CALL AND RESPONSE CERAMICS  By Professors Jim Klueg and Liz James

In music, a call and response is a succession of two distinct phrases usually played by different musicians, where one musician plays the first phrase and then the second musician plays the second phrase as a direct commentary on or response to the first.

The Tweed’s extensive ceramics collection is like a cabinet of curiosities: historic, diverse, multi-layered, and sometimes even a bit quirky! As diehard music fans, the idea of a call and response-based selection of the collection’s treasures was simply too tempting.

Last year we helped curate a large historically-themed exhibition based on the Tweed’s ceramics holdings, and a small mini-exhibition themed on graphic surfaces, currently out in the second floor niche display area. So, this time we wanted to take a different route through the vault. As makers, we wanted to work more intuitively and open up the possibility of selecting works that don’t often get seen. Incidentally, a couple of the works included are brand-new Tweed acquisitions seen here for the first time—lucky us!

There's a lot of talk amongst food and wine aficionados today about “pairings” of certain wines and dishes, and perhaps that’s the other inspiration for the show’s concept. As the foodies do, we looked for works that resonated with each other in various ways. Like cooking, sometimes there are more obvious complementary choices, but occasionally the pleasure lies in putting disparate ingredients together and experiencing tasty unexpected combinations!

So ultimately, whether the inspiration for our show is musical or culinary doesn’t really matter—as ceramists, this is our affectionate roam through the collection, highlighting duos that struck us for any number of reasons, some of which we spell out, some that leave more to your imagination.

Being ceramics collectors, we couldn't resist adding several pieces from our own collections to round out the mix. We, like all ceramists, have pieces we’ve been given, bought or traded for. We live with them, eat from, or otherwise use them. One of the pleasures of owning beautiful things is the joy of rearranging them, storing them away temporarily to take them out and see them with fresh eyes.
Currently on display in the Court Gallery are highlights from the Tweed Museum of Art's permanent collection of European religious paintings that illustrate the evolution of art during the Early Modern Period (the Renaissance and Baroque).

Christ Standing in the Tomb dates to the mid-fifteenth century and was painted in the Marche region of Italy, an area removed from the artistic center, Florence. At first glance the panel appears characteristic of Late Medieval art, especially in the proportions of Christ’s body, the treatment of his anatomy, the stylized landscape, as well as in the execution of the sky with the regular placement of the stars, the patterned moon, and sun with facial features. A closer look, however, reveals aspects of the painting associated with Renaissance innovations. The unknown artist created a tomb that conforms to a perspective scheme and recedes in space in a way that can accommodate Christ’s body. The artist combines traditional conventions for the depiction of Christ with the new spatial techniques of the Renaissance.

The Madonna and Child by an anonymous artist takes us into the High Renaissance, a period characterized by a concern with replicating nature, harmonious compositions, and use of dramatic light and shadow. This oil on canvas painting reflects the influence of the High Renaissance master, Leonardo da Vinci, in the delicate treatment of the Virgin’s hair (notice how the light falls across each ringlet), in the dark background, and in the centrality of the Virgin and Child. The Virgin sits at a three-quarter angle, depicted from the waist up, and looks out at the viewer in a manner similar to Leonardo’s famous portraits.

Caravaggio and his followers, like Vitale, executed paintings that leave behind the quiet harmonies of the Renaissance and embrace the theater and emotional intensity of the Baroque.

Dr. Jennifer Webb, Associate Professor of Art History, at a Tweevening recently offered some background to artworks on display from the Museum’s permanent collection.
SINW

Female Native Artists of the Twin Cities Take over the Northland

An exhibition from the Guerilla Girls Twin Cities takeover, curated by Dyani White Hawk, is coming to the Tweed this summer. The show was originally produced for the Artistry Performing Arts Theater in Bloomington.

The artworks are from some of the most accomplished female Native artists from the Twin Cities today, who are described as “feminist masked avengers in the tradition of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Wonder Woman and Batman.”

Sinew, the thread created from the backbone tendons of animals, is a material central to historic Native arts and cultural knowledge. Before cotton thread became readily available in the U.S., women of many tribes used sinew to sew garments and create the stunning porcupine quill-work, beadwork, clothing, and other objects that required stitching. This simple material metaphorically speaks to the strength of a people and very specifically to the strength of the women who used this material to create a great deal of the legacy of historic Native arts we know today.

Sinew will run from May 30th through September 24th in the Special Exhibition Gallery with a free, public reception on Thursday, June 1st from 6-8pm.

TRAVELLING THE COLLECTION

By Ken Bloom

Serving the community as a general art museum, the Tweed’s most important resource, after its people, is its art collection. Comprised of over 10,000 objects, half of which are works on paper, including prints, drawings, photographs, and watercolors, the rest encompasses paintings, ceramics, and indoor and outdoor sculpture. Since gallery space is limited, only a small percentage of the collection is shown at any one time.

The contents of the Museum collection have come to the Tweed primarily through the financial and artwork donations by the citizens of our regional community. In fact, the Museum started as a gift of artwork to the University in 1950 by Alice Tweed which included her home and over 500 historical paintings and drawings. Her vision was that the collection that she and husband George had acquired over many decades would stay in Duluth and be cared for by the University on behalf of the citizens for their education and enjoyment. This enjoyment has become international, as some of the artworks have travelled to museums around the world. Notably, in 2013, five Jean François Millet paintings were exhibited in a number of Japanese museums accompanied by Millet artworks on loan from Japanese, American, French and British museums.

Contemporary artworks find their way to other venues as well. More recently Jordan Almonds, 1979, a painting by Duluthian Kay Kurt, was loaned to the Albertz Benda Gallery, New York. Not only was Kurt’s solo show a success, but it was reviewed in the New York Times with the Tweed’s painting as a feature.

When Tweed artworks travel, the profile of the Tweed and its artistic community increases. Happily, such recognition improves the Tweed’s ability to borrow artworks from other institutions so that our students and faculty can be assured of exceptional opportunities for research and the pleasure of looking at great art.

As is our tradition here in the Tweed Store, we have a wonderful summer selection this season! Whether you’re spending your time at the beach or at the cabin, working or relaxing, we have plenty of gifts and fun items for you to peruse!

Come see our beautiful new handmade glass wind chimes, beach glass jewelry made by our very own volunteer, and a selection of unique hand-blown glass by talented local artist, Jes Durfee. We also have inspirational gifts and cards for that graduate who’s off to new adventures.

We have a huge assortment of new jewelry, including Michael Michaud’s collections, Helen Wang, Patricia Locke, and many more!

Remember, Father’s Day is right around the corner, and we have lots of gift options.
Over my career, working in education and with non-profits both in Minneapolis and here in Duluth, it has been my distinct pleasure to work with many wonderful, efficient, and effective groups and organizational boards. I have also worked with a few not so much so.

Our Tweed board and staff are absolutely in the first category. Since first I was asked to volunteer at the Tweed some ten years ago, I have had the pleasure of volunteering with an extremely dedicated and knowledgeable staff and director. And our advisory board, composed of persons from our communities, brings a range of skill sets that complements the expertise of our small staff and amplifies their efforts. It is the business of our board members to advocate for the well-being of the Tweed and the greater development of our museum. When there is a synergy with all working in common cause toward a clear mission and vision, excellence can emerge, and has.

One of the greatest resources an organization can have is the relationships and bonds of its members. Our Tweed Museum is better and becoming even more so because of these relationships.