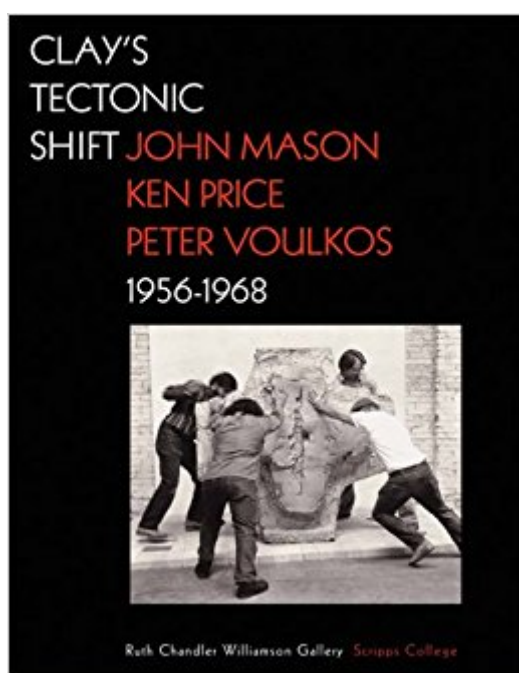


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# Clay's Tectonic Shift: John Mason, Ken Price, And Peter Voulkos, 1956-1968



## Synopsis

Clayâ™s Tectonic Shift focuses on artists John Mason (b. 1927), Kenneth Price (1935-2012), and Peter Voulkos (1924â“2002) and their radical early work in postwar Los Angeles where they formed the vanguard of a new California ceramics movement. The three artists broke from the craft tradition that emphasized the function of a piece. Experimenting with scale, surface, color, and volume, their work was instrumental in elevating ceramics from a craft to a fine art. Earlier exhibitions and publications stated that key innovations in this new ceramics movement were made at the Otis Art institute and that its direction was defined by a group of students surrounding the charismatic leader Voulkos. The truth is that the new trend in ceramics was driven by the works that Price, Mason, and Voulkos made in a subsequent, independent phase when they were working as professional artists in Los Angeles, and the goal of Clayâ™s Tectonic Shift is to correct that misperception. These three artists followed individual paths as they willfully propelled a new use of the medium into the mainstream professional arena, where it was widely recognized and documented. An exhibition of the same name will be on view at the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College from January 21 through April 8, 2012, as part of Pacific Standard Time, a collaboration of more than sixty cultural institutions across Southern California to tell the story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mary Davis MacNaughton, director of the Williamson Gallery and associate professor of art history at Scripps College, has contributed to books on ceramics, including *Revolution in Clay: The Marer*

Collection of Contemporary Ceramics (University of Washington Press, 1994) and retrospectives on Paul Soldner and David Furman. Â

Ken Price, one of the most honored and respected clay artists of our time has died. A bit of background: 'Kenneth Price (February 16, 1935 - February 24, 2012) was an American ceramic artist and printmaker who was born in Los Angeles, California in 1935. He studied at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, before receiving his BFA degree from the University of Southern California in 1956. He continued his studies at Chouinard Art Institute in 1957 and received an MFA degree from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in 1959. Kenneth Price studied ceramics with Peter Voulkos and was awarded a Tamarind Fellowship. He is best known for his abstract shapes constructed from fired clay. Typically, they are not glazed, but intricately painted with multiple layers of bright acrylic paint and then sanded down to reveal the colors beneath. Ken Price lived and worked in Venice, California and Taos, New Mexico.' Now, almost as a salute to Price's passing comes this hefty and highly informative book CLAY'S TECTONIC SHIFT: JOHN MASON, KEN PRICE, AND PETER VOULKOS. The book describes in words and images how these three giants changed the world view of clay art from the functional format to the purely artistic format of clay for the sake of clay and form for the sake of beauty. Though the manner in which each of these three artists approached clay as a medium, each of them developed strong followings in the art world and their works are valued by museums and collectors alike. The book is published in context of the PACIFIC STANDARD TIME city wide exhibition this year and the works in this 'catalogue' are the attraction for the exhibition that bears the book's title at Scripps College. Now with the recent passing of Ken Price the book becomes even more of a collectors item. Grady Harp, February 12

I was an art history student finishing my degree at Scripps College while Clay's Tectonic Shift was on display as part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time initiative. The exhibition, and this catalogue which accompanied it, are outstanding examples of what happens when a team allows scholarly research to guide their curatorial and critical decisions. Clay's Tectonic Shift serves as a thorough introduction to the work of John Mason, Ken Price, and Peter Voulkos, and really illustrates how the synergy between these three artists challenged clay's traditional place in the hierarchy of materials. The essays are seriously academic in their point of view, rather than relying on the numerous myths (however alluring) that surround the work of these artists.

This is an excellent overview of not only the ceramics scene; but, the entire art climate in the United States in the time following WWII. Very well researched and presented. I would recommend this to anyone wanting to further their knowledge of art and ceramics, of this period, and how it's affected our attitudes even down to current times.

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