

CHAPTER 2

GETTING TO KNOW THE CLAY

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While working with clay you will become very familiar with the material and the unique characteristics that can differ clay body to clay body. With time and patience, you will develop your own personal aesthetic. You will learn what to look for in a clay body when doing a specific task. Working with clay can be very rewarding and therapeutic in many ways. However, to stay in the game, it's important to exercise good safety while working with clay. It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt.

CLAY CHARACTERISTICS

Whether you are using preprocessed clay or tailor making your own clay from raw materials you will notice that different clay bodies have different characteristics. The five basic

characteristics to look at when evaluating a clay body are Shrinkage, texture, color, moisture and plasticity. Some clay's characteristics leave them better suited for hand building or sculpture while some are better for wheel throwing. Various clays

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLAY

Shrinkage
Texture
Color
Moisture
Plasticity

also fire differently. Some stoneware can be fired to very high temperatures around 2300 degrees resulting in a very solid, durable, and dense body.

Earthenware clays can only be fired to around 2100 degrees. The end product may be more colorful but it won't have the durability of the stoneware. Basically the more organic matter that is present in the clay the

lower the firing capacity of the clay. The trade off for a clay that has limited firing range is that it is often more plastic. **Plasticity** is the property of clay that allows it to be shaped and formed without tearing or breaking. Also, clay bodies like earthenware often have a wider range of colors that occur naturally in the clay.



Successful potters and ceramic artists take time to get to know a new clay body. Understanding the material that you are working with can make a big difference in the final product. Artist, Oliver Van Herpt is creating beautiful ceramics pieces using a 3D printer that is able to work with clay. Obviously, he has a very specific clay body that is able to hold such a large form and yet yield itself to be formed by such sensitive and precise instrumentation.

SHRINKAGE

From the moment that a completed form is placed on the shelf and left unattended the clay begins to dry. While clay is drying water evaporates out of the clay leaving only silica, alumina, and whatever organic matter may be present. As a result, the clay shrinks in weight and size. **Shrinkage** is the



This image shows a mug that has dried, a bisque fired piece, and a mug that has been glazed and fired again.

reduction in size of the clay mass that occurs when water evaporates from the clay during drying and firing. Dry shrinkage refers to the percentage

the clay will shrink from wet clay to drying. You can test

the shrinkage by rolling out a small tile and then measuring it while it is wet. Then simply re-measure when it is dry or after it has been fired. With some simple math you can find the shrink rate of your particular clay. Most Earthenware clay will shrink 6-8 percent while most stoneware has a shrink rate of 11-15 percent depending on what temperature it is fired to. Being aware of the shrinkage that your clay will undergo can help to appropriately size your creations. The larger the piece the more evident the shrinkage. For instance, a 36" tall vase can shrink up to 5.5 inches. Considering that many mugs and bowls are not even that tall its quiet obvious that the larger piece will have more noticeable shrinkage.

TEXTURE

The texture can vary greatly from clay body to clay body. A smooth textured



This photo shows grog being wedged into a clay body.

clay is more suitable for throwing small pieces, making beads, and doing precise work. Course textured clay is better suited for larger applications where small details are not needed. Also many of the additives that make clay

bodies course also give the clay a great deal of strength and at the same time reduce the shrinkage rate. Many potters deliberately add additives like



sand or grog to their clay. **Grog** is fired clay that has been ground down into tiny particles. Pieces that have grog mixed into the clay don't shrink as much because the grog itself has already previously shrunk. Although this reduced shrinkage sounds enticing, grog is not for every clay body. A classically shaped teapot would look

strange with a course clay body. The texture of the clay can totally change the way light moves across its surface. A mature and experienced potter knows what clay texture is appropriate for what project. Compare and contrast the two pictured hand thrown pieces. The choice of clay plays just as much a part of the design as the form



COLOR

Clay comes in many shades. As you discovered last chapter clay is



most pure closest to it's parent source. This parent source is the sight where the clay initially eroded from exposed igneous rock. A **primary clay** is a clay that has the same



This photo shows a limited variety of stoneware color.

composition as its parent source. Porcelain is an example of primary clay. It is very pure and contains very little impurities making the clay have very little color. Most natural porcelains are white. Porcelain pieces are very expensive because porcelain is so hard to work with. However, because of the purity a porcelain piece can be translucent when held up to light. Unlike primary clays stoneware do sometimes have a bit of color. Stoneware which has traveled further way from the parent source may have low levels of other impurities giving them a range of lighter colors. If you are looking for a clay with dark rich colors, you will need to look at earthenware clays. Earthenware clay comes in a variety of colors due to the addition of generous amounts of various other additives like iron, tin, and other metals and oxides. Earthenware also contains varying amounts of organic matter that color the clay as well. Many clay formulas mix stoneware and earthenware to add some color or desired texture while maintaining the strength that comes with being able to fire clay at high temperatures.

MOISTURE

Another characteristic of clay that is worth mentioning is moisture. Moisture is very much related to shrinkage in that as water evaporates it reduces in size. In addition to that the moisture content can be a factor that dictates other attributes of your clay body. The degree of moisture in a clay body is to some degree a preference that changes from person to person. It is often



Bailey Pugmill

a compromise in having a clay that isn't too hard or too soft to do the job. For this reason, many professional studio potters prefer to pug their own clay. A

pugmill is a large mixer that is designed to mix dried clay with water and other amendments like sand or grog. There are many companies that mix clay and prepackage it for consumer purchase. I'm sure they are constantly getting customer feedback on the moisture content of their clay. Potters working at a wheel generally want clay that is soft or moist enough to center on the wheel without having to exert excessive force. However, if the clay is too moist it won't hold the shape it is put into. Artists working with slabs may want clay that is a bit stiffer so that it can support its own weight when oriented into vertical forms. There are

definitely limitations to what can be done with clay at various moisture levels but there is also a degree of preference too.

PLASTICITY

The last characteristic to take into account is plasticity. This characteristic is also partially determined by moisture. However, there are two other factors that determine a clays plasticity. **Plasticity** is the property of clay that allows it to be shaped and formed without tearing or breaking. The size of the clay particles is the first variable in plasticity. The smaller the particles the more plastic the clay becomes. The larger the particles the easier the clay breaks when stressed. The second factor is as already mentioned, the moisture content. The more moisture the easier the clay can be shaped. However, for clay to have an ideal plasticity it should not only be easily shaped, but also needs to be able to hold that form. Therefore, too much moisture can ruin the plasticity of a clay. The last factor that determines a clays plasticity is organic material. As organisms and plant life living in our environment breakdown long after they have been alive they mix in with soils and clays. This organic matter often greatly improves the plasticity of clay bodies.

A simple test can be preformed to determine the plasticity of a piece of clay. The steps are outlined below.

1. Get an orange sized ball of clay.
You will also need a canvas or some sort of cloth to put on your table or hard flat work surface.



2. Quickly roll out a thick coil. If you spend too much time trying to make it perfect it will dry out from your hands and the cloth. Drying out the clay would give you inaccurate results.



3. Cut your coil off at one foot.



4. Now take the coil that you have made and form it into a ring.



5. The last step is to hold the ring up vertically from the bottom.



A clay body that has a good plasticity will roll into the coil with little resistance. You will be able to make a ring without the coil cracking. Some clays may crack completely in half. Those clays would not be examples of clay that are plastic. The last thing to look at would be to check that the clay is not so plastic that it does not hold its own form after being put into a ring. A clay that can be easily shaped but cannot retain that shape is of little value. Its remarkable how clay has the capacity to be formed, molded, coiled, or spun into a beautiful vessel but then is strong enough to retain that shape. Taking a chance that a clay is suitable for throwing a large piece can result in tragedy when the piece collapses or cracks to pieces as it dries. It's important to know that you are working with a material that you can trust to hold up against the demands you will be throwing at it.



PREPARING CLAY FOR USE

Wedging is a process that de-airs and thoroughly mixes the clay for an even consistency. There are several methods for wedging the clay. The

1. Gather your materials. You will need the clay of course, a wire tool, and a cloth or canvas to keep the clay from sticking to the table.
2. Cut off a piece of clay that you feel is appropriate for the project you are pursuing. It is hard to wedge a piece that is too small or too large.

As you learn to wedge clay you will learn how much is appropriate for your hands.

3. Ball up the clay in such a way that it doesn't enclose air pockets in the clay.
4. With your arms straight press down on the clay at a 45 degree angle away from you toward the side of the clay you cant see.
5. Grab ahold of the clay as it begins to flatten out going forward.
6. Lift up the now flattened side of the clay so that it is parallel to you vertically.
7. Now press back into the clay at a 45 degree angle downward and forward. This process will feel awkward at first. Watching an



experienced potter wedge will shed light into the process. Repeat steps 4-7 until the clay begins to have less resistance.

8. The finished wedged clay has a face made by the clay folding itself over and over again.

If you notice that the clay is too soft continue wedging a bit. The process will take out some excess moisture. If the clay is too dry you can cut layers of clay that is moist and then sandwich alternate them together. You will then have to wedge again.

AFTER YOU ARE ALL DONE



After you have prepared your clay and then have made a masterpiece you will find that you probably have more clay left over. It is common to see beginners take a good bit more than they need and then make a mess and leave it for others that

use the same space to clean. It is very important to understand that clay can be recycled. In most ceramics classrooms there is a scrap bucket or sometimes several. Clay can be slaked or soaked in water and then mixed with dryer clay in a pugmill. Commercially prepared clays are very expensive it would be a shame to throw away material and money. Keep clay out of the sink. Inexperienced potters might think its wise to clean up by trying to

wash clay down the sink. The heavier particles in the clay will build up over time clogging a drain. Try to minimize how much clay goes down the drain. Many art classes and ceramic studios are equipped with traps to capture this clay that does go down the drain. If you have ever had to clean one of these traps out, you will know that it is not a fun job. They stink so bad. It's not a job for someone with a weak stomach. Therefore, the conscientious thing to do is to not put clay in a sink.



con·sci·en·tious

ˌkän(t)SHē'en(t)SHəs

adjective: **conscientious** - wishing to do what is right, especially to do one's work or duty well and thoroughly.

CLAY EVERY DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY

Clay is a great therapeutic material. Working with clay can be a great stress reliever. Many first timers find it somewhat addicting and can become consumed with projects. Often, we don't have a kinesthetic connection to materials or process in an occupational sense. Many people in this technology driven era sit in front of computer monitors in cubical farms and have no physical stimuli. Clay is a great remedy to many of the stresses we face today.



Clay is a therapist in many senses. For instance, throwing a pot on the wheel can be so mesmerizing, even for the potter himself. You may find yourself thinking about nothing but the connection you are having with the material and how it responds to your actions. The clay records your each and every decision. It does not complain or lecture you on what you are doing wrong. The end result may be good or bad but it's exactly what you made it.

Have you ever met an elderly person who still loves to do projects and physically demanding chores? If you've ever wondered why they still keep going and what is their driving force you are not alone. There is a great sense of pride in completing a task and doing it well. In addition to that, your body releases endorphins when you are in motion and at work. Thus, making you feel good. The same thing happens while working with clay. Bridges to Healthcare a mental healthcare group published an online article called, [Neuroscience Could Explain Why Pottery Is Good for Depression](#), here is an excerpt, "The therapeutic potential of pottery for depression is increasingly being recognized by the mental health community. But how and why does it work? From the effort-driven reward circuit theory that extolls the benefits of manual labor to theories focusing on the biological impact of self-expression, researchers are looking for answers. What ultimately matters, however, is that people are getting better, which is why Bridges to Recovery integrates pottery in depression treatment." Neuroscientist Dr. Kelly Lambert puts it this way. "In our contemporary age, when it's possible to Tweet one's deepest thoughts while waiting two minutes for dinner to warm in the microwave, this circuitry—encompassing a vast amount of 'brain real estate'—isn't often called on to function in coordination and communication, as it seems evolutionarily designed to do. But when we activate our own effort-driven reward circuitry, it squirts a cocktail of feel-

good neurotransmitters, including dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin.”

Famous potter, Mississippian George Ohr once said, “When I found the potter’s wheel I felt it all over, like a wild duck in water,”. The connection man has with this material is hardwired through millions of years of evolution. Neglecting to experience the clay may have consequences that we have yet to discover.



OH WAIT, MAYBE CLAY WONT KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY.

There are many health risks that one working with clay should be made aware of. Most of the risks are associated with breathing airborne dust from clay, glazes and other ceramic related materials. Other risks to consider are injuries acquired from repetitive movements using bad ergonomics and poor positioning.

Regardless of whether you are a ceramics teacher in a large art department or just a small time hobbyist, there are a few safety precautions that could make a large difference in your health if not implemented.

Air quality is one of the main concerns that a potter or ceramic artist should



give attention to. Clay is relatively safe when wet. But as it dries, it becomes much more dangerous to those who have repeated exposure to it. Clay dust contains silica particles that are very small and since they are so light they can easily stay airborne for days. Breathing in these particles over long periods of time work havoc on the lungs. Your body does not have an effective way to rid these particles from the lungs. They act as an irritant for years to come. They also diminish your lungs ability to properly pull oxygen from the air as they were intended. With long and repeated exposure to breathing clay dust an individual risks having Chronic Bronchitis as well as Silicosis. Acute Silicosis can result in calcifications of parts of the lungs greatly decreasing the functionality of the lungs.

Fortunately, there are several things that can be done to avoid this disease. Keeping your workspace clean is the first line of defense. Any clay scraps no matter how small should be put into a bucket with water to keep them hydrated and unable to cause dust. Clay should be kept off of the floor. Most of the dust in a ceramics workspace initially comes off of the floor. Pieces of clay usually fall on the floor and then are crushed into tiny particles as they are walked on. This dust becomes airborne and then is

breathed in. If it never falls on the floor in the first place the chance of having clay dust in the air is greatly diminished. Ceramics workspaces should be daily carefully swept in such a way that the dust is not kicked up into the air. It is very helpful to have the area mopped at least once a week. Some studios are outfitted with a drain in the center of the room allowing the room to be hosed down. This type setup is very helpful in keeping dust to a minimum. Other precautions that should be followed are running a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Arrestance) filter that can filter out as small as 0.3-micron (0.000012-inch) particles. This can greatly reduce the volume of airborne dust in a space.

Ergonomics is also worthy of some consideration. Often people suffer from injuries that are the result of repeated movements that are not good for certain height, size, and body type. Although the world can't be tailor made for each person individually, there are some things that can be done to improve the ergonomics from person to person.

er·go·nom·ics

ˌɜrɡəˈnämiks/

noun: **ergonomics**- the study of people's efficiency in their working environment.

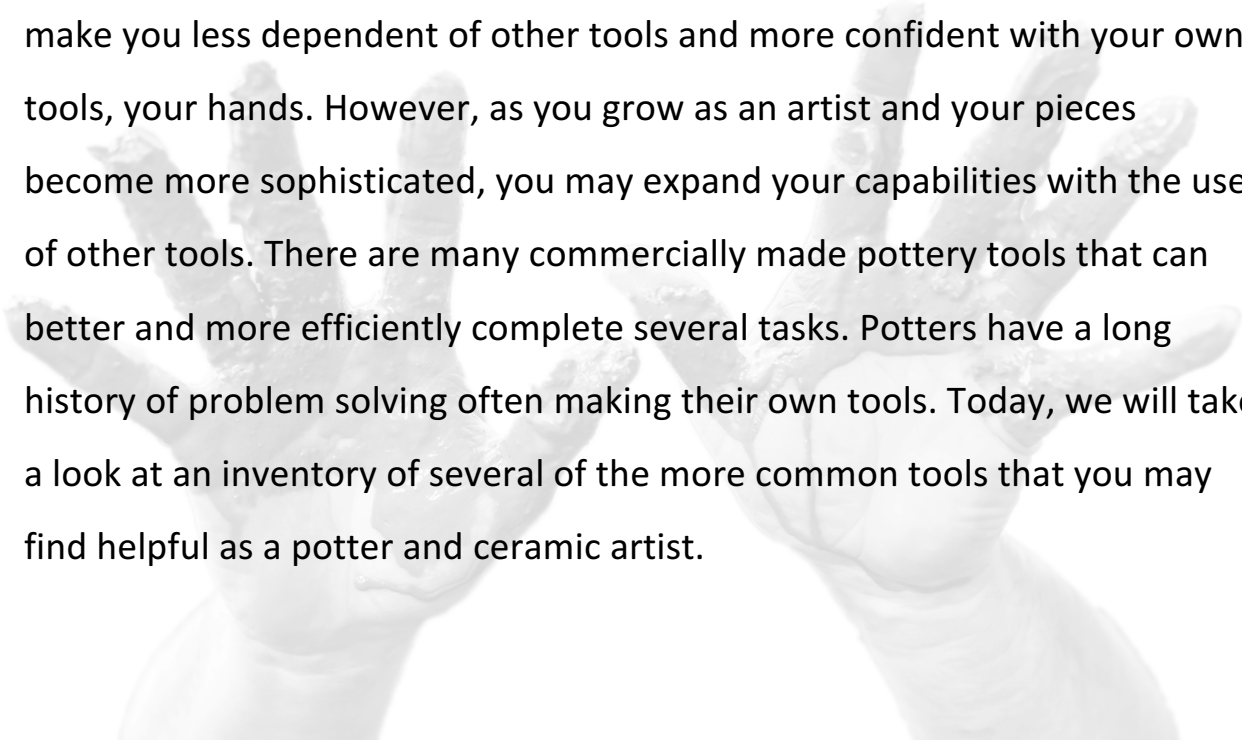


Little things can make a big difference in exercising good ergonomics. For instance, it's important to have a workspace that is the appropriate height. In a classroom setting where all the tables are the same height it may be helpful for one to stand on a book or a small stool if they are too short for the table to be at a comfortable working height. On the other hand, if one is too tall for the workspace the worker may want to elevate the project on top of the table to avoid slumping over for long periods of time. Commonly

used equipment and storage areas may want to be elevated to eliminate users from having to often bend down. Stools at a range of heights may help to accommodate tall and shorter people. When it comes to a repetitive action like throwing on a wheel or wedging clay. It is important that your movements are not painful and that you are maintaining good posture through the process. This can save your joints from unneeded wear and tear, lessening the likely hood of arthritis in the future. For better ergonomics the potter pictured here could have elevated the wheel to not have to bend over awkwardly.

TOOLS

The hand is the most valuable tool for the artist. Because the hands are in direct contact with the brain they are quiet capable to completing a myriad of different tasks. As a student of ceramics your teacher may require you to complete several projects using only your hands. This is in an effort to make you less dependent of other tools and more confident with your own tools, your hands. However, as you grow as an artist and your pieces become more sophisticated, you may expand your capabilities with the use of other tools. There are many commercially made pottery tools that can better and more efficiently complete several tasks. Potters have a long history of problem solving often making their own tools. Today, we will take a look at an inventory of several of the more common tools that you may find helpful as a potter and ceramic artist.



1. Stamps can be a great way to add interesting textures to your pieces. Many potters make or have made special signature stamps that easily sign pieces.
2. A paddle that can flatten out areas of a piece can be of use when shaping large areas of clay. This one has a nylon sock over the end so that it doesn't stick to the clay.
3. Brushes of various sizes and shapes are useful when glazing, painting on slip when joining pieces and when smoothing out areas of clay.
4. A needle tool is one of the most often used tools you will use while working in clay. This needle tool made by Sherril Mud Tools is called a Mud Shark. It doubles as a needle tool and a plastic rib.
5. Wood ribs are mainly used by potters working on the potter's wheel to shave off or shape excess clay as the wheel spins. The name rib comes from the fact that early potters used animal ribs to perform this same function.
6. Rubber or plastic ribs can be shaped in the hand as they are applied to the clay surface allowing its user the flexibility to custom contour the silhouette of their pieces.
7. Metal ribs are great for scraping off the soft slurry of clay on the outer surface. They are also great for compressing the bottoms of bowls and plates.
8. Glazing tongs are designed to allow its user the ability to maintain control of a bisque piece of ceramics while submerging it in glaze.



9. Calipers are designed to make precise measurements in situations where you need to know the relationship of two pieces. For instance, calipers are handy when you are making a top to a teapot.
10. A bump tool is a tool that is designed to shape closed forms by pushing outward from the inside. It is very useful for longneck vases with a small opening.
11. A wire tool is a very commonly used tool to cut clay from a large piece in preparation for making a piece. Also a wire tool is needed when when you are cutting a vessel off of the head of a potter's wheel.
12. A shredder can be helpful when you are wanting to file down a specific area of a

piece. Works the same way as a cheese shredder but is rounded to allow you to file more specific areas.

13. Trim tools of various sizes and shapes are useful when



- trimming the bottom of a wheel thrown piece. Trim tools can also be helpful when sculpting clay using a subtractive method.
14. A couple buckets are valuable for keeping clay scraps hydrated that can be processed for later use. Also, a bucket with a lid is a great container to use to store clay while keeping it from drying out. A third bucket is needed for holding water that you will use while throwing on the wheel.

15. Sponges are often used when working with clay. Both hand building and wheel throwing has many applications where sponges are very useful.
16. A banding wheel is a great tool for quickly turning a piece to allow easy access to all sides. Artist find this useful when they are glazing and performing other surface decorations.
17. A potter's wheel is one of the single most important pieces for the potter. There are many commercially made wheels that range in size and clay turning capacity.
18. A good apron made with split legs for straddling a potter's wheel is a great way to keep clean when working with clay.



You may find it helpful to find a toolbox or other type container that you can put all of your tools in. This toolbox had legs put on it to raise it up a bit making it easier to reach tools when throwing on the wheel. Anything you can do to improve the ergonomics of an activity that you do

over and over will have lasting benefits.

COMPOSITIONAL TOOLS

As an artist your goal shouldn't just be to make pieces that have a utilitarian purpose. Utilitarian is a regard for utility or usefulness. One of the most important goals of an artist working in any medium should be to create pieces that have a beautiful or pleasing aesthetic. Artist create compositions with various mediums. A composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art. The elements of art are more or less the conceptual tools that an

artist has in his arsenal to make compositions. Here is a brief overview of many of the common elements.

Line- the path of a moving point. The most obvious line in a ceramic piece is the profile of a piece. Also, lines can be integrated in the surface of a piece in the glazing or throwing marks made by a potter's wheel. Lines can be thick or thin, wavy, curving.



Shape - is an enclosed space, the boundaries of which are defined by another element of art. Shapes can be geometric or organic. The silhouette of an object is the first shape that we recognize.



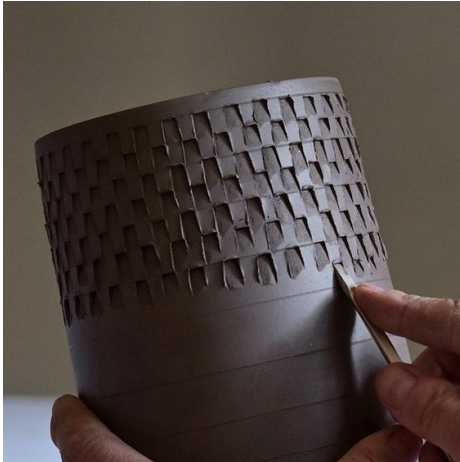
Secondly, the artist or viewer observes the shapes of objects within the composition such as subordinate parts like handles, bases, lids and other parts that belong to the whole. Shapes can also breakup or pull together the visual flow of a piece.

Form- refers to the whole of a piece's visible elements *and* the way those elements are united in three dimensions. Height, width and depth. Form is the element in three dimensional medias that is the support or foundation for all the other elements that will be integrated into the composition. Form is basically the overall shape of a piece. Many Potters and Ceramic artists are most conscious of their forms, without the form you have nothing but unoccupied space



Value – refers to the range of dark to light in colors or tones.

Various clays are different colors. For the most part the value of a piece will be determined by the glaze choice as well as the way the way shadows wrap around the form.



Texture - refers to the surface quality in a work of art. We associate textures with the way that things look and feel. Everything has some type of texture. The texture may be literal in that it can actually be felt or may just be a visual texture We describe things as being rough, smooth, silky, shiny, fuzzy and so on. Some things feel just as they appear; this

is called **real or actual texture**. Some things look like they are rough but are actually smooth. Texture that is created to look like something it is not, is called **visual or implied texture**.

DEVELOPING AN EYE FOR AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy and subject of study in art that deals with issues of beauty such as what is to be considered beautiful and what is considered art.

Aesthetics can vary from person to person. Each and every person has his or her own opinions often they are strong. Most mature artists have a range of styles and looks that they have an appreciation for. Many academics who study art feel that their view of reality and their personal opinions are more valid than the next.

There are people who think that the main purpose of art is to give a critique. As a result, they are constantly critiquing the work of others even when they haven't created any of their own. It will eventually effect a person's outlook if they only look at art with the intent purpose of finding something that they don't like about it to point out.

It takes a lot of bravery to decide that you are going to try to express yourself in a strange or new medium. Learning a new language can be very difficult and even intimidating. The same can be said of learning to express yourself in a new medium. Honestly, it's sometimes scary expressing your thoughts, feelings, and emotions even in your native tongue. There is always a fear that you may suffer some rejection. As a result, many would be artists are discouraged from creating anything that might be near and dear to them. Famous Cubist Artist, Pablo Picasso once said, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Picasso was wise enough to realize that children usually don't have a fear of communicating what's on their mind, and what is in their heart. Unfortunately, as a child grows up and experiences the rejection of what they hold in their inner sanctum, they become Jaded to freely expressing themselves.

The great painter Paul Cezanne once said, "Don't be a critic, but paint, there lies salvation." learning to appreciate art for what it is without picking it apart is a very liberating experience. Who knows, there may be some artistry in the way people view the world around them, some people live happy lives despite their situations. Maybe they are better at exercising their artistry in viewing what's around them. The bottom line is that we should make every effort to build up instead of tearing down. We should encourage instead of discourage.

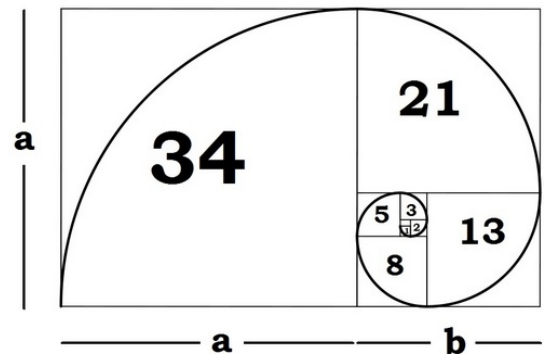
Unfortunately, we know our art will be judged we might as well take some time to look at some commonly held beliefs about aesthetics, what is and what isn't beautiful in the eyes of the masses. It's important to make art that resonates with you the creator but also to consider the audience you will have. The ultimate goal of a ceramics piece should be to balance beauty of form with function. Keep in mind the function could be aesthetic value alone. In that case the art is for arts sake alone. But if you are creating utilitarian vessels form and function must make compromises with each other in order to have a successful piece. Fortunately, function often works well with beauty, take the human form for example. It has been precisely engineered to work as it does and does so with great beauty.

There are several easy concepts to understand that if implemented in your work can give you a leg up in creating a beautiful form that is pleasing to the eye. The following are concepts that can greatly improve the look of your vessels.

The Golden Mean

The Golden ratio is a special number found by dividing a line into two parts so that the longer part divided by the smaller part is also equal to the whole length divided by the longer part. It is often symbolized using phi, after the 21st letter of the Greek alphabet. In an equation form, it looks like this: $a/b = (a+b)/a = 1.6180339887498948420 \dots$

The idea is simply to have a division of space that is pleasing to the eye. An experienced artist is aware of proportions and utilizes them to aid in making more aesthetic shaped vessels. The Golden Mean is a ratio



for proportioning space that has been used for hundreds of years in many mediums. A crude and more simplified idea of this golden mean is simply using the thirds rule. A potter can shape his or her vessels utilizing the rule of thirds or the golden mean as the locations for the narrowest or widest areas of the piece are presented.

THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The principles of design describe the ways that an artist use the elements of art in a work of art. Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. You might think of it as the principles being your goal to achieve an aesthetic piece, while your elements are your tools that you have at your disposal to work with. Balance is evenly weighting the elements making the design seem stable.

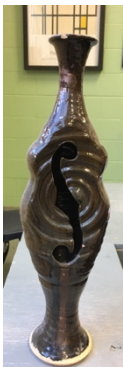
There are two main types of balance. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on



one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.

Which of these photos (to the left and right) do you think

is an example of symmetrical balance and which is asymmetrical balance?



Emphasis is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area should be a focal anchor but not so distracting from the rest of the composition that it hinders the viewer from noticing other areas of the composition.

The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc. The piece on the left

has emphasis created by a design cut out from the surface of the clay. So your eyes are drawn to the shape made by the void left in the clay. The image to the right is an obvious example of emphasis being made by a black dot surrounded by a red glaze.

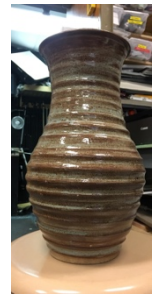




Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often this path can vary from viewer to viewer. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art. The most obvious movement is the profile of the form itself. There is a line that is created by the contrast between the form and its surroundings.

Handles, spouts, lips, feet, and other parts of vessels also create movement in a piece.

Pattern is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art. Repetition works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. Here the the throwing marks make a repetitive line pattern up and down the vessel. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.



Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other.



Rhythm is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.

Variety is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.

Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates sense of completeness.

CREATING SUSPENSE

Ultimately the goal of your composition should be to grab your viewer's attention and then to maintain it. Maintaining your viewer's attention is much more of a challenge. Captivating your audience can be accomplished through creating dissonance. When the viewer feels satisfied and comfortable with what they are seeing their attention is quickly averted. People are creatures who like things evenly divided, organized, labeled, and neat and orderly. When a piece of art fits this criteria we are quickly satisfied and comfortable with what we are seeing. We quickly look away to see other things and explore the world around us. However, when there are two or more conflicting elements at play the viewer wrestles with the visual conflict. The viewer's attention is held in suspense. As a result, they are able to notice other elements of the composition that they might not have taken the time to absorb. This is a delicate balance of giving the viewer what they want while withholding just a bit to create a suspense. This is a skill that is cultivated over years of producing artwork.



CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

1. What are five basic characteristics to look at when evaluating a body of clay?
2. What is plasticity?
3. When do the oldest discovered bricks date back to? Where were they found?
4. How is clay formed?
5. What is the chemical formula for clay?
6. What are some different types of clay and how are they different from each other?
7. What is the oldest piece of intact fired clay to have ever been found? Where was it found? When does it date back to?
8. How did early artists process naturally found clay to prepare it to work with?
9. What are five basic methods for creating pieces out of clay?