer to when I was growing up as, oh he's the one that has all the hobbies. And, I was always dragging in pieces of wood in the basement, cutting them up and building things, and drawing on the wall or what have you. Now my family didn't have an art background, per se, so they really didn't plug into that, and say you know we ought to get him some art classes. They just let me hammer away and cut wood. And, to them, he has hobbies. And, it wasn't until I later went to college that I kind of discovered art and ceramics, and the idea that you could make that a career was just amazing to me. And, it was like, are you kidding? Who wouldn't want to do that? So, but growing up it was a very typical middle class family, with me having the most hobbies of all my brothers and sisters.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you get art classes in school?

MOLINARO: No, never. I was on the college preparatory program. I went to private schools all the way through kindergarten...all the way up through high school. And, these private schools were always training you to be academically inclined and to go to college. And, unfortunately...and it really is unfortunate...art wasn't in that curriculum. You had to be in a different program to get art classes, but the program I was in was always preparing you for college. And, I never took one art course. My first art course wasn't until I was in college, believe it or not.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

MOLINARO: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay, so you went to college and you started taking art courses. And how did you land onto doing ceramics?

MOLINARO: Well, when I went to college I wasn't an art major. I started college...I didn't know what I was going to be, actually. You know, I was kind of good at math, so my brother majored in accounting and he was in business, so I thought well maybe I'll do that. And, my other brother, you know, was more into education so I thought I could do that. By the time I settled on something about myself, for a year I was going to major in special education. And so, that was major my major up until half way through my junior year, or towards the end of my junior year, because we were on the quarter system. And so, I was in special education all that time having never taken an art class. And, I quit college about three different times while I was in college. And, I realize now, looking back on it, I quit because I never really knew what I wanted to do. And, the things I had chosen were never things that I felt passionate about. They were just careers, so quitting to hitchhike across the country was more appealing, or quitting to go work in a factory and make some money was more appealing. Sometimes I had to do that to keep in school. But the last time I dropped out of school I was working in a factory. And, I was working alongside in my home town of South Bend, Indiana. And, I was working along side a guy who had just graduated from the University of Notre Dame in History, and he and I worked next to each other. And, he would tell me about the classes he liked the most were his electives, and they were art, and in particular, ceramics. He had taken a ceramic class and learned how to throw on the potter's wheel, and he would describe making pottery and the wheel to me. Now, keep in mind that I always liked working with my hands, so I remember asking him time and time again to describe the process of making a pot, because I was so mesmerized by it. And, I'd say, "Tell me about that again." And he would over and over. And, I finally...when I got enough money to go back to school, I was back at the university. I went to Ball State University for my undergraduate degree, and I was back in special education. But, I went over to the art department and met with the ceramics professor, and asked if I could come by and just try this stuff that I had heard about...on my own in the evenings...not a student, because I wasn't an art major. And they said, "Sure." And, I think at the time, they probably felt like I'd come once or twice and that would be the end of it. But I started going over there in the evenings, and I was spending a lot of time there. I was making friends. I found myself, even at times, every now and then, I would cut classes because I had a pot to trim or something to tend to. And, the breaking point was when one of the ceramic professor's came to me one day and said, "Look, you're here all the time. You're taking up a lot of space in our studio with the stuff that you're making. Either change your major, or find another place to work, because we were not designed to have people use the facilities the way you are." So, I did. I just went and signed up for the first ceramics class and that went fine. Then I went to take the next ceramics class and then they said, "Well you can't take the next level because you're not an art major, you're in education." So, I cleverly thought well I'll just change my major on paper just to be able to get in that class,

because I could always change it back later. So, I did that. I changed my major, so I could be eligible to take the next class. But then, when I went to sign up, they said, "Well that class has a prerequisite. You have to take drawing." So, I thought okay I'll take drawing just so I could take that ceramics class. So, I had to wait a semester. You know, two or three semesters into it, I realized, gee, my major is art! And I've now got a lot of art courses under my belt, and I really liked it. And that's where my friends were at that point so I stuck there.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you got a bachelor's degree in art?

MOLINARO: A bachelor's degree in art, and a master's in fine arts degree in areas of specialty and ceramics.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

MOLINARO: And in between that I did about a year and a half of apprenticeship at a pottery, where that was an important part of my schooling as well, I feel.

WILLIHNGANZ: And where did you decide you wanted to go with this? What did you want to do with it?

MOLINARO: Well it's interesting at the time, one of the first things I learned about as I began to make pottery, especially when I got into my apprenticeship, was I thought I wanted to be a functional potterer, because after all, I was enticed by the working on the wheel, and I really liked pots. I really liked the idea of making handmade pots that you could use in the home. This was back in the early seventies, so you know there was a lot of kind of back to the earth, and that felt right. I'd learned about Berea College and that whole thing down there, and so I thought, you know, if I could learn to be a good potterer, I could go move into the woods and make pots for a living. And so, that my goal, was to make pots. And, I grew up in a large family, and so the using of the pots at meal time, or in the kitchen, and things like that, I understood because my mother would, you know, had pottery that we ate off of, and things like that. I thought how great it would be to eat off your own dishes. So my first inclination was to make pots for everyday use, and that's what drew me in.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

MOLINARO: But, I'm not sure if I answered your question, because I think I got.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, I'm just sort of looking for how people get into these fields, and some people seem to just naturally gravitate toward what they do, and they do it for the rest of their lives.

MOLINARO: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And others of us, me especially, tend to try this, and that doesn't work out. So then, I'll try this and, you know, you keep shifting around until you find something that works, and that works for this period.

MOLINARO: Well within art, I will say this, its Greg right?

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

MOLINARO: And Greg, I will say this: that I came into art because I wanted to learn clay, and you haven't learned it by being an artist, art major, art student. I didn't, if there had been another way to become a potterer that would bypass academia, I may have taken that route because it was only about making pottery. So, I was never one of those students that were trying all the different areas of art to feel where I wanted. I came in knowing I wanted to work in clay, and then I was thrown into the hopper of, okay, you have to take print making and painting, and all of that which was great for me, and really opened me up, and educated me about the bigger world of art. But, none of those areas overtook my love for wanting to do ceramics. They've influenced it at times, but again, when I went into my apprenticeship, I thought, you know, I had finished my undergraduate degree in about a year and a half in ceramics, because I didn't get into it until my junior year. So, when I got my apprenticeship, I thought this is the way to go, because really it's not about academia. It's about learning a craft. But, it was through my apprenticeship I realized that I didn't want to be a functional potterer. I didn't want to make the same thing over and over and over and over and over again. I wanted to be more contemplative, and I think that it was the greater art training that allowed me to see it that way, because before that, all I wanted to do was learn how to be a potterer. But then, by the time I finished my undergraduate degree in art, I went off to do an apprenticeship, and I wasn't satisfied just making pots. I wanted to explore them visually more, and again I think some of the training I had outside of ceramics kind of bolstered that way of looking at it, and so from there I decided graduate school would be important for me.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you did graduate school, and then where did you go from there?

MOLINARO: Well, from there, after I finished graduate school, I initially started applying for jobs. And, at that time, you know, like no experience, right out of school. There really a chance of getting a decent job, or a job at all, was pretty slim. I remember getting rejection letters of being 1 of over 100 applicants. And, at that time, I had gotten married, and we had our daughter, and she was just two years old by then. And my wife, who had gotten her undergraduate degree in art as well, decided she wanted to not continue on in art, and thought maybe she would continue on in something else. But, we were young, and

probably foolish at the time, but we decided if we're going to be unemployed right now, had difficulty getting a job, let's be unemployed someplace where we want to be. So we sold everything we had and moved to London, England. And we lived there for a while...long enough to, you know, financially. I was working kind of illegally, but you can only do that so long. And, we ended up moving back to the States. And then, my wife went to graduate school in library science and started off on her career. So, after graduate school there was probably a good two to three years where I was painting houses, trying to make pots, sign up for community college. We were living in California coming back from England. And, I signed up for a class in one of the community colleges, just to be able to come in and make work, which I would do in the evening, and paint houses during the day, or do odd jobs. And then finally, she got into graduate school. We moved, and did that, and then I got my first teaching job in Florida.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you were teaching where doing?

MOLINARO: That was in Briar Community College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. And moved down there and I taught there for eight years. And from there we came to Kentucky.

WILLIHNGANZ: What were you teaching down there?

MOLINARO: Ceramics. Ceramics in 3D design in art appreciation. But initially, it was a combination of those courses that I was hired to kind of develop their ceramics program. So, by the time I left, it was a little bit of art appreciation and mostly ceramics, because it had developed and grown.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm looking at this pot of yours. I'm thinking to myself, this is an interesting 3D design...has a number of different elements in it. Can you tell me a little bit about this pot, and what went into its design?

MOLINARO: Well, the teapot is a form that has always captivated me as it has many potters. The teapot form in and of itself, I think, offers great challenges sculpturally, because you have these parts. You have a handle, spout, body, and all that. It needs to come together visually to work, so as an artist, you can explore the form sculpturally, or you can just make it functionally. Obviously the best functional tea pots are also sculptural in nature, as well. For me, I have always been interested in body decoration. And so, that really opens the door for this kind of textural surfaces. This is porcelain, and this is unglazed, and the kind of scarification the way in which surfaces affected whether it's through tattooing or scarring, or what have you body decoration. Black and white kind of came to me as a palate after I moved to Kentucky from Florida, because in Florida the bright sun, the bright light. I developed a lot of places that really had a lot of color appeal to them. But, I discovered that a lot of people love pieces because they love the color of blue it was, or the color of green it was, and maybe being a little bit more of a purist I really wanted that form to kind of

resonate. So I made a conscious attempt to kind of bring it down to a more minimal way of looking at it through color, and that's black and white. And, I like that because it really allows you to juxtapose different elements of the pot. For example, you have the spout and the handle, juxtaposed against the whiteness of the body. And so, I like that kind of clarity it brings to it. This piece here has been hand built and thrown, and extruded. So, the handle I extruded, constructed...and then this body is all constructed with slab. The handle is thrown with the potter's wheel. So it really offers me a way of working in a lot of different techniques within clay in one piece, and I enjoy that.

WILLIHNGANZ: I don't mean to be naïve, but why exactly do we call it throwing a pot?

MOLINARO: Well, because you take a ball of clay and throw it onto the wheel.

WILLIHNGANZ: But that's the least of it.

MOLINARO: Yeah, it is.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's just like a second. From there on it's all shaping and holding and stretching.

MOLINARO: Yeah, well, some people call it turning.

WILLIHNGANZ: Stretching, turning the pot is more appropriate to me.

MOLINARO: A lot of your older potters...folk potters. There is even a book called Turners and Burners, and you know throwers and firers. So, but, throwing is probably the more common term that's used.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, hum. I noticed this...what is this at the end...there is that the?

MOLINARO: This here?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

MOLINARO: That's the lid. Again, it's not about function but in referencing the parts. We all know if I say to you, what is a teapot? You could probably sketch something in your mind immediately.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure, right.

MOLINARO: So I'm referencing all those. This is a handle.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

MOLINARO: And, this is the spout. And the stopper would be, you know, where you would pour the water. But again I'm not restricting myself to how well the water poured in that, because I have no intentions of ever doing that. I want the teapot in this case to suggest things outside the functionality of the pot itself. And, you might look at it, and perhaps your experiences might cause you to imagine or recollect a certain way of looking at it, or seeing something, or an experience you had, and it's a trigger. In the same way, you may look at a Jasper Johns painting of the American flag. And, it's green and black or something like that. You know, we can be critical, and say that's not the color of the flag, but that's also not the point of the painting. And, that would make it hard to pour water in there. But, I don't know why you would want to, because that's not the intent of the piece. And for me, and I talk about this a lot with my students, that, you know. What is the intent? If the intent is to pour liquid out of it and use it as a tea pot, I've really missed the mark here.

WILLIHNGANZ: (Laughter).

MOLINARO: But if the intent is to take you some place else, using this as the yellow brick road to that, then perhaps there's some truth there.

WILLIHNGANZ: What about the white piece that's coming out of the end of the spout? Is that just?

MOLINARO: Well, and for me, this part here is an extension of what you see down here. And, it is almost like this is an evolving form, and it's growing like a shoot from a bamboo, for example. It comes out here, and as this grows up, this black falls behind it. So, if this were really a living organism, in maybe a year's time, this thing might be out to here, and this would all be black, and the varying would always be that. That's your sprout, and that's new life, and that's, you know, when something is growing, and you see a sprout come out. You never really know where it's going to end up. Is it going to survive? Where is it going to go? How does it become a major player in the plant? Those are the mysteries of the unknown, so this is referencing that in a more metaphoric way.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

MOLINARO: And again, I'm deliberately being very abstract in my thinking about it, because I can make functional teapots Greg, but a lot of people make functional teapots, and they work really well. And, when I need a functional teapot if my wife asks me for one, I make one for her, or if I have a friend that makes a teapot that I admire, I might get one from them. But, this is what I'm making that isn't as ordinary, and so I'm always I see it more of an exploration. And, I want to, maybe in some way, be an explorer within the realm of functional pots, where I'm exploring the new horizon. And, I would suggest,

that if I were forced to be a designer only, I could take this and through a process of modification and illumination, and a lot of different things, could convert that into a very functional form. What would the changes be? I don't know, but they haven't done that. So I'm only suggesting the abstraction of a form, and I think good designers in industry, that are making functional work, that you and I might use, that's really strong...like designed...probably had in its more embryonic stages of development pieces that weren't much different than this. They were almost ridiculous. You could never work, but then the idea is how do you make it work? So, in my classes where I teach at Eastern, I sometimes will give students a challenge to make a functional pot. But, the criteria is not the functionality of it, but the abstraction of the form. And, draw from your painting classes, and your printmaking classes, and your sculpture classes. It could be bizarre because I'm not going to grade you on how well it works. I just want the pot to be the reference, and once you do that, then the next part of the project is okay. Now, what modifications do you have to bring to that, to bring it back into the world of function? And, sometimes they end up with some really dynamite designs of functional pieces, but they give themselves the liberty to step outside of function to see the form.

WILLIHNGANZ: What about these scalloped bases?

MOLINARO: This here?

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh hum.

MOLINARO: Well, I refer that as the skirt on the piece, and it floats a little bit. You see the little space underneath.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

MOLINARO: And part of it is to just try to give some attention and importance to a part of the pot that I think sits quietly in the back, while there is other form. Most pieces of pottery, how they sit on the table, is where people forget. And, I think that the relationship of the platform that it sits on is part of the piece. And, that's why when you put things on a pedestal, the pedestal is not just a platform to sit it on. But, how does it relate to that pedestal? That's part of the piece. And so, this is a way of trying to activate what otherwise would be somewhat of a static bottom. And, when it sits flat on the table, sometimes they look like they're glued onto the table. So I want to lift it up, create some space underneath, and do something down there that lets you know I was there, visually and intellectually. And, this kind of design, in and of itself, then, is repeated in that spot itself.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, that's interesting. I was out at a friend's house in Seattle a couple of weeks ago, and my friend collects the pottery of Mono Ortiz.

MOLINARO: Uh, hum, sure. I know it well.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Well, they do something kind of interesting, because they make mostly rounded pots.

MOLINARO: Sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: And then, they make a ring out of clay which they then cook, bake, and then they wrap it in very fine thread so that the pots can sit on it without getting scratched or hurt.

MOLINARO: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Plus it allows you to turn them at angles as you display them, which is really nice. I thought a very thoughtful way to deal with that bottom problem.

MOLINARO: Well, it is. And, it brings something to the pot that, I mean, if it just sat on the table, you know it can be eliminating and necessarily bad, but you know it's just part of the exploration of the form.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Tell us a little bit about some of your other pieces here.

MOLINARO: Well, the other ones you're looking at there, as I mentioned from the onset, that they are quite a bit different in many ways. You know they aren't porcelain. Actually, this one is, but the other one isn't. And, they are in the same way that this is referencing the pot, those are referencing dwellings.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about that piece because I'm really interested in the center.

MOLINARO: This one in particular?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

MOLINARO: Well, this one here is probably the closest connected to the pottery that I make, because the spikes are something that you would see up here as visual elements, on whether it's cups I'm making, bowls or teapots. Putting the pot on the top is a deliberate attempt to really do two things. One is I've spent a lot of time traveling in Central and South America...and the pyramids. Often times the Mayan Aztec Incan Ruins that I've studied, they have these roof cones on the tops of them which I find extremely fascinating. So that's where the one on the far left...you see those roof cones on there, and that's exactly what they are, roof cones. But in this piece in particular, it's a bowl, because I've taken the liberty of making the roof cone a pot, and it's almost

sacrificial in a way. It's almost a way of presenting the pot, and it has a bit of a religious...isn't the right word...spiritual might be a better overtone to it. And, what I mean is, when you think of a chalice for example...I mentioned earlier that I was raised in a large Italian Catholic family, and so my upbringing kind of filters through the work, and I'm not ever deliberately trained to make religious work. That's not what it's about, but I can't help but deny that some of my thinking in my work has been influenced by that upbringing of, you know, being an altar boy, and having a brother who's a priest, and spending time in a Catholic church. And, as a kid, being part of processions through the church, and growing up in that kind of private school system, and how it really influences a lot of the way you look at the world. And so, these house forms are I think dwellings, and sometimes they almost come off as church-like. And, the ones that are behind you, where you are sitting, have these roof cones that almost begin to take on a cross type structure on the very top of them. And so, they're kind of not trying to be crucifixes but they certainly suggest that. I've had people suggest they're almost like the Star over Bethlehem sort of thing, and that's very deliberate. In the openings of these pieces are very small, and that's very utensil as well. Because, in studying the pyramids of Central and South America, and thinking of mining pyramids for example, these mammoth structures with these really tiny little openings. This idea that, you know, this monumentality on the outside, but what's inside is a mystery. You really can't get to it because you can almost not get in. The openings are so small...creates just a fascinating mystery, and it requires you to bring information to those pieces. And, that's what I hope happens there...is when you're looking at these pieces, you kind of wonder where those openings are taking you, but you can't really enter there. You can't really see into them very well.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's right. They're small little slits.

MOLINARO: Yeah. And, you know, sometimes when I'm driving through these subdivisions in Lexington, I'm always amazed, you know, you see all these houses that look alike, one after another, and I find myself wondering, "What are the dramas that are being played out as I'm driving down the street? It's different inside each house". Yet, as you drive down the street, everything looks the same. There is a certain sameness to it, but the interiors are really where the mysteries lie. And so, I want to create these dwellings that really speak to that interior mystery that we have, whether it's thoughts we have in our head, or things we hold in our heart. Yet, by and large, we all look the same. I mean, there is very much in difference in the way we look. But, what you see in when you meet somebody isn't always what you get. And it takes an effort to get to know them...to understand kind of what stirs their soul, or where their mind is. And, I think these pieces...I want it to be more about what you see is what you get...that you have to put some work into it. And in doing so, you can discover something about the piece, and perhaps something about yourself. So, I really like that sense of mystery to the piece. And, I think even in the pots that I make it's often about the mystery. I mean, what is it about a teapot beyond the

functionality of a teapot? And, I think there's more to it than meets the eye. There's a wonderful quote out there. I think it's by John Cage. He says, "It takes as much work to appreciate art as it does to make art." And, I think the average person tends to be a little bit on the lazy side when it comes to art. We want to look at art like we're watching T.V. Entertain me, and if you don't do it, I'm going to click it and go to the next channel, or go to the next piece. You watch people in museums and they go through it like their flipping through their channels. But, the best art is the art that you come back to when you do a little work, and you're giving it a second chance, and you're trying it out again at a different time of day, or a different time of your life, and you discover that it resonates with you. Whereas, maybe the first time it didn't...because you took the time to revisit it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, let me see here. Well, we talked a little bit about the role that functions play in your work, the functions of objects. Does your work contain any sort of message about gender, or race, or social status, spirituality, or environment?

MOLINARO: Well I think I touched on it a little bit so far. I don't really try to make work that is a billboard. That is telling you this or telling you that. I would much rather the work existed more quietly in the backwaters of art, and let it quietly creep up on you. And, I want work that adds a certain element of intrigue, beauty, thought-provoking; because you've allowed yourself to challenge it and be challenged by it. The connections back to the origins of pottery being functional pottery, in this case, something worth contemplating. The message in my work I am not trying to claim being profound. I'm not trying to make masterpieces. I'm just trying to make objects that are...I'm drawn in by, I'm challenged by. And, I think are worth sharing with somebody else and maybe they're not for everybody, but I don't see it as a one size fits all. The message or the content behind it can be very personal, based on what kind of work again you want to bring to it. But, if I wanted to answer the question of what's the overarching message to the work? I would probably come up with something along the lines of something that reminds you of the history of clay, of pottery forms in the role they play in our lives, and the way in which clay touches us in so many ways. And the architectural forms...we look around, and buildings are made of clay bricks, you know, and so what's that about, you know? And you look at the history of architecture. And, whether it's Mayan Ruins, or whether it's gaudy architecture, you know clay tends to find its way into that way of looking at objects. So really, it's a way of looking at the past, but, at the same time, being curious about the future.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, clay has to be the oldest of functional materials for us in some ways.

MOLINARO: Sure it is. And, I think that's what's really triggered by thinking in my work...even outside of the work. I spend a lot of time, and have for about the last, probably closing in of twenty years now, studying indigenous

pottery of third world cultures, in the last fifteen, sixteen years, primarily in the Amazon of South America. So, you know, I've been writing about it, and producing videos, and traveling down there every year, and spending anywhere from two weeks to six months at a time studying the pottery of the Ecuadorian Amazon indigenous people. And, what really attracts me with any of this pursuit... in the early days it was traveling through Mexico, and the Caribbean, and places like that. I kind of kept working my way south, and ended up in the Amazon. And, I've been stuck there ever since, in a good way. But, what's drawn me to those people, the indigenous people of the world that still make traditional pottery forms for everyday life, is the idea that I'm not trying to study why or how they make the pieces they do, even though that's part of it, because technique is always intriguing. But, I'm not studying it so I can make their work. I'm studying it to understand why they do what they do. Why is it that generation upon generation, this information is passed on from mother to daughter, or father to son, and the tradition is maintained, and they share a certain cultural ethos where they don't own the images they make, or they paint onto the pots? There is a collective consciousness that they share, and it's always wonderful to watch a woman decorating a fine pot from the Amazon, and doing an abstraction of a bowl on the surface, and the child needs to be nursed. And she passes the pot over to the lady next to her to continue painting it while she nurses her child. And, then gets the pot back in ten minutes. And I'm always intrigued by that, because I always wonder, would a painter half way through a painting go and tend to something and let another painter come in and finish it? No, because our ego is wrapped up in the work, and yet these people do not. It's the void of the ego because nobody owns that image. They own it as a community of people. They share it and so they can work on each others work and feel satisfied. So, when you say the connection of my work, I want it to be connected back to the roots of pottery-making, because at the end of the day, where I got to (unintelligible) this, I'm just borrowing and appropriating material, forms and images. And, I'm trying to juxtapose these things in a way that maybe speaks of me, but doesn't ignore those from which I have borrowed this information from.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow! I'm looking at this pot and I'm thinking, you know, this tea pot that you've made is striking. I can see that going very quickly into a gift shop and somebody snapping that up, because it's really unique, and really interesting, and has a lot of aspects to it. I look at this house and I think to myself, this is a little odder for me, or maybe it's just my lack of education, but how did you get attracted to making houses?

MOLINARO: Well, you know, it's funny though, because I started making houses when I moved to Kentucky. I hadn't made any until I came here. And, this is only about twenty years now. And, it was probably my second or third year...well, my second year in Kentucky. And, when we moved from Florida I had been traveling Central America, and had started traveling a little bit in South America, and was smitten by the pyramids. So, that was the first paying of attention to these forms. Then, at the same time, living in Florida and seeing

these developments pop up all over, and they were just like cookie-cutter houses. And I would think about that, think about the pyramid and the Mayan pyramid of Chicanes and think, you know, how unique that is, and yet were so standardized here. And then, we bought our first home when I was living down there, and then the next thing you know we're living in Kentucky, and we still owned a home in Florida. We couldn't buy a house here, because we didn't have the money, because we still owned that house in Florida. So, we were renting, and it felt really weird. I mean I was climbing pyramids regularly, interested in these architectural forms. I had been working in an area of south Florida, Fort Lauderdale, where there was a lot of development...watching subdivisions spring up around me right and left. So, architecture was present. And then, here I was in Kentucky without a home. I was renting, but I was without a home. Me, and my wife and daughter and I started making these house forms. And, it was rather innocent because I didn't set out to do anything profound or say anything by it. I just, I don't know, I just started constructing these structures that was, kind of...I was leaning on some of my own experiences, and things I was looking at, and wanting to own a home again, and not able to afford one. It's not that I started doing this because I wanted something to live in. It was, I can't really answer the question, other than that was the moment in time that it happened. And, when I started doing that I was at the time thinking more of the Mayan pyramids, the Ruins and the Yucatan, and thinking in terms of massed development in subdivisions. And, I have a certain feeling about that. That's not really the thing for us, and I'm concerned about it. Even around here, you know, in Lexington, the way development is beginning to eat up some beautiful farmland. What are we left with? We're left with a lot of structures that just look alike, but what do they say about the people? And again, back to that, but there are these drums inside, and so I don't know. I mean, they just kind of spring up on their own. There really wasn't an intentional trying to make a statement. I think because I was in a new place I could do something new. I took advantage of that.

WILLIHNGANZ: How many years have you been making them?

MOLINARO: Now it's been fifteen years.

WILLIHNGANZ: How many have you made?

MOLINARO: Well, they've changed over the years drastically. I mean, when I say I made the first one fifteen plus years ago. They didn't look anything like these. So how many I made? Oh gosh! Over a hundred probably, you know, a lot.

WILLIHNGANZ: What did the original ones look like?

MOLINARO: Oh, they were pretty crude. They were like these big boxes that looked like houses. They were more literal like houses. But quickly I

plugged into some things that were appealing to me visually, the intimacy of that space or the accessibility of it, and the roof column idea, and how it references the idea of a church, and something more of a spiritual event. And, a lot of them had surfaces on there where they were kind of depicting that interest I have in a lot of the adornment skin decoration. And, some of them I put metal on, where these here might have been nails stuck into the side of them...actual nails. Then, some of them...I was welding bases onto them...steel bases, where the house sat eye level. And, it was a long rebar base. And, I was at the time kind of reflecting a little bit of my interest, when sculptures (unintelligible) how their long and stretched out, very linear, the same way that house on that window is. It's long and compressed. So, they, you know, and I wanted people to walk up in a show, and when you walked into the gallery, this opening was almost eye level. So, that's why they have this steel rebar feet to them, running all the way down the floor. So, when you walked in you couldn't help look in there, but you really couldn't get in there. You really couldn't look in there very well, so I was like baiting you. That well, looks like you shouldn't be able to see in there. It's at the right eye level but you can't really see anything when you get there. And, eventually the bases disappeared, and, you know, they still are going through changes. That piece behind you with the dozens of small houses, house forms...none of them have little openings, and that's actually a whole one piece. And, it's meant to be displayed on a wall, much like these are where, you know, individual houses, thinking more in terms of community, or village, thinking of that in that way.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Is your work more about materials and technique? Does your work reflect it in your joy, or sensual, or response to the material?

MOLINARO: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: Not really?

MOLINARO: No. I love working with clay, so I guess I could say it reflects my joy of working in a material...sure. And I want the pieces to be more contemplative. That's the functionality that I want to bring to them, that they give you pause for thought, and take you someplace else. So, I guess there's a lot of yeses to your question. But, my quick answer of no is deliberate, because everything I'm talking about Greg, are things that are important to me in my work. I'm not requiring, or asking, or mandating, that they be important to you. I want them to be intriguing pieces, where people are drawn into them, because as a good work of art, it's designed well, crafted well. Maybe the colors are what you want, maybe the surfaces appeal to you. But the content beyond that is my own, and if somebody understands it, great! But it's not a requirement. I look at a lot of art work in museums around the world, where I may never know what the artist intended, but yet it resonates and the fact that it resonates is more important than whether I get it or not. Now, I may find later, reading about an artist, or hearing

an artist talk, and they say something, and I go ah-ha...that's what I thought when I saw it. I'll never forget that looking, I've always been influenced by the sculpture of Brent Koozy. And, you know, he did a cup once that is about, I don't know how many feet across, and how many feet high, of solid wood. And, it's just this big massive piece of wood with this solid handle on it. You could never use this thing. I mean it's this big. You know, it's huge, but it's a timeless cup. And, when I saw that I knew immediately what it was about. It wasn't about using a cup. It was a cup about cups. It was like making pots that are about pots. And I didn't even know the title of it when I first saw it, but when I saw it, I thought to myself "Cup" and so when I saw the title I thought how honest that he understood that a cup can be more than the thing you hold in your hand, or put to your lips, and what makes a cup a cup. It was real intriguing to me that he understood that. He called it "Cup," but it was this tall, this big, and it would take a forklift to move, but it was still called "Cup." So you know, what does it mean to say it's a bowl? What does it mean to say it's a flag, in Jasper Johns' case? I think, you know, being able to expand the way in which we see things is much more interesting to me than having it all neatly tied up into it's this and it can't be anything outside of that, but I think it can.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about your work in process? How do you start from conception to finished product? What are the steps into that?

MOLINARO: Well, that's a tough one, because I never really know what that is. When I'm working, a lot of times, I will make parts. And, I mentioned earlier about being an explorer. I think I like to work in my studio as though I'm on an exploration. I'm looking for the end point, but there's no map to get me there. I've got to discover it. And to me, working as an artist is all about discovery, because if I'm starting to make something, and I know the end point already, I find that less engaging. And a lot of times I do that because if my wife asks me to make a teapot because she just broke ours, I know what the end point is, and that's to be a functional teapot that she can use...and that's okay. But, I prefer to work on pieces where that's something to be discovered. It's like this: if I get into my car and drive to Lexington, and if I get onto the Interstate and see something, and I get off the Interstate, no longer am I going to Lexington, I'm on a diversion. So, I'm really off target, because I'm supposed to be going in that direction and now I'm not. But, if I get in my car and just go for a drive, and I don't care where I end up, the whole process of the drive is to discover things along the way, and see what's out there...doesn't matter how long it takes to get there. I like to tell people you're never lost, just alone, and I like to work in the studio that way. And, when I'm doing house pieces for example, I will roll out a lot of slabs of clay, and then I usually have a general size I want to work in or multiples if I'm making one piece, or if I'm doing a multiple of pieces. But, how they end up is kind of discovered enroute. But, I do know I'm making houses, so I'm rolling out slabs. I do know I'm making a teapot so I'm making the parts for it. But, for these teapots, for example, when I make the spouts I might make a dozen of them, and I might work on many tea pots at the same time. And, I

might put a tea pot spout on one that triggers the thought about what if I had done this. So, the next one I try that, and maybe it works and maybe it doesn't. And I might throw in a dozen of these doughnuts, and I might have several of the bodies, and I start juxtaposing these parts next to each other, and I'm looking for something that I don't really know what it is yet. And then, when a little bit of information comes to me, then I run with that and let that kind of steer me into the next decision. And sometimes, I end up way off course doing things that I never intended to do, and at that point, a lot of times, I feel like, well I'm sketching now. I'm just sketching out some ideas to see where they will take me. And, depending on where I end up, I might end up in a place where I then consciously pursue an idea, because I'm onto something here that's curious to me, and I want to see where it goes.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you were talking a little bit about technology.

MOLINARO: Technology, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And how it impacted your work.

MOLINARO: Well, it's impacted my work. I'm not sure if its impacted the physicality of the work. And, what I mean by that is, where it's impacted at makes it easier to fire kilns, for example, because now they're computerized. The Internet, you know, the way in which technology has brought us to have all this have-a-world at our doorstep sort of thing, so you have the ability to reference things quicker. You know, back it's been, like fifteen years almost, about thirteen or fourteen years ago, I started a list of called "Clay Art", and at the time, you know, I just thought, well, there wasn't anything. There was no group out there you could subscribe to, and talk to other people in ceramics, so I thought, well, I'll start one myself. If I get a couple of dozen people on it, that would be great, because, you know, living in Florida, you know, there was a lot of people around all the time that moved to Kentucky...more rural, and felt a little bit more cut off to the greater clay community. So, you know, when e-mail came about, we all got our first e-mail addresses. And, I quickly started looking at these user groups out there that were on art, architecture, and everything. And, I tried to ask questions about ceramics, and nobody wanted to talk about it, because we're talking about art. So I thought, well, screw it! I'll just start my own. And, I called it "Clay Art". And again, I thought, you know, if I get a couple of dozen people on this list, I'll be happy. Well, you know, within five years I had well over three thousand people from thirty different countries. And, of course, that was a time when people were really jumping onto the e-mail band wagon. And, all these list of groups were being started, so I just happened to be at the right place at the right time, and it's still in existence today. I ended up passing it onto one of the major ceramic magazines, and they run it now, and it's gotten even bigger. But, so technology really influenced me there, because all of a sudden I was electronically connected to people in Japan, or England, or Tennessee, you know, and so the ceramic world all of a sudden existed in my

own house, so questions could be asked. At that time I was just starting to go down to the Amazon of Ecuador, and so I could write reports about these things I was experiencing down there, to audiences that were around the world, and people were asking questions about it, so I started writing about it. And, you know, so it kind of ushered me down that path as well. And, I have always enjoyed writing, so that's something that I've pursued alongside of my work, and still do today. As a matter of fact, I'm working on another book on pottery in the Ecuadorian Amazon, but a lot of that started with clay art, and that was the early days of being connected to kind of a global community of ceramics. And, it's a long shot from when I first got into ceramics. I thought man, if only I could make pots in the potter's wheel, and buy some land in the country. So, it's kind of opposite, but in many ways, it's still the same, because it's still about community and it's still about clay, it's still about tradition. And, my interest in indigenous potteries' of the world is because I've been able to be exposed to that, through not just books, but through the internet and e-mail and stuff like that. I've met people on line, and shared images, and learned about them and their countries, and so, I think technology has influenced. And, there is a lot of potters' influenced by technology, because, you know, there are glazed programs, and I have those, and I don't use them very often.

WILLIHNGANZ: What does that mean?

MOLINARO: One of my best friends has written a very popular program that ceramists can use to develop (unintelligible), where you type in parameters into the computer, and it formulates different things, and gives you that. So, technology has been extremely helpful for that. If I'm having trouble with a glaze, I can type in my recipe, and I can troubleshoot it that way, instead of having to mix it, and fire it, and try this, mix it, fire it, and try this.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow!

MOLINARO: I can circumvent a lot of that, so technology has been great there. So it has influenced, but at the same time, I never claimed that it's a driving force. I think it's just a tool, because I'm more influenced by tradition and the indigenous work that's being produced still today.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you use any types of technological tools? Neil Di Teresa's was showing me how he does paintings. And, he has a photograph that he likes of a woodland scene, and he puts it in the photo shop, throws it up on the screen. And then, takes another picture of a person standing, and he wants to put this person standing in there, and he doesn't like the size of the person, so he shrinks the size. When he gets this done, he makes a copy of that, and then he paints from that to recreate what he's done on the computer.

MOLINARO: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: You do any kind of design thing like that?

MOLINARO: No, I don't. I don't, and that's an interesting concept. And, I've thought about that at times, about, for example, teapots. I could go through a multitude of designs just by using photo shop, in cutting and pasting different spout combinations, and things like that. But, I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in discovering that spout combination, because I've got ten spouts I've made, and their all different. And, I've got all these different bodies, and I'm trying one against the other, and this one's suggesting this one. It's kind of a dance I do with the pieces themselves, because I like working with the material more than I like working taking these parts, and putting them on cut and paste on the computer screen. It's not to say it's a bad thing to do, but I think for me, anyway, something is lost when you know I'm touching this and feeling it, it opens a door to...I've got somewhere I've put textures on, just the spot here where that's smooth, and I could probably do that on a computer. But, I would rather do that than reel. Sometimes I'll make a dozen spouts, and I'll find myself, you know, carving into the spouts, or putting slip on, or doing different things. And, I never put them on a teapot, because all I'm doing is, I'm looking at the relationship of this surface on this zigzag form. And, I might stumble across something that really isn't appealing to me. Then, I take that and reconstruct it, and put it on a teapot. So, I really like that kind of playing around with the material, and the forms, and the reel. I could probably, and maybe I should, do some of it online with my computer photo shop, but I feel like I spend enough time at the computer now with my job, my writing, and other things, that I don't want to then give the computer that much more control of my life as it relates to my work, because a lot of times when I'm writing or doing things on the computer, I do a lot of that. I deliberately will stop and go to my studio to work, so I can juxtapose that activity to this activity. And, if I try to see how close I can bring them together, I think both of them would suffer from me anyway, they would. It's not to say I might come up with some great designs, but, you know, maybe I don't come up with many great designs, but the ones I come up with I can't keep up with as it is.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

MOLINARO: So, I'm not going to worry about it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where do you exhibit your work?

MOLINARO: Well, I exhibit it through exhibitions pretty regularly, and tend to have work coming and going pretty regularly, through juried or invited shows, and those are a myriad of places. Most recently, Saint Louis over at Morehead...just different places, you know. Wherever there are shows, you know, I'll enter or be invited. And, I've got some shows coming up. There are a couple of galleries that I've kind of been in and out of...Blue Spiral in Nashville, the North Carolinas...carried my work off and on places like that. And, I've been

in galleries in Lexington, or the Kentucky Art Craft Museum in Louisville has showed my work quite a bit. And you, know, I've reached a point where I don't worry about, oh gosh, I've only had this many shows, or that many shows, because it seems like when I've looked back on the last five or ten years, I still show about the same whether I'm working in it or not. Some years I get invited to more, and some years there are shows I'm interested in pursuing. But, it always tends to work out. And, I know that, because with my job at the university, we have to file these reports at the end of the year. And, one of them is, you know, how much are you showing your work for the artists? That is, and so, most of us on faculty are worried, cognizant of the fact that we have to be out there doing that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is this a "publish or perish" situation?

MOLINARO: Yeah, kind of. And, of course, I write a lot, too. So, I've got that to (unintelligible). But, years ago, I just decided that it will take care of itself. Because, as long as I'm active in the studio and active in my field, I just have the confidence that the work will be shown, and it does, and it seems to work out that way, that I tend to show about, you know, six to ten really good shows a year. And, if I try real hard, I'm in six to ten good shows a year. And, if I don't, I'm in six to ten good shows a year. So, I just, you know...I guess maybe I've been doing it long enough, that there's enough that trickles my way, and one's that I choose to pursue. I, you know, good batting average, so I can rely on that without having to get. I watch the young faculty come on, you know. They're just so hell bent on making sure they sustain that record. But, you know, thirty years later, it's more about doing the work and just staying involved. The record kind of follows you.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you ever do commission work at all?

MOLINARO: No. I really don't. Now, it's not to say that I have done work, for example, one year. It's going back a few years. The Art and Craft Museum contacted me, because there was a couple of big collectors, I think. They're going into the collection. It was something to do with Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby. Somebody was buying for them for something that they had done. And, they saw my work there. And, so they commissioned me. They wanted to buy two teapots, one for each of them. And, but, they didn't tell me what they had to look like. They saw my teapots in an exhibition, and we would like to buy two of your teapots. But, I got to make them, and there wasn't, like, we would like a black and white one, and they didn't get into that. So, that's kind of the level. If you come to me and give me commission work, I'll probably say okay. And, you'll probably be calling me for three years saying, "Where is it?" Well, I haven't done it yet, because I'm not real good at doing that, and wife will attest to that. She's still waiting for canister sets.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

MOLINARO: I really don't do commissions per say.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Have you exhibited at fairs?

MOLINARO: Years and years and years ago.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah.

MOLINARO: I haven't in many, many years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I wouldn't expect you to have much time between your teachings.

MOLINARO: No. And, that's not really the venue for my work. I think it's important for artists to know who their audience is, and my work needs to be displayed more on a pedestal with proper lying. It looks better in a gallery. And, if you buy it, you're going to put it in your home, because you're kind of into collecting this kind of stuff, and you have a place for it. The gallery and the art fair setting, doesn't really afford me that setting, nor that clientele. It's not to say that the people that would be there wouldn't appreciate my work, but those people would be better off to find it in more of a formal gallery setting.

WILLIHNGANZ: If you were to quit teaching altogether, quit writing, and just do pottery day and night, would you be happy?

MOLINARO: Probably not. I would like to do more of that, though, and I just built my studio here at home this last year, and just built a kiln. And, I happen just to get ready to fire it for the first time, so it's all new for me working here. I have been working at the university, and part of that is an effort to spend more time on my work, because it's really hard for me to spend that kind of quality time at the university in my studio there, because there are so many distractions that are waiting for you. There are distractions here, but they're of a different nature, so you know I've been teaching long enough where, you know, I'm looking down the road. There is going to be retirement coming my way, and stuff like that, and so what I really want to do is stay involved in my work, and be involved in a more independent level where, when that day comes, I will be able to continue my work even after I'm done teaching. So my work is very important. And, I'm trying to pay more attention to it on that level. But, to quit teaching and to quit writing, and just do my work, even when I quit teaching, I will still be traveling and writing hopefully. And, at that point is when I might be more interested in doing workshops. And that, because that will fulfill this yearning to get in front of a group of people and talk about your work, and share what it is you do. Even if it is a simple technique, just to be able to share it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, hum. What recognition have you gotten for your work?

MOLINARO: Well. Over the years, going back to when I was in Florida, I did get a state fellowship when I taught in Florida, one or two down there, I can't remember. And here, I've gotten two Al Smith Awards, and did receive the Rude Osolnik Award, which was a great honor. And, I've gotten a couple of Fulbright Awards academically, for my research. And, I've produced some video documentaries of pottery in the Amazon, and done quite a bit of writing for publications, and wrote the book on Kentucky Pottery. Those are all part of awards in and of themselves, a number of awards and shows that I've been in over the years, and been in some pretty good collections along the way, so. None of these are things that you really pursue, they are products of what you're doing, and how you're doing it, I think. And, you know, luckily in Kentucky, we're surrounded by good artists and good craftsman. And so, to win an award here is really an honor, because you're in really good company. Because, you know, that they had so many people to pick from, and it was really nice. And, most recently, I won an award at the university where I teach, Eastern Kentucky University. It's called the Warrick Award, and it was an award acknowledging my research in South America. And, they only give one of those a year to faculty. So that was a big honor. That was, for me, at the university, like the Rude Osolnik was for the visual arts. So, I'm happy in that regard, and the Fulbright's were a great honor in that. But, you know, I always think that if you do what you love, you will always love what you do, so it's just an easy thing to kind of stay plugged into what brought you there in the first place. And, what brought me to working in clay was that fascination with this material, that could start so soft, and then so hard, and in between that help you put a little bit of who you are in it. And, I'm still trying to do that, whether it's a bowl I'm making to put on the kitchen table of my home, or a sculptural form in a gallery, is to somehow what little bit of your legacy is left there. Because one thing I learned very early on, that good pots and bad pots live the same life, and that's more than you. So the requirement that's for you to really just preserve and cherish the good, and have the courage to eliminate the bad, because twenty years from now or even after we're all gone, the bad work is still there representing you. So, you really want the good work out there because when you're gone, it's still going to be speaking of who you were when you were here. So hopefully, that because it's a material that, you know, if there's an earthquake, or a fire or flood or what have you, these damned pots seem to survive better than we do.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

MOLINARO: It might break, we glue them back together, but they're pretty tough stuff, you know. Unlike a painting that, you know, water damage and boom, where are you? And, that's why pots are the oldest of the arts. And, that's why we learn about past civilization, and past people through the pottery that they made. Because the people who made them, whether they knew it or

not, whether they're aware of it or not, a little bit of who they are, is a people was left in that work. And so when we dig these treasures up, wherever we are in the world, we learn a little bit about the maker, and so I just hope that is the case with stuff I'm making. And I know, I'm pragmatic enough to know, not all of it is, and it's scary to think that I don't know which ones aren't, because you know their going to be here after me; their still going to be talking so.

WILLIHNGANZ: I got to tell you a story. I was in Seattle, I mentioned my friends who were collecting Mata, and I'm not even sure how you spell it, Mata Ortiz pottery.

MOLINARO: Mata Ortiz, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: She told me some wonderful stories, and she has quite a collection. I mean we went room to room, and went through all these different things, and she told me some fascinating things about. She's been there, and she took a work shop with Ortiz somebody or other and she said what's amazing to her is they don't use wheels.

MOLINARO: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: They scrape them out with bone.

MOLINARO: Sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Then they paint them meticulously, and they take their children's hairs and make these very fine brushes, with like four hairs, and they dip them in, and they very carefully paint these lines hundreds and hundreds of lines into these patterns. Then, they fire them up, and they loose roughly half of them when they fire them. They break and their gone. And, all that work they put into them up to then is gone. It's just I don't know.

MOLINARO: Well, the pottery in the Amazon I've been studying, and some of its right behind you there, the bowls. Those are painted with brushes made of human hair, and they will spend hours if not days painting one piece, and sometimes they break in the firing. And you know these people don't get upset about it because it's part of the day's activities. They're not trying to fill an order. They're not working for somebody else. It's, they know that pots break and that's part of the process. Where we lose it as we try to make a masterpiece, or we got to make this by 5 o'clock on Friday, and if it breaks, were all upset. Whereas, if you can kind of put it into the daily rhythm of your life, it's a lot less troubling. And that's something I still don't know how to do (laughter), but it's interesting to watch these women do that. They will spend all day painting a pot, and it will blow up in the firing, and it doesn't ruin their day. There is another day, and they will make another one tomorrow and it's really a lesson, but the

pots in the Amazon, in many ways, because I have studied the Mata Ortiz somewhat, and for that reason, because of the similarities for the jungle pots.

WILLIHNGANZ: Interesting, that's very interesting. What craft organizations or associations do you belong to?

MOLINARO: Well I am a member of NCECA, which is the National of Council and Education for the Ceramic Arts, and actually I'm on the board of directors for them. I'm their program director. It's an appointed position, a three year term, renewable for the second term, which I'm in the second term now, and that's probably the biggest clay organization in the country. It is the biggest in the country and probably the biggest in the world of a clay organization, and there is a conference every year, and we do symposiums in other places. For example, we have a symposium this October in China, and our conference last year was in (God where were we last year, I'm drawing a blank?), we were in Pittsburgh last year, and next year we will be in Phoenix, and the year after that we'll be in Philadelphia. So, that's very time consuming for me. And, that's the big membership thing. But I'm also a member of the American Craft Council and Kentucky (unintelligible) Partners. I'm involved in their cultural programs. That's about it! There might be another one or two smaller ones.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you ever been involved with the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Crafts?

MOLINARO: I've never been a member. Well actually I was a member of the Kentucky Guild for a few years, about ten years ago. And, I fully support who they are, and what they are, and my not being a member in no way is any kind of statement whatsoever. When not being a member is really more about me, not finding a way to plug into like, I don't do their shows. You know, things that they're really about aren't things that I'm involved in. And, when I did join the organization several years, about ten years ago, and I was a member for a few years. I did it mostly, just an attempt to, just to support them, and I probably should still do that, and just laziness I don't. But, you know, I'm always encouraging my students to join, and feel like they have a lot to learn by being a part of that, so it's a really valid group, and a (unintelligible) group in this state, and I have a great respect for them. So, you know, I'm always quick when people say are you a member to say no, but not because I don't believe in them you know. Theirs a lot of things I should be members of.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you ever been involved with Southern Helms Guild?

MOLINARO: I've been involved in some of their shows but not as a formal member. No, but I have shown. They have done exhibitions that I've been invited to and been a part of.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh, hum, okay. You've subscribed to periodicals.

MOLINARO: Too many.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter.

MOLINARO: Specifically to clay?

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, to your field really.

MOLINARO: Yeah, well, I get American Crafts, Ceramics Monthly, Studio Potter, Art and Perceptions, Ceramics Technical, yeah, Clay Times.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you get a chance to read all of that stuff?

MOLINARO: You know, I get them, and I look at them more than I think I'm going to, just because I'm busy. But, it's hard not to, because, you know, I know a lot of people that maybe the person on the cover is somebody I know, or maybe there's an article in there that somebody wrote, that I know, or maybe it's something I'm interested in. But, largely I keep membership to those, because I teach, and it's a way for me to keep abreast of the field. And, often times, the students are working on something, and I'll say, "Okay, you need to go look at the May issue of Ceramics Monthly, because there was an article that so and so is addressing that technique that your exploring". So it's a way for me to kind of help them be connected and I write for them.

WILLIHNGANZ: I was going to say I thought you probably wrote for them.

MOLINARO: Yeah, and I had an article in Ceramics Monthly on something in the Amazon, so I publish. I use those as vehicles to disseminate my writings.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Have your family been pretty supportive of you work?

MOLINARO: Very, yeah, yeah. My daughter's a graphic designer herself. So, she's grown up in the arts, and when she graduated from Notre Dame, and when she went to college she said...my wife's a librarian...she said, "Two things I will not major in is library work or art" (laughter), and she ended up an artist, so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you ever worked on projects with her, your daughter?

MOLINARO: No. I really haven't. We'll talk about things that touch us both, but we've never, you know, she's in graphic design, and that's a little more commercial avenue, but she's very creative and very successful. And, she

doesn't really work in clay or anything. When she took a ceramics class, I mean it was with one of my professors at Notre Dame, so, you know, and so she's taken ceramics that she knows, and she's grown up with pots in her life. But, she's not inclined to come out here and get her hands dirty you know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Laughter. Okay, well I think that's all I have unless there is anything else you would like to contribute for the record.

MOLINARO: No. I just hope I gave you what you wanted.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, I think you gave us a lot of information. It's terrific and I really enjoy your work. Thanks!

MOLINARO: Good, good.