

## The Clay Studio to Break Ground on New Center for Ceramic Arts in South Kensington



*The Clay Studio's new 34,000-square-foot home at 1425 North American Street in the heart of the South Kensington neighborhood. It will be the first of its kind ceramic arts facility built from the ground up in the United States.*

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** – The Clay Studio will break ground January 15, 2020 at 11:00 am, on a new state-of-the-art ceramic facility, propelling the nonprofit organization forward as a national leader in ceramics as well as a welcoming center for local residents and artists in Philadelphia.

Founded in 1974 in Old City, The Clay Studio has grown from a collective of five artists to a thriving, collaborative fellowship of artists, educators, and professional staff serving 35,000 people a year through a wide array of classes, exhibitions, events, and The Claymobile community engagement program.

With the new South Kensington facility, located in one of the city's most vibrant arts corridors, The Clay Studio will expand its services and spaces by 67 percent, paving the way for unlimited new possibilities for studio art, arts education, and community engagement.

"This is a defining moment, and together we are making a big dream a reality," Executive Director Jennifer Martin said. "We have always believed that art changes lives, that people of all ages and backgrounds can discover and nurture their individuality through clay. And when people give voice to their creativity, they in turn give voice to their communities."

The groundbreaking is the culmination of a \$13.7 million capital campaign for this new facility to advance The Clay Studio's vital mission. Significant support for the capital campaign included an allocation of New Markets Tax Credits from Philadelphia's Economic Development Corporation (PIDC), as well as funding from Local Initiatives Support Corporation, The Reinvestment Fund, and Wells Fargo. The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance estimates the new facility will generate an annual economic impact of more than \$8.4 million on the local economy.

The new facility will also deepen relationships between The Clay Studio and the South Kensington community. These bonds are rooted in The Clay Studio's Claymobile program headquartered in South Kensington for 25 years, and have expanded in recent years through artist-led workshops, shared meals,

and conversational exchanges that have allowed the Studio and the neighbors to know more about each other's history and hopes for the future.

These dialogs informed much of the new building's thoughtful design, which includes an intentionally open, publicly accessible ground floor, dedicated classrooms for after-school youth programs, new spaces for year-round public events, and new headquarters for the Claymobile program. Larger classrooms, state-of-the-art studios, an outdoor sculpture garden, and luminous new gallery spaces will meet the increased demand by students, artists, and visitors, and a rooftop garden deck will offer anyone commanding views of the city.

"With something like this in the neighborhood, I think there's quite a few opportunities for kids, and not just to become artists," says a former Head Start teacher in the neighborhood. "Art and music are wonderful ways to get young children interested in education."

These critical connections between artists and communities will be the central theme in the inaugural exhibition at The Clay Studio's new home. *Making Place Matter*, a major exhibition, symposium, and publication, will open in spring 2021 and is funded by a [Project Grant](#) from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

The exhibition is organized around the complex and contemporary meaning of place and identity in today's social conversation. Artists [Kukuli Velarde](#), [Molly Hatch](#), and [Ibrahim Said](#) will explore the idea of place with regard to personal history, cultural history, and social justice.

*Making Place Matter* will also launch a new exhibition-related Visitor Engagement Gallery, which will invite the community to create artwork in response to the work they see in the gallery. The accompanying symposium and publication will further the exhibition's reach, allow for deeper thinking, and document the project.

*Making Place Matter* will establish the new gallery as a laboratory for The Clay Studio's twofold mission: to serve artists in the community, and its community with art.

"I am proud and thankful beyond words," said Martin. "Only a few short years ago our Board of Directors, together with the South Kensington community, artists, and patrons, embarked on a \$13.7 million capital campaign, and we've been working with a team of architects, designers, and builders to create the best possible facility we could imagine. Community is what began and sustained The Clay Studio for 45 years, and community is what will make our new building a home."

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#### **About The Clay Studio**

*The Clay Studio is a nonprofit arts organization with internationally renowned artist residency programs, classes and events, exhibitions, community engagement programs, a shop, and more. We serve as a place where established and emerging artists come to shape their careers, a vital resource for arts education at local schools and community organizations, and a destination where people from all walks of life can explore the vast world of clay. Visit [theclaystudio.org](http://theclaystudio.org) for more information.*