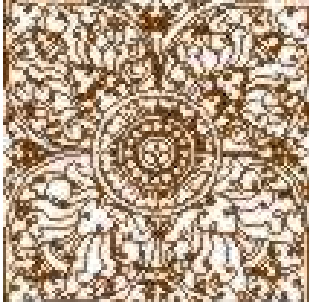




# NATIONAL CENTER FOR KHMER CERAMICS REVIVAL NEWSLETTER

Number 2

July 2007



## NCKCR Newsletters.

The July Newsletter is mostly devoted to the many preparations necessary for the inaugural, 2007, International Khmer Ceramics Festival. But research and training still on-going.

We are glad to present you our July newsletter.

We publish 2 newsletters per month:

1. A newsletter to our supporters about the works, research and life in NCKCR.
2. A newsletter aimed at marketing the NCKCR to the travel industry, travel agents, guides and hotels.

Both of these news letters are available in either French or English language versions.

Please subscribe by email to [info@khmerceramics.com](mailto:info@khmerceramics.com) for either or both of these newsletters according to your interests.

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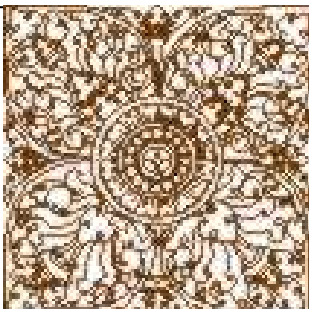
### *Enjoy...*

#### Researching Ancient Khmer Glazes.



Of the old Khmer glazes, it is black mat glaze that remains the most mysterious and is the subject of ongoing research. This month we conducted an experiment in carbon trapping in an attempt to replicate this old glaze. Different pieces, including red and white clay bisque; red and white clay first firing and low firing glaze, using borosilicate were fired. Even though we are almost certain that the ancient Khmers did not use borosilicate. The test pieces were fired in the 220 litre fast firing kiln to 1000° C. At this temperature, we closed all vents, chimney and other possible sources of oxygen in to the kiln. We then poured 10 Kg of sugar palm into the firing chamber of the kiln to produce a large amount of carbon. The aim being for the carbon produced to be trapped in the clay body and/or the low temperature glaze. The pouring vent for the palm sugar was also carefully sealed with fire clay. The kiln was opened after 2 days of cooling. At opening and on inspection, we find that carbon is not trapped in the body clay; clays need higher temperature to enter partially in fusion. The same test will be

now be performed but at 1100° C with red and white clays. Carbon trapping seems to have been used by the ancient Khmers, as this old technique has been and still is used all around the world for a very long time. .../...



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Carbon trapping can be provoked by the introduction of fresh vegetal material at the end of firing in the kiln chamber. At introduction of the material in the chamber, all vents, chimney and others possibilities of oxygen admittance in the firing chamber must be very well sealed. Admittance of oxygen at this step will re-oxidize the pieces and destroys the carbon layer. However this firing experiment yielded a very interesting piece; the body is a Khmer vessel replica, coated with a copper borosilicate glaze. During the heavy reduction the copper turned as normal to a very deep red, carbon was trapped in the glaze and resulted in a black-red piece enhanced with a very interesting lustre and cracking.



### Pit firing to prepare rural workshops.

In order to prepare for the Koh Ker Ceramics workshops, including the development plan for Heritage Watch, we made samples of possible ceramics designs that can easily be reproduced by villagers. These models are made by hand and pit fired in order to make as simple as possible the first steps of the Koh Ker villagers into the world of ceramics. The results of pit firing can be enhanced by the effects obtained using simple materials such as salt, old electric copper wires; we have avoided the use of copper carbonate as it is unavailable in Cambodia. Our next steps will be the introduction of the potter's wheel and training in its use and then, an introduction to kilns and training in their building, use and maintenance.

We are working in close cooperation and harmony with Heritage Watch, as we wish to engender the practice of sustainable activities for the villagers. Every step we take in the development raises the question - "what happen when the project is finished"? It is essential that the villagers can continue their activities when the project ends, in order that they can be self-sustaining and self-supporting once we complete this project and that our time, effort and funds helping them leave a lasting benefit to the villagers we have trained. The designs that we will present to the villagers are very simple to make. Those designs have been made to assist the contact and to stimulate the interest of the villagers about the project. The villagers' creativity will quickly come to the fore, as is our



aim, and we will stay on to advise them about items that are most suitable for making on the technology available to them and that are most suitable for easy sale. These items need to be small, easily transported once bought and have a practical or decorative use for the customers. Our activities not only offer potential to raise the villagers' income and provide a level of income security, but also offers them a means to be artistically expressive and involved in recreating their artistic heritage. Heritage Watch is also developing many others activities in Koh Ker. [www.heritagewatch.org](http://www.heritagewatch.org)



### International Khmer Ceramics Festival (IKCF)...

The IKCF is on track. The key participants are our 25 Khmer potters, from different provinces of Cambodia, and our five international ceramic artists; three of whom have already announced their support for and participation in the IKCF. Those confirmed as participating so far in December 2007 are - Janet Mansfield (Australia); Louis Katz (USA); Suwanee Natewong (Thailand) and consultations are on-going with the others and will be confirmed and announced as soon as possible. Our Khmer potters will benefit enormously from the skills, techniques and technological transfers that will take place during the IKCF through working in very close cooperation with such skilled international ceramic artists. Their standing as artists and their ability to support their families from their artisanship will be vastly improved, as well as bringing about a revival of the ancient Khmer ceramic crafts and techniques, the primary aim of the IKCF.



Official poster of the IKCF

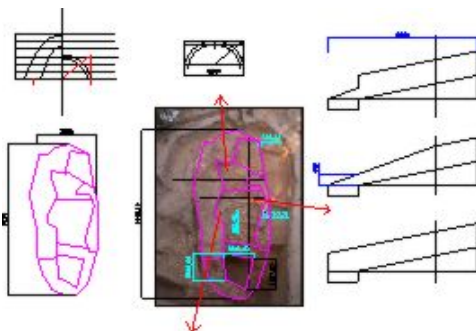
You will note that the IKCF daily programme has a gap between the IKCF and the Symposium. This is because the IKCF is both the re-birthing of Khmer Ceramics and a celebratory fête open to all tourists and Khmer local in the Siem Reap/Angkor region at this time. The Symposium, however, is only for those directly involved or enrolled for it.

In addition, the firing of the reconstructed Khmer kiln requires ten days and nights to accomplish and we seek the widest public participation and involvement in this spectacular and historic event! Also throughout the IKCF there will on-going demonstrations of all aspects of the reproduction of Khmer ceramics of all types; interactive demonstrations of the potter's wheel... by our visitors; two daily firings of smaller kilns and so much more in the daily life of a working ceramics workshop.

We seek the widest possible involvement of everyone in one capacity or another – be it as visitors, spectators, volunteers, technical assistants and advisers, a kiln firing member or master of firing, fund raiser etc., etc. Please go to our website [www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/support\\_uk.htm](http://www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/support_uk.htm) and check out the many ways you participate and contribute to the success of the 2007 IKCF!

For full and regularly updated information about the IKCF, please refer to [www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/index.htm](http://www.khmerceramics.com/IKCF/index.htm) Please ask us any questions and we shall do our best to reply to you as fully and as quickly as possible. Thank you.

### Reconstruction of an ancient Khmer kiln.



Our plans for the reconstruction of an ancient Khmer kiln are proceeding well, thanks to a meeting between NCKCR and APSARA ceramic archaeologists, greatly assisted with additional information from Roxanna Brown of the Southeast Asia Ceramics Museum (SEACAM) and from Professor John Miksic of Singapore University. We are now close to being able to build a very faithful reconstruction of an ancient Khmer kiln. This preparatory research stage is vital to the success of the project. If you can contribute any information or technical knowledge or expertise about these matters,

we hope you will contact us as soon as possible at [info@khmerceramics.com](mailto:info@khmerceramics.com)

## Website evolution...revolution.



The NCKCR website [www.khmerceramics.com](http://www.khmerceramics.com) has been completely redesigned and reorganized! It is now far easier and more user-friendly than before. A new link to the **International Khmer Ceramics Festival – IKCF** is now included. The IKCF page will be up-dated near-daily, in the months leading up to the Festival, so please check it out regularly! Please do yourself a favour and [check it out now](#).

## First page of the COSAME.

The NCKCR extends a very special “Thank You” to the French NGO, COSAME, which translates loosely as “Craftsmen without Borders”, and whose goals are to create bonds between the Craftsmen and Craftswomen of the North and the South. COSAME has taken a close and special interest in the work of the NCKCR and is very supportive of what we are doing here in Siem Reap and we are both moving to a far closer series of collaborative efforts. Future NCKCR fund raising efforts will now include some provision for technical and other support from the crafts persons of COSAME. COSAME will act as an overall facilitator and the NCKCR will look after the accommodation, board and lodgings etc of the exchange crafts persons assisting our Khmer trainees. Mission and project costs will be shared by our respective organizations Please visit the COSAME Website (<http://www.apcm.com/cosame/>) and select either the English or French version.



## 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 encourage 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 – its infectious!

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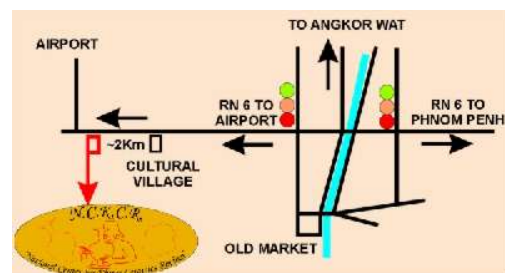
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Our trainees will give you a fully guided tour with explanations and demonstrations of all stages and processes involved in turning raw clay in to a full finished, fired and glazed Khmer ceramic of beauty and utility. After which we invite you to browse 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.

