

Emerging from the Shadows

Hundreds of unrecognized women artists working in California from 1860–1960 receive proper art history scholarship in new book series

Diane May Stuart Hamilton de Causse (1886–1971) and Genevieve "Vieve" Bartlett Hamilton Montgomery (1887–1976)



Diane May Hamilton de Causse (left) and Genevieve "Vieve" Hamilton Montgomery. C. 1946. Collection of Steve and Debra Soukup. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*

May (a.k.a. Diana May) and Vieve (short for Genevieve) Hamilton were primarily known as modernist sculptors, designers, and studio ceramists working both independently and as a team from the twentieth-century's teens through the 1930s.

Their story begins in the frontier banking town of Gallatin, Missouri, shortly after a young public prosecutor named William Decatur Hamilton III married an artist, Minerva "Minnie" Bartlett Miller, on April 7, 1885. On January 18, 1886, following the Southern tradition of double naming, Diane May was born. Calm in personality, she was followed with the

birth of the feisty Genevieve a year and half later, on June 6, 1887. During the early 1890s, Minerva maintained a public studio, taking commissions and teaching all branches of painting. William Hamilton eventually served two successful terms as a member of the Missouri state legislature. Then in 1903, he suddenly dropped dead at age fifty-two while living apart from his wife and daughters. Minerva raised and educated her daughters by teaching at boarding schools in St. Charles and St. Louis before they relocated to California around 1905, possibly first settling in the San Francisco area. There, May and Genevieve appear to have attended Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, prior to the historic 1906 earthquake and devastating fires, and later the San Francisco Institute of Art. By 1910, mother and daughters settled in Pasadena, California.

In 1916, Minerva, May, and Vieve founded, co-owned, and operated Hamilton Tiles, Inc./Hamilton Pottery in Culver City, California, just west of Los Angeles. The successful studio operated until 1930, producing decorative tiles and mantles, largely in the arts and crafts style, along with ceramic figurines, tableware, and other pottery. Notable local commissions included massive Batchelder-style mantles for the Friday Morning Club, the California Country Club, and the Sovereign Hotel in Long Beach. Their work at Hamilton Tiles received a 1925 certificate of honor in fine arts from the American Institute of Architects. Known tile marks include a paper label that reads "Hamilton Pottery: Culver City, California" and an impressed tree with banner that reads "MAVIVA WARE," an acronym derived from the names May, Vieve and Minerva. Other studio marks include an impressed "HAMILTON" within a circle, sometimes above stylized flames. Both May and (especially) Vieve appear to have worked in the business as designers with their mother during much of this time, though both were periodically absent to attend art classes or to follow other pursuits during the 1920s. Minerva wished her daughters to be self-sufficient and follow their art. Minerva passed away in 1951.



Untitled (sometimes referred to as "Two Women Plaque"), c. 1927–1930, glazed earthenware, 23.75 × 12.75 × 0.75 in., impressed *l/r*: "M.H. de Causse." Collection of Steven and Debra Soukup. Photo: Martin A. Folb, PhD. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*

The sisters maintained their "Hamilton Pottery" studio in California in various forms over the years from Culver City to Pasadena, while creating work to be sent as far away as Paris, France, New York City, or Sebring, Ohio. While they were fiercely competitive with each other, their early education, achievements, and awards were often shared experiences. Their mother stressed achievement and opportunity while raising two daughters enveloped in the socially conservative atmosphere of their time and birthplace.



"Hamilton Pottery," paper label attached verso: Nature Allures That She May Lead Us. Collection of Robert Schmid. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*

The modern and cosmopolitan influences of New York and Paris can be observed in both sisters' frequent work in the liberated and modernist art deco style. Ranking highest among their recorded accomplishments is their exhibition of ceramic sculptures at the prestigious 3rd and 5th National Ceramic Exhibitions at the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts in 1934 and 1936 where May and Genevieve were both awarded "Honorable Mention for Group" among their impressive peers in 1934. Several of these works were chosen by the Syracuse museum for inclusion in a much-heralded 1937 *Contemporary American Ceramics Exhibition*, that toured three Scandinavian countries, plus England. Similar exhibitions with their work included the 1935 and 1936 California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego at the Palace of Fine Arts, and the decorative arts display at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939 (which showed their work produced by Vernon Kilns of Los Angeles). The sister's VK trademark included a Pekingese dog inside a circle with their names. Their contract with Vernon Kilns ended that same year when May and Vieve also appear to have retired from their professional ceramic careers. More research is necessary to appreciate their work in painting and illustration

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DIANE MAY STUART HAMILTON DE CAUSSE (1886–1971)

From early childhood on, she was simply May, except during a period around 1933–34 when she went by Diane (Hamilton de Causse). May's art education during the period from 1919 through the mid-1920s included classes at the Art Students League, the School of American Sculpture, and Columbia University, all in New York. In Paris, at the L'Académie Julian, she studied under the French sculptor Paul Landowski, whose influence embraced both the neoclassical and the avant-garde of the twentieth century. At L'École des Beaux-Arts, Fontainebleau, she was taught by an obscure French sculptor, Denis Gelin. May's later work in the art deco style can be traced to her witnessing firsthand the influential Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes during her Parisian visits. In 1924, in Pasadena, May married Philadelphia-born James Francis de Causse, the renowned but enigmatic Franklin automobile stylist and alumnus of the European auto salons. It is likely they met while she was studying at the Art Students League as his office was located in the same block of West 57th Street. Fourteen years later J. Frank de Causse died of complications from throat and lung cancer at age forty.

May is represented in the American Art Collections of the Brooklyn Museum by a bronze, *Giraffes* (c.1933). Her *Modern Head* was included in the Third Annual Sculpture Exhibit at the Potters' Shop on Madison Avenue in New York City during February 1931. She was awarded an honorable mention for her *Head* at the National Ceramic Exhibition in Syracuse in May 1933. It is not known if these last two works were one and the same. Some of her ceramic work is script-marked in-mold, M.H. de C, M. H. de Causse or May Hamilton de Causse. Once accustomed to life's luxuries, May and Vieve frugally lived out their remaining years in the Pasadena area.

Diane May Stuart Hamilton de Causse passed away on January 31, 1971.



Nature Allures That She May Lead Us, clay bas-relief tile (front), c. 1920, produced by Maviva Ware. Collection of Robert Schmid. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*



"Maviva Ware" impressed mark verso: Nature Allures That She May Lead Us. Collection of Robert Schmid. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*



The Hamilton Studio "flange mark" was used c. 1925–1935. This example impressed underside: Untitled (Nude on Triangular Base). Collection of Steven and Debra Soukup. Photo: Martin A. Folb, PhD. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*



Untitled (Nude on Triangular Base), c. 1930, glazed earthenware, 3.75 × 4.25 × 6.25 in., Hamilton Studio "flame mark" impressed underside, unsigned (Attributed to Vieve Hamilton). Collection of Steven and Debra Soukup. Photo: Martin A. Folb, PhD. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maurine St. Gaudens grew up surrounded by art and creativity. She is the granddaughter of noted San Francisco jeweler, Maurice Saint-Gaudens, and the third-cousin of the esteemed sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Maurine's artistic background led to her career as a respected Fine Arts conservator and the establishment of the Maurine St. Gaudens Studio in Pasadena, California.

In conjunction with her professional work as a conservator, Maurine has served as guest curator for numerous art exhibitions throughout Southern California and as a consultant and manager to the estates of various artists.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. is proud to announce the release of the four-volumes of *Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California 1860–1960*. In more than 2,000 color images these four books trace the 100-year history of 320 women artists working in California as well as throughout the United States, Mexico, and Europe.

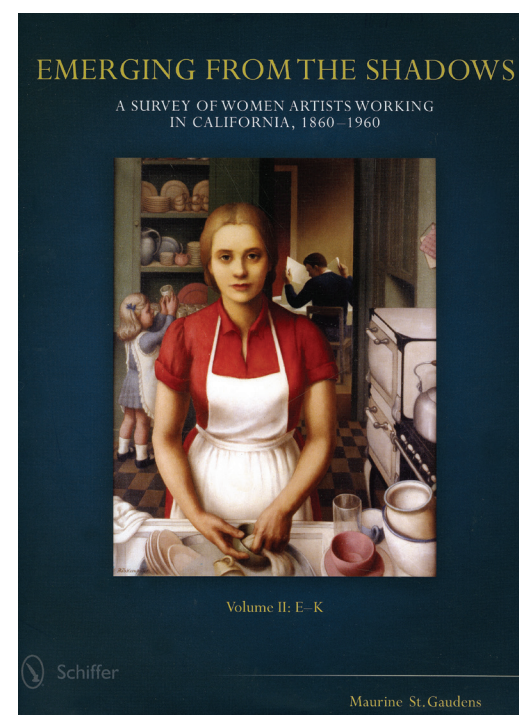
GENEVIEVE BARTLETT HAMILTON MONTGOMERY (1887–1976)

Vieve's art education during the early to mid-1920s included classes in New York at the Cooper Union, where she studied with the classically trained sculptor George Thomas Brewster. In New York, she also studied under the cubist-influenced sculptor Alexander Archipenko at his school. Vieve's ceramic sculpture variously titled *Torse* or *Torso* (c.1933) is a direct reflection of Archipenko's influence. She is also credited with attending classes at University of California, Berkeley, and San Francisco's California School of Fine Arts. Vieve married briefly very late in life, sometime around 1942–1949. Circumstantial evidence indicates she became the third wife of Ernest Alexander (Bob) Montgomery, a widely known Nevada mining figure who had made and lost several immense fortunes spanning his long career. In addition to her shared awards with May, Vieve received a purchase prize in ceramic sculpture in 1936 for *The Way Shower* (location unknown) at the beachside Hollywood Riviera Galleries.

Genevieve Bartlett Hamilton Montgomery passed away on April 21, 1976, in conservatorship. As sisters together in life, they were interred together in May's crypt, though Vieve's presence there remains unmarked, but not forgotten.

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Biography by Steven R. Soukup. *Courtesy of Emerging from the Shadows: A Survey of Women Artists Working in California, 1860-1960 and Maurine St. Gaudens.*



Emerging from the Shadows – Volume II: This hard cover book is 9" x 12", 352 pages and 500-plus color images. ISBN13: 9780764348624. \$59.99 – available at www.schifferbooks.com