

Fall 2009 Visiting Artist Workshops

Netsuke: A Workshop in Miniature Carving

with Peter Benson

Monocle Members and Above: \$180.00

Nonmembers: \$200.00

Materials Fee: \$35.00

Join Peter Benson, renowned international woodcarver, and learn to make your own miniature Netsuke carving, no more than a few inches, to fit in the palm of your hand. The workshop will include a brief introduction and history about Netsuke, followed by a chance to explore the design process and complete one example.

As defined by the International Netsuke Society:

A netsuke is a form of miniature sculpture which developed in Japan over a period of more than three hundred years. Netsuke served both functional and aesthetic purposes. The kimono, the traditional form of Japanese dress, had no pockets. Men suspended their tobacco pouches, pipes, purses, or writing implements on a silk cord from their *obi* (kimono sash). These hanging objects are called *sagemono*. To stop the cord from slipping through the obi, a small toggle was attached. The toggle is called a netsuke. (The most popular pronunciation is "net-ski", while the actual Japanese is closer to "netskeh"). Netsuke were often beautifully decorated with elaborate carving, lacquer work, or inlays of rare and exotic materials, including: wood, ivory, precious metals, shell, coral, and semi-precious stones.

VA0915.....Saturday and Sunday.....October 3rd and 4th, 2009..... 9:00am-4:00pm

Peter Benson started carving as a boy of 11 and has been learning ever since. He spent his working life as a Schoolteacher specializing, initially, in Physical Education moving on to teaching children with special educational needs. Since his retirement from full time employment he has created The Essex School of Woodcarving in his studio at home providing courses for carvers of all abilities. For the last three years, he has travelled to the United States conducting seminars and talks throughout New England, most notably as a founding tutor at the Mystic Carvers Retreat in Rhode Island.

In addition to his teaching commitments, he manages to do some carving of his own. His work has won National competitions and examples can be found in homes around the world as well as in many public places. Although his particular love is to carve small - miniatures of all types, including netsuke - he has recently been involved in producing two large carvings for the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire – a full size, two ton Polar Bear, and a life sized Golden Eagle. All this work has been carried out with a small team of enthusiastic members of the British Woodcarvers Association of which Peter is the Chairman.

Peter firmly believes that "anyone can carve with the right approach and guidance and that it really must be a 'fun' experience. Too many aspiring carvers are put off by too much technical, in depth detail and end up terrified to make mistakes. True pleasure and achievement will only come with a willingness to experiment and, indeed to fail, once the necessary skills have been mastered. There is nothing wrong with aiming for excellence - it is to be applauded - but there is also nothing wrong with not attaining it. After all how many people ever do?"

The Raku Process: Forming, Surface, Glazing, and Firing

With Steven Branfman

Monocle Members and Above: \$290

Nonmembers: \$260

Materials Fee: \$30.00

VA0916.....November 6th-8th, 2009

Raku is a technique that is simple in concept, requires rudimentary firing facilities, and is easy to do. Because of this simplicity, many wares display superficial aesthetics and lack individuality and power. A deeper understanding of the process along with experimentation and higher expectations can yield sophisticated colors, textures, and surfaces not necessarily recognized as "raku".

Get ready for an action packed weekend with Steven Branfman. Steven will show slides of his work, studio, raku history, and contemporary raku pottery survey, as well as selections from his wide ranging personal clay collection, with a few surprises thrown in! Steven's personal and friendly style will entertain as well as inform. Be ready to ask questions and join in the discussion and conversation. He will demonstrate his throwing and forming techniques including his personal surface treatments, inlaid colored glass technique, narrow neck vase shapes, one handed throwing and expanding forms from the inside out, glazing and raku firing. Throughout the weekend, Steven will talk about this life, career, and experiences as a student, potter, teacher, writer, and businessman. Bring your questions and don't forget your camera and notebook! No experience with raku is necessary.

Schedule:

Friday 6:00pm-8:00pm – Slide presentation, lecture, and reception

Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm – Demonstration of throwing, forming and decorating techniques and processes.

Sunday 9:00am-4:00pm – Finishing, trimming and vessel forming. Glazing and firing throughout the day, with demonstrations in between firings. Firing techniques may include controlling atmospheres, salt, fuming, slip resist, shard resist, copper mat, post fire techniques and others.

Steven Branfman wears many hats. He is a potter, teacher, writer, and businessman. His raku ware has been shown in galleries and exhibitions in Canada, Mexico, Germany, Holland, and throughout the US and appears in many collections. His studio, The Potters Shop & School, which he founded in 1977 has a national reputation for high quality programs and facilities which include resident and non-resident potter memberships, workshops, internships and services for people working in clay. To many potter and teachers throughout the world, it is best known as being the source for books and videos on pottery and ceramics, offering a selection of titles unmatched anywhere. Steven is the author of the books [Raku: A Practical Approach Second Edition](#), and [the Potter's Professional Handbook](#) as well as many articles on raku, the business of pottery, and studio management. He teaches and coaches at Thayer Academy in Braintree Massachusetts, and he divides his time between there, travel, and his studio.