

# Ceramics

## Graduate Program Coordinator

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Ceramics Department

Rhode Island School of Design

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## About the Program

This two-year, studio-based graduate program offers a contemporary, urban context for rigorous investigation and dialogue in support of the development of one's ceramic practice. Our graduate students are currently engaged in independent studio work on campus and as well as field research in New York, Boston, rural Rhode Island, Japan and Denmark.

Students in the program are professionally committed, materially articulate, intellectually curious and open. Grounded in a keen awareness of global and cultural contexts, their diverse areas of practice and research include pottery, sculpture, installation, utilitarian and architectural ceramics, design, decoration, historical ceramics, contemporary issues in ceramics, political and narrative ceramics, abstraction, glaze and clay innovation, community-engaged practice, ceramics education and other experimental approaches to ceramic materials, processes and ideas.

Through participation in studio critiques and seminars, graduate students investigate the social, historical, philosophical and technical foundations of ceramics, critical theory and contemporary issues. The process of clarifying one's ideas is supported through written and verbal communication as well as visual presentation. Throughout the program, graduate students receive feedback and critiques from RISD's internationally known faculty and an impressive roster of visiting artists.

Graduate study – and the inherent invitation to un-ground and reinvent one's process and thinking through risk-taking – occurs in individual and communal settings: in the privacy of individual studio spaces, through independent research and experimentation with new processes and ideas in consultation with faculty advisors, and through challenging interaction with peers. The focus of the program is on individual artistic development and self-directed ceramic work in the studio. In addition, graduate students may choose to take advantage of opportunities to enrich and broaden their practice through interdisciplinary, collaborative and/or community-engaged approaches.

RISD's ceramics studios and facilities support the production of advanced work through state-of-the-art computerized Blaauw gas car and electric kilns, digital and manual gas and electric kilns, a mobile raku kiln, a computer lab and software for remote kiln control and

monitoring, glaze calculation and database manipulation; wheels; a slab roller; rolling worktables; extruders; a ram press; a clay mixing room; and newly refurbished plaster and glaze labs.

### Enrollment

# of currently enrolled graduate students: 12

# of currently enrolled undergraduates: 13

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the focus of the RISD Graduate Program in Ceramics?

The ceramics faculty is committed to supporting the rigorous development of each graduate student's independent, studio-based practice. Every year our graduate students continue to be diverse in how their research and bodies of work contribute to the fields of art and contemporary ceramics. Whether they focus on sculpture, installation or functional pottery and pursue architectural, design-based, experimental, traditional or pedagogical inquiry, they use the language of ceramics as a consistent thread through all of these explorations. In developing fluency through the material, historical, social, cultural, political and critical specificity of ceramic practice, our graduates are equipped to contribute a remarkable depth of material research and critical perspective to the interdisciplinary global context.

In addition to this main focus on ceramics, our graduate students may choose to take advantage of opportunities in our department and across campus to enrich and broaden their practice through interdisciplinary, collaborative and/or community-engaged approaches.

### Is my work ready for grad school?

The four ceramics faculty members at RISD — Larry Bush, Frank Bosco, Jan Holcomb and Linda Sormin — will closely evaluate your application package and make a joint decision regarding your admission to the program. The most important way of communicating the strength and potential of your work is through your visual portfolio. We will look at your images of work and consider the depth, breadth and momentum of your exploration. We are interested in how

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you make forms, form questions, question conventions and take risks in your practice. By intelligently editing and organizing your portfolio, you have the opportunity to focus our attention on the issues most central to your ceramic work. Ideally, your images will describe your work to us. Titles, detail shots and/or brief written descriptions of work/context are generally helpful.

## Am I ready for grad school?

The faculty will read your letter of application and other materials in order to understand the motivation behind your ceramic practice — the life, travel and professional experiences that enrich your work and your goals as an artist — and what you hope to achieve by coming to grad school. In addition to a strong portfolio, we are looking for quality of thought and purpose, level and range of skills, experience, innovation, commitment, curiosity and ambition. It is in your best interest to provide concrete details and examples of these attributes.

The grad experience is all-consuming. Throughout these two years, you will need to push your making and thinking beyond your current limits. You will be challenged to draw on personal, social, physical, intellectual and material resources in new ways, and with a sense of urgency and purpose. The grad experience is not a comfortable one, and in order to move your work forward, you must be ready to open your practice and ideas to the questioning and critique of peers and faculty, to spend long hours working in your studio and to contribute to rigorous discussion and debate. Your willingness to be alternately vulnerable and bold in the studio, to participate in intensive hands-on material exploration, to take risks in your artistic production and to maintain a strong work ethic are all integral to the highly charged, transformative experience offered through our graduate program.

## What national and international travel opportunities are available to me?

The RISD Ceramics Department is in its first year of establishing a thematic, cross-disciplinary art residency at a traditional working studio site in Japan. Our grads and undergrads now have the opportunity to work in ceramics and travel in Japan during RISD's six-week Wintersession and over the summer.

Ceramics faculty members make it a priority to seek out international opportunities for our students and, when possible, to provide financial support. So far this year we've been able to support three of our grads in traveling to the UK, Germany, Japan and Canada to participate in international conferences, work with faculty in installing work and conduct thesis-related research. In addition to these opportunities, the Ceramics Department goes on regular field trips to New York City and NCECA, and there

is always the potential for travel and field study each year with interdisciplinary groups at RISD — anywhere from New York to Italy to Australia, etc.

## How much financial aid is available to me through the Ceramics Department?

The majority of our graduate students remain within the discipline and/or the larger field of art. Many go on to establish independent studios (either individual, collective or both), producing one-of-a-kind gallery work and/or limited production pieces. Some go on to design for the industry and/or create work on commission. More recently, our graduates are opening galleries as well as securing teaching positions and artists' residencies.

## Application Requirements

### Application Form + Fee

The graduate application form must be filled in completely and accompanied by a \$60 application fee (non-refundable).

### Academic Transcripts

Applicants must submit official transcripts (displaying the registrar's signature and school seal) of all undergraduate and/or graduate study indicating satisfactory completion or evidence of anticipated completion of an undergraduate degree program from an accredited college or university.

An international student completing requirements for a diploma, rather than a degree, must submit a written statement prepared by an appropriate official at the school you are attending verifying the status of the diploma to be the equivalent of a baccalaureate degree in the United States. All academic credentials must be translated into English.

### Letters of Recommendation

Applicants should arrange to have three letters of recommendation written by professors, instructors or professionals with whom you have recently worked or studied. These letters are required. We strongly suggest that your recommenders use our form (pdf), which you may → [download here](#). (Recommendors may also use their own stationery, but it is critical that they include your full name in their letter.) Each person who writes a recommendation should send it directly to the Admissions Office in time to meet the deadline of January 21, 2009.

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### Portfolio

Applicants are required to submit 10 to 20 examples of their work, reproduced as 35mm slides or as digital image files on a CD or DVD.

Slides should be arranged in a plastic slide-holder page. If you choose to send your portfolio as digital files, each image should be submitted as a separate file in .jpg format. Individual file sizes should not exceed 3MB. Do not combine images in a prepared presentation or slideshow of any type (i.e. PowerPoint) and please do not affix any adhesive labels to your CD or DVD. You should also include a printed contact sheet/thumbnailed page of the images on your disk.

Time-based work or performance pieces may be submitted in video format or as QuickTime files on a CD or DVD.

Whichever format you select, include a work description sheet. Number the examples you are submitting and on your description page list the corresponding number, medium, size, date of completion and title for each work. It is very important that your full name and address are clearly noted on your individual slides or CD/DVD and on your description sheet and thumbnail pages.

CDs and DVDs will not be returned, but slide portfolios will be sent back if you include a self-addressed envelope or mailer with the correct amount of postage. International students should send postal coupons to cover return postage. Portfolios will be returned before May 15. *Please note: All portfolio materials will be handled with great care, but neither RISD nor the Admissions Office takes responsibility for loss or damage.*

### Statement of Purpose

Please submit a written statement (500-750 words) outlining your interest in graduate study. Please be certain to include your full name and address on your statement form.

### TESTS

#### Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

Results from the Graduate Record Examination are not required for admission to this department.

#### Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

If English is not your native language, you must submit results from the TOEFL. Proficiency in English is a prerequisite for acceptance and applicants must attain an acceptable score on this test.

On the Internet-Based TOEFL (IBT), which is becoming more widely available, we expect a minimum score of 93. On the paper-based version, which is still in use in some testing centers, we expect a score of 580. Finally, some applicants may have taken the Computer-Based TOEFL

(CBT), which uses a different scoring scale; we expect a result of at least 237 if you used this version of the test.

You should schedule to take the TOEFL well in advance of the application deadline you have chosen, as it may take (depending on the test center location and the test format) six weeks for your scores to be sent to RISD. Further information about TOEFL is available at [→www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org).

#### International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

Students may choose to submit their result from IELTS in place of TOEFL. RISD expects a minimum score of 6.5 from an IELTS examination. Further information is available at [→www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org).

#### Summer Program in English Language Studies

The Summer Program in English Language Studies is recommended for non-native speakers of English who either need or would like to increase their fluency in listening, reading and/or writing formal English. The program runs for six weeks and prepares students for the regular RISD curriculum with a rich mix of classes. Students who successfully complete the summer program will receive three Liberal Arts elective credits.

During these classes, students listen to and write English, focusing on the specifics of art and design studies. In the reading and writing course, they develop critical reading and writing skills, whereas in the studio class they focus on the language of art critiques and develop self-confidence in speaking in front of their peers. Students in the summer program live on-campus in RISD's residence halls, make use of the collections of The RISD Museum of Art and the Fleet Library at RISD, travel as a group to New York City and visit the many art galleries and smaller museums in and around Providence. During the six-week program, which begins in late June, students have the opportunity to practice both formal and informal English within the larger community of students who study at RISD during the summer months.

In rare circumstances, a student may be required to attend and successfully complete this program as a condition of their acceptance to RISD.

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## Curriculum

### 1st year

First-Year Graduate Studio  
 Topics in Ceramic Material Science  
 Topics in Ceramic History  
 Graduate Studies Seminar  
 Wintersession: Graduate Studies Seminar or Studio Elective

### 2nd year

Second-Year Graduate Studio  
 Seminar: Source Presentation  
 Graduate Studies Seminar  
 Studio Electives  
 Graduate Thesis  
 Wintersession: Graduate Studies Seminar or Studio Elective

### Degree Project

During the final semester, degree candidates undertake their thesis project along with the guidance of a thesis committee. This work culminates in an independent thesis exhibition, participation in the RISD *Graduate Thesis Exhibition*, and a written thesis.

### Equipment + Facilities

#### Kiln Room

Two programmable automatic firing gas car kilns, remote computer monitoring, 57 and 88 cu ft  
 Downdraft gas brick kiln with natural draft burners, 20 cu ft  
 Downdraft gas brick kiln with forced air burners, 50 cu ft  
 Front-loading programmable automatic firing electric kiln, remote computer monitoring, 24 cu ft  
 Portable gas kiln for Raku firing  
 Four electric test kilns

#### Raw Materials Lab

Two-station spray booth  
 30-gallon pneumatic blunger  
 Ball mill  
 Air filtration system  
 Double-station sink  
 Raw materials storage  
 Database computer station with printer  
 Glaze calculation programs (Hyperglaze & Insight)

#### Clay Mixing

3 large-capacity clay mixers  
 2 de-airing pug mills  
 25-gallon electric slip mixer  
 30-gallon pneumatic blunger  
 Air filtration system

#### Plaster

Stainless work tables  
 Drying cabinet for plaster molds  
 Large-capacity pound scales  
 Jigger/jolly  
 Extruder  
 30-ton hydraulic (RAM method) press  
 Double-station sinks  
 Air filtration system

#### Classroom + Studio Facilities

Two multi-purpose studios for handbuilding and wheel work  
 30 electric wheels  
 Private studios for juniors, seniors and graduate students  
 36" slab roller  
 Double-station sinks

#### Computer Resources

Networked computer workstations, Macintosh  
 Dedicated PC to monitor firing programs in kiln room  
 Flatbed scanner  
 Slide scanner  
 Firewire CDR  
 Laser printer

#### Additional Facilities and Equipment

Digital camera  
 Light table for slide viewing  
 Product photography studio  
 Photo strobe system for 3-D portfolio photography

### Campus Location

Metcalf Building, 3rd Floor  
 9 North Main Street

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## Faculty

### → Lawrence Bush

*Department Head*

BFA, University of Washington

MFA, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred

### → Linda Sormin

*Assistant Professor*

BA, Andrews University/Crafts and Design Program at Sheridan Institute

MFA, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred

*senior lecturers*

### Frank Bosco

BFA, Rhode Island School of Design

MFA, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred

### Jan Holcomb

BA, University of Michigan

MA, California State University

*technician*

### Richard Haynes

BFA, University of Oklahoma/Kansas City Art Institute

MFA, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred

## Recent Visiting Artists + Critics

### Timothy Berg

*Head of Ceramics, Fitzer College*

### Bruce Cochrane

*Head of Ceramics, Crafts and Design Program at Sheridan Institute*

### → Nicole Cherubini

*RISD BFA '93*

### → Kristen Kieffer

### → Jean-Pierre Larocque

### Rory MacDonald

*Head of Ceramics, University of Regina*

### → Tony Marsh

*Head of Ceramics, CalState, Long Beach, CA*

### Mary Drach McInnes

*Associate Professor of Art History*

*New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred*

### Magdalena Odundo

*Surrey Institute of Art and Design*

### Patrick Purcell

*RISD MFA '00*

### Rob Raphael

*RISD BFA '00*

### → Anders Ruhwald

*Head of Ceramics, Cranbrook Academy of Art*