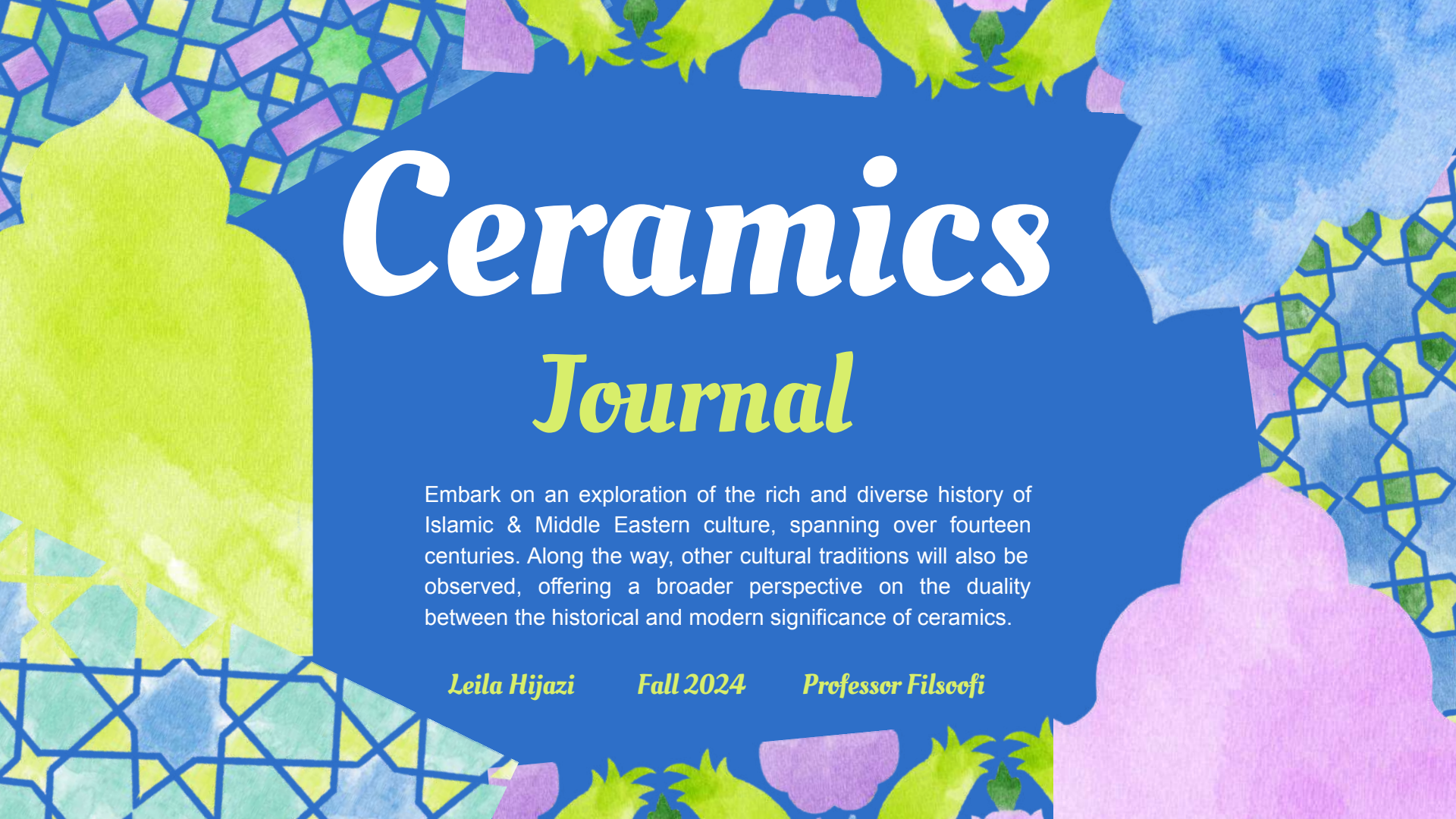


The background is a vibrant blue with various decorative elements. On the left, there is a large, light green, stylized archway. On the right, there is a large, light blue, stylized cloud or smoke-like shape. The top and bottom edges are decorated with colorful, stylized floral and geometric patterns in shades of green, yellow, and purple. The title 'Ceramics Journal' is centered in the upper half of the image.

Ceramics

Journal

Embark on an exploration of the rich and diverse history of Islamic & Middle Eastern culture, spanning over fourteen centuries. Along the way, other cultural traditions will also be observed, offering a broader perspective on the duality between the historical and modern significance of ceramics.

Leila Hijazi

Fall 2024

Professor Filsofi

Table of Contents

01

Ceramics Basics

Open Exam

02

Mayan Culture

The Envelope Project

03

The Bowls Project

Sadaqah Jariyah

04

The Slab “Box” Project

Islamic Significance

05

The Cups Project

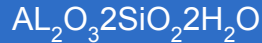
Middle Eastern
Cultural Connection

01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 1: General Ceramics Knowledge

1. What is the Chemical Formula for Clay?



Aluminum Oxide (Alumina), 2 Silicon Dioxide (Silica), 2 Water

2. List the Most Important Qualities of Clay:

Abundance Plasticity Durability

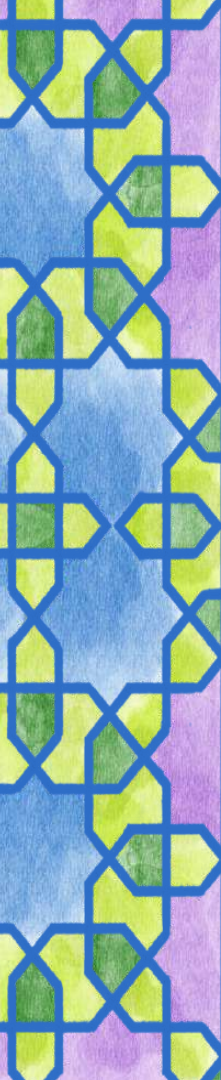
3. Name the Six Major Stages of Clay:

A clay can be classified into one of six major stages based on its water content, ranging from the wettest to the driest they are:

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

4. How Many Construction Methods (Techniques) are there in Ceramic Art?

1. Handbuilding: A sculpting method where clay is shaped by hand using techniques like pinching, coiling, or rolling out slabs.
2. Wheel Thrown: A process where clay is centered and shaped on a potter's wheel using centrifugal force.
3. Slip-Casting: A technique where liquid clay (slip) is poured into a mold in layers to eventually create a hollow form.
4. Press Molding: Clay is pressed into a pre-formed mold to capture its shape and details.

A decorative vertical border on the left side of the slide, featuring a complex geometric pattern of interlocking hexagons and lines in shades of green, yellow, and blue, set against a light blue background.

01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 1: General Ceramics Knowledge

5. Define the Main Purposes of Glaze.

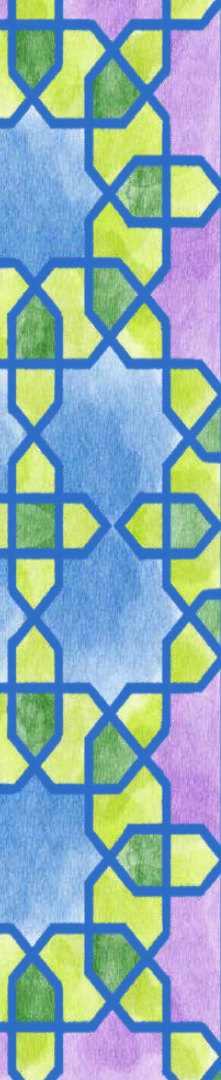
Glaze is a layer of glass fused to the ceramic surface. It is applied as a liquid to bisque and is quickly absorbed, leaving behind a layer of dry powder. It is then melted on the body at a high temperature in a kiln. The purpose of glazing is to color, decorate, strengthen or waterproof an item.

6. What Does the Term "Bone Dry" Mean, and Why is This Stage Important?

"Bone dry" is a term used to describe and identify greenware pottery that has dried as much as possible, with no remaining moisture, prior to its first firing (the bisque firing). This stage is important because it prepares the clay for firing, ensuring that it is stable enough to withstand the heat without cracking or warping.

7. What is the Purpose of Wedging Clay Before Working on the Potter's Wheel?

To prepare the clay, it must be wedged to remove air bubbles and ensure a uniform consistency. There are two common wedging techniques: the spiral method and the simpler ram's head method, both named after the shapes the clay forms during the process. Once wedged, the clay should be rolled and shaped into a slight cone with a rounded body and flat base. This helps prevent the clay from cracking or breaking in the kiln by ensuring it is evenly mixed and free of trapped air.

A decorative vertical border on the left side of the slide, featuring a complex geometric pattern of interlocking hexagons and lines in shades of green, yellow, and blue.

01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 1: General Ceramics Knowledge

8. What is 'Slip' and Give an Example of How it can be Used in Ceramic Work.

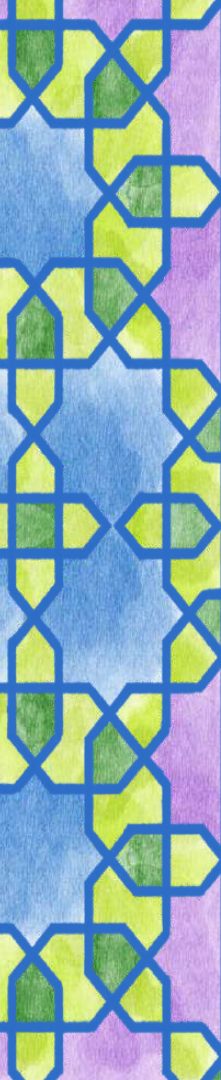
Slip is a liquid mixture of clay and water that is often used in ceramics for decorating or bonding. It can be applied to the surface of pottery for various techniques, such as slip trailing, where it is used to create intricate, raised designs, or to add color and drawings to the piece. Additionally, slip can serve as an adhesive to join pieces of clay together, ensuring a strong connection between parts during construction. Unlike underglaze which has a commercial use, slip can be used at any stage.

9. What is Leather-Hard Clay, and What Technique can be Performed at this Stage?

Leather-hard clay is a stage where the clay is partially dried but still firm and malleable, feeling cool to the touch and holding its shape without being brittle. At this stage, techniques like carving, stamping, or adding texture can be performed, as the clay is firm enough to hold intricate details yet still soft enough to manipulate. This is also the ideal time to attach pieces together using scoring and slipping.

10. What does the Term "Plasticity" Mean in Ceramics, and why is it Significant?

Plasticity is the property of clay that allows it to change shape without breaking when force is applied. It is essential in construction because it allows clay to be easily molded and retain shape when wet.

A decorative vertical border on the left side of the slide, featuring a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking hexagons and lines in shades of green, yellow, and blue, set against a light purple background.

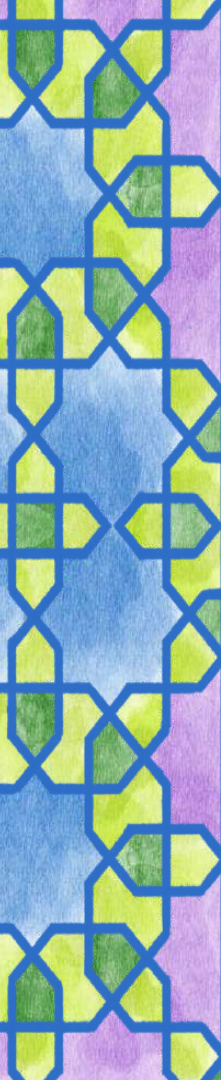
01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 2: Book-Based Questions

1. List five essential tools for ceramicists and explain their primary functions. How does choosing the right tools impact the final product?
1. **Needle Tool:** thin, sharp tool used for detailed carving, trimming, and scoring clay.
2. **Loop/Ribbon Tool:** used for carving and trimming away excess clay, especially during the leather-hard stage.
3. **Rib:** flat tool, typically made of wood, metal, or plastic, used to smooth, shape, and refine the surface of a piece during the throwing or handbuilding process.
4. **Wire Cutter:** used to slice off lumps of clay from larger blocks or to remove pieces from the wheel.
5. **Sponge:** control the moisture level of the clay during the shaping and forming process, and smooth out the clay.

Choosing the right tools help's the ceramicist achieve the desired shape, texture, and finish, which directly impacts the final product's aesthetic and structural integrity.

A decorative vertical border on the left side of the slide, featuring a complex geometric pattern of interlocking hexagons and lines in shades of green, yellow, and blue, set against a purple background.

01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 2: Book-Based Questions

2. Discuss Briefly the Different Types of Clay. How do Properties such as Plasticity, Shrinkage, and Firing Temperature Affect Clay Choice?

On page 68 of *Ceramic Design Course*, Quinn states that “The idiosyncrasies of a given clay body will have a profound effect on your final object...Each design will have its own properties and should be assessed in relation to the clay’s own properties”. The book describes earthenware as being the most ubiquitous type of clay and an extremely versatile medium, making it the ideal clay to start out with. Stoneware has a higher firing temperature than earthenware and is a strong robust clay body with little porosity, making it ideal for general use. On the other hand, bone china is an extremely strong, high fired, clay body used mainly in slip form in the manufacturing of tableware and lighting. With an even higher firing temperature, porcelain is a very fine, strong clay body, distinguished by its translucency. Notably, it is used in the manufacturing of porcelain tableware.

Clays with higher plasticity, like earthenware, are easier to work with, especially for beginners. Shrinkage occurs as the clay dries and is fired, and different clays shrink at different rates. For example, porcelain tends to shrink more than stoneware, so careful consideration must be given when combining clay bodies or adding decorative elements to prevent cracking. Firing temperature is another critical property; clays like bone china and porcelain require higher firing temperatures to reach their full strength and durability, while earthenware is fired at a lower temperature. This affects the final hardness and porosity of the piece, making earthenware suitable for decorative or functional work, while high-fired clays like porcelain are preferred for fine tableware due to their strength, translucency, and smooth finish.

01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 3: Object Identification and Methods

1. Object Identification

Name: Venus of Dolní Věstonice

Medium: Clay body fired at a relatively low temperature

Culture: Moravia, Czech Republic

Year: 31,000-27,000 years ago



01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 3: Object Identification and Methods

1. Object Identification

Name: Jōmon Jar

Medium: Sand-Based Clay

Culture: Jōmon Period, Japan

Year: 2500-1500 BCE



01 Ceramics Basics

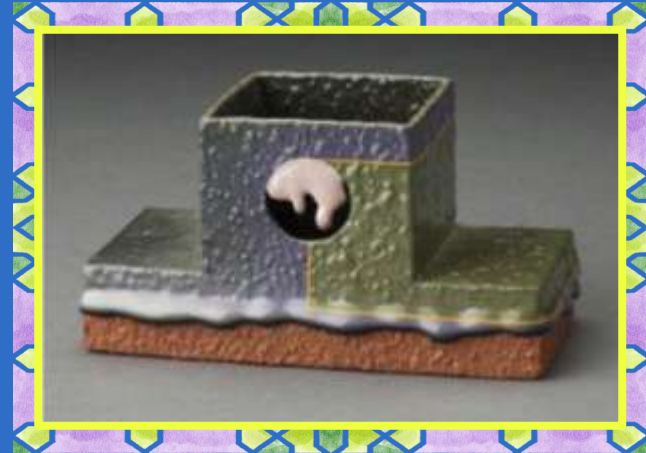
Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 3: Object Identification and Methods

2. Identify the methods of construction for the provided ceramic pieces. Write a short explanation of how they were made.

Ron Nagle, "Incense Burner" 1990–1991

Use of a low-fire, white earthenware (whiteware) clay formulated by artist. Unlike traditional earthenware, it did not dull colors but intensified them. Slab rolling was used to make the form, which is diminutive in size to apply focus on the multiple glazing techniques. Strong, saturated colors are achieved by the spraying of 20-30 layers of china paint on the individual piece.



01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 3: Object Identification and Methods

2. Identify the methods of construction for the provided ceramic pieces. Write a short explanation of how they were made.

Giselle Hicks

Hand-pinched vessels. Intentionally does not smooth out the sharp edges or the indents/flaws left from hand markings, instead preserves them to retain the traces of her hands Labor. Glazed with opaque glaze.



01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

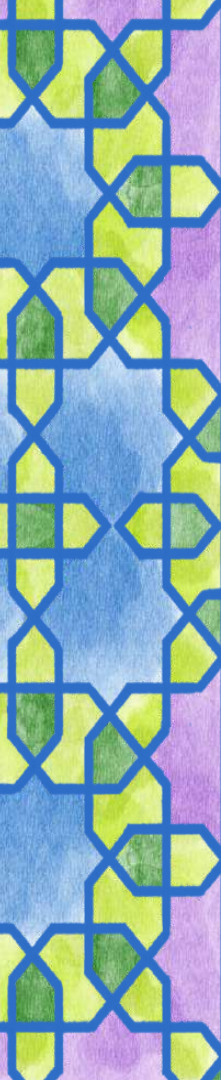
Part 3: Object Identification and Methods

2. Identify the methods of construction for the provided ceramic pieces. Write a short explanation of how they were made.

Bernard Leach (1887-1979)

Wheel-thrown porcelain pot with cover. Decorated with an oak leaf pattern, impressed St Ives seal mark and painted with the artist's initials (BL).





01 Ceramics Basics

Responding to the Open Exam Questions

Part 4: Extra Credit

1. Amber
2. Allen
3. Frank
4. Jocelyn
5. Katherine
6. Kelsey
7. Koyuki
8. Leila Hijazi - me :)
9. Olivia
10. Sumira
11. Tianzi
12. Venicesa

02 Mayan Culture

The Envelope Project

This project explores the rich and complex world of Mayan culture through the analysis of the *Mayan Bowl with Water Scene* ceramic piece. The Mayan civilization, which flourished in Mesoamerica from 2000 BCE to the 16th century, was renowned for its advancements in astronomy, mathematics, and art. Ceramics played a central role in Mayan society; Intricately decorated pottery often depicted mythological scenes, historical events, and daily life, reflecting the Mayans' deep connection to their cosmology and social structure. By analyzing this artifact, I aim to uncover how ceramics serves both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes.



02 Mayan Culture

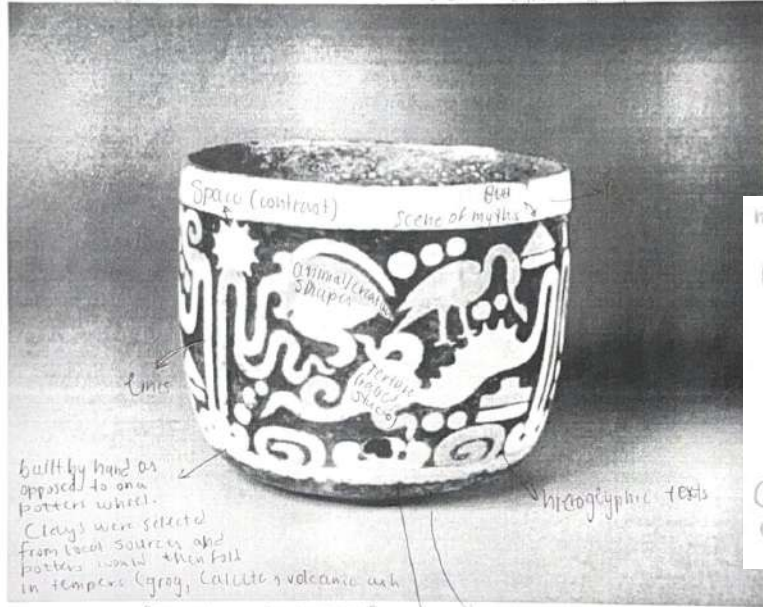
The Envelope Project

I began my analysis by unreservedly annotating a printed copy of the ceramic piece. I applied my knowledge of the elements/themes of art, principles of design, media, and techniques.

Ethnohistoric group of indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. They began constructing buildings, sculpting in various media & creating durable containers out of fired clays.

Maya "Bowl with Water Scene"
Guatemala, 600-900 AD

their ceramic vessel creations served as both utility & meaning.
→ they held food and drink for daily living, but also offerings in dedicatory contexts & burials (graves, ritual tombs)



built by hand as opposed to on a potter's wheel.

Clays were selected from local sources and potters would then fill in temper (gray, calcite, volcanic ash)

from volcanic landscape of Guatemalan highlands.

Medium: earthenware with painted stucco.
fired at lower temp.

POLYCHROME vessel

→ Resist technique (using wax in conjunction with slips to produce patterns of + & - coloration)

main elements of Design prevalent

ORGANIC (Free-form) Shapes → HEAVY (Shapes occupy most space)

↳ representing birds & other important creatures (depicts new cross section of life in a water or swamp)

↳ mix of sharp edges & soft edges

LINES

↳ the composition of shapes seems to be connected with a series of lines. It gives the impression that the design was drawn without lifting the paint brush (continuity)

COLOR

↳ contrast between bright oranges, and calm beige, and brown negative space.

TEXTURE

↳ the Bowl is earthenware that has an overall rough texture

↳ organic shapes are raised (bumpy), emphasizing the main shapes.

Principles of Design

↳ the equal distribution of the colors, and ^{equal} ratio between positive and negative space gives rise to a well-balanced design (stable & aesthetically pleasing)

↳ the raised texture + contrasting color of the shapes places focus & emphasis on the birds/creatures, essentially highlighting the life that exists within these bodies of water.

Leila Hijazi | Envelope Assignment



"Our Arable Land" A Villanelle Poem

Fertile, terraced fields glowed lush and green, cradled beneath the towering Guatemalan volcanoes grande
Silver streams carved their way through the verdant land, fed by rain and the hands of toil
Graceful birds dipped their beaks in the flowing streams, sipping the life that flowed through the land

Hands of heroes grew calloused and weathered, stained with earth, as they built irrigation channels to harness the rain and expand
These same hands etched steps into the lush and green hillside soil
Fertile, terraced fields glowed lush and green, cradled beneath the towering Guatemalan volcanoes grande

The long necks of the birds lithely arched over the water, resembling a delicate strand
The rain returned, swelling the streams once more, nurturing the land with life's gentle toil
Graceful birds dipped their beaks in the flowing streams, sipping the life that flowed through the land

Heroes earthen-stained hands scattered seeds across the land
Soon succulent watermelons, chili peppers, and chayote sprouted from the milpa's soil
Fertile, terraced fields glowed lush and green, cradled beneath the towering Guatemalan volcanoes grande

Families revel in the blessings of their crops in hand
Laughter echoes as it dances across the banks and coils
Graceful birds dipped their beaks in the flowing streams, sipping the life that flowed through the land

A picturesque scene unfolds across the land
The heroes and the birds harmonize in their shared soil
Fertile, terraced fields glowed lush and green, cradled beneath the towering Guatemalan volcanoes grande
Graceful birds dipped their beaks in the flowing streams, sipping the life that flowed through the land

02 Mayan Culture

The Envelope Project

I translated my hand-written analysis into a villanelle poem that captured the essence of the ceramic piece and its profound significance to Mayan Culture. I decided to write a villanelle poem because it's double refrain structure has a re-ordering effect on the entire poem, as the same lines appear in different contexts throughout. As a result, the words of the refrains find new meaning in each context in which they reappear. This mirrors the abstract nature of the ceramic piece, depending on the angle and context with which one views the piece, a new story will be told. In that way, ceramics is a powerful tool to convey the depth and dimension that exists within cultural contexts, whether it is belonging to the prehistoric Mayan, or to modern societies.

03 The Bowls Project

Objective: Using stoneware on the wheel, create three bowls. All of the bowls should be properly trimmed, two should be glazed. One of the bowls will be donated.

Technique: Ceramic Wheel Throwing

Our act of donating of a handcrafted, wheel thrown bowl reminded me of a longstanding islamic tradition instilled in my values, *Sadaqah Jariyah*. *Sadaqah Jariyah* is an Islamic term that refers to a voluntary, long-term charitable contribution that continues to benefit others. Ceramic pieces have the ability of being passed to members of the community for their use. In the context of the bowl, its donation serves as a tangible example of *Sadaqah Jariyah*, where the gift extends beyond a momentary act of charity to have lasting value. Just as a handcrafted ceramic piece can be used and cherished by others over time, it embodies the ongoing benefit and positive impact that charity can have on a community. The bowl, in this sense, not only fulfills a practical need but also represents a continuous cycle of giving, enriching lives and fostering connections across generations.



04 The Slab “Box” Project

Objective: Using the slab technique, create a box following your creative freedom.

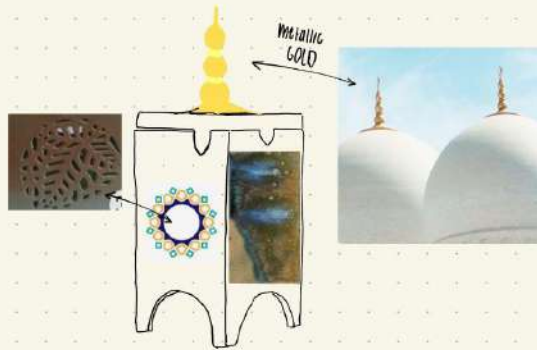
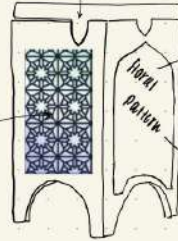
Technique: Handbuilding - Slab Technique

In order to create a slab built piece, the slab must first be created. The clay was prepared by carefully wedging it to remove all the air bubbles and achieve a uniform consistency. This would ensure that there were no air pockets that could explode in the kiln, during the firing process. The clay was then placed on the slab roller table between two sheets of canvas fabric. I chose an appropriate thickness and then guided the clay through the slab roller by pulling one end of the canvas. This process was repeated forwards, and then backwards through the rolling table again. The final slabs created were then set out to dry for multiple days to allow the clay to firm up. In order to control the dryness of the slab, they were kept covered so they could dry in a controlled environment.





"Reverse" Archway



04.

The Slab "Box"

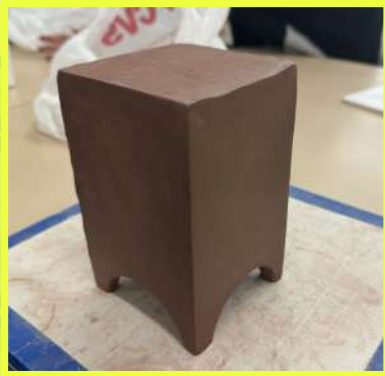
Project Original

Sketch

04 The Slab “Box” Project

Inspiration: Islamic Architecture & My Islamic Heritage

I created a template out of cardboard for a simple box design and used this to cut out the slabs into my desired shapes. The inspiration for the form and decoration of this box is my Islamic heritage, and a curiosity to research it. I took this project as an opportunity to combine my favorite aspects of Islamic-inspired art in a modern and non-traditional form. The geometric, sharp edged shape of the box was created to loosely resemble *The Kaaba*, a stone building at the center of Islam's most important mosque and holiest site, the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. After using the template I created to cut out the slabs into my desired shapes, the edges of the cut slabs were scored using a pin tool, and slip was applied to connect the 4 sides, and the base and lid of the box together - forming an enclosed box. The lid of the box was later cut from the top half of the enclosed box. In order for the lid of the box to fit smoothly, two notches had to be cut out. I cut out the notches to resemble archways. In Islamic tradition, archways represent portals to the divine, especially in mosques where they guide movement and gaze towards the qibla wall (the wall in a mosque that faces Mecca, the direction that all Muslims face when praying).



04 The Slab “Box” Project

Inspiration: Islamic Architecture & My Islamic Heritage

The inspiration for the top handle of my box came from the deep sense of awe I've always felt hearing the call to prayer echo through the streets of my hometown: Beirut, Lebanon. The call emanates from a minaret, a tower traditionally built atop mosques, which also served as a symbol of Islam's presence and a prominent landmark. To evoke this imagery in my box project, I chose to hand-build an abstract interpretation of a minaret and incorporate it as the handle on the lid. The handle was securely attached using the same scoring and slipping technique I used to assemble the box, ensuring a cohesive and lasting connection.



04 The Slab “Box” Project

Inspiration: Islamic Architecture & My Islamic Heritage

In my home in Beirut, we have many mosaic art pieces, and I’ve always been drawn to the intricate beauty of Islamic mosaics, which often feature geometric patterns symbolizing the infinite nature of Allah and the divine order of the universe. To incorporate this inspiration into my project, I decided to adorn two sides of the box with mosaic-inspired designs. On one side, I used a wood modeling tool to carve a circular mosaic pattern, while on the other, I applied blue slip and used the sgraffito technique to scratch through the surface, revealing the contrasting terracotta beneath.



04 The Slab “Box” Project

Significance: Visual Tribute

After the first firing, I painted the box with harmonious shades of red, green, and blue, creating an archway design and inscribing a Quranic verse that translates to, “Remember Me; I will remember you.” For me, this box serves as both a personal reminder to remember God in all circumstances and a visual tribute to the Islamic architectural elements I most admire.



فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ



05 The Cups Project

Objective: Using stoneware on the wheel, create four cups. All of the cup should be properly trimmed and decorated, and a handle should be attached to one.

Technique: Ceramic Wheel Throwing

The first step in wheel throwing is centering a lump of clay on a spinning potter's wheel. I weighed out 1.5 pounds of clay and wedged it thoroughly to ensure that there were no air pockets that could explode in the kiln during the firing process. I placed the clay lump on the potter's wheel. To center, I applied consistent pressure with both hands—one hand on top of the clay and the other at the side—while the wheel was spinning. I pressed the clay down and inward to ensure it became symmetrical and was firmly attached to the wheel. I could tell the clay was centered once it could spin smoothly without wobbling, providing a solid foundation for shaping the piece. After the clay was centered and spinning evenly, I used my thumbs to press down gently in the middle of the clay, creating a well. This allowed me to then begin forming the walls of the cup by pulling the clay upward. After the cup was formed, it was set to dry in front of fans to firm up prior to trimming. Once firm, the cups were attached, face down, to the potter's wheel, using clay. Slowly spinning the wheel again, I used a ribbon tool to carefully trim the base of the cup to my liking. The cups were then set to dry.



05 The Cups Project

Objective: Using stoneware on the wheel, create four cups. All of the cup should be properly trimmed and decorated, and a handle should be attached to one.

Technique: Ceramic Wheel Throwing

Once the cups reached the leather hard stage, I could begin attaching a handle to one, and could create my design on the other. To create the mug, a handle was created by a technique called "pulling," where a piece of clay was gently stretched and shaped into the desired handle form. The handle form was then securely attached to the cup to create a mug. The mug design was inspired by Middle Eastern patterns and textures. A Middle Eastern pattern stencil was stuck to the mug and a roller was used to imprint the pattern onto the mug. The mug was glazed to with the intention of producing a rustic color and texture.



05 The Cups Project

Objective: Using stoneware on the wheel, create four cups. All of the cup should be properly trimmed and decorated, and a handle should be attached to one.

Technique: Ceramic Wheel Throwing

For my second cup, I used a dotting tool to free-hand a quote in Arabic, aiming to make this piece deeply personal. I then filled in the letters with green underglaze. I allowed myself to write the first words that came to mind—words that held the most sentiment during a time of profound change. The fall 2024 semester marked my first experience living away from my home in Beirut, Lebanon. Shortly after arriving in the U.S., my country was plunged into conflict, witnessing the deadliest days since the Lebanese Civil War. Amidst grappling with homesickness and the harsh reality that my home may never be the same, I poured my emotions into this cup. Its form is inspired by the Arabic coffee cup my father would drink from every morning on our balcony, overlooking the Beirut skyline. The quote I etched into the cup, which translates to "From Lebanon, with love," serves as a tangible reminder of my homeland—a token I can hold onto no matter how far I am. The familiar shape of the cup and the authenticity of the Arabic script offer me comfort and nostalgia, anchoring me to my roots in a time of uncertainty.

