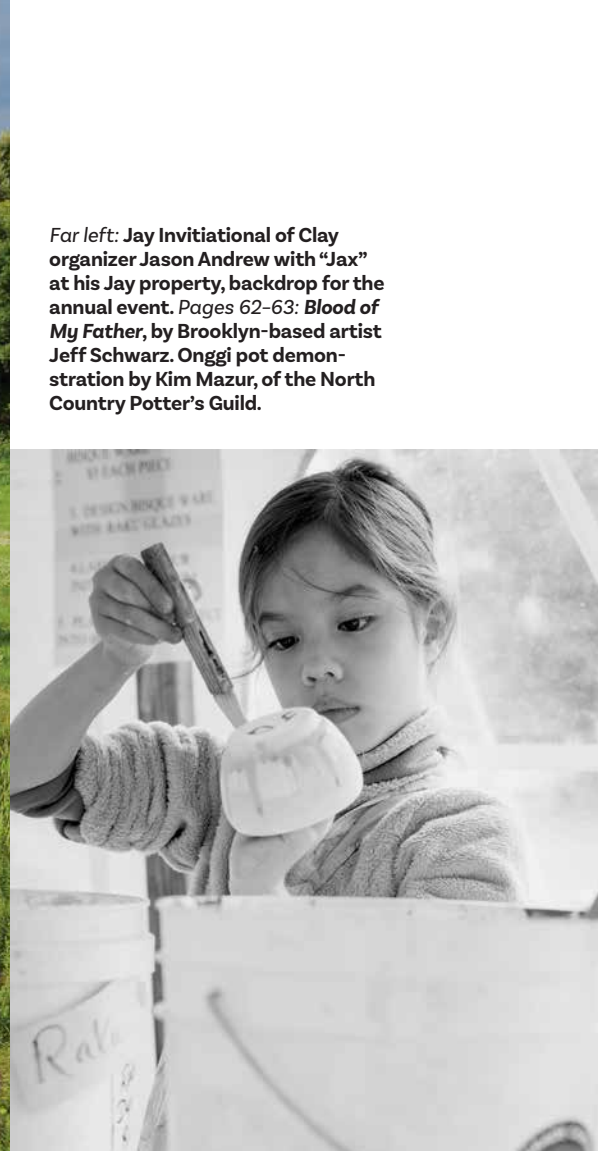


THE
JAY
INVITATIONAL OF
CLAY

THREE DAYS OF FINE AND FUNCTIONAL ART
ON THE AUSABLE RIVER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN STECHSCHULTE



Far left: Jay Invitational of Clay organizer Jason Andrew with “Jax” at his Jay property, backdrop for the annual event. Pages 62–63: *Blood of My Father*, by Brooklyn-based artist Jeff Schwarz. Onggi pot demonstration by Kim Mazur, of the North Country Potter’s Guild.

JULY IN JAY—A HAMLET THAT cradles the East Branch of the Ausable River—is postcard perfect. Families splash in the rapids below the covered bridge. On weekends, musicians perform by the gazebo on the village green. Every Fourth of July there’s a lively parade, followed by field games, then fireworks. And the past few years another summer event has added an artistic flair to this Rockwellian scene: the Jay Invitational of Clay.

A cluster of white tents serves as exhibition space on the backyard of a 19th-century farmhouse, aka The Jay House, on a dead-end, riverside road. For three days, local and urban ceramicists mingle, and visitors from across the region come to see the work of neighbors and New York City artists.





Under the biggest tent are ceramics that push the craft—figurative work, intricate mosaics and mobiles and architectural pieces. Across the lawn and inside and outside the property’s hulking barn are sculptural installations. Another tent shelters functional pottery with shelves of mugs, bowls and vases. All weekend, artists demonstrate techniques such as wheel-throwing, raku firings and surface decorating. Visitors amble tent to tent, poke around the barn and stroll to the covered bridge.

Meanwhile, a self-guided Ausable River Valley studio tour brings the public to the workspaces—in many cases, the homes—of painters, photographers, sculptors and ceramicists from Au Sable Forks to Wilmington to Keene Valley. Last year 25 artists participated, including photographer Nathan Farb, in Jay; rustic furniture artisans the

and works (for several years he ran Jeff Koons’s studio; today he’s head of the estates of artists Jack Tworikov and Elizabeth Murray). There, Norte Maar sponsors exhibitions, performance events and kids’ community art programs.

In 2013 Andrew and his husband, Norman Jabout, bought property—the pastoral Jay Clay backdrop—as a laid-back getaway that also lends itself to an outdoor exhibition space. Because “clay is already a mainstay in this part of the Adirondacks,” says Andrew—as evidenced by the long-time studios of local potters Cherie Cross, Sue Young and Jackie Sabourin—Norte Maar’s Jay event helps remind the community and its visitors of the talent in their midst. It reinforces the role of area artists who Andrew describes as “vital, expressive elements of our community.”

And that carries to the future. On the Jay House’s lawn



Posts, in Au Sable Forks; and abstract painter Frank Owens, in Keene Valley.

The event’s organizer, Jason Andrew, says these activities support the Jay Invitational of Clay’s mission “to make art more accessible.” And the Jay House gathering allows artists whose paths don’t often cross to have “a conversation about what’s happening right now in ceramic arts.”

Andrew is co-founder of Norte Maar, a nonprofit arts organization he established in Rouses Point in 2004 with choreographer Julia K. Gleich, “founded on the concept of collaboration and cross-disciplinary projects.” Its first five years Norte Maar presented an annual ballet, *Fête de Danse*, at Rouses Point’s empty ice-skating rink. Focus then shifted to Brooklyn, where Andrew lives

(well away from the sculptures), two boys kick a soccer ball back and forth. They’ll soon take a break to join a kids’ workshop under one of the tents, where they’ll shape palm-size bowls and embellish them with pressed leaves, bark, shells and other found objects, working their clay, inspired by the pieces surrounding them. That’s part of Andrew’s plan: “If kids can get involved and exposed,” he says, “it’s all worth it.” —Annie Stoltie

IF YOU GO

Jay Invitational of Clay happens July 14–16, with an opening reception on Friday, 6–10. Exhibitions are open Saturday and Sunday, 9–6. **Ausable River Valley Studio Tour** (created in collaboration with Jay Craft Center, Young’s Studio & Gallery and Stoneledge Pottery) runs Saturday and Sunday, 10–4.

For a list of participating artists—and Jay Clay’s schedule of events (demos, workshops, live music and the Northern Feast food truck)—see www.nortemaar.org.