

Visiting artist to deliver slide lecture Feb. 16

2/14/05

Robert Compton, a studio potter from Bristol, VT, will deliver a slide lecture about his work at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 16, in Room 106, Binns-Merrill Hall on the Alfred University campus. "I enrolled in the forestry program at the University of Vermont in 1968, and first touched clay a year later," said Compton. "My addiction was both immediate and irreversible." He attributes farming with drawing him into his "life of clay." "Coming from an agricultural background, I find that farmers by necessity need to be practical, flexible, inventive and creative, and these attributes transfer well to working as a potter." In the 1970s, he work "focused on being inventive with form and the development of ideas." During the '70s and into the '80s, his work consisted of unusual objects in clay, including Aquariums and Fountains, Galleries as far away as Tokyo carried the pieces, which required three additional workers and "took on a life of its own." By the 1990s, he reverted back to a one-person studio. His current work, inspired by ancient Jomon pottery, emphasizes the quality of a pot's surface, achieved by methods such as wood firing and salt glazing. "These processes are active agents which produce subtle but powerful surface effects," said Compton. "The work of Mirek Smisek, a salt glaze potter in New Zealand, and Australian wood fire potter, Chester Nealie, have been inspirational to me in these techniques." "Personally, I find a vessel's form is most expressive when freshly made," said Compton. "As a finished piece, it most closely resembles that state when a wet skin is created during firing from the interaction of salt, fly ash and clay."