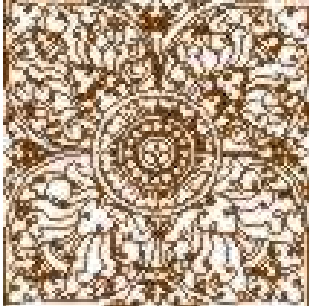




# NATIONAL CENTER FOR KHMER CERAMICS REVIVAL NEWSLETTER

Number 6

December 2007



## NCKCR Newsletters.

Please accept our apologies for the absence of the November 2007 newsletter, which, as readers will appreciate, became due during the frantic lead up to and during our inaugural International Khmer Ceramics Conference and the International Khmer Ceramics Festival. Given all that we were committed to at that time, the production of the newsletters was quite beyond our means. However, for those who attended, our other involvements were well worth the effort.

Albeit slightly belatedly, the NCKCR wishes all of its many friends and supporters a Happy New Year and extends our best wishes to each and every one of you for 2008.

### Summary

Festival summary	1
Successful conferences	2
NCKCR Artist in Residence programme	2
Technical assistance from overseas potters	3
First firing aborted for ancient Khmer kiln	3
New volunteer, Laurence Chabard	4
Refit of the fast-firing kiln	4
Refit of the Bourry Box kiln	4
Reviving Lost Skills Khmer Ceramics	5
Editor : NCKCR	
Correction-redaction : Ian Brookes	

### **Festival summary:**

A summary of IKCF 07 is posted on our website:

[http://www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/2007/on\\_the\\_run\\_uk\\_2007.htm](http://www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/2007/on_the_run_uk_2007.htm) .

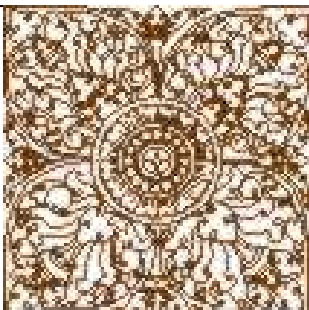
The website article emphasizes the very good spirit of the festival and the way it provided a practical and constructive and meaningful interchange between academic and ceramic theory, ceramic practices and hard-won practical working knowledge and relaxed meetings with friends and colleagues - both past and newly- met, at our activities. A real fellowship of potters and those interested in ceramics in general and Khmer ceramics in particular. The festival was a melding of conferences,



artistic work, barbecues, ceramic studies! ... Hard work in a fete atmosphere. Academicians and ceramists, “clayers” to use Louis Katz’s phrase, all contributed to reinforce the works of the NCKCR consolidate it’s work to date and guide us along the path ahead of us.



NCKCR  
Phum Thnorl  
Khum Srour Ngea  
Siem Reap  
Kingdom of Cambodia  
+855(0)63 761 519  
[www.khmerceramics.com](http://www.khmerceramics.com)



### Successful conferences:

Our conferences, both formal and informal, opened up a flow of dialogue and exchanges of ideas between the craftsmen and the scholars. All of which will help us to redevelop the production of authentic Khmer ceramics in an appropriate and sustainable manner in the Angkor region and beyond in Cambodia. We were much encouraged by the last minute rush of applications and enrolments from around the world which resulted in a multi-national conference. This augurs well for our 2008 International Khmer Ceramics Conference and our International Khmer Ceramics Festival, both of which are scheduled for December this year.



We are most grateful indeed for the hard and dedicated work of Ms. Suzanne Freilich, a volunteer, who undertook all of the conference coordination and liaison work, including handling the very many enquiries from potential attendees. The last minute rush of enrollments and the final participants list, including a lot of well know names, owes much to her commitment and hard work. Thank you Suzanne.

Conferences abstract, photos and minutes of discussion are available on:

[http://www.khmerceraamics.com/IKCF/2007/conferences\\_uk\\_2007.htm](http://www.khmerceraamics.com/IKCF/2007/conferences_uk_2007.htm) .

Details of the 2008 International Khmer Ceramics Conference, which will be even bigger and better than the 2007 Conference, will be progressively posted to our website. Please keep checking the website at regular intervals to say abreast of developments.



### NCKCR Artist in Residence programme:



The Angkor region and its many temples and other great structures and works provide an infinite source of inspiration for artists and capable of having a life-long influence on many. The NCKCR Artist in Residence Programme provides artists with the space to create new works, experiment with innovative ideas and research new and different ways of making ceramics of any type. Artists are encouraged to explore all our facilities to open up new possibilities and directions for the contemporary ceramicist. The program is open to all artists who wish to work independently on their own projects. Artists may use the residency to accomplish a specific project or to work in a creative and supportive atmosphere alongside other international ceramic artists. The International Ceramics Studio provides ceramic artists and potters with opportunities to experiment and explore new directions in their work. Resident artists

are able to exchange ideas and experiences through presentations and informal discussion. The luxury of time and the studio environment allows for intense periods of creativity free from the distractions of everyday pressures. .../...



Continuation of page 2 ...

Art and life become one - in perfect balance. We have created, here in Siem Reap - Angkor, a centre of international cultural exchange, allowing artists to work alongside others from a variety of rich and culturally diverse backgrounds as well as local arts professionals and students. This program is managed on a not-for-profit basis by the KCS. Participants are expected to cover the costs of accommodation and/or studio whilst we provide all the necessary support to make your time here fruitful and enjoyable. Excellent facilities, equipment and studio spaces are available.

### Technical assistance from overseas potters:

The NCKCR wishes to acknowledge and thank especially the following ceramic artists and wood kiln firers from overseas, who gave so freely of their time, great knowledge and experience - Janet Mansfield OAM (Australia); Alan Lacovetsky (Canada); Louis Katz (USA); Suwanee Natewong (Thailand); and Laurence Chabard (France). We made various tests and were successful in replicating the ancient green clear "Kulen" glaze on clay samples provided by Chhay Rachna. Advice these experts was also very helpful in



analyzing ancient ceramics and discussing

how best to make them once more. We also profited from the past experience of potters in Thailand who know and understand the potteries of this region. Alan Lacovetsky and Louis Katz are ceramics teachers at universities and understand so well how to teach our Khmer students each of the necessary processes involved in reviving lost ceramic skills, techniques and practices. We are planning to network with both of them and others and we look forward to seeing them and many other ceramic practitioners or "clayers" at future festival



### First firing aborted for ancient Khmer kiln reconstruction:

We were ready with the Ancient Khmer kiln, a real challenge against time and technology. Unfortunately we did not find sufficient sponsorship to purchase the very large quantity of wood required for the ten days of kiln firing. So, we will now work to protect the kiln from the next season's monsoonal rains so that we can fire up the kiln at the 2008 Ceramics festival. However just the construction of this kiln gave us a much deeper understanding and



appreciation of how the firing techniques must have been one thousand years ago. The faithful reconstruction of this ancient kiln

type was only possible through the dedication and assistance of Chhay Rachna, and the hard working volunteers, who prepared and pounded in to place over 60 cubic metres of clay – entirely by hand and foot, just as it would originally have been constructed in the Angkor era!



### **New volunteer, Laurence Chabard:**

Laurence is a ceramist working in Laos and who attended our activities in December 2007. Laurence has proposed an interesting collaboration between the NCKCR and her kiln in Laos, developing a ceramics jewels collection. Laurence will develop the collection between Champasak (Laos) and the NCKCR at Siem Reap/Angkor. She shares the NCKCR aims and wishes to assist us in marketing. We welcome her marketing and promotional expertise as we desperately need a sustainable cash flow to support our many trainees and operational costs. Prototypes will shortly be produced and test marketing, both in the Angkor region and in Phnom Penh will shortly follow.



### **Refit of the fast-firing kiln:**



Our fast-firing kiln has been refurbished. During the last wet (monsoon) season, the chimney seal was washed away by the monsoonal rains. This lack of a perfect seal was costing us a proper through draft inside the kiln and we were losing some 600 °C. Put simply, the kiln had lost the ability to fire ceramics at the required 1150°C. In addition to the 3 m. brick chimney we also had a 2 meter steel pipe extension which had become very badly corroded under actual working conditions in the monsoonal rains! The entire chimney has now been rebuilt entirely of bricks. Unfortunately, refractory mortar to bond the bricks was not available to us so this remains only a provisional chimney at this time.

### **Refit of the Bourry Box kiln:**

The bourry box kiln suffered the same problem as the fast firing kiln. Moreover, the cross section of the chimney appeared to be too small. Accordingly, we shall rectify these problems as well as enlarging the exit flues and the fire box. In addition, an insulating layer will be placed on the roof of the kiln to prevent unnecessary heat loss and to conserve fuel, wood, acquired from the local environment. All of these repairs and improvements will be of great help to us in shortening firing times and conserving fuel, thus reducing our costs of operation.



### Reviving Lost Skills – Khmer Ceramics.

The National Centre for Khmer Ceramic Revival – NCKCR,



cordially invites you to visit, free of charge, our ceramic revival training centre, workshops and kilns, as we assist present and future generations of young Cambodians to revive the rich ceramic heritage of the Khmer Empire – 802 to 1432. The Khmer ceramic heritage is unique and very different from the ceramic traditions of China, Vietnam, Champa and later Siam.



You will be fascinated by the many activities taking place, and we encouraged you to try your hand at the potter's wheel! The NCKCR and its young Khmer students are passionate about bringing about a full revival of the ancient skills and recreating traditional, high quality, Khmer ceramics for the benefit of future generations. We wish to share this passion with you – it's infectious!



Our trainees will give you a fully guided tour with explanations and demonstrations of all stages and processes involved in turning raw clay in to a full finished, fired and glazed Khmer ceramic of beauty and utility. After which we invite you to browse in our show room and relax in the beautiful tropical garden setting. Our several kilns are all faithful reconstructions of ancient traditional Khmer Kiln types based on proven archaeological discoveries, and are of great interest and fascination to most people; especially so if your visit coincides with the regular firing of one of the kilns. These kilns operate at very high temperatures, between 1,000



° C to 1,400 ° C (1,800 F to 2,550 F). Please join in and help us “fire” a kiln – an impressive and awe inspiring activity and highly photogenic! Visiting the NCKCR is a “must” whilst in the Angkor region as it brings you closer to the true Khmer spirit and gives you a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Khmer ceramic arts and heritage, so sadly lost, but now making a slow renaissance through our work and research.

Opening hours are: 8 am to 6 pm daily.

