

April 2002
Volume 3, Issue 4

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Baltimore, MD, played host to the [American Craft Council Craft Show](#) for the 26th year this past February. For a week at the end of the month, the downtown convention center was turned into a large gallery of world-class artwork ranging from ceramics to wood.



The ACC has eight shows every year, starting in Baltimore and then moving to Atlanta, St. Paul, Chicago, back to Baltimore, San Francisco, Sarasota, and Charlotte, North Carolina.

Week-long events, each show is broken into wholesale days for wholesale buyers only and retail days for the general public. The show are all juried, but one application and one set of slides can get an artist accepted to all of the shows in the year's cycle.

The Baltimore show kicks off the start of ACC's show cycle, and is regarded as an important event by both the craft council and the craft community. In 2001, wholesale sales were above \$21 million, and retails sales were above \$6 million.

Wholesale and retail attendance totaled more than 32,000 people viewing and buy the work of 725 artists.



The 2002 Baltimore show had 850 artists in attendance, with seven artists representing the polymer clay world. As usual, it was difficult to track down all the polymer clay artists, since the craft world doesn't yet seem to recognized *Polymer Clay* as a category in its own right.

The seven artists present were cataloged under various titles, ranging from non-metal jewelry to mixed media to wood.



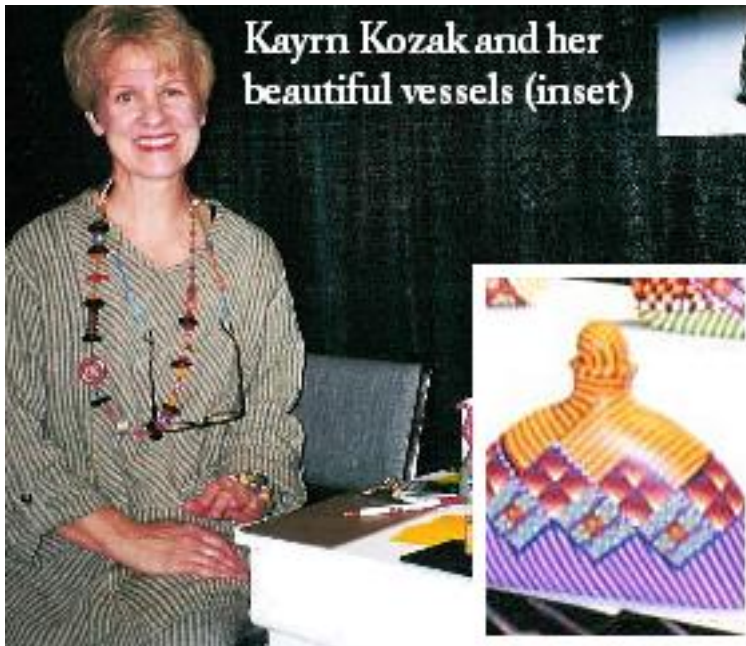
[Steven Ford and David Forlano](#), listed under *Jewelry, Non-Metal*, were displaying their newest line of pins, necklaces, and other wearable art in a wonderfully minimalist space of grey flannel walls and mannequins.

Their work has evolved from the brightly colored blends of the early 1990s to chunky, organic pieces whose surface texture evokes moss, stone, and hide.



Ford and Forlano pins

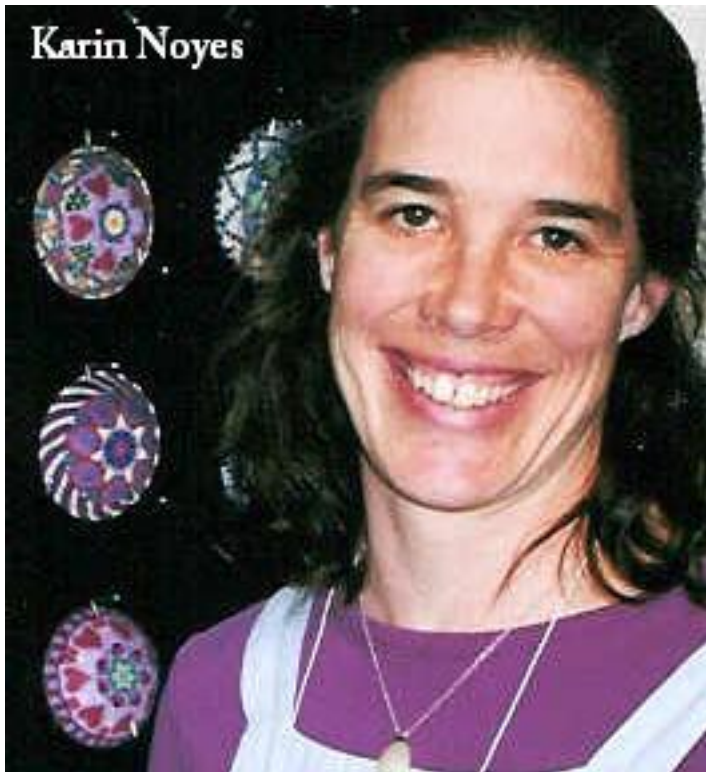
In the work they displayed at ACC, Ford and Forlano mixed organic color, texture, and shape with sterling silver to create fluid, multi-dimensional pieces that require only a neutral background to be displayed to full effect.



Kayrn Kozak and her beautiful vessels (inset)

At the other end of the spectrum, splashed in color and geometric patterns, was the work of Karyn Kozak, who is well-known in the polymer clay community for her playful colors and shapes.

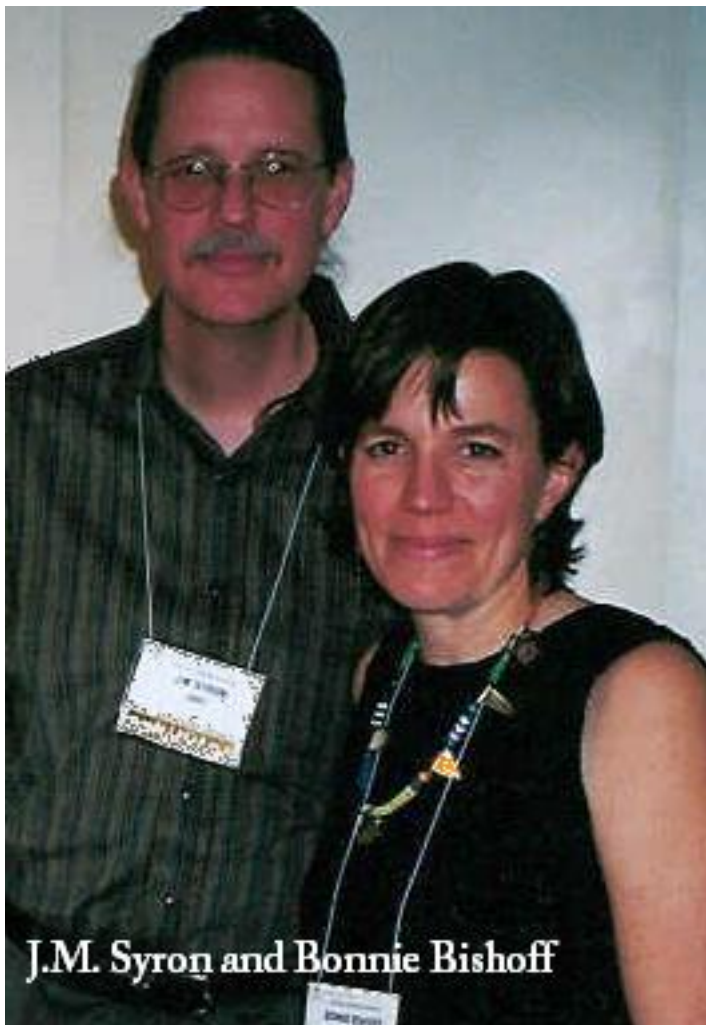
Listed under *Mixed/Other Media, Work in Other Media*, Kozak was selling teapots and other objects in her trademark style.



Karin Noyes, also listed under *Mixed/Other Media, Work in Other Media*, was in attendance selling jewelry and small bowls.

Noyes uses imagery and color themes in her work, resulting in a wonderful display of color. Starting with a central image at the bottom of the bowl, Noyes works outward, using an array of shifting values in the same hue to complete the bowl.

She then displays similarly hued bowls together, thus turning her booth into a lovely rainbow of color.



Listed under *Wood, Furniture* were the team of Bonnie Bishoff and JM Syron. They are listed under furniture for a reason: the team creates gorgeous furniture which they then cover with polymer clay.

On display this year was an enormous sideboard in yellow maple inset with a faux bird's eye maple veneer (made from polymer clay). About 80 percent of the sideboard was covered in clay. Also on display were lamps, dressers, tables, and chairs.

The work of these two artists is pushing the size envelope and is very exciting. Look for a Bishoff/Syron interview in an upcoming issue of *Polymer Clay Polyazine*.



Laura Balombini
and some of her wire sculptures

Well-known polymer clay artist [Laura Balombini](#), listed under *Mixed Media/Other Media, Sculpture*, was present, selling her wonderfully whimsical wire sculptures, ranging in size from two feet high figures to tiny teapots.

Balombini's work is very popular, as are her workshops. She will be with the NYC Polymer Clay Guild May 25-26 to give a workshop entitled "Teapots and Vessels, Polymer and Wire."

The Baltimore 2002 ACC Craft Show was an exciting, bustling event, filled with art treasures in all kinds of medium, but of course the polymer clay work was the most significant to me. I also spend the day with the delightful Georgia Sargeant, editor

emeritus of *POLYinforMER*. It was wonderful meeting all the polymer clay artists and discussing with them the joys and trials of being a polymer clay artist.

If you have the opportunity to visit any of the ACC craft shows, drop by two places: 1) all the polymer clay artists, to fall in love with their work, and 2) the ACC Craft booth, to tell them that polymer clay is an art material and rightfully deserves its own category.



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