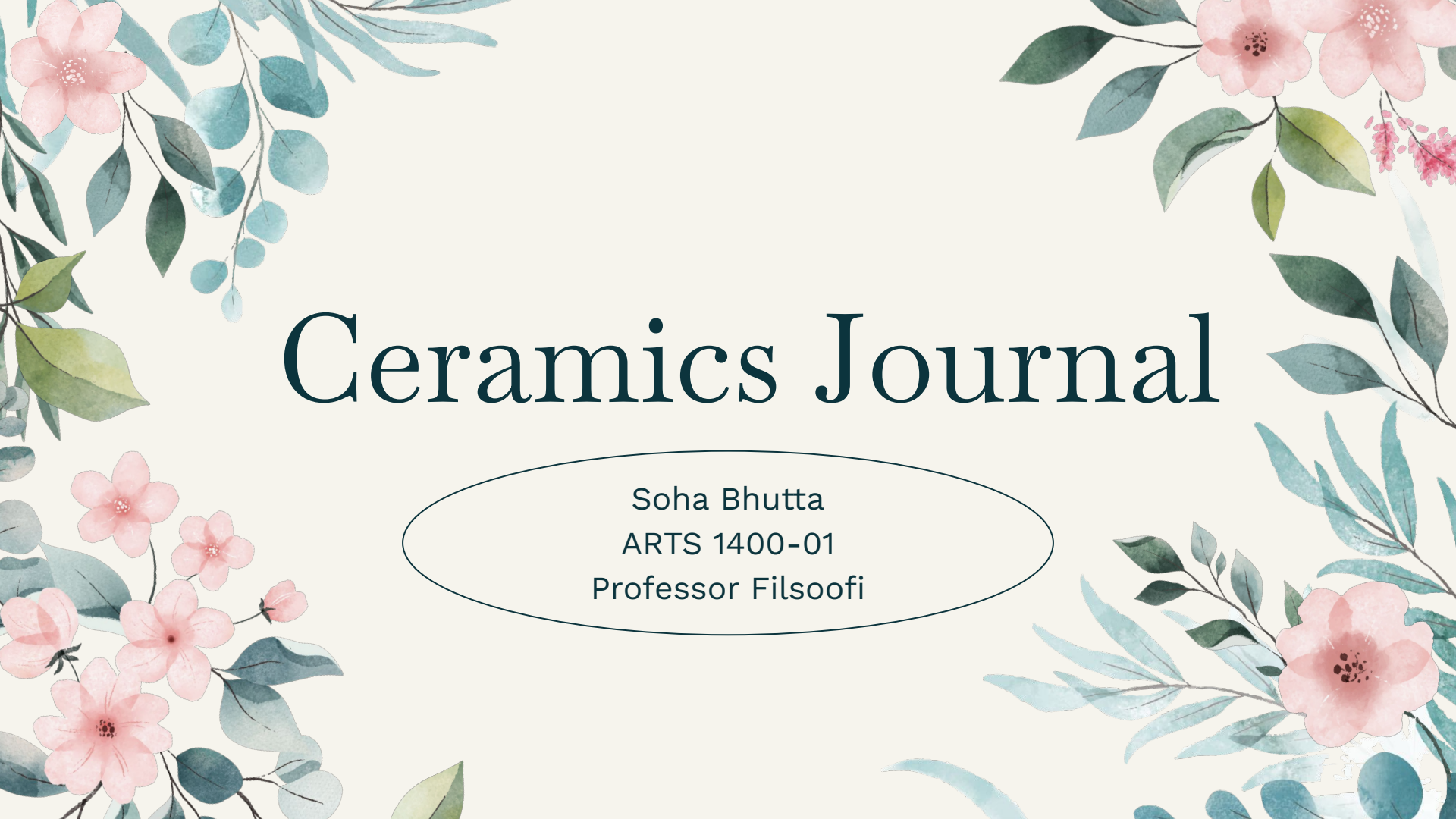
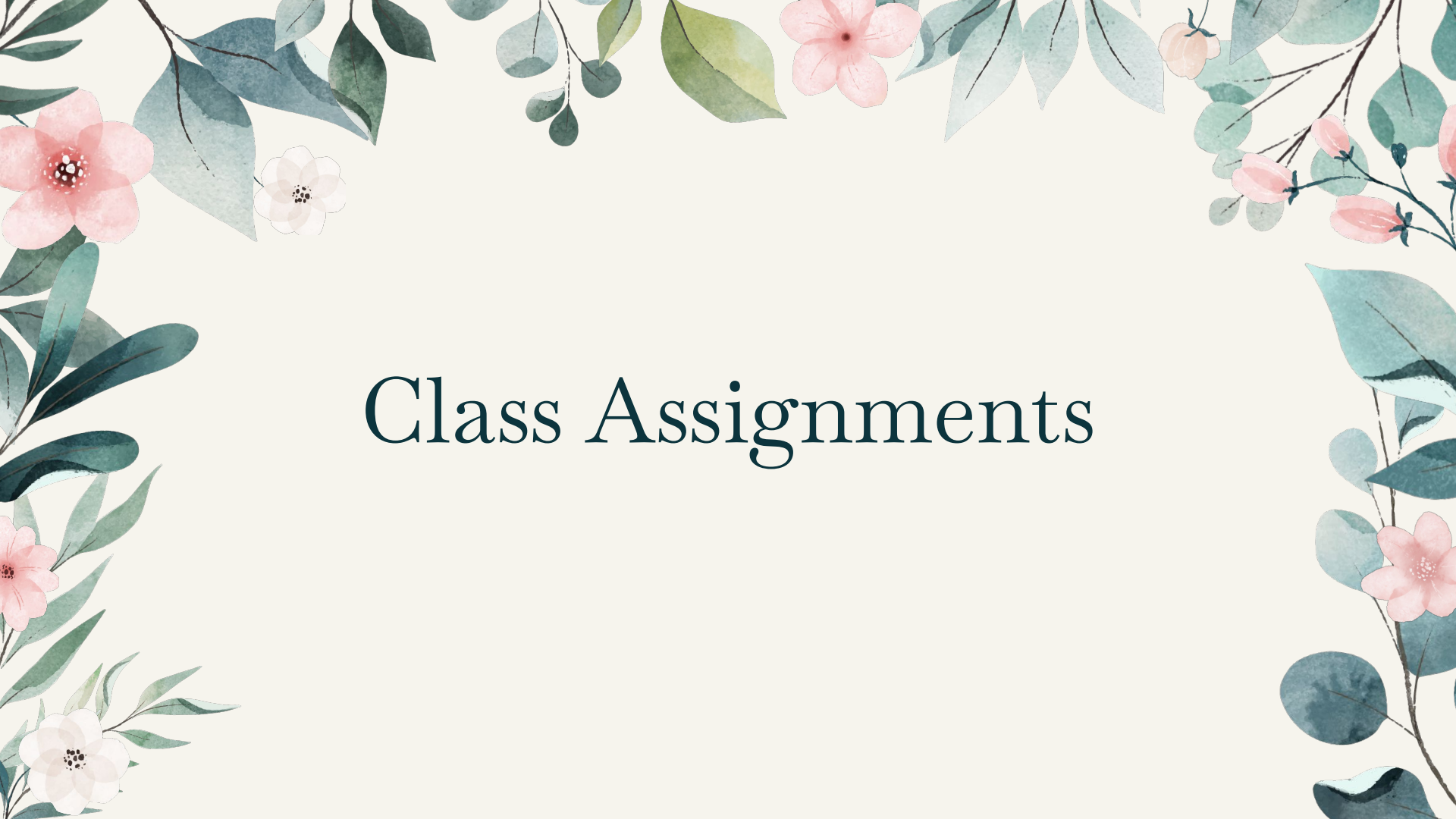




Ceramics Journal

Soha Bhutta
ARTS 1400-01
Professor Filsoofi

A decorative border of watercolor-style flowers and leaves in shades of pink, red, and green, framing the central text.

Class Assignments

Formal Analysis: Stirrup-spout Bottle

Major elements of design: Form, Texture, Shape

Major principles of design: Rhythm, Balance

This ceramic work uses form, texture, and shape to create a balanced and rhythmic visual experience. Although the overall 3D structure of the vessel is unique, its rounded and voluminous form gives it a compact stability that anchors it visually and physically. The raised, pebble-like texture of the circular protrusions and curved linear ridges offers a tactile experience that allows the viewer to imagine what the bottle feels like even before touching it. Basic geometric shapes, especially circles and repeated curved lines, are used consistently across the vessel's body. This repetition establishes a steady visual rhythm that guides the eye smoothly along its curves and across its patterned surface. These elements are also distributed symmetrically across the vessel, preventing any side from appearing visually heavier and contributing to an overall sense of balance.



Formal Analysis: Mexican Tree of Life

Major elements of design: Form, Color, Space

Major principles of design: Variety, Unity

This sculpture uses form, color, and space to create a work that feels both richly varied and deeply unified. Its distinct tree-like form expands outward in layered tiers, giving the piece an impressive sense of height and fullness while still being anchored by a sturdy, trunk-like base. The artist uses a broad palette of colors including reds, greens, yellows, and blues to differentiate each flower, figure, and animal, creating lively variety across the surface. Space also plays a critical role; while there are focal areas such as the angel near the top and the two figures in the gazebo on the left, the surrounding space is densely filled with flowers and animals. This crowded arrangement produces a sense of fullness and wonder, offering countless details to explore. Although the variety can feel overwhelming at first, the overarching tree structure unifies the composition, allowing the viewer to appreciate little details while still experiencing the sculpture as a harmonious whole.

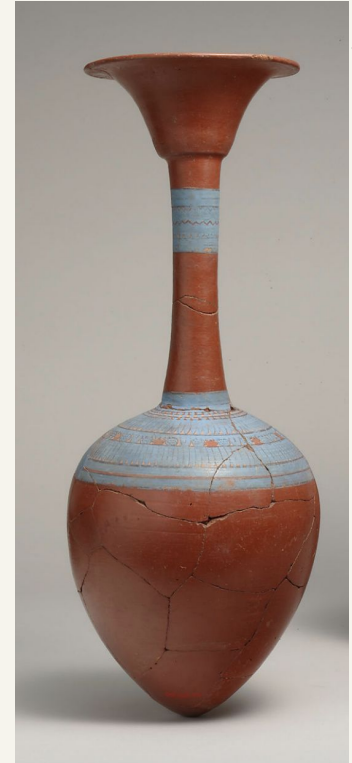


Formal Analysis: Tutankhamun's Water Bottle

Major elements of design: Form, Color, Line

Major principles of design: Contrast, Balance

This water bottle demonstrates how the elements of form, color, and line work together to create a striking sense of contrast and balance. The form is particularly compelling; although its elongated neck and pointed base suggest instability, the vessel achieves balance through precise symmetry, with both sides mirroring each other so evenly that the shape feels intentional and controlled rather than precarious. The bold color contrast between the warm red clay and the cool blue painted bands clearly separates different sections of the vessel, helping the viewer visually organize its unusual proportions. Lines are used to emphasize this color contrast, especially in the blue areas where fine linear patterns add texture and guide the eye around the rounded body. Together, the strong red–blue contrast and the perfectly symmetrical form encourage the viewer to see the vessel as both visually balanced and structurally coherent, despite its seemingly unstable form.



Terracotta Army Documentary

The tomb of Qin Shi Huang and its accompanying Terracotta Army were created in the third century BCE to serve as a monumental funerary complex, intended to protect and accompany China's first emperor in the afterlife. The thousands of life-sized terracotta soldiers, along with chariots, weapons, and infrastructure, reflect both imperial power and artistic capability. In the documentary, I learned about archaeological evidence from the tomb that suggests Westerners may have been present in China much earlier than many historians have traditionally believed. From an artistic perspective, certain sculptural features of the terracotta figures, such as life-sized proportions, appear to parallel Greek sculpting techniques. Additionally, aspects of bronze casting resemble Western metalworking methods, raising the possibility of foreign influence or training. From a transportation perspective, the documentary presented evidence of an extensive road network dating back to around 220 BCE, potentially stretching toward China's western borders and implying early external contact. Evidence of Western individuals themselves remains limited, though the possibility of Western concubines buried near the emperor, supported by mitochondrial DNA findings, was especially intriguing. The most fascinating aspect for me was the investigation of this early road system. I've learned about the Silk Road in many history classes and believe that discovering a precursor like the one in the documentary could alter the way history views early East-West interactions. However, I remain cautious of the assumption that Chinese artistic advancements must have been derived from European influence, as these innovations could have developed independently, and I was also unsettled by moments in the documentary that seemed to treat the archaeological site carelessly, such as when the cameraman knocked over bricks while climbing in the beginning.



Cultural Ceramic Forms - Amphora

As someone who grew up reading the Percy Jackson series, I've always had an obsession with Greek mythology. Amphoras were commonly referenced throughout the series, and I was excited to have an opportunity to research them further. Amphoras are Ancient Greek jars that were primarily used for the transport and storage of wet and dry goods, particularly wine. They often feature religious or mythological paintings to pay respects to the gods of the time period. The one pictured here is a very typical example. The form is symmetric, marked by the pointed bottom, wide belly, narrow neck, and two handles. Contrast is a major principle of design here, as the difference between the black base and orange details allows the surface artwork to stand out more. The picture itself is a depiction of the birth of Athena, who is said to have sprung from the head of Zeus fully grown and prepared for battle. This piece presents a great use of shape, as shown by the triangles near the bottom and the intricate geometric details of the figures. Despite the differences between the figures themselves, there is an overall sense of symmetry and balance from smaller details, such as the horses on either side of the scene.



Black-figured Amphora, 540 BC¹

1: *Object set: Ancient greece - virginia museum of fine arts.* (n.d.). Retrieved <https://www.vmfa.museum/es/collection/learn/object-set-ancient-greece>

Cultural Ceramic Forms - Albarello

I grew up in a Muslim household and have always been fascinated by Islamic art. My house is filled with Arabic paintings and ceramic pieces, so I was thrilled to have an opportunity to research this style of art further. Albarellos are cylindrical earthenware jars that are typically made using Majolica glaze. Originating from the Middle East, albarellos were primarily used by pharmacists to store drugs, ointments, and medicinal herbs. The form is typically cylindrical with no handles and slightly inward-curving sides. Instead of having a fitted lid, people would often use a fitted paper to seal the top of the jar. The surface is typically brightly colored with elaborate designs. This can be seen in the example pictured here, which is a classic Albarello from Renaissance Italy. This vessel in particular leverages the design elements of shape and color, as it features many brightly colored geometric patterns that remind the viewer of a Mediterranean summer. This piece also has a more elaborate design on one side of the jar than the other, which is intended to link the piece back to a specific artist. It's interesting how so much attention to detail and creativity is present in a piece that has a such a clinical function; perhaps it's a way for doctors to remind themselves of the beauty that exists in this world in spite of all the horrors they encounter throughout their work.



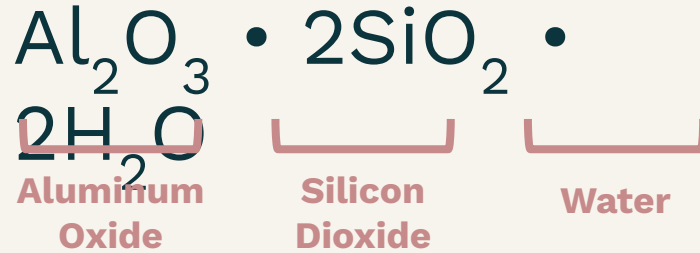
Albarello, 1515¹

A decorative watercolor floral border surrounds the central text. It features various green leaves in different shades and sizes, along with pink and white flowers. Some flowers have detailed centers with stamens. The style is soft and artistic, typical of watercolor painting.

Ceramics Fundamentals



Introduction to Clay



Clay is the component of soil that serves as the foundation of ceramics. Its most important qualities are its:

- Abundance
- Plasticity
- Durability

The different clay bodies are:

- Earthenware: low fire, brownish red color, least durable
 - Stoneware: mid-to-high fire, greyish-white color, extremely durable
 - Porcelain: high fire, white color, extremely durable
- 



Stages of Clay



Water interacts with clay in primarily 3 forms:

- Free Water: Extra water filling the space between clay particles
- Adsorbed Water: Water clinging to clay particles that helps the clay stay moldable
- Bound Water: Water that's locked into the clay's structure

Depending on the water content, clay can be classified into 6 major stages:

Slip/
Slop → Clay/
Plastic → Leatherhard → Greenware
/Bone Dry → Bisque → Glazed

Least
Dry

Most
Dry

Construction Methods/Techniques



Hand Building
(Pinch, Slab, Coil)



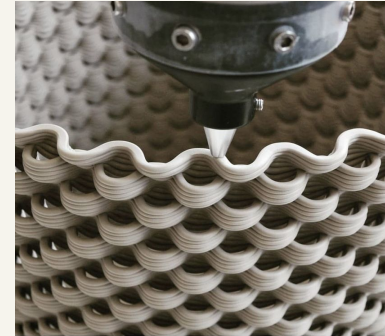
Wheel Throwing



Slip-casting



Press Molding



3D Printing



Surface Decoration Techniques

The surface of a clay piece can be decorated using a variety of techniques. Some examples include:

Sgraffito: Scratching through a layer of slip or underglaze to reveal the color of the clay underneath.

Image Transfer: Laying an image on top of the piece and soaking it in water so the ink transfers onto the clay.

Stenciling: Laying a cut-out template on top of the piece and tracing the pattern into the clay.



Sgraffito/Stenciling

Image Transfer



A decorative border of watercolor-style flowers and leaves in shades of pink, red, and green, framing the central text.

Projects



Kurinuki Bowl

Kurinuki is a traditional Japanese handbuilding technique that involves shaping a solid block of clay and hollowing it out to create an interior. The end goal is not to create a perfectly smooth work, but rather a piece that feels raw and alive. The Kurinuki technique is typically used to build tea bowls and teapots, but can also be used to carve out the base of more complex structures ¹. For my Kurinuki bowl, I decided to carve out the sides to create a natural, rocky texture. Because this was my first ceramic project, I approached the clay with hesitation, worried that I might carve too aggressively and remove more material than intended. Consequently, my bowl ended up thicker than I originally planned. I was also surprised by the amount of creative freedom this assignment offered. There were no strict expectations for the final product, so I had a lot of room for experimentation. Overall, this project felt like a perfect introduction to ceramics and gave me the confidence to begin the semester on a strong note.

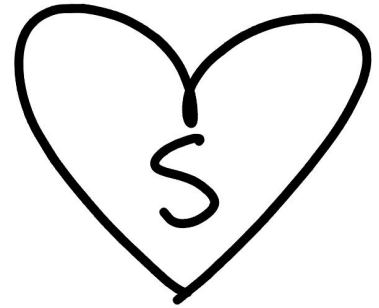
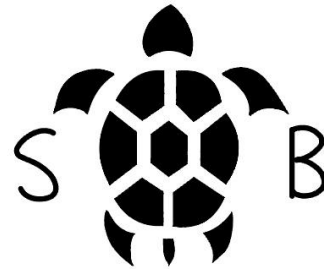
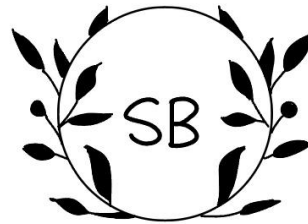
1: Julie peel / *ceramics ceramics*. (n.d.). Julie Peel | Ceramics. Retrieved <https://www.juliepeelceramics.com/notes/kurinuki>





Ceramic Stamp

One of my earliest projects was my personal clay stamp, which I've been using throughout the semester to initial all of my pieces. I started by looking on Pinterest for inspiration and found several designs that I really liked, but many of them were very intricate and detailed. After experimenting with the clay, I realized how difficult it is to carve small lettering and fine details at such a tiny scale. That process helped me better understand the material and its limitations. Eventually, I chose a much simpler design: a heart with an "S" in the center for my initial. I doodle hearts on almost every paper I write on, so incorporating one into my stamp felt personal and authentic. The final design feels both meaningful and practical, reflecting my style while also being simple enough for a new ceramicist to carve.





Form Exploration

For this form exploration project, we began by sketching a wide range of vessel shapes and experimenting with different silhouettes and proportions on paper. After choosing one design to build using the coil technique, I quickly realized that my original choice was too complex to execute successfully at my current skill level. I decided to pivot and create a simpler form, which resembles a traditional olla water and storage jar from Latin America. I appreciated that this project was not about striving for technical perfection, but instead about embracing the character of hand-built work. The slight asymmetries and irregularities give the piece warmth and authenticity. For the surface decoration, I experimented with ceramic stains, slip, and even sand and small rocks to create texture. I approached the surface in a spontaneous, almost chaotic way, layering materials intuitively. In the end, the different elements came together in a kind of randomized harmony, making the piece feel expressive and alive



A decorative watercolor floral border surrounds the central text. It features various green leaves in different shades and sizes, along with pink and white flowers. Some flowers have dark centers, while others are simple outlines. The style is soft and artistic, typical of watercolor painting.

Final Submissions



Dinnerware Set

For my dinnerware set, I created a bowl, cup, and plate based on the class recommendations. I wanted the set to feel personal, so I chose a night sky theme inspired by my love of stargazing. After looking at different reference images online, I pulled together elements that I liked and adapted them into my own design.





Dinnerware Set

I threw and trimmed each piece on the potter's wheel, which helped me maintain consistency across the set. Once the forms were finished, I applied a black underglaze as the base and used white underglaze to add the star and sky details. I finished the pieces with a clear glaze to give them a smooth, glossy surface.

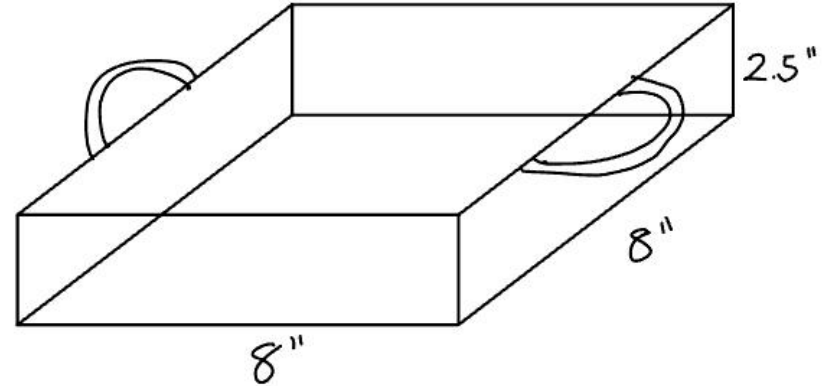
The most challenging part of this project was throwing the plate, since it was my first time attempting that form. It required more control and precision than I expected, especially in keeping the shape even and preventing warping. Overall, this project helped me improve my wheel-throwing skills and gave me more confidence working with functional forms.





Dinner Party

For the dinner party project, we were asked to create both a food item and the ceramic container to serve it in. Since I've been baking since I was a kid, I immediately knew I wanted to make brownies, which are one of my favorite things to bake. I typically use a square 8x8 pan, so I looked for inspiration online and designed my piece around that familiar form.



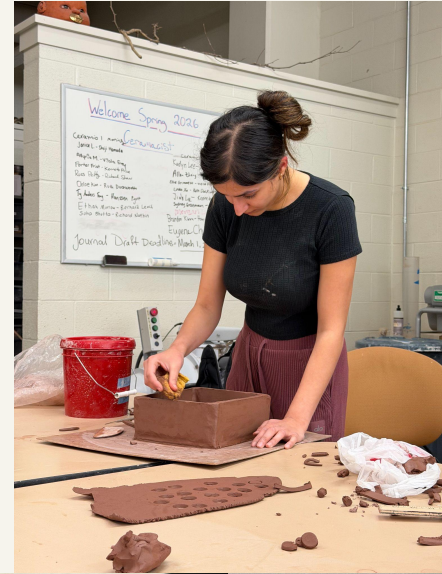


Dinner Party

For the construction, I primarily used slab building. I measured and cut five slabs, one for the base and four for the walls, and then attached them together. I paid close attention to compressing the seams to prevent cracking during firing. For the handles, I cut additional slabs and attached them to the partially dried form using slip and score, reinforcing them with coils.

Because the piece was fairly thick, it took a long time to dry. I placed it on drywall to help it dry evenly and reduce the risk of warping or cracking. For decoration, I used green, yellow, and orange underglaze to paint a pattern, and finished the piece with a clear glaze.

Overall, this piece turned out really beautifully. I did measure slightly incorrectly, so the brownies didn't fit perfectly at first, but with a bit of rearranging, I was able to make it work.

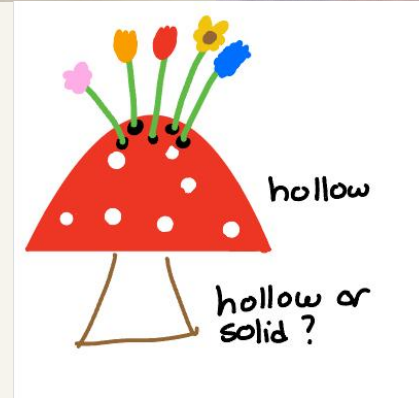




Ikebana

Ikebana is the Japanese art of flower arranging that focuses on balance, simplicity, and intentional placement. Unlike traditional bouquets, ikebana emphasizes negative space, line, and form to create a more sculptural and expressive composition.

For this project, I started by looking at reference works, and I was especially drawn to mushroom-inspired ikebana pieces. I thought the form was really playful and visually interesting, while still aligning with ikebana's emphasis on shape and structure. I also liked that this idea would allow me to combine multiple ceramic techniques, which felt like a fun challenge. Based on this inspiration, I decided to create a ceramic mushroom form that could function as an ikebana vessel.





Ikebana

To build the stem of the mushroom, I used coil building so that the interior would remain hollow and allow for a longer plant stem to pass through. For the top, I threw a bowl on the wheel and cut small holes into it to hold the stems. I then flipped the bowl upside down and attached it to a slab, creating the mushroom cap structure.

After that, I slip-and-scored the slab and bowl onto the coil-built stem. I rounded out the edges to make the piece feel more organic, and added small circular cutouts to the top for decoration. For the surface design, I used red and white underglaze to mimic a mushroom cap, and finished everything with a clear glaze.

This was probably the most difficult project I worked on. It combined several different techniques and required a lot of precision to make sure everything held together and didn't collapse. It also took a long time to dry, which put me slightly behind on the firing schedule. Despite the challenges, I'm really happy with how the final piece turned out.





Miniature Sculpture

For my miniature sculpture, I was inspired by small koi pond pieces I had seen online. I thought they were really cute and liked the idea of creating something detailed and calming on a small scale.

I handbuilt the entire piece. I started by cutting out circular slabs to form the base of the pond. Then I rolled a number of small balls to create the border rocks around the edge. After that, I carefully hand-built the fish, flowers, and other details within the scene.

This project required a lot of precision because everything was so small. I found it challenging to work at that scale, especially when shaping the tiny elements. The flowers alone took me about an hour to complete. After finishing the construction, I used underglaze to add color and then applied a clear glaze over the entire piece.

Overall, this piece turned out really well and ended up being one of my favorites from the semester.





Empty Bowl Project

The Empty Bowls Project is a global initiative where artists create handmade bowls that are sold to raise money for organizations working to fight hunger. The empty bowl acts as a reminder of those who do not have enough to eat, giving the piece both functional and symbolic meaning.

For my bowl, I kept the design simple. I threw it on the wheel and dipped it in an emerald green glaze.

I appreciated the purpose behind this project. It was nice to contribute something small to a larger cause while focusing on clean, functional design.

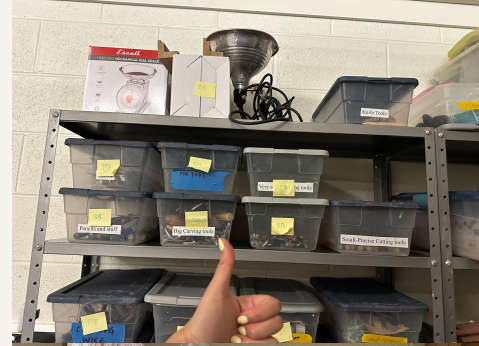




Studio Management

For my studio management task, I was responsible for cleaning some of the supply bins on the top shelf. I wiped down the shelf and thoroughly washed out the bins to make sure they were clean and ready for continued use. I also cleared off my personal shelf space and wiped that down as well.

In addition, I donated around 10 pounds of extra terracotta clay back to the studio for others to use.



A decorative border of watercolor-style flowers and leaves in shades of pink, red, and green, framing the central text.

Class Presentations

Richard Notkin

Soha Bhutta
Ceramics I



Background

- Born October 1948 in Chicago
- Received a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute and an MFA from the University of California, Davis
- Has worked in ceramics for over 40 years
- Currently lives and works in Washington



Inspirations and Influences

- Notkin's work explores the social, political, and environmental impacts of humanity on our planet and each other
- He grew up during a time of major political and social unrest, which heavily inspired his art
- He is especially known for his work in traditional Chinese Yixing pottery



Art Style and Ceramic Techniques

Primary Techniques

- Mold Making
- Slip Casting

Art Style

- Yixing Pottery
- Functional pieces reframed as purely decorative
- Political Symbolism



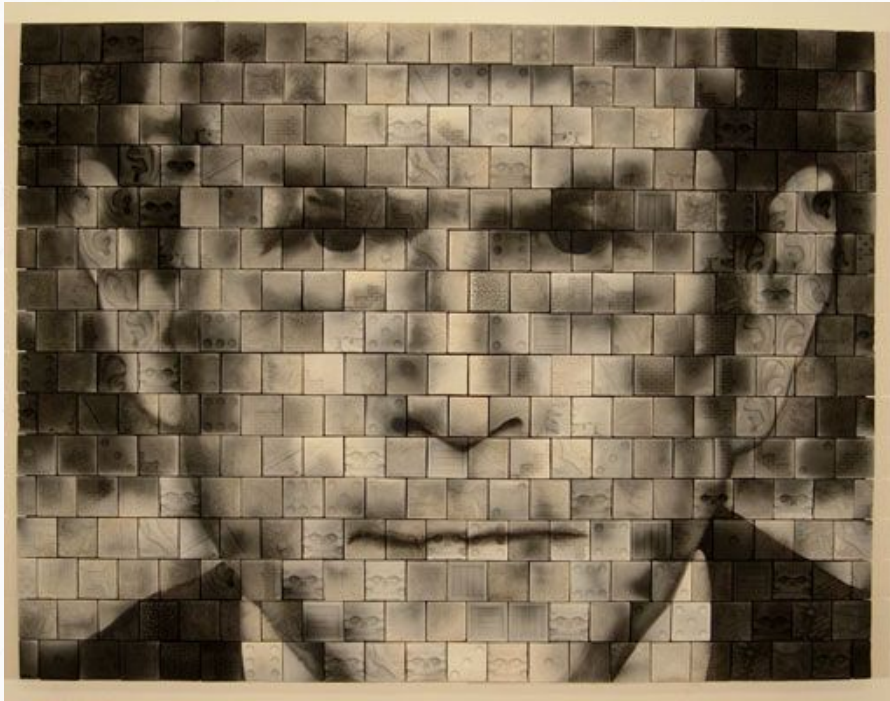
Heart Teapot Series

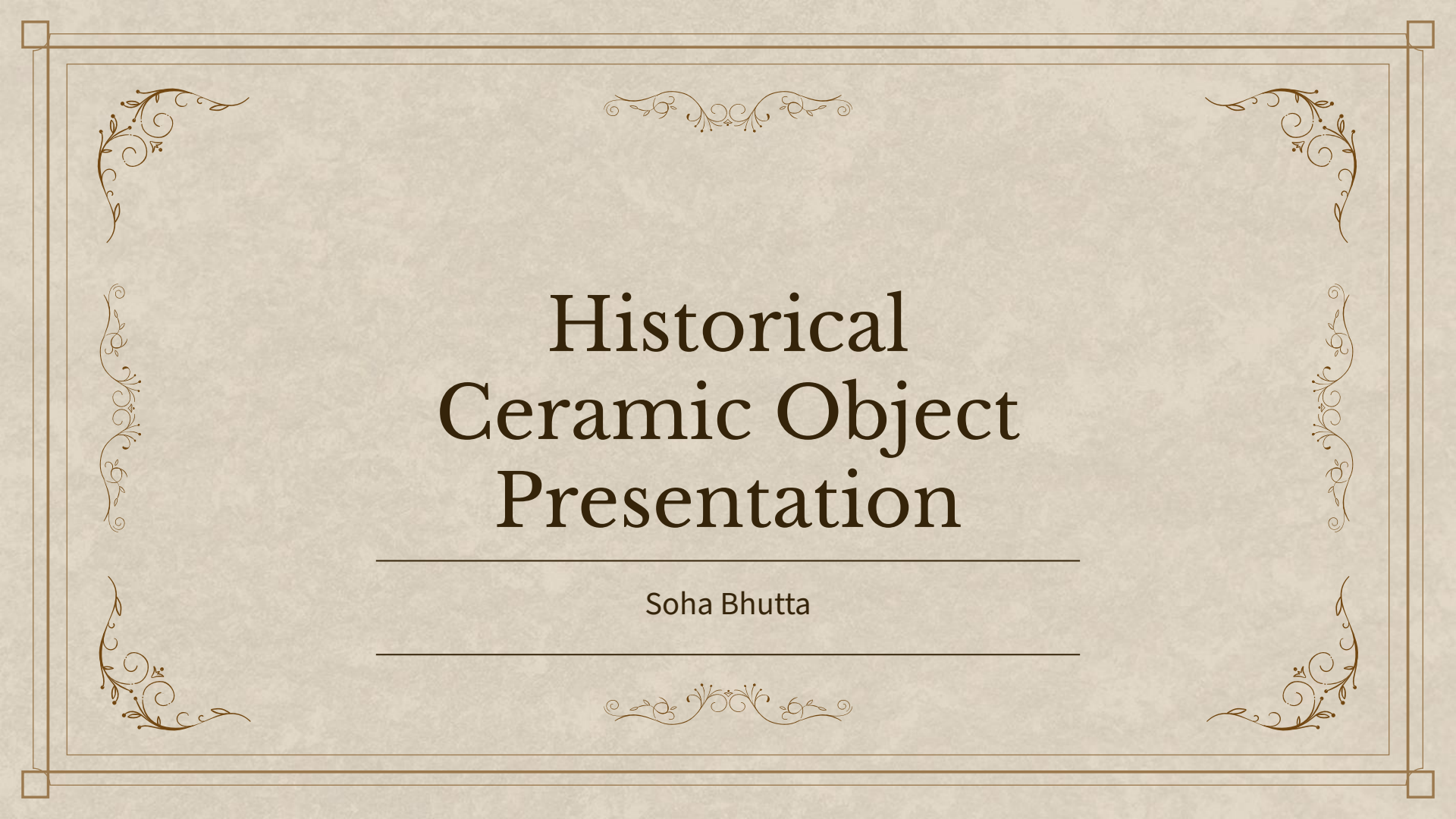


Teaset - Iraq 2007



All Nations Have Their Moment of Foolishness





Historical Ceramic Object Presentation

Soha Bhutta

Islamic Sgraffito & Splashware

- Flourished 9th–13th century across Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia
- Involves applying slip to a ceramic piece, scratching intricate patterns through it to reveal the clay below, and applying splashes of glaze to add color
- Splashware technique originated from Tang Dynasty China, spread via Silk Road trade



Piece Introduction

- 10th Century CE from Nishapur, Iran
- Earthenware with white slip, sgraffito incision, polychrome glazes under transparent glaze
- H. 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " × Diam. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
- Excavated from Nishapur in a 1937 Metropolitan Museum of Art expedition
- Currently on display in the Met



Bowl with Green, Yellow, and Brown Splashed Decoration

Historical Context

- Nishapur was a major Silk Road hub, connecting China, Iraq, and Iran through trade and cultural exchange
- Islamic law banned gold and silver vessels, making fine ceramics the prestige tableware of choice
- This piece was likely a prized household object, functional but also a marker of taste and status
- Nishapur ceramics were exported widely, with versions of this bowl found across the Islamic world



Form and Surface Decoration

- Wide, shallow profile maximizes the decorated interior surface
- Lobed, fluted walls create radial structure and direct the glaze into dramatic streaks
- Two decorative layers: sgraffito incision scratched through white slip below, splashed polychrome glaze on top
- Rim features alternating floral and vegetal forms; center is a lattice pattern



Elements & Principles of Design

- **Symmetry** — composition rotates outward from central lattice
- **Line** — precise incised marks vs. loose, fluid glaze streaks
- **Color** — green (copper), amber/yellow (iron), manganese brown; locally sourced minerals
- **Contrast** — controlled geometric incisions vs. organic glaze movement



A decorative border of watercolor-style flowers and leaves in shades of pink, red, and green, framing the central text. The flowers are delicate with visible petals and centers, and the leaves are elongated with prominent veins.

Artist and Object Lists

Bernard Leach



Leaping Salmon Vase



Pilgrim Dish

Kenneth Price



Zaba



Blind Sea Turtle Cup

Viola Frey



Falling Man in Suit



The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization

Glenn Martin Taylor



I'm So Sorry I Can't Be More



Teacup in Chains

Roberto Lugo



Bank Escape and Dominoes in the
Same Day



Block Party

Heidi Lau



From the Heart of the
Mountain Anchored the Path
of Unknowing



Banyan's Dreams

Shoji Hamada

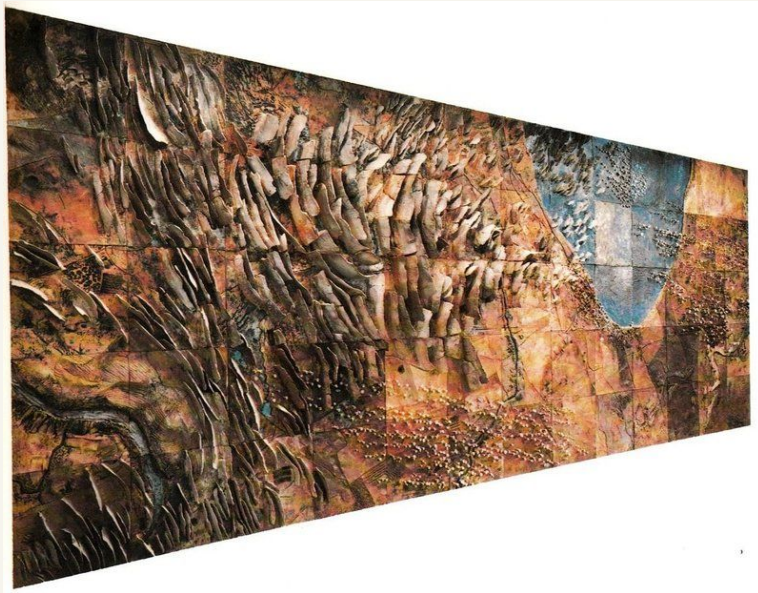


Chawan



Faceted Teapot

Ruth Duckworth



Clouds Over Lake Michigan



Slab Built Vessel

Jessica Stoller



Bloom



Breastplate

Richard Shaw



House of Cards



Vanitas with Artist's Sketchbook

Pablo Picasso



Le Hibou Gris



Tête de chèvre en profil

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott



Still Life (9 Pieces)



Still Life

Ashiwi Pottery



Ashiwi Polychrome Jar



Ashiwi Polychrome Pottery Jar

Terracotta Army



Goryeo Celadon



Maebyeong (plum bottle)
decorated with cranes and
clouds



Melon-shaped ewer with bamboo
decoration

Onggi



Mini Onggi



Green Patterned Onggi

Islamic Sgraffito & Splashware



Sgraffito-ware Bowl



Bowl with Sgraffito Decoration

A decorative watercolor floral border surrounds the central text. It features various green leaves in different shades and sizes, along with pink and white flowers. Some flowers have dark centers, while others are solid pink. The style is soft and artistic, typical of watercolor painting.

Frist Art Museum Visit

Visit Reflection

I really enjoyed my visit to the *In Her Place* exhibit at the Frist Art Museum. It was especially meaningful to see work from female artists in the local Nashville community, and even more exciting to see my own professor's work displayed in a museum setting. That made the experience feel more personal and connected to my own studies. One artist who stood out to me was Shannon Cartier Lucy. Her work is influenced by her upbringing with a schizophrenic father, and she paints scenes that feel realistic at first but become unsettling through surreal details. Her figures are often faceless, and the domestic settings she depicts feel both familiar and disturbing. There is a strong sense of melancholy and confusion throughout her work. This resonated with me because I am close to several people in my life who have schizophrenia. I've always been interested in understanding how they experience the world and how I can best support them. Her work felt impactful because it offers a glimpse into that altered perception. A piece that stood out to me was *New Home (oven)*. The composition is simple and centered, focusing on a pair of underwear placed inside an oven. While the setting is familiar, the subject is unexpected and unsettling. The muted colors and soft lighting make the scene feel realistic, which contrasts with the strange subject matter. The oven, usually associated with warmth and nourishment, instead creates discomfort. The underwear introduces a sense of intimacy in an inappropriate context, creating tension. This contrast makes the piece feel disorienting and open to interpretation, reflecting themes of confusion and altered reality.



New Home (oven)
Shannon Cartier Lucy, 2019



The Resonance of the Land

I really enjoyed attending *Resonance of the Land*, my professor's clay instrument performance inspired by the immigrant experience in the Nashville community. It was a unique and memorable experience that combined art, music, and storytelling in a way I hadn't seen before. One of the most interesting aspects of the performance was how it brought together people from such different backgrounds, including places like Iran, Guatemala, and Albania. It was powerful to see how something as universal as music, paired with clay as a medium, could create a shared experience across cultures. Before this, I had never really thought of clay as a musical vessel, so it was fascinating to see it used not just as a visual art form, but as something that could produce sound and contribute to a performance. The most impactful moment for me was when MonÁxi invited the audience to hold hands and sing together. It felt unfamiliar at first to hold hands with complete strangers, but it quickly became a meaningful moment. There was a strong sense of connection and unity in the room, and it made the themes of community and shared experience feel very real. Overall, the performance highlighted how art can bring people together across differences and create moments of genuine connection. It challenged the way I think about both clay and performance, and left a lasting impression on me.





Studio Exhibition

For the exhibition, I chose to display my koi pond. While it wasn't the most technically complex piece I created, I was especially proud of its aesthetic quality and the level of detail throughout.

