‘Fantastic medium’ displayed in gallery by ceramic artists

By Michael O’Brien
Staff Writer

The department of fine and performing arts is holding a “Clay Invitational” for six nationally recognized ceramic artists.

The display is on exhibit in the Fine Arts Gallery until Feb. 23. It features the works of Jerry Horning, Holly Walker, James Watkins, Jean Appleby, Anna Holcombe and Harris Deller.

Horning teaches ceramics at Creighton, but is on sabbatical this semester. Horning, an art major in college, said a course in ceramics similar to what he teaches sparked his lifelong interest in the subject.

“The clay itself is a fantastic medium,” Horning said, “used by all artists at one time or another, because it is so responsive and versatile.”

Horning said he uses a potter’s wheel for all his work. This usually limits an artist to functional, round objects. Despite this, he said, he views his double-walled bowls more as sculptures.

Horning said he discovered his method of making pots with an inner and outer wall that don’t touch while experimenting in his studio. All of his bowls on display are double-walled. Horning said only three or four other artists in the country use this method.

“Right now I’m trying to make bowls with presence,” Horning said, “that hold interest for a long time, and somehow touch the soul somehow. The form is very important, but the glaze is like the clothes we wear in how it can change a bowl.”

Walker is currently teaching Horning’s ceramics course at Creighton. Walker has been involved in ceramics since 1979, when she attended the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina.

“I like touching and shaping the material,” Walker said. “At first I was majoring in painting, but I found I enjoy the form more than abstracts.”

Walker said she gives a positive or negative shape to her forms, and then uses paints to carry on the shape or to contrast it. She said that recently, imagery with a plant or animal feel is coming out in her creations.

Walker said the pieces on display had been in her mind for several years, but that she couldn’t make them until arriving at Creighton.

“My kiln was too small,” Walker said. “The one here is large enough for what I wanted to do. The pieces upstairs are about three feet tall, more than twice as large as anything I did before.”