POTTERY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

by

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I am intrigued by the way that the human mind automatically makes connections between objects and people. I am interested in how an inanimate object becomes the signifier of entire relationship between two or more people, and I am curious as to what causes such connections to form and to be recalled. For example, I have fond memories of baking with my mother, and so mixing bowls, cake pans, and other baking instruments remind me of my relationship with my mother. Every relationship in my life whether closest family or distant acquaintance can be represented by a set object. My goal in making this work is to represent eight different relationships in my life that I cherish, and to make functional pots that represent that relationship and those people. I used specific forms, glazes, surfaces, and aesthetic values in order to make a direct connection from one set of pots to one set of people or person. In making this work I wanted to explore the ideas of functional objects in daily life, and how an object can become much more than a material item.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................. iv
POTTERY IN EVERYDAY LIFE .................................................... 1
TECHNICAL DATA ........................................................................ 7
FIGURES ..................................................................................... 9
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tomorrow Night</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alone at Last</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guidance and Inspiration</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grace and Truth</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Old # 7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thursday Mornings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Learning to Cook</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Time to Ourselves</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POTTERY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Through my studies and experiences, before coming to graduate school, I became interested in the idea of ritualistic objects in our culture, and how functional pottery plays a role. I spent a portion of my first year experimenting with ideas of ritualistic pottery and sacred objects, challenging myself to pottery that was sacred to me. I researched ritualistic objects from other cultures and considered the meaning of the word “sacred” pertaining to contemporary American culture. Through my studies, I have come to a complete thesis statement about the role of pottery in my life and American culture. My thesis is based upon the ideas of functional objects in everyday life, how these objects become sacred, and how these objects play a role in our lives and culture.

There are eight specific relationships that I chose to make pottery for, intending to illustrate the correlation between objects and people. In designing the pottery, I wanted to relate the aesthetic values of the pottery with the personalities of the people that they are intended for. Each person or group of people in my life has a set style and personal aesthetic voice, and each relationship can be connected with a specific functional object relating to food consumption. In connecting the personalities with the objects, I hoped to illustrate the way that the objects in my life connect to the people in my life. Each relationship has its own specific qualities, and to display this, I made eight different sets of pottery that have their own specific aesthetic and physical qualities.
The first relationship that I designed was for me and my closest friends from my hometown. In our relationship, there are a mix of personalities and opinions, but we always come together and can relate to each other best when drinking beers together. To illustrate this relationship I chose to make a beer-stein and pitcher set with six beer-steins, one for each of my friends and myself. The pottery was made and designed to be as functional as possible, and its glaze is inspired by salt-fired glazes from early American pottery, hoping to convey the sense of timelessness that best represents my relationship with my friends.

The next set that I made is intended to represent all of the conversations and moments shared between my mother and me in the kitchen cooking and baking. I made a mixing bowl set with three larger bowls, three smaller bowls, and two jars for flower and sugar. The bowl forms all stacked inside one another creating a nesting set that represents the home and the bond between me and my mother. The pottery was glazed with a transparent green glaze that illustrates the sense of functionality that I desired to convey specifically in this piece.

I chose to make a flask set with four cups to describe my relationship with my father, brother, and brother-in-law. In moments of celebration my father or brother would bring out four cups and a bottle of whiskey to partake in a celebratory drink together. I chose to throw the flask and cups with the intentions of making the form feel soft, to reflect the sensitive and caring nature of the men in my family. I then used a glossy black glaze to represent the toughness and hardness that the men put on as an outer surface to
show the world. I wanted this set of pottery to create a place where my father, brother, brother-in-law, and myself can relate.

From this set of pottery I moved on to create a set of seven tea-bowls that represent my personal relationship with myself and my personal faith. This is the most intriguing relationship, because it is about me in relation to myself and my intimate relationship with God. This is the most intriguing relationship, because it is about me in relation to myself and my intimate relationship with God. Obviously this is a difficult relationship to make peace for because God is not a physical being, so He cannot physically interact in the relationship. I thought that this relationship would be best described by making a mediation and fasting calendar in which there is an illusion of transition which represents personal growth and faith. The first tea-bowl is a murky brown green glaze with some small parts of blue. The last of the seven bowls is a blue glaze with spots of the murky brown green, and each piece in the series has a slight amount of change happening in the glaze, turning from mostly murky brown to mostly blue. I wanted there to be this description of my personal growth during times of self reflection and deep faith through the transition of glaze colors. I often use meditation and fasting as well as prayer as a way for me to grow personally, and during those moments I use the tea-bowl as the particular pottery form for self-reflection. The mediation and fasting calendar is the concept and pottery that best describes my faith and growth, as well as my relationship with God.

The next pottery set I made was designed to represent my brother and sister-in-law, and is a wine bottle set with two cups. It is intended to reflect their personality and
relationship together more than my relationship within their lives, because I do not get to see them very often. They are both very into modern electronics and styles, and their home is very minimal and streamlined. Most of the objects in their home are very simplistic yet have an overall feeling of elegance. I made the bottle and cups to reflect the minimalist part of their personalities, and I made the glaze of the pottery to represent the elegance that their home represents. The gold-honey colored glaze was made so that the wine set would match the elegant china-set that they received for a wedding present, so that when they share an intimate dinner my art is taking part in that relationship.

In a similar manner, as far as representing a romantic relationship between two people, I made a dinnerware set of two plates, tow bowls, and two cups for my girlfriend and I to use when we have an intimate dinner. I threw the forms with a more gestural style intending to allude to the movement and change that occurs in our relationship. I also chose a blue celedon glaze and a lighter blue celedon glaze in treating the surface of the pots, and mixed the individual sets together. When displayed, there is a interaction between glazes because of the slight color changes within the glazes. I wanted this to represent the compromise and changes that occur within our relationship, as well as the ambiguity of gender roles within our relationship. My girlfriend and I do not have defined set roles of who is the leader and who is following, we each lead and we each follow, and I wanted the dinnerware set to represent this part of our relationship as well. The interconnection between the two sets also helps to represent that the two individual sets of pottery belong to one another and make a whole new set when placed together. I wanted this concept to illustrate the relationship between my girlfriend and me.
The final two sets that I made are representations of my life as graduate school student at Kent State University. The first piece is about the mentor-student relationship between my professor Kirk Mangus and me, and the other is about the relationship of the graduate students in ceramics and our professor. The mentor student relationship is displayed as a teapot set with two cups, and it represents all of the moments and conversations shared between Kirk and me. I wanted the glaze to be a runny green ash glaze that would represent the path that a liquid must travel as it flows over a surface, much like the path that a student must take in order to navigate his way through to becoming a mentor himself. The pouring of the tea from teapot to the two cups also is meant to illustrate the passage of wisdom from mentor to student.

For the relationship between the graduate students and me, I made a coffee pot set with eight cups one for each of the graduate students and for our professor Kirk. During our Thursday morning seminar class there is always an abundance of coffee and conversations and I wanted to make a pottery set that would fit directly into this setting of discussion and dialogue. The pottery set is thrown with a gestural style adding a sense of movement that often happens during the conversations that we have together. I used a tenmoku glaze that matched more with the identification of the set being for drinking coffee and so the brown and caramel colors are intended to illustrate the potteries functionality.

Each of the pottery sets were designed for specific moments in my daily life that I consider to be sacred because of the people that the moments are shared with. Every set was designed for that moment and for that specific relationship in hopes of illustrating
how the relationships in our lives are all unique and valuable. I wanted not only to make objects that would represent the sacred moments, but to create pottery that would be used during such precious moments. It was my intentions to not only make functional objects that represented people in my life, but to illustrate the roles that pottery can take in our culture. My thesis was to make functional pottery for use in the sacred moments that occur in daily life, and to illustrate how the relationships in my life are sacred to me.
TECHNICAL DATA

All data entered as percentages.

**White Stoneware Clay Body:**
- Edgar Plastic Kaolin - 25
- XX Sagger Ball Clay - 25
- Goldart Fire Clay - 25
- G-200 Feldspar - 15
- Ground Silica - 5
- Glass Rock Silica - 5

**Porcelain Clay Body:**
- Grolleg Kaolin - 30
- 6-Tile Kaolin - 20
- Nepherline Syenite - 20
- G-200 Feldspar - 20
- Ground Silica - 10
- Bentonite - 3

**Brown Salt-Fired Glaze:**
- Earthenware Clay - 40
- Wood Ash - 18
- Nepherline Syenite - 20
- Gersley Borate - 11
- Ground Silica - 11

**Honey Celadon Glaze:**
- Nepherline Syenite - 35
- Edgar Plastic Kaolin - 15
- Wollastinite - 25
- Gersley Borate - 25
- Red Iron Oxide - 2

**Green Ash Glaze:**
- Wood Ash - 50
- Gersley Borate - 20
- Whiting - 12
- Edgar Plastic Kaolin - 8
- Ground Silica - 10
- Copper Oxide - 3

**Blue Hare’s Fur Glaze:**
- Nepherline Syenite - 35
- Ground Silica - 10
- Whiting - 25
- Edgar Plastic Kaolin - 5
- Soda Ash - 5
- Wood Ash - 20
- Red Iron Oxide - 8
- Cobalt Oxide - 5
Shiny Black Glaze:

Nepherline Syenite- 40
Wollastinite- 15
Zinc- 12
OM4 Ball Clay- 5
Ground Silica- 28
Red Iron Oxide- 10
Manganese Oxide- 2
Cobalt Oxide- 2

Caramel Tenmoku Glaze:

Nepherline Syenite- 40
Ground Silica- 30
Whiting- 20
Edgar Plastic Kaolin- 10
Red Iron Oxide- 10

Green Celadon Glaze:

Nepherline Syenite- 40
Ground Silica- 30
Edgar Plastic Kaolin- 10
Whiting- 20
Red Iron Oxide- 4

Choy Blue Celadon Glaze:

Barium Carbonate- 15
G-200 Feldspar- 45
Frit 3110- 5
Whiting- 6
OM4 Ball Clay- 6
Ground Silica- 23
Red Iron Oxide- 1
Barnard Slip- 1
Figure 1

Tomorrow Night
Figure 2

Alone at Last
Figure 3

Guidance and Inspiration
Figure 4

Grace and Truth
Figure # 5

Old # 7
Figure 6

Thursday Mornings
Figure 7

Learning to Cook
Figure 8

Time to Ourselves