

## AU faculty and alumni highlighted in history of American Craft Movement

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Wayne Higby, professor of ceramic art

Alfred University's long history as the leading school of ceramic art earns a prominent place for its faculty and alumni in "Breaking Ground: A Century of Craft Art in Western New York." The book - described as the "first book to fully explore the history of the American Craft Movement within the region" - will be unveiled at a book-signing Sunday, March 21, at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester. There will be a panel discussion, "Craft Art: Looking Back, Looking Forward," at 2:30 p.m. on March 21 at the Memorial Art Gallery, with the signing to follow. Admission to the panel discussion and book signing is covered by the admission price to the Gallery. Among the panelists will be Wayne Higby and Linda Sikora, professors of ceramic art in the School of Art & Design at Alfred University, as well as Robin Cass, a 1998 graduate of the School and a glass artist. Other panelists are Leonard Urso, a metal/jewelry artist; Paul J. Smith, director emeritus of the American Craft Museum; and moderator Suzanne Ramljak, editor of *Metalsmith* magazine. Smith and Ramljak are co-editors of "Breaking Ground" with Barbara Lovenheim, a journalist and author who initiated the book. "Richly illustrated with vintage and contemporary photography, the 156-page publication surveys the work of early pioneers as well as 29 current artists," according to a release from the Memorial Art Gallery. A photograph of Higby's ceramic sculpture is used on the book's cover. "The editors did a good job showing how pivotal Alfred's involvement in the whole craft movement is," said Higby. The book talks about some of Alfred's past faculty members, from Charles Fergus Binns, who founded the school in 1900, to Charles Harder, Bob Turner and Ted Randall, whose careers brought them to Alfred as faculty members. The book "fast-forwards" to today, profiling four masters of their media: Higby, ceramic art; Wendell Castle, wood; Albert Paley, metal; and Michael Taylor, glass. It also surveys the work of 29 other contemporary artists, including Cass; Stephen D. Edwards, professor of glass sculpture; Jackie Pancari, a 1996 alumna and glass artist; and Angus Powers, a 2000 alumnus and current assistant professor of glass sculpture. In addition to Higby, the ceramic artists and Professors of Ceramic Art at Alfred University who are highlighted include: Linda Sikora, Anne Currier, Andrea Gill, a 1976 alumna; John Gill, a 1975 alumnus; and Walter McConnell, a 1986 alumnus as well as Professor Emeritus Val Cushing, a 1956 alumnus. "New York City may be the cultural center of the state, but it was in the small towns of western New York that a craft movement took root, producing some of the most important schools and artists in the nation-wide studio craft movement," says Lovenheim, a Rochester native, author and journalist who has written on the arts and lifestyle for the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *International Herald Tribune* and national magazines. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Rochester, and taught at the City College of New York. "Breaking Ground" is available for pre-order at the Memorial Art Gallery store for \$45 (softcover, \$30). To order, contact Colleen Griffin-Underhill, 585.276.9012 or email her at [cunderhill@mag.rochester.edu](mailto:cunderhill@mag.rochester.edu)