

The New York Times

Sunday, December 7, 2003

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ART REVIEWS/D. DOMINICK LOMBARDI



Tony Moore's "Beacon," left, is on exhibit at Germaine Keller Gallery in Garrison.

Passionate Fire 2003: Wood-Fired Ceramics

Germaine Keller Gallery, 17A Garrison's Landing, Garrison, (845) 424-3575. Through Dec. 14.

This is the second year in a row here that Tony Moore has put together a show that features the art of wood-fired ceramics. "Passionate Fire 2003: Wood-Fired Ceramics," features eight artists, all of whom have built an Anagama kiln: a large, exterior, superheated oven that looks a little like a rustic dwelling. Some Anagama kilns can be as long as 100 feet. Wood-firing, a technique that is chiefly associated with traditional Japanese ceramics, can take from one to eight days to finish. Each piece in the show lists the firing time, giving each work an ad-

ditional layer of attraction.

In most cases, the art here has a certain roughness, even a brutality to its appearance. Cracks, scars, crystallized minerals mar the surfaces, which, to the artist, are the crux of this unusual art form. I found Tim Rowan's quirky, metallic looking vessels to be the most extraordinary. They are clunky, even clumsy looking, and they debunk most preconceptions one may have about the delicate nature of ceramics.

Peter Callas's "Exodus" (2003) reminded me of some of the enigmatic landscapes of Max Ernst, who, too, created narratives

halfway between the conscious and the subconscious. Mr. Callas's wife, Chrissy, offers works that are creepy, and look as if they could be thousands of years old.

Tony Moore, the exhibition's curator, adds a handful of works that have a certain heroic quality. Paul Chaleff's imposing "Large Jar Form With Undulating Lip" (2002) proudly bares its scallop-shell-shaped firing scars, while Jeff Shapiro's "Cut Slab Vase" (2003) balances the unpredictability of the wood-fired surface against the concreteness of geometric shapes. Roger Baumann and Joy Brown prefer softer-looking surfaces, which may provoke a viewer's touch, but, actually, don't. If you like things bold and different, then this show is for you.