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Catherine Merrill Receives the Jose Maria Heredia Medal of Honor for her Contributions to Cuban Ceramics

On May 17 2005, in Santiago, Cuba, prominent San Francisco Bay Area ceramic artist, Catherine Merrill, was awarded the *Jose Maria Heredia* Medal of Honor for her "Significant contribution to Cuban Culture (cultural development)." This is the highest arts award in the province of Santiago de Cuba. Merrill is the second American to ever receive this significant honor. Rodolfo Vaillant, a prominent Cuban composer and director of the Cuban Union of Artists and Writers, presented the award to Merrill.

Since 2002 Merrill, along with Cuban master ceramist, Antonio Lewis, have co-directed the international cultural exchange Proyecto Arte del Fuego (Art of Fire). The project's mission is to promote peace and friendship among the diverse peoples of the world through the international language of art. Merrill and Lewis have organized exhibitions, residencies and workshops throughout Cuba. In a joint 2004 project with Kwantlen University College in Vancouver, Canada they ran a month long residency with workshops by ceramicists from Cuba and Canada. Future Proyecto Arte del Fuego projects include programs in Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago and Spain.

About Catherine Merrill

Merrill's artwork has been exhibited extensively internationally. She has been an invited artist and presenter at the "Encuentro Terracota" annually since 2001. She has been warmly accepted into the community of prominent artists in Cuba demonstrating the power of art to overcome (cultural) barriers of social philosophy, race and religion.

Merrill is the foremost U.S. authority on contemporary Cuban Ceramics. Based on her first hand research she has published articles on Cuban Ceramics and Cuban-American Cultural Exchange in leading national and international ceramics publications. Merrill presented a panel and exhibition of work by Cuban & American artists who have worked together over the years at the worlds' largest NCECA Ceramic conference in San Diego in 2003. She has lectured widely at art centers and colleges. She runs ceramic workshops throughout the year in the United States and abroad.

For more information about Catherine Merrill visit: www.catherinemerrill.com