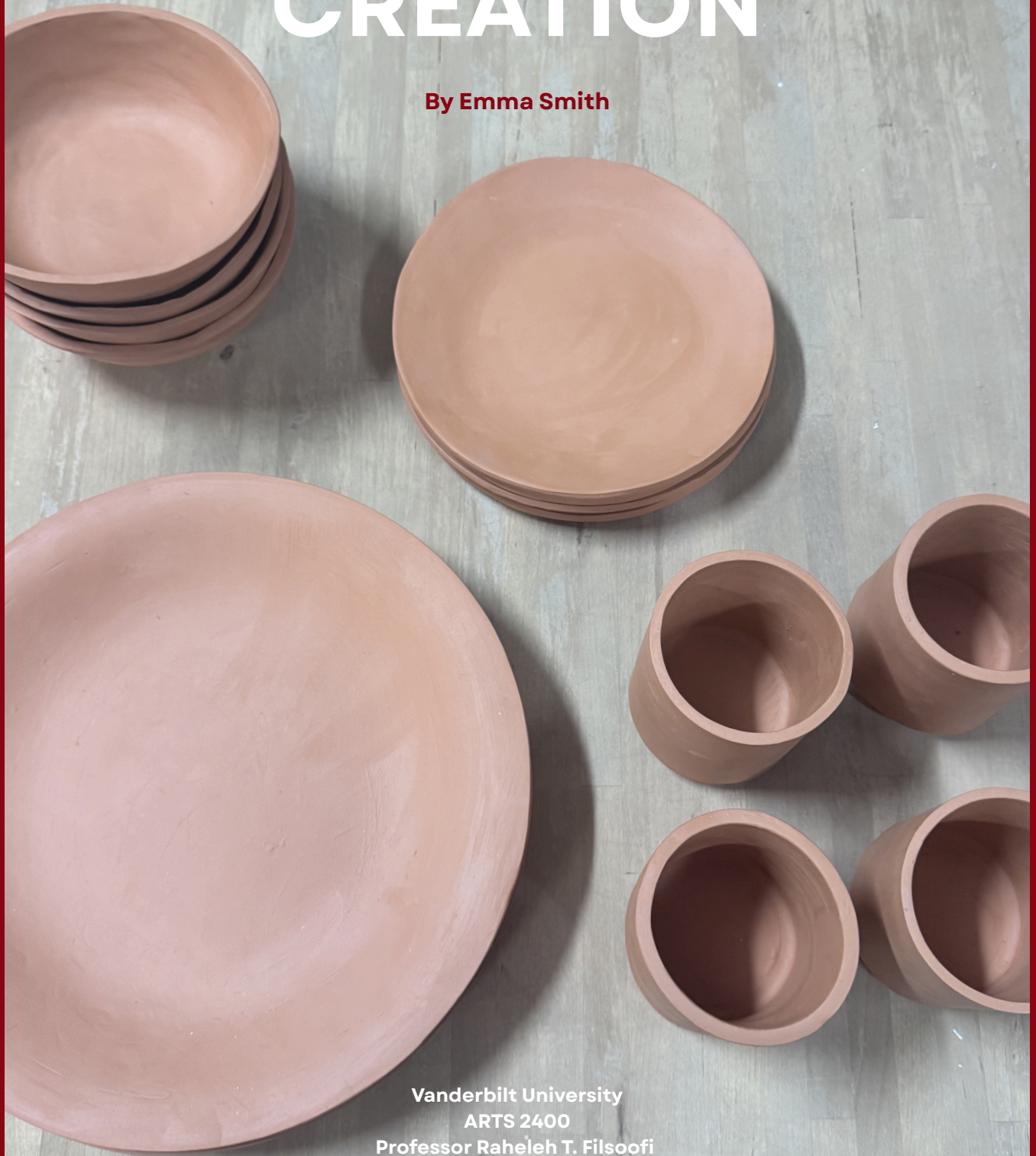


A CERAMIC JOURNAL

FROM CLAY TO CREATION

By Emma Smith



Vanderbilt University
ARTS 2400
Professor Raheleh T. Filsoofi
April 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. Miniature Work
4. Miniature Work Critique
5. Mug Creation - Kurinuki Cup, Footed Mug, Two Hand-Built Mugs, Thrown Mug
6. Jar Creation - Two Lidded Jars
7. Dinnerware Set - Four Cups, Four Bowls, Four Saucers, Four Plates
8. Tea Set - Teapot, Two Teacups, Tea Plate
9. Tea Set Measurements
10. Long Table Dinner Party - Cake Stand
11. Form Project - Clay Coil Vase
12. Raku and Obvara Firings - Two Raku Bookends, Raku Key Holder, Two Raku Ring Bowls
- 13.- 15. Class Documentation
16. Other Pieces - Paint Tray, Two Bookends, Four Espresso Mugs, Spoon Holder
17. Community Engagement – Empty Bowl Project
18. Studio Participation
19. Studio Management
- 20.-21. Frist Art Museum Visit
22. Glaze Test Tiles
23. Glaze Recipes from Scratch
24. Studio Inventory of Glaze Chemicals
25. Roberto Lugo Research
- 26.-28. Artist Presentation – Roberto Lugo
29. Additional Ceramic Artists
30. Terracotta Army Research
- 31.-33. Terracotta Army Presentation
34. Additional Historical Objects
35. Additional Research – Cultural Forms
- 36.-38. Class Notes / Lectures
- 39.-40. Resources

**Build:**

- Hand Built Slab

Glaze:

- Shelf-
 - Black 1 Dip, Cherry Blossom 1 Dip
- Books & Checkered Board-
 - Various underglazes

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5

MINIATURE WORK

This miniature bookshelf was inspired by the idea of intimacy and quiet hospitality. Specifically, how small, personal spaces can invite reflection, comfort, and connection. I was particularly drawn to domestic interiors and study spaces, where objects like books and games create a sense of warmth and belonging. In researching scale in ceramics, I became interested in how reducing size requires greater precision and sensitivity to proportion.

The piece was entirely hand-built, which allowed me to maintain control over the structure and refine delicate details. I began by sketching and constructing a paper template to establish accurate proportions, ensuring the bookshelf felt believable despite its miniature scale. Because of the fragility of small forms, I had to carefully manage moisture levels, allowing the clay to dry slowly and evenly to prevent cracking or warping. One of the most rewarding elements was crafting the individual books. Each was formed separately and finished with a unique underglazed surface, creating variation and visual rhythm similar to what would be seen on a typical bookshelf. I also incorporated a small checkerboard to enhance the narrative of the piece and reinforce the inviting atmosphere.

This project introduced me to the patience and attentiveness required in hand-building, and it revealed my preference for this method, which I followed throughout the semester.

CONT. MINIATURE WORK

Critique 1/14 - Mini Study

This piece is a three-dimensional ceramic bookshelf intended to live on a table or shelf. I focused on geometric form, lines, and repetition to create a sense of balance and unity across the object.

The books function as repeated forms, while subtle variation in their size creates rhythm without overwhelming the piece. I was intentional about leaving negative space so the object feels calm and restrained rather than crowded.

The checkered board includes attached pieces and references use, but it is not meant to be interactive. Instead, it emphasizes pattern, order, and contrast through the use of black and white slip, while remaining integrated into the shelf as a form.

Overall, the work prioritizes clarity of form, subdued surface, and careful proportion, drawing from the quiet, contemplative presence of Ming-inspired table objects and rewarding close observation. I was drawn more to unity and proportion than variety, and I wanted repetition and negative space to do most of the work.



Kirnuki Cup



Build:

- Thrown then Carved

Glaze:

- Antique Iron 2x, Eggshell 2x

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5

Footed Mug



Build:

- Thrown then Carved

Glaze:

- Eggshell 2x inside and top of outside

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



Build:

- Wheel Thrown, traditional handle

Glaze:

- Meadow 1 dip, lines taped then peeled

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



Build:

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Cherry Blossom 2x, Tropical Melon 1x, Calico 2x

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



Build:

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Shino 2x, Antique Iron 2x

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5

MUG CREATION

This series of mugs explored both traditional and experimental approaches to functional ceramics, with a focus on form, texture, and tactile experience.

The kirnuki cup was created by throwing a thick-walled cylinder on the wheel and allowing it to stiffen before carving into the form. This process required careful attention to balance and proportion, as removing too much material could compromise the structure. I particularly enjoyed carving a deep, grounded foot, which gave the piece a sense of weight and intentionality.

The footed mug further expanded this idea by integrating three carved feet directly from the base rather than attaching them. This approach allowed the form to remain cohesive while introducing a playful and sculptural element. I also applied a repetitive stamped texture using a square stamp, creating a rhythmic surface that enhances both visual and tactile engagement. The glaze application was intentionally partial, exposing areas of raw clay to contrast texture and finish, however, the glaze did not end up even on the outside, which made it look different than expected.

The additional hand-built and wheel-thrown mugs served as technical practice, especially in refining handles and achieving consistent proportions. Through this process, I developed a deeper understanding of how form, surface, and function interact, as well as greater confidence in combining traditional techniques with more experimental approaches.



Build:

- Wheel Thrown

Glaze:

- Cherry Blossom 2x, Tropical Melon 1x, Calico 2x

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



Build:

- Wheel Thrown

Glaze:

- Shino 2x, Antique Iron 2x

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



JAR CREATION

This project focused on the relationship between form and function through the creation of lidded vessels. I was interested in how containment and closure can influence the visual and tactile experience of an object, and I explored contrasting forms to better understand this dynamic.

Technically, this was my first experience throwing a vessel with a fitted lid on the wheel. I learned how to construct a rim on the jar and a corresponding lip on the lid, allowing the two components to fit securely together. This required precision in measurement and timing, as both pieces needed to reach compatible stages of dryness to function properly.

I created two jars with intentionally contrasting forms. The first was wide, smooth, and shallow, evoking a sense of openness and warmth. Its soft curvature emphasized simplicity and balance. The second jar incorporated a ridged surface created using a rib tool directly on the wheel, introducing texture and movement into the form. This contrast allowed me to explore how surface treatment can alter the perception of volume and structure.

One of the main challenges was achieving a proper fit between the lid and the vessel, as even slight inconsistencies could affect functionality. Through this process, I gained a deeper understanding of precision in wheel throwing and the importance of timing and control. However, after throwing these on the wheel, I decided I wanted to shift to focus more on hand building for the remainder of the semester as I like the flexibility it can provide.



Build:

- Hand Built slab

Glaze:

- Black 1 dip, Blue Monday 1 dip

Clay Body:

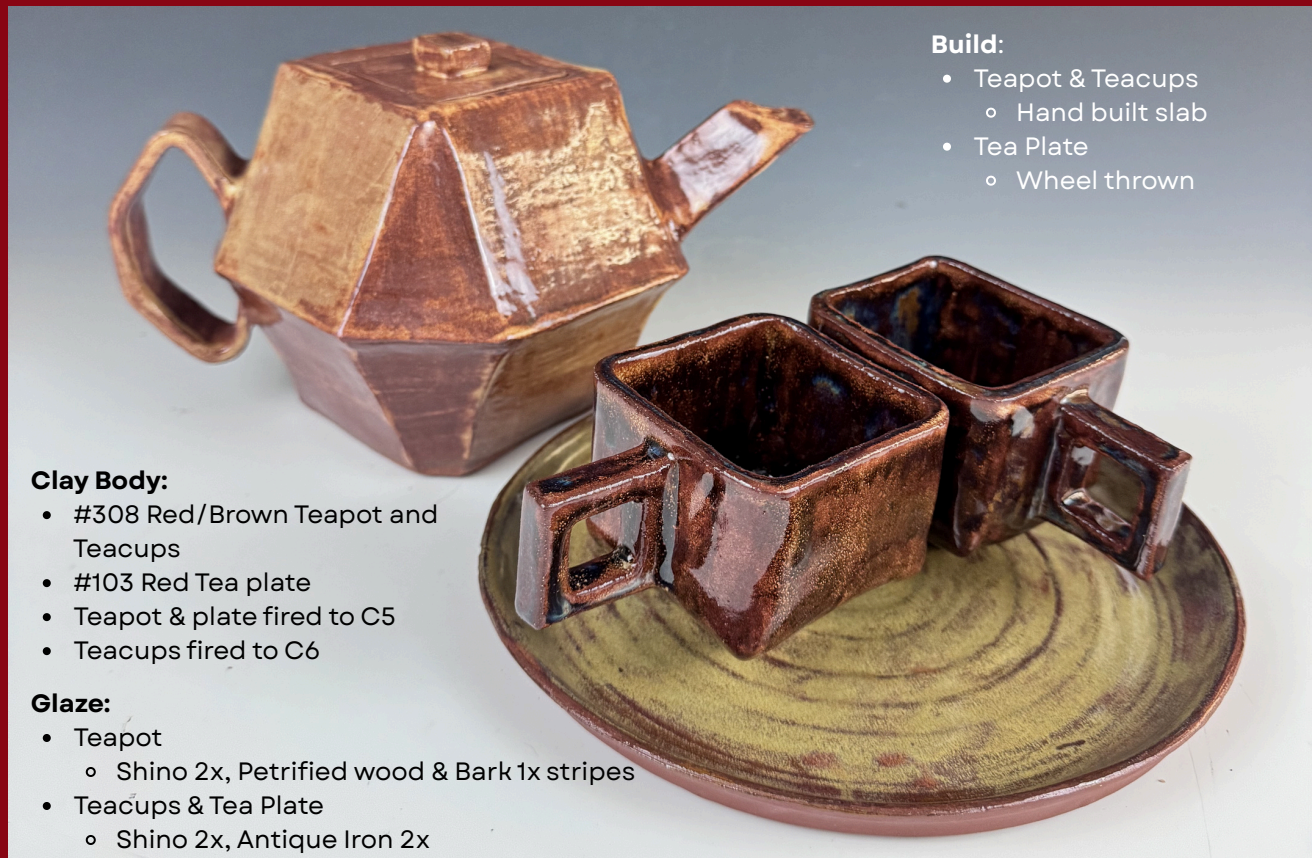
- #103 Red
- Fired to C5



DINNERWARE SET

This dinnerware set served as the culmination of my work in ceramics, bringing together the technical skills and conceptual ideas I developed throughout the semester. I was inspired by the idea of creating a cohesive, warm, and inviting table setting, where each piece contributes to a unified visual and functional experience. I was particularly interested in how repetition and subtle variation could create rhythm across multiple forms.

Before constructing the final pieces, I created glaze test tiles to research how different finishes would respond to the clay body and firing process. This step allowed me to make more informed decisions and maintain consistency across all sixteen components. However, the blue monday glaze pooled on the plates more than other pieces, causing some smoothed pinholes in those pieces. The glaze also turned out completely different than expected because I did this test tile on a different red clay body (#306), and even though this was red too (#103), it came out completely different. I chose to hand-build each piece in order to maintain control over form and ensure uniformity. Templates were carefully measured and transferred onto slabbed clay, allowing me to replicate consistent shapes for the cups, bowls, saucers, and plates. The cups and bowls were constructed with thick, intentional feet to allow for stacking, emphasizing both practicality and design. Bowls were formed using molds to achieve smooth, consistent curvature, while plates and saucers were shaped using plaster molds and refined at the leather-hard stage. Through this project, I learned the importance of planning, testing, and precision, as well as how cohesive design can elevate functional ceramics into a more immersive and thoughtful experience.



TEA SET

This tea set was inspired by geometric form and the challenge of translating angular design into a functional ceramic object. I was interested in moving away from traditional rounded teapot forms and instead creating something structured, architectural, and intentional. This required careful planning, as geometric construction in clay presents unique challenges in both stability and assembly. I began by sketching and measuring the design on paper, creating a template to guide the construction process. The teapot was entirely hand-built, starting with the body and followed by the attachment of the base, lid, spout, and handle. Each component had to align precisely to maintain the integrity of the geometric form. The teacups echoed this design through the use of square handles, reinforcing the visual language of the set. A coordinating plate was also created to unify the collection and enhance its functionality.

One of the primary challenges was ensuring that all angles connected cleanly without warping or collapsing during drying and firing. Sharp edges are particularly vulnerable in clay, requiring careful control of moisture and compression. Through this project, I developed a stronger understanding of structural planning and learned how to adapt hand-building techniques to achieve more complex, angular forms.

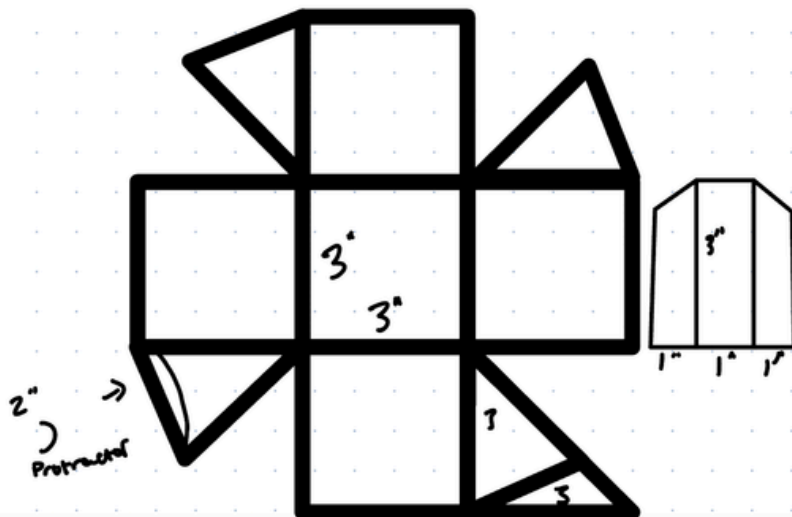
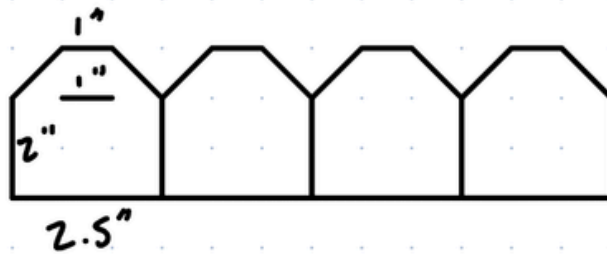


CONT. TEA SET

Teapot 3



Teacups





Build:

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Clear 3x

Clay Body:

- Brown Bear C6
- Fired to C5



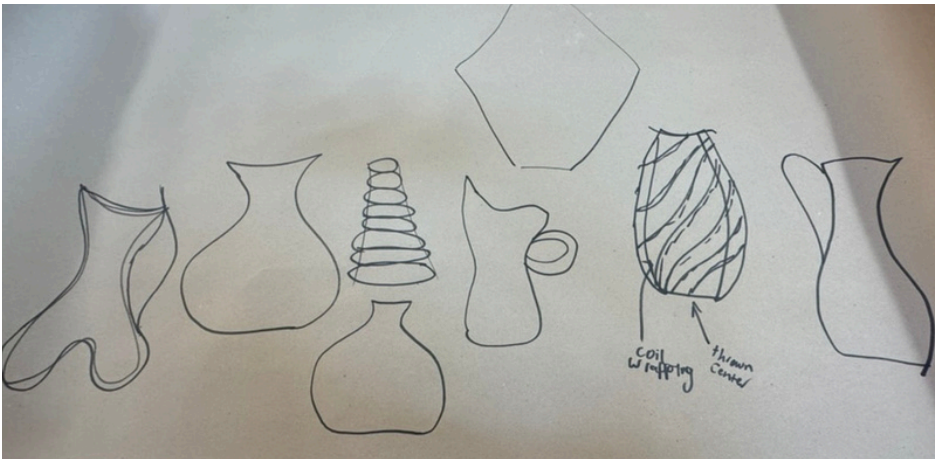
LONG TABLE DINNER PARTY- CAKE STAND

This cake stand was created as part of a larger dinner party concept, with the intention of designing an object that feels both functional and visually expressive. I was inspired by decorative serving ware and wanted to incorporate a sense of movement through the use of ruffled edges, giving the piece a dynamic and elegant quality.

The stand was entirely slab-built using black clay, beginning with a carefully measured template to define the proportions. The top surface was constructed first, with ruffled edges carved and refined before attaching the base. The pedestal was then built and joined, also incorporating ruffled detailing to create continuity in the design.

One of the main challenges with this piece was warping during the firing process. Because the top was glazed on both sides to allow for dual functionality as both a stand and tray, the uneven tension likely contributed to distortion in the kiln. Additionally, the clear glaze altered the color of the black clay, resulting in an unexpected brown tone.

Despite these challenges, this project deepened my understanding of how material, glaze, and structure interact. It highlighted the importance of considering how design decisions, such as glaze application, can impact the final outcome.



Build:

- Hand built coil

Glaze:

- None- sands and colorants pressed onto surface

Clay Body:

- Vanderbilt Earthenware Fired to C5

FORM PROJECT - CLAY COIL VASE

This project began as an exploration of form through drawing, emphasizing the translation of two-dimensional ideas into three-dimensional objects. I was inspired by organic and abstract shapes, focusing on how lines could define volume and movement.

After sketching multiple potential forms, I selected one that felt dynamic and balanced. The vase was constructed using coil-building techniques, layering and blending coils to gradually build the structure. The clay body used in this project was extracted from Vanderbilt's campus and had a vibrant red tone, which added a strong visual presence and influenced my material decisions.

To further experiment with the surface, I applied sand, silt, and colorants to the exterior of the piece. This introduced texture and variation, allowing me to explore how additional materials interact with the clay body during firing.

A challenge in this project was maintaining the intended form while building upward, as coils can easily shift or collapse if not properly supported. Through this process, I developed a better understanding of structural integrity and how to control form through gradual construction of noncommercial clay.

Raku Key Holder

**Build:**

- Hand Built Slab

Glaze:

- Tomato Red Raku

Clay Body:

- #239 Raku

Two Raku Ring Bowls

**Build:**

- Pinchpot

Glaze:

- Terra Sigillata
- Horsehair

***Clay Body:**

- #239 Raku

Two Raku Book Ends

**Build:**

- Hand Built Slab

Glaze:

- Obvara Firing

***Clay Body:**

- #239 Raku

RAKU AND OBVARA FIRINGS

The raku and obvara firings introduced a more experimental and immediate approach to ceramics, emphasizing surface transformation and unpredictability. I was inspired by the dynamic and often spontaneous results of these firing techniques, which contrast with more controlled kiln processes.

The bookends were hand-built and designed using pre-planned templates to ensure structural stability. The obvara firing process created organic, smoke-like patterns on the surface, giving the pieces a sense of movement and natural variation. The key holder incorporated layered elements and surface details, such as stamped dots and raised floral forms, to enhance the visual impact of the metallic raku glaze.

The small ring bowls were used as test pieces for horsehair firing, allowing me to observe how different materials interact with the heated surface of the clay. This process required precise timing, as the hair must be applied at a specific temperature to achieve the desired markings. One of the challenges of raku firing is its unpredictability, as results can vary significantly. However, this unpredictability also became one of the most rewarding aspects. Through this experience, I learned to embrace experimentation and to view unexpected outcomes as part of the artistic process.



RAKU AND OBVARA PROCESS: CLASS DOCUMENTATION



RAKU AND OBVARA FIRINGS: CLASS DOCUMENTATION



RAKU AND OBVARA FIRINGS: CLASS DOCUMENTATION

Paint Tray

**Build:**

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Eggshell 2x,
Calico 1x on
sections

Clay Body:

- #563 White
- Fired to C5

Book Ends

**Build:**

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Black 1 dip, Blue
Monday Dots

Clay Body:

- Brown Bear C6
- Fired to C5

Espresso Mugs

**Build:**

- Wheel thrown then
pinched

Glaze:

- Shino 2x, Antique Iron 2x

Clay Body:

- Brown Bear C5
- Fired to C5

Espresso Mugs

**Build:**

- Wheel thrown then
pinched

Glaze:

- Black 1 dip, Blue Monday 1
dip

Clay Body:

- Brown Bear C5
- Fired to C5

Spoon Holder

**Build:**

- Wheel thrown

Glaze:

- Meadow 1 dip, lines
taped then peeled

Clay Body:

- #103 Red
- Fired to C5

OTHER

Throughout the semester, I created several additional pieces to further develop my technical skills and explore new ideas. These included bookends made with black clay, a paint tray for glaze testing, espresso mugs, and a spoon holder.

The black clay bookends allowed me to revisit hand-building techniques while observing how a different clay body responds to shaping and firing. The paint tray was used as a functional test piece to explore how two glazes interact when layered, providing insight into surface effects and color variation.

The espresso mugs were particularly valuable for practicing wheel-throwing techniques. After throwing the forms, I altered them by pinching one side during the drying process, creating a more dynamic and ergonomic shape. This introduced an element of movement and individuality to each piece.

The spoon holder served as an additional glaze test, allowing me to experiment with surface finish and opacity. These smaller projects were essential in reinforcing skills and encouraging experimentation. They demonstrated how even simple forms can provide meaningful opportunities for growth and discovery.

Build:

- Hand built slab

Glaze:

- Undecided

Clay Body:

- Porcelain



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: EMPTY BOWL

At the end of the semester, our ceramics 2 class participated in the Empty Bowl Project, which is a community based effort where handmade bowls are donated to help raise money for people who are experiencing food insecurity. I liked being part of something that connected ceramics to a bigger purpose beyond just class projects.

For this project, we used porcelain clay, which feels very different from other clay bodies. It's softer and more smooth, but also more delicate and harder to work with. One thing that stood out to me was learning that porcelain can be trimmed even when it's more dry, which was something I hadn't experienced before.

The process of making the bowls was a little challenging because we had to work somewhat quickly while still making them functional and well-made. I also chose to hand build this which took time. Since these bowls were going to be used and given away, it felt important to make something that was both useful and thoughtful.

This project helped me see how ceramics can have a real impact outside of the studio. It made the work feel more meaningful, knowing it was contributing to something that supports the community.

STUDIO PARTICIPATION

Throughout the semester, I stayed really involved in the studio, not just during class but outside of it as well. On average, I came in about 2-3 extra times a week, spending around 5-10 additional hours working. That extra time made a big difference in how comfortable I became with the space and the materials. I helped with a variety of studio tasks, including mixing glazes, loading and unloading the kiln, and helping during firings. Mixing glazes helped me better understand how different materials affect the final surface, while working with the kiln showed me how important it is to load pieces carefully so they fire correctly. I also stayed after class to help clean, mop, and take care of clay waste, which made me more aware of how important it is to maintain a shared studio space. One challenge was balancing my own work time with helping out around the studio, but over time I got better at managing both. Overall, being consistently present in the studio helped me feel more confident in my skills and more connected to the full process of ceramics.



Loading the Kiln

Unloading the Kiln



STUDIO MANAGEMENT

For my studio management, I worked on organizing the glaze and underglaze cabinet. This involved going through all of the materials, getting rid of anything that had run out, and reorganizing everything so it was easier to see what we had and what we needed. It made the space a lot more functional and easier for everyone to use.

This process helped me realize how important organization is in a shared studio. When materials aren't clearly labeled or stored properly, it can slow down the whole workflow. It also made me more aware of how glazes need to be maintained to stay usable over time.

I also spent time cleaning my personal workspace, including my wheel, shelves, and cabinet. This was especially important for reducing dust, which can build up quickly in a ceramics studio and isn't safe to breathe in.

One thing I learned from this experience is that studio management isn't separate from making art, but it's part of it. Keeping a clean and organized space makes it easier to focus and work more efficiently, and it benefits everyone in the studio.

Cleaned Shelf



Cleaned Wheel



Organizing Glaze Cabinet





Sisavanh Phouthavong Houghton
b. 1976, Vientiane, Laos

Whispers of Hope #21-#79, 2025

When I went to the Frist Art Museum, this was a collection of oil paintings that immediately stood out to me when I walked into the room. At first, I was just drawn to the colors and the shapes. There were a lot of bold colors mixed with more muted ones, and everything felt very layered. I also noticed how geometric everything was... there were a lot of lines and grid structures that made the paintings feel really intentional and organized.

After looking longer, I started to notice the actual images within the paintings. You could see people and landscapes, but they weren't super obvious at first. It kind of made me slow down and actually look instead of just glancing. Some of the paintings felt heavier, like they were showing sadness or grief, while others felt calmer. The way they were all placed next to each other made it feel like each one was telling a different part of a bigger story.

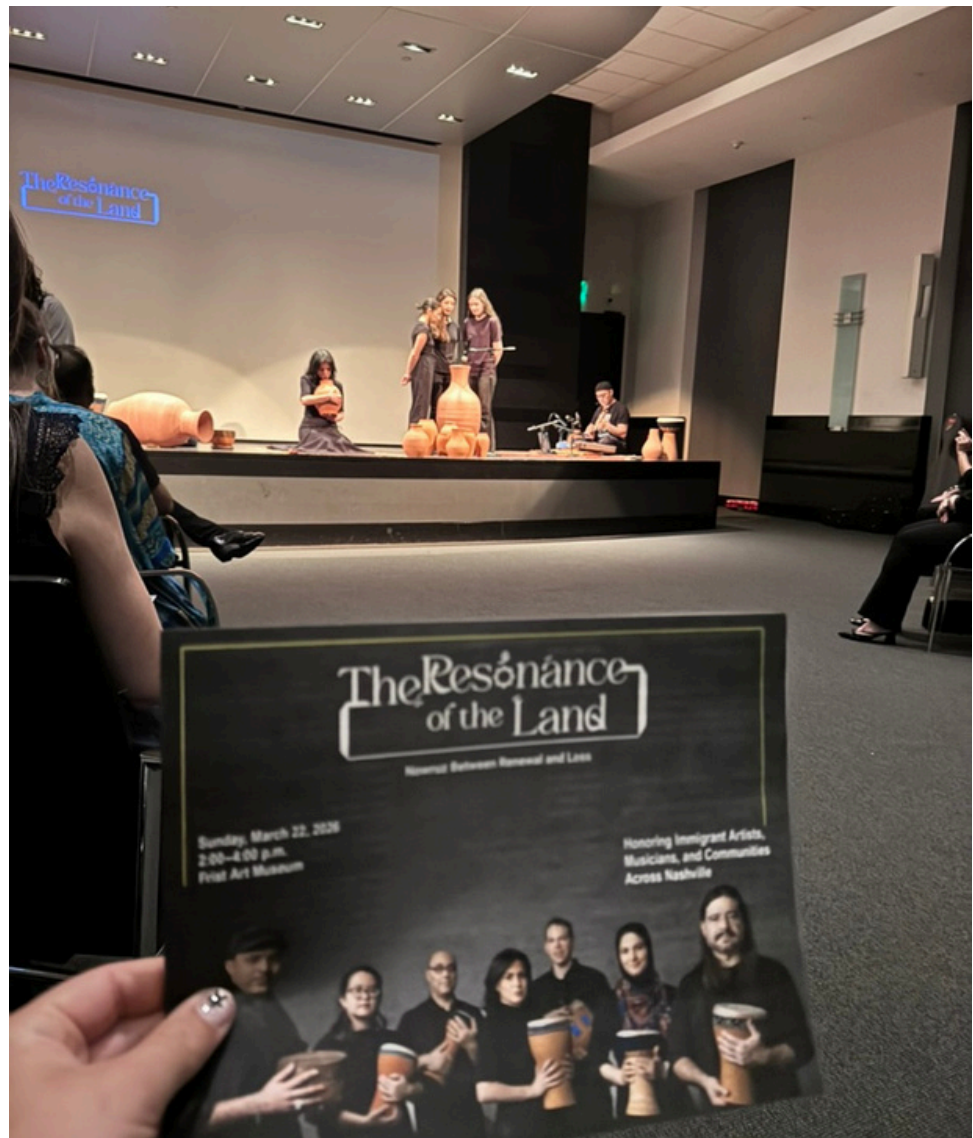
Even though these were oil paintings, it still made me think about ceramics. It showed me how much form and composition matter when you're trying to communicate something. In ceramics, especially with vessels, the shape and structure can tell a story in a similar way. This made me want to be more intentional with how I design my pieces, not just thinking about function but also what they might express.

FRIST ART MUSEUM VISIT

The Resonance of the Land

Transmedia
Performance-
Ceramic Instruments
and Performance

By Artist Raheleh
Filsoofi and Musician
Reza Filsoofi



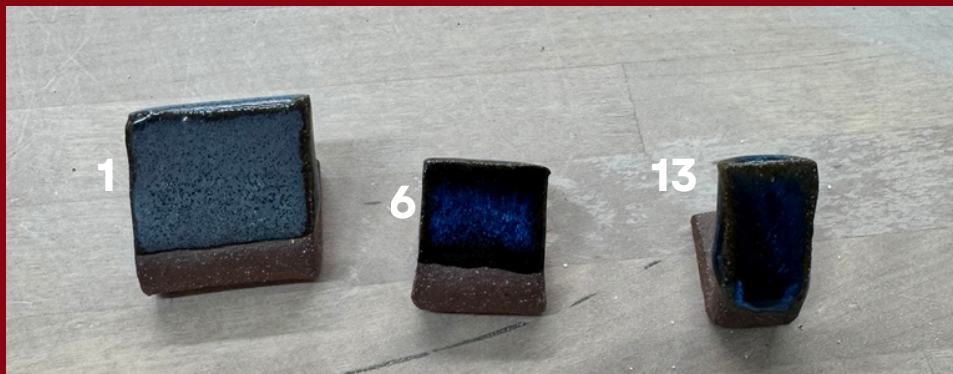
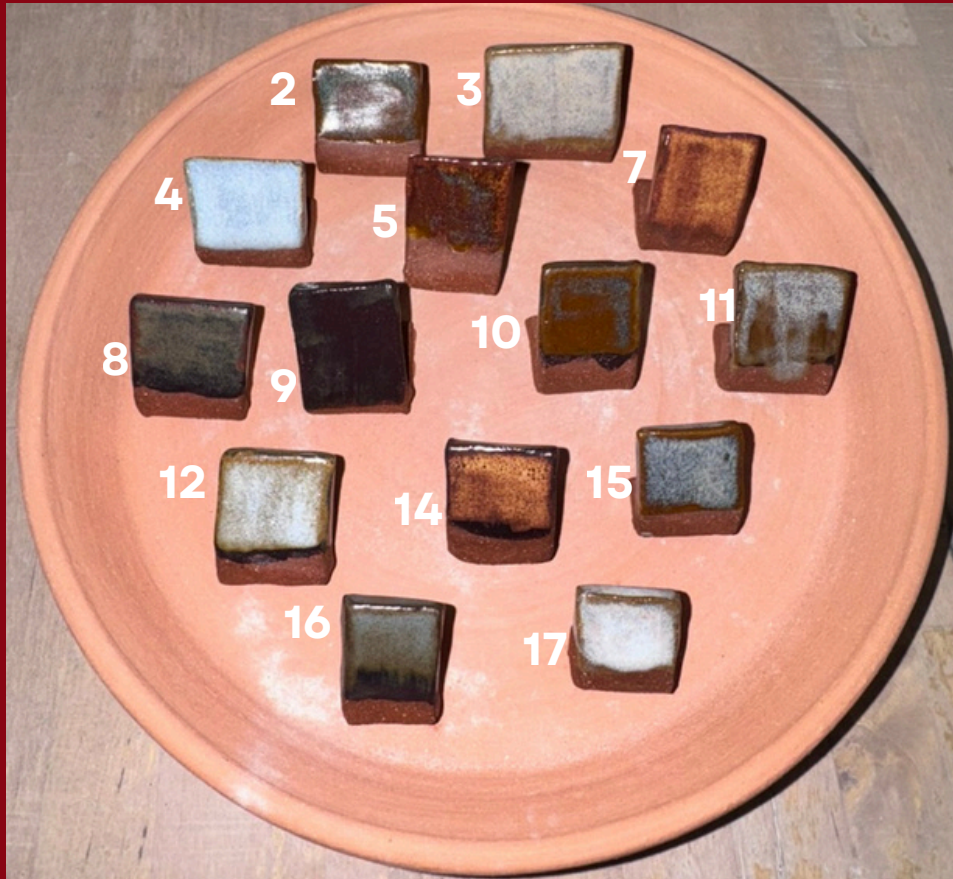
While I was at the Frist Art Museum, I watched a transmedia performance called *The Resonance of the Land* by Raheleh Filsoofi and Reza Filsoofi. This was the most memorable part of my visit. The performance focused on themes of displacement and the experiences of refugees, expressed through a combination of music, movement, and ceramic work.

What stood out to me most was that many of the instruments being played were handmade ceramic vessels. Seeing ceramics used in a live performance brought the pieces to life in a way I had never experienced before. The music was really moving, and when it was combined with the dancers and performers, it created an emotional experience that felt both personal and shared.

This experience changed the way I think about my own work. It made me more open to experimenting and thinking beyond traditional forms. It showed me that clay doesn't have to stay within just functional objects, but it can be interactive, expressive, and part of something larger and more meaningful.

FRIST ART MUSEUM VISIT

TEST TILES



- 1.617 GALAXY 1D
- 2.600 ANTIQUE IRON 2LP
- 3.604 CALICO 3LP
- 4.611 EGGSHELL 2LP
- 5.650 SHINO 2LP, ANTIQUE IRON 2LP
- 6.BLACK 1D, BLUE MONDAY 2D
- 7.650 SHINO 3LP
- 8.650 SHINO 2LP, 869 BARK 2LP
- 9.869 BARK 1D
- 10.869 BARK 2LP 600 ANTIQUE IRON 2LP
- 11.869 BARK 2LP 604 CALICO 2LP
- 12.869 BARK 2LP 611 EGGSHELL 2LP
- 13.BLUE MONDAY 2D, BLACK 1D
- 14.869 BARK 2LP 650 SHINO 2LP
- 15.600 ANTIQUE IRON 2LP, 604 CALICO 2LP
- 16.869 BARK, BLUE MONDAY 1D
- 17.604 CALICO 2LP, 611 EGGSHELL 2LP

LP = LAYERS PAINTED
D = DIP

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: GLAZES

MIXING GLAZES FROM SCRATCH

Custer feldspar 35 (G-200
potash feldspar)
Silica 30
Whitening 20
Kentucky om #4 ball clay 15

Red iron oxide 10%



40 Minspar 200 (or G-200)
20 Silica 325
20 EPK (big box)
15 Whitening (calcium
carbonate)
5 Dolomite

2% Cobalt carbonate
6% Red iron oxide

Soda feldspar 40.30
Silica 26.90
Whitening 14.90
Zinc oxide 12
Kaolin 4.90

Copper carbonate 6%
Cobalt carbonate 4%
Red iron oxide 1%

Through research, I chose three glaze recipes to test for my first time mixing glazes from raw materials. I was interested in seeing how different chemicals would affect the final color and surface.

Overall, the results turned out really well. None of the glazes ran during firing, which was something I was worried about. The top glaze was supposed to turn purple but came out green, which I think could be due to the kiln temperature or how the materials reacted together. My favorite was the dark blue glaze because it has hints of black and blue and feels very fluid on the surface. This experience helped me understand how unpredictable glaze results can be and made me more interested in continuing to experiment with different recipes.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: GLAZES

GLAZE CHEMICALS- STUDIO INVENTORY

Cobalt carbonate
Albany slip
Tin oxide
Borax
Minspar 200
G-200 potash feldspar
Yellow iron oxide
Magnesium carbonate oxide
50% calcium carbonate 50% talc
Magnesium dioxide 200 mesh
Granular manganese dioxide
Granular borax
Chrome oxide
Lithium carbonate
Bentonite
Bernard slip clay
Barium carbonate
Copper oxide
Ultrox
Red iron oxide
Copper carbonate
Epk China clay
Spodumene
Zinc oxide
Granular Borax

Frit
Silica 325
Epk
Calcined alumina
Om4 ball clay
Om4 Kentucky ball clay
Magnesium carbonate
Calcium carbonate
(whitening)
Calcified kaolin
Bentonite
Cornwall stone
Dolomite
Zircopax
Nc4 soda feldspar
Gerstley borate
Cornwall stone
Rutile

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: GLAZES



Digable Underground (2021)

This is one of Roberto's most significant works created for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit, "Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room."

It has the face of Harriet Tubman to portray the foundation of freedom, and he combined glazed stoneware, paint, cloth patterns, and graffiti to create this piece.



Trails and Trials: A Century's Journey to a Dream

Roberto made this vase to reinterpret the 1876 Century Vase, with a current lens. He features a portrait of MLK and made graffiti depictions of Atlanta's history. He wanted to focus on civil justice when making this vessel.

ARTIST PRESENTATION: ROBERTO LUGO

Roberto Lugo was raised in Philadelphia, in a Puerto Rican family, and he is a ceramic artist, spoken word poet, and activist. His early experience of art was primarily graffiti, and he discovered ceramics in community college at age 22.

He calls himself the "ghetto potter" because he uses ceramics to portray marginalized communities, hip-hop, and African American imagery on traditional ceramic vessels. Along with that, he is a social activist that uses his platform to discuss poverty, racial injustice, and inequality. He works mostly with porcelain and uses classical and historical forms, but he paints graffiti and urban imagery on these vessels to intentionally break down class barriers and start conversations about it.

Roberto Lugo

By Emma Smith
April 22, 2026

Who is he?

- a ceramic artist
- a spoken word poet
- an activist

He calls himself the "ghetto potter"



Contributions to the field

He seeks to discuss inequalities through his platform



Gun Teapot: Mae Jemison,
2021



Juicy, 2020



Frederick Douglass and Anna
Murray Douglass Vase, 2021

Technique/ style

- Porcelain
- Classical & historical forms
- Painted graffiti



Digable Underground (2021)

- Displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit, "Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room."
- Depicts Harriet Tubman
- Starting conversations about freedom



Trails and Trials: A Century's Journey to a Dream



- Reinterpretation of the 1876 Century Vase
- Portrait of MLK
- Graffiti depictions of Atlanta's history

Resources

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/847018>

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/latinx/roberto-lugo>

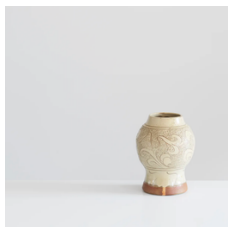
<https://high.org/collection/trails-and-trials-a-century-journey-to-a-dream/>

ADDITIONAL CERAMIC ARTISTS

Bernard Leach

Vase, c. 1928

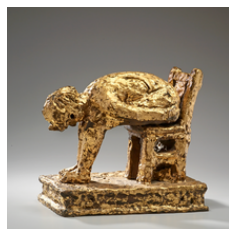
Source: Oxford
Ceramics



Viola Frey

Untitled (Woman
Seated and Leaning
Over II), 1985

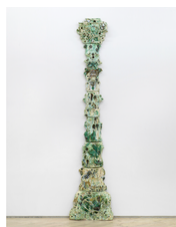
Source: Gavlak Gallery



Heidi Lau

From the Heart of the
Mountain Anchored the
Path of Unknowing, 2023

Source: Matthew
Brown Gallery



Ruth Duckworth

Footed Bowl, ca. 1970

Source: Artnet



Richard Notkin

Cooling Towers
Teapot (Variation
#32), Yixing Series

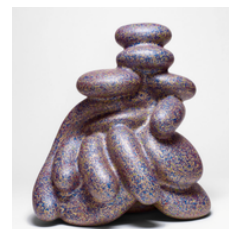
Source: Virginia A.
Groot Foundation



Kenneth Price

Zaba, 2008

Source: Matthew
Marks Gallery



Glen Martin Taylor

Healing Was Beautiful

Source: Artist Website



Hamada Shoji

White-Glazed

Square Bottle with
Black Drip

Source: Dai Ichi Arts



Jessica Stoller

Bloom, 2019

Source: PPOW
Gallery



Richard Shaw

Palette with Ink

Pencil Eraser, 2023

Source: Andra Norris
Gallery





The Kneeling Archer

This is one of the best preserved figurines that still shows traces of the original colored pigment. High levels of detail can be seen on this piece with braids in the hair to show the realism the artists achieved. The tread on the bottom of his shoe can still be seen which shows the precision of the artists' work.



HISTORICAL OBJECT PRESENTATION: TERRA COTTA ARMY

The Terra-cotta warriors are thousands of clay soldiers that were made to guard Qin Shi Huang's tomb. He was the first Chinese Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. These sculptures were discovered in March 1974 by peasants who were building a well in China. Since then, archaeologists have located more than 600 pits of underground vaults within 22 square miles!

This is very significant in the clay community and world because they were most likely created around 210-209 BCE, and they were all mainly preserved. There are also thousands of sculptures- around 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots, and 670 horses. They are all shaped in military formations too, because the emperor believed the army would protect his empire in the next world/afterlife.

Each soldier was uniquely crafted with distinct facial features, which highlights the incredible artistry and labor of the Qin Dynasty. . It's also significant because it is believed to have taken around 40 years to complete, and they are life size! The sculptures were all made from terracotta, fired clay, using a system to build them, and they were then fired in massive kilns which made them very durable!

Terra Cotta Army

By Emma Smith
April 22, 2026

What is it?

- Thousands of clay soldiers
- Guards the first Chinese Emperor's tomb
- Discovered in March 1974



Significance

- Around 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots, and 670 horses
- They are life size
- All soldiers are uniquely crafted



Cultural context



- Made during the Qin dynasty
- In military formations

Production Method

The figurines were all made from terracotta, fired clay, using a system



Molding was used for legs, torsos, and arms



Assembly with slip to connect the pieces



Hand sculpting details and features



The Kneeling Archer

- Most preserved figurine
- High levels of detail
 - Example- there's tread on the bottom of his shoe!



Resources

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-you-need-know-about-chinas-terra-cotta-warriors-first-qin-emperor-30942673/>

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL OBJECTS

Ashiwi (Zuni) Terrace Rim Bowl

Historic Zuni Pueblo
Terrace Rim Bowl,
c. 1870s

Source: Adobe Gallery



Onggi Jar

Onggi Storage Jar

Source: Bandana Pottery



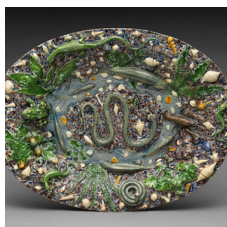
Islamic Sgraffito Bowl

Bowl with Green, Yellow,
and Brown Splashed
Decoration, 10th century
Source: The Metropolitan
Museum of Art



Bernard Palissy (Follower of)

Platter, late 16th century
Source: The Metropolitan
Museum of Art



Pueblo Pottery

Cochiti Storage Jar, c.
1800–1820

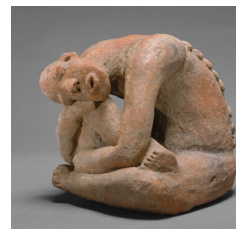
Source: Indian Pueblo
Cultural Center



Seated Figure (Middle Niger)

Seated Figure

Source: The
Metropolitan
Museum of Art



Goryeo Celadon Maebyeong

Maebyeong (Plum Bottle)
with Cranes and Clouds

Source: The Metropolitan
Museum of Art



Pablo Picasso Ceramics

Wood Owl, 1968

Source:
Masterworks Fine Art



ADDITIONAL RESEARCH: CULTURAL FORMS

I chose this piece because I really like the shape and how simple it is. Even though there's no decoration, it still stands out and feels really intentional. Moon jars were used for storage, but they also show how something can be functional and still feel significant. I like that the shape isn't perfectly even, which makes it feel more natural and unique. The smooth white surface makes it feel calm and balanced without needing anything extra added to it.



Moon Jar, Korea, 18th century
Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Pharmacy Jar (Albarello),
Italy, c. 1450
Source: Cleveland Museum of Art

I chose this piece because it seems very different from things we use today. It was used to store medicine, which gives it a really specific purpose that we don't see as much anymore. What stood out to me most was the amount of detail on the surface. The decoration makes it feel more decorative than something meant for storage. I also like the curved shape of the jar, which shows how the form was still practical to make it easy to hold.

CLASS NOTES/ LECTURES

From Dust to Clay 🤖 -- Clay Presentation January 14, 2026

Venus of Dolní Věstonice-

Paleolithic age between 31,000-27,000

From Czech in Europe - rituals of explosions when the clay was still wet



My sculpture from 2025



The Great Ziggurat of Ur - 4000BC

Present day Iraq - The first cities in the Middle East

The Jomon Period -

14,000 BC to around 300 BC

Coil building!!!



My coil piece from 2025

CLASS NOTES/ LECTURES

Soil

Soil particles: Sand, Silt, and Clay

Sand:

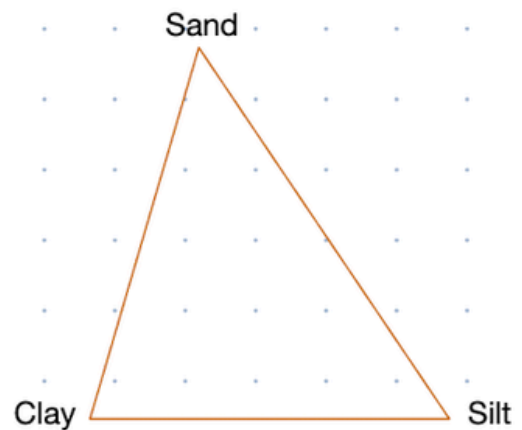
- Largest particles
- Gritty texture, drains water quickly
- Doesn't hold shape well

Silt:

- Medium sized particles
- Smooth, silky feel when wet
- Holds water better than sand

Clay:

- Smallest particles
- Sticky and plastic when wet
- Can be shaped and fired --> Ceramics



Most important qualities of clay

- Abundance
- Plasticity
- Durability

Clay formula



Aluminum oxide, two silicon dioxide, 2 water

Clay Sources

○ Primary Clay (residual clay)

- formed at the site of the parent rock- white and free from impurities
- not plastic and they are refractory (have to fire very high)
- aka the rock breaks, stays there, and is not moving
- Example (kaolin in China- porcelain)

○ Secondary Clay

- transported from multiple sources by water and wind
- uneven particle size
- contains organic materials and other impurities
- Examples: ball clay, fire clay, earthenware clay, slip clay, volcanic clay

CLASS NOTES/ LECTURES

Clay Bodies

- Earthenware (1832-2166)
- Stoneware (2192-2336)
- Porcelain (1260-1350)

Plasticity

- Short clay = Lack of plasticity
- Fat clay = High plasticity

Water in Clay: Interacting in 3 forms

- 1. Free water (inter-particle water)
- 2. Absorbed water (capillary water)
- 3. Bound water (constitutional water)

6 Major Stages of Clay

1. Slip/ Slop
2. Clay/ Plastic
3. Leather Hard
4. Green ware (dry) / Bone dry (room temp/ extra dry)
5. Bisque (first firing)
6. Glazed

Construction Methods

- Pinch
- Coil
- Slab
- Wheel Thrown
- Slip Casting
- Press Molding
- 3D Printing

Kilns

- Electric kilns
- Gas kiln
- Raku (gas)

RESOURCES

“Ashiwi (Zuni) Terrace Rim Bowl.” Adobe Gallery, c. 1870s,
<https://www.adobegallery.com/art/historic-zuni-pueblo-terrace-rim-bowl-circa-1870s>

“Bernard Leach. Vase.” Oxford Ceramics, c. 1928,
<https://www.oxfordceramics.com/artists/50-bernard-leach/works/4615-bernard-leach-vase-c1928/>

“Bernard Palissy (Follower of). Platter.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, late 16th century, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/201633>

“Cochiti Storage Jar.” Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, c. 1800–1820,
<https://indianpueblo.org/grounded-in-clay/>

“Digable Underground.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/847018>

Duckworth, Ruth. “Footed Bowl.” Artnet, ca. 1970,
<https://www.artnet.com/artists/ruth-duckworth/footed-bowl>

Frey, Viola. “Untitled (Woman Seated and Leaning Over II).” Gavlak Gallery, 1985,
<https://www.gavlakgallery.com/art-fairs/frieze-masters>

Glen Martin Taylor. “Healing Was Beautiful.” Artist Website,
<https://glenmartintaylor.com/portfolio/clay-pottery/>

“Goryeo Celadon Maebyeong.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39590>

Hamada, Shoji. “White-Glazed Square Bottle with Black Drip.” Dai Ichi Arts,
<https://www.daiichiarts.com/artists/52-hamada-shoji/overview/>

Heidi Lau. “From the Heart of the Mountain Anchored the Path of Unknowing.”
Matthew Brown Gallery, 2023, <https://www.matthewbrowngallery.com/artists/heidi-lau>

High Museum of Art. “Trails and Trials: A Century’s Journey to a Dream.”
<https://high.org/collection/trails-and-trials-a-centurys-journey-to-a-dream/>

RESOURCES CONT.

Jessica Stoller. “Bloom.” PPOW Gallery, 2019,
<https://www.ppowgallery.com/artists/jessica-stoller>

Kenneth Price. “Zaba.” Matthew Marks Gallery, 2008,
<https://matthewmarks.com/artists/ken-price>

“Moon Jar.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45432>

Notkin, Richard. “Cooling Towers Teapot (Variation #32), Yixing Series.” Virginia A. Groot Foundation,
<https://www.virginiaagrootfoundation.org/winners/richard-notkin/>

“Onggi Jar.” Bandana Pottery, <https://bandanapottery.com/onggi>

“Pharmacy Jar (Albarelllo).” Cleveland Museum of Art,
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1954.258>

Picasso, Pablo. “Wood Owl.” Masterworks Fine Art, 1968,
<https://www.masterworksfineart.com/artists/pablo-picasso/ceramic/wood-owl-1968-ceramic/id/w-5417>

Raheleh Filsoofi. “Resonance of the Lands.”
<https://www.rahelehfilsoofi.com/resonance-of-the-lands>

Richard Shaw. “Palette with Ink Pencil Eraser.” Andra Norris Gallery, 2023,
<https://andranorrisgallery.com/art/untitled-title-coming-9-by-richard-shaw>

Roberto Lugo. “Roberto Lugo.” National Museum of African American History and Culture, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/latinx/roberto-lugo>

Shoji Hamada. “White-Glazed Square Bottle with Black Drip.” Dai Ichi Arts,
<https://www.daiichiarts.com/artists/52-hamada-shoji/overview/>

Smithsonian Magazine. “What You Need to Know About China’s Terra-Cotta Warriors of the First Qin Emperor.”
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-you-need-know-about-chinas-terra-cotta-warriors-first-qin-emperor-30942673/>

A CERAMICS PORTFOLIO

FROM CLAY TO CREATION

By Emma Smith