

Works by Newcomb master potter Joseph Meyer on display

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There it is on the base of Newcomb pottery, the conjoined letters “JM” incised in the clay. That's the mark of Joseph Meyer, who worked from 1897 to 1927 at Newcomb College, throwing the pots that were later decorated by students and art faculty members. A museum in Biloxi, Miss., is shining a light on this era of Newcomb history with an exhibit of Meyer's work.



Joseph Meyer works in the Newcomb pottery building at 2828 Camp St., on the original Newcomb College campus, in 1904. (Photo from the Newcomb Art School scrapbook, University Archives)

Now through March 22, the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi is featuring the [exhibit](#) “Joseph Fortune Meyer: Master Potter, Mentor.” Thirty-four works by Meyer, circa 1900, are on display in the museum's Mississippi Sound Welcome Center, along with one piece of Newcomb Pottery from the museum's collection.

Meyer died in 1931, but he is lovingly remembered on the Tulane University campus, now home to a highly prized collection of Newcomb pottery, much of it molded by Meyer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

“The Pottery enterprise owes a deep debt to him,” says Sally Main, senior curator of the Newcomb Art Gallery. Hired by Newcomb art school director Ellsworth Woodward, Meyer “ran the studio, making clays, mixing up glazes. He was the lynchpin in all of this, creating shapes for the Newcomb decorators to paint and carve.”

Born in France to a clan of red ware potters, Joseph and his family arrived in the U.S. in 1858. His father, François, trained both Joseph and now-famous Gulf Coast potter George Ohr, called the “Mad Potter of Biloxi” for his genius as well as his eccentricities.

In addition to his work at Newcomb, Meyer created his own pots, Main said, classical shapes fashioned in contrast to his lifelong friend Ohr. The two potters are buried near each other in Biloxi.

Art enthusiasts also can view the largest exhibit of [Newcomb Pottery](#) in decades now through March 9 at the Newcomb Art Gallery on the uptown campus.