



# A Small Stream in the Sunlight

Amy Smith and Simon Levin

**E**MULSION IS THE CULMINATION OF A THREE-YEAR-long collaboration between Amy Smith and Simon Levin. Across states, these potters collaborated in a unique way through the coupling of independently completed work. Like dancers responding to each others' movements on the floor, Smith and Levin maintained their own identities while each artist's work reflected – actually and metaphorically – characteristics of the other's work. *Emulsion* is an exhibition of this collaboration at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Eisentrager-Howard Gallery.

Separated into two large rooms and one long narrow gallery between, work was installed thematically. Work for the East Gallery was earth-themed and work for the West Gallery was water-themed. But when walking through the show, what I saw was stillness in the East and movement in the West.

## A Review by Heather Davis

In the East Gallery, Smith's clean porcelain jewel coloured bowls rested like dew-drops on Levin's sturdy, richly flashed woodfired stoneware trays. In some, the glazes inside the bowls were the same colour as inlaid glaze. In others, stark white glaze lines in the tray corresponded to the unglazed outer surface of the porcelain bowls. Smith placed her bowls onto the trays in centre-balanced compositions with consideration for the flashing patterns and wad marks left by Levin's firing process. The undulating rims of Smith's bowls echo these flame patterns. The rectangular shape of the trays and the softly rounded shape of the bowls created a sense of calm and furthered the idea of stillness while, underneath, the flame pattern left on the surface of the trays

was a reminder of the tumultuousness of a woodfiring,

like swirling mud patterns reveal the now absent turbulence of a deluge.

A wall installation of woodfired stoneware tiles and brightly glazed shallow porcelain bowls created a lyrical sense of movement in the stillness of the East gallery. Round glaze inlay patterns in the tiles mirrored the pattern and colour of the bowls on the wall. For Smith and Levin, the tiles represented islands and the bowls represented water. But much more could be seen in this installation. I saw Smith's bowls as boats, moving around the islands. I saw

Above: *Move*. 2014. Woodfired stoneware and porcelain fired to cone 10. 30 x 15 ft. Photo by Pete Pinnell.

Facing page, top: *Earthly Element*. 2014. Woodfired stoneware and porcelain fired to cone 10. 19 x 10 x 2 in. Photo by Drew Davis.

Facing page, below: *Shallow Wade*. 2014.

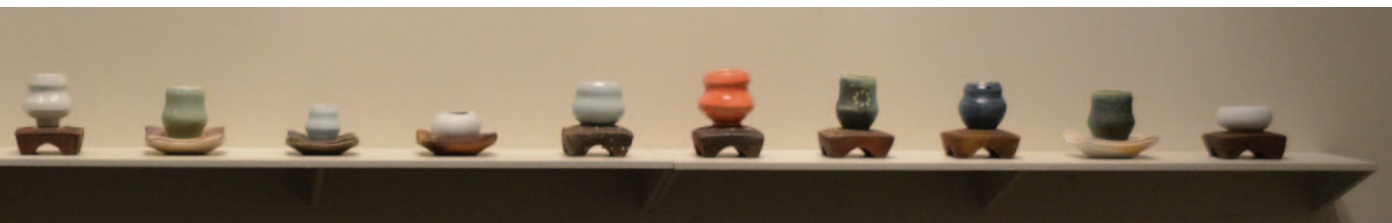
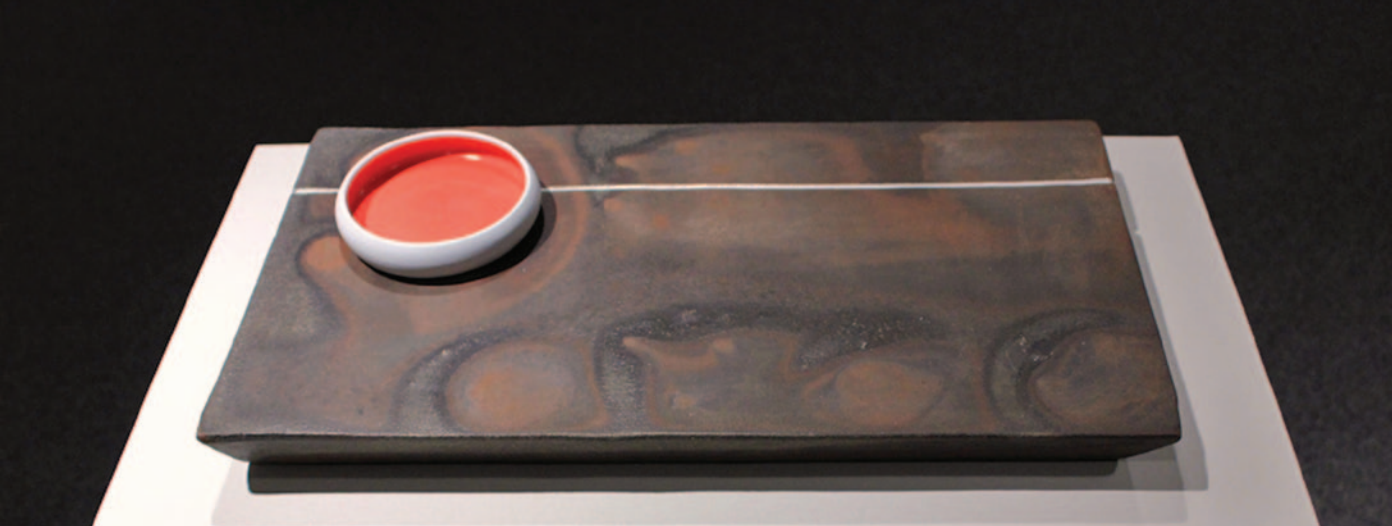
Woodfired stoneware, woodfired porcelain and porcelain fired to cone 10. 12 x 7 ft. Photo by Heather Davis.

Bottom, all pages: *Wave*. 2014. Woodfired stoneware, woodfired porcelain and porcelain cone 10, porcelain fired to cone 6.

20 x 1 x 1 ft. Photo by Amy Smith.











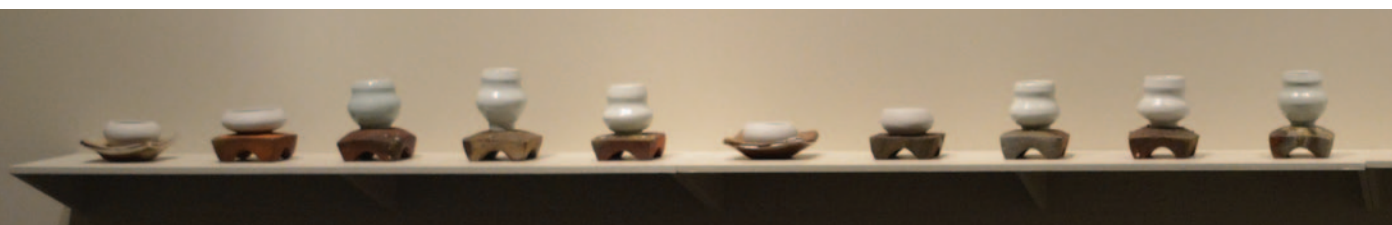
Levin's tiles as autumn leaves on the surface of a pond surrounded by bubbles floating up from the mucky bottom. I saw raindrops falling into a shallow puddle on a cobblestone street.

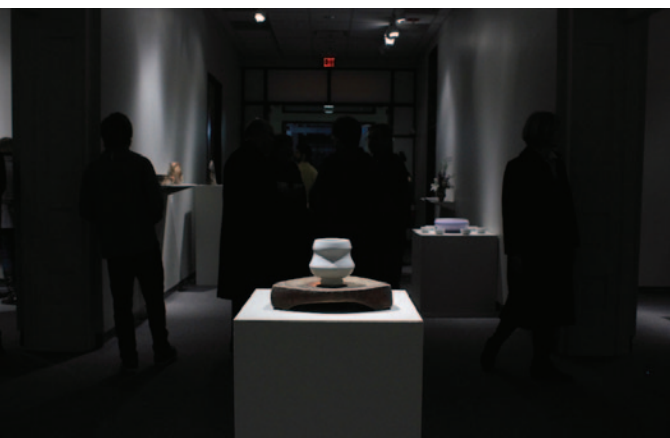
In the West Gallery, the work was smaller but taller, more like staccato beats rather than long held notes. On Levin's curved three sided trivets, Smith placed her cups nearer to one corner of the tray instead of choosing a centre composition. One cup, glazed to match the green glaze inlay decoration of Levin's tray, reminded me of a bright tree frog gripping a leaf. A long shelf held a wall full of cups and saucers arranged by height to make a wave. Levin's saucers hold Smith's cups. Unlike the perfectly flat trays contributing to a sense of stillness in the East Gallery, the corners of these saucers tip up or slope down, contributing to the sense of movement in the West.

Just as the wall installation contributed lyrical movement to East gallery, a floor installation resembling a pond contributed quietness to this room. Levin's pinched pots represented lilies rested on Smith's porcelain lily pads. River rocks made by both artists outlined the edge of the pond. The two installations are opposite representations of water – ocean versus pond, journey versus home, expanse versus containment – and were positioned in opposition so as to create an oscillation between movement, stillness, then movement and stillness again as I made my way through the exhibit.

The piece that most captured my attention was a sculpture titled *Surround*. It is a simple boat-like shape with a carved top. One of Levin's pinched pot lilies is placed near the bow. This small bowl stood out to Smith because, of all the bowls, it contains the deepest blue. She made a stand to assert its significance. This special bowl was held aloft by a boat filled with waves.

The way Smith's and Levin's work





correspond in this collaboration is like watching a small stream in the sunlight. The current of the water creates ripples in the sand while the ripples in the sand influence the rolling flow of the water. Sunlight travels through the water, but is refracted by its uneven surface into undulating patterns, completing the circle of influence. This is how Amy Smith and Simon Levin worked together, remaining two separate entities while reflecting and complementing each other's work with their own.



Facing page: **Surround**. 2014. Woodfired stoneware and earthenware fired to cone 04. 14 x 7 x 8 in. Photo by Amy Smith.

Top: **Wadi (Detail)**.

Above left: **Wadi**. 2014. Woodfired stoneware and porcelain fired to cone 10. 9 x 9 x 5 in. Photo by Drew Davis.

Above right: **Begin**. 2013. Woodfired stoneware and porcelain cone 10. 9 x 9 x 4 in. Photo by Heather Davis.

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Heather Davis recently completed the Artist in Residence program at the LUX Center for the Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska, US and is a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

