

# Art from the Earth: Early American Stoneware

May to October 14, 2012

**Programs Related to this Exhibition:** [The Birds of Bennington Presentation](#) | [Leslie Keno on Hidden Treasures](#) | [Guy Wolff Pottery Studio Tour](#) | [Archaeological Evidence of Early Stoneware in NYC](#) | [Manhattan Stoneware Lecture and Appraisal Event](#)

This exhibit featured over one hundred pieces of uniquely decorated stoneware, made in the Northeast between 1780 and 1880, assembled by Edwin and Thayer Hochberg, in addition to pieces from David Behnke & Paul Doherty and Edward & Judith Kelz.

Stoneware, known for its durability, was considered the perfect material for making sturdy household necessities such as jugs, crocks, jars, pots, pans and became a staple of American life during the nineteenth century. The elaborate and unusual cobalt blue designs on stoneware are the reason these once utilitarian goods are now cherished as Folk Art. The clay also lent itself to the production of more decorative items such as dolls, vases, ink bottles and figurines which are included in this display.

Led by artistic director Chris Zaima and designer Sandy Booth this exhibit featured wall murals by local artists Keith Templeton and John Pitts, the former scenic artist at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Large and elaborate examples of stoneware were creatively displayed on beautiful antique tables, cupboards and armoires from [Monique Shay Antiques](#) of Woodbury.

The exhibit was funded in part by a grant from [The Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut](#), in collaboration with the [Connecticut Humanities Council](#). The following special programs delved into the varied histories and characteristics of stoneware.



This jug is one of only three extant Bennington vessels made by J&E Norton depicting a horse (circa 1850). It is among over 100 very rare pieces of stoneware displayed in this exhibit, and is owned by Edwin and Thayer Hochberg.



### **The Birds of Bennington Presentation — May 5, 2012**

Dr. Steven Leder of Yale University gave a slide presentation "The Birds of Bennington" in the Wykeham Room of the Gunn Library. He discussed the elaborate and unusual bird decorations found on nineteenth century stoneware made in Bennington, Vermont. Dr. Leder has been collecting and writing about stoneware for over 25 years and is the co-author of the definitive book entitled, *The Birds of Bennington*, that describes the many bird designs on the stoneware from the Norton family pottery of Bennington, VT. His presentation covered the relative rarity of the bird decorations with respect to the design, form and size they are found on. New information regarding who may have decorated the stoneware vessels was discussed, as well as the prices the wares originally sold for. Copies of his book were for sale.

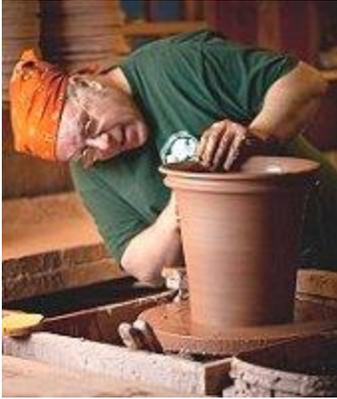
### **Leslie Keno of Antiques Roadshow Lecture on "Hidden Treasures" — June 10, 2012**

Leslie Keno, one of the foremost experts in the field of antique arts and furniture, presented a lecture entitled "Hidden Treasures," discussing his adventures in the antiques business and sharing some of his most memorable discoveries.



Leslie and his twin brother Leigh first started in the antiques business as teenagers collecting American stoneware. The dynamic and engaging brothers became celebrities on PBS's highest rated series, *Antiques Roadshow* and have been part of its team of appraisers since the series began in 1996. Leslie Keno has been a Senior Vice President and Director of American Furniture and Decorative Arts at Sotheby's since 1983. Throughout his tenure, he has cultivated relationships with leading Americana buyers, as well as with a broad range of art collectors, including board members and directors of institutions, renowned private collectors and prominent dealers. With his brother Leigh, he published *Hidden Treasures: Searching for Masterpieces of American Furniture* in 2000. The Kenos were awarded the National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States in 2005 for their contributions to the Americana field. Leslie graduated from Williams College with Honors in American Art and was a Fellow at Historic Deerfield.

### **Guy Wolff Pottery Studio Tour and Demonstration — June 10, 2012**



Renowned local craftsman and master potter Guy Wolff will give a tour of his early American stoneware collection, and demonstrate how he makes hand-thrown pots in his shop in Bantam.

Guy is a traditional potter who has operated [Guy Wolff Pottery](#) since 1971 and is an authority on the production of simple and beautiful historically inspired pottery. His apprenticeships were at older pottery shops in North Carolina, Wales and Northern England. Guy has designed and produced garden pottery for many of America's most prestigious estates, botanical gardens, museums and

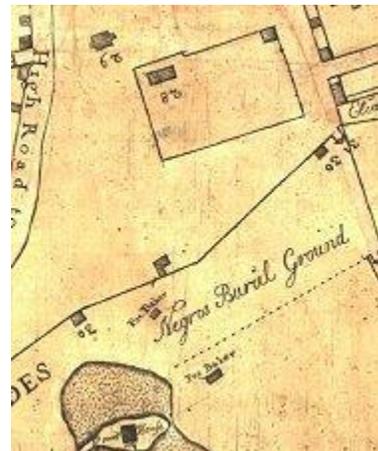
historic homes including the U.S. Botanical Gardens, Bartram's, Monticello, New York Botanical Gardens, Martha Stewart, The White House, The Atlanta History Museum and The Japanese Folk Museum. Guy Wolff's limited, highly sought after studio collections are hand thrown by the master himself, individually stamped and signed.

The architecture of the piece is his passion and is why he can look at 18th and 19th century English flowerpots and centuries old Asian vases with the same eye and discern "What makes this antique pot so wonderful?" The answer always comes back to the architectural integrity of the pot and the potter's reverence and knowledge of the materials he is using. The potter knew where he was going in the making of that particular pot. This is where traditional craftsmanship is born: The knowledge of a particular material and its attributes after years of working with it and respecting the true potential of that material. See Guy in our video, below.

### **Archaeological Evidence of Early Stoneware in New York City — September 23, 2012**

Dr. Meta Janowitz, a noted archaeologist from the African American Burial Ground project in Manhattan, presented the lecture, "Archaeological Evidence of Early Stoneware in New York City."

The [African Burial Ground](#) project began in 1991, when during excavation work for a new federal office building, workers discovered the skeletal remains of the first of more than 400 men, women and children. Further investigation revealed that during the 17th and 18th centuries, free and enslaved Africans were buried in a 6.6 acre burial ground in lower Manhattan outside the boundaries of the settlement of New Amsterdam, which would become New York. Over the decades, the unmarked cemetery was covered over by development and landfill. Today the site is a National Monument featuring a distinctive memorial that commemorates the story of the



African Burial Ground — the single most important, historic urban archaeological project undertaken in the United States.

Dr. Janowitz has worked as an archaeologist with a specialty in material culture studies, in particular ceramics, for over thirty years. She analyzed and inventoried the stonewares excavated at the African Burial Ground project. This project was significant to the study of American-made salt-glazed stonewares because it was the first (and to date only) large-scale excavation of kiln wasters from eighteenth-century German-tradition stoneware potters in America. Dr. Janowitz discussed the archaeological project, the history of the Crolius and Remmey potters which were located adjacent to the African American Burial Ground, and what was learned about the wares of these potters from the excavations. A significant finding of this archaeological project was that vessels heretofore attributed to Germany, based on their forms and decorations, were actually made here in America.

### **Manhattan Stoneware Lecture and Appraisal Event — October 13, 2012**



Brandt and Mark Zipp of Crocker Farm, the nation's leading auction house of American stoneware and redware pottery, presented the lecture "Manhattan Stoneware, 1795-1820," followed by a free appraisal event, where the Zippes gave verbal appraisals of attendees' stoneware and redware.

In 1795, four of the most important stoneware potters in American history were all working in lower Manhattan, around a place called "Potter's Hill." In 1820, two were still there, two had moved on: one to Baltimore — where he took the American stoneware craft to what could be called its zenith — and one to the west coast of Africa. The story of these potters during that quarter of a century and beyond is amongst the most interesting in the history of the American stoneware craft. This lecture discussed the life and work of Clarkson Crolius, John Remmey III, Henry Remmey, and Thomas W. Commeraw — the latter a free African-American potter who worked on Manhattan's lower east side.

Brandt and Mark Zipp are principals in [Crocker Farm, Inc.](#), the nation's leading auction house of American stoneware and redware pottery, located in Maryland. Their research and writings are consistent contributions to the study of American utilitarian ceramics. The book Brandt is authoring on Thomas W. Commeraw is one of the most anticipated works to be published on the topic of American stoneware.

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