Ceramics and Context: Creating Meaningful Curriculum and Classroom Practices at the Secondary Level

by

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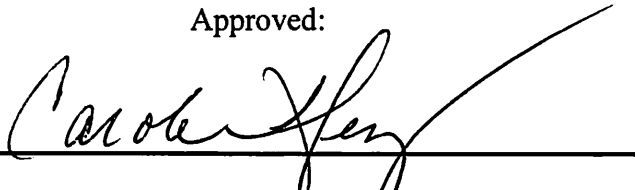

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ABSTRACT

INDEX WORDS: Ceramics, Context, Curriculum, Secondary Education

This paper rejects the traditional approach to ceramics education that focuses on skills-based learning. The author argues for a more comprehensive ceramics education in high school classrooms that would include contextual information about ceramic objects. Observations are given for five exemplary ceramic programs and a unit that exemplifies the authors approach is included.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to give thanks to my mother, who gave up uncounted hours listening to me rant about my ideas and encouraging me to keep going. Also to Nick, who was always polite when reminding me that I had some writing to do. A big thank you to Dr. Henry, for believing that I can do better.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Overview

I believe that clay is an often underappreciated medium by our society, given minimal attention in the K-12 classroom when taught in tandem with drawing and painting; and more often than not, stand-alone high school ceramic classes offer a skills-based curriculum with a main focus on production. This kind of approach limits the potential of a media that has much more to offer intellectually. I envision a ceramic curriculum that takes a step further towards interdisciplinary connections based upon the needs and interests of the students, a program that provides an in-depth visual, critical, and conceptual foundation for the education of students about ceramics.

The coursework should encourage discovery not only through the process of making, but with the added pursuit of individual research. The ceramic classroom should be one that provides the opportunity for students to exercise verbal articulation and critical thinking through discussion with the teacher, group critiques with peers, and written assignments. Students sharpen their abilities to critically analyze creative choices and to seek answers for their own questions. It is imperative that research and collecting source material in areas of personal interest are emphasized; through this investigation students can achieve a greater understanding of historical perspective, a sense of the contemporary, and a working knowledge of the materials and processes of ceramics.

Clay Clicks for Me

I grew up with three of my grandparents being teachers and one who was a principal. Though they didn't live close by, I was influenced by them and my parents to treat everyday

as an opportunity to learn something new. My family nurtured my curiosity and instilled an excitement in acquiring information. A common conversation starter was "Guess what!"

For me, science was the way to go. I was able to grasp concepts through observation and experimentation, something that wasn't the case with other subjects. By the time I was in high school, I was quite certain that I wanted to be a science teacher. I felt that I could help others find the joy in learning something new. A quote that has stuck with me for quite some time is, "Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost."

This was all before art, as it was not available in the elementary and middle school I attended. I enrolled in an introductory visual arts course because I thought it would be interesting-what an understatement! Art had rules and concepts, only they were flexible and open to interpretation. The class as a whole learned the same things, but the discoveries that I was making were personal and completely different than those of the person next to me or any other person in the classroom. I learned that I had a greater sense of accomplishment when I was creating something tangible.

For a while I largely felt that art and science were two exclusive disciplines and that I had to choose one or the other as to which best represented me. I felt that my care for science could not flourish if I chose to continue my study of art. After a week in Ceramics I, I was hooked. Working with clay had possibilities that were only limited by my imagination and how well I could manipulate the medium within the constraints of the process. It became clear to me that the direction of my life was to follow art, but I didn't have to leave science behind. It wasn't enough that I could make something and put it in the kiln and be done. I had to know how the whole process worked.

I pursued my studio degree at Georgia Southern with a concentration in ceramics. There, I found an amazing studio space with a professor who had over 40 years of experience to share and always knew when experimentation would be more meaningful than a lecture. Clay bodies, shrink rates, glaze calc...each new piece of information combined with growing skills gave me more confidence to go further. I enjoyed having an active role (physically and mentally) in every step of the process-except firing. To me, it seemed to be the least involved step, just turning a knob or pushing a button. I felt that I should have a greater role in this final step. I was really drawn to the natural look in direct contrast to the industrial. This led me to firing not with electricity or gas, but with wood; and I found the involved firing that I was looking for. Wood doesn't come out of the wall or from a pipeline; it had to be collected, split and left to dry out. Loading the kiln became a puzzle that had to be solved without blocking the airway or allowing too much draft. The firing itself required *constant* attention, at least three days of it, working through problems with trial and error when the theoretical didn't seem to work out. My professor was usually there in person, or on call late at night, to offer me support or input as needed and, of course, knew when to step back and let me figure it out.

When I think about teaching ceramics, I want to follow her example to push the students further and allow them freedom when they need it.

Goals for the Curriculum

The Georgia Performance Standards (Georgia Dept. of Education, 2009) for ceramic curriculum at the secondary level fall under the category of High School Sculpture. While *Production* is the largest category within these standards, it is neither the only category nor the first listed. The other sections are: *Meaning and Creative Thinking, Contextual Understanding, Assessment and Reflection, and Connections.* These standards call for an intellectual pursuit of

three dimensional media. It is my goal to better reflect this by implementing classroom habits that allow students to…

- Build technical proficiency and contextual knowledge of traditional and non-traditional areas of ceramic practice, art history, and criticism.
- Understand and practice an experimental approach to problem solving.
- Learn to research, question, organize and synthesize information about existing ideas and practices, develop new ideas and areas of inquiry, write about and articulate issues to peers, faculty and the community at large.
- Combine critical thinking and problem solving with the development of ideas and conceptual skill.
- Understand working methods and develop the ability to translate a conceptual idea into a creative solution.
- Apply a self critical, articulate, and individual approach to finding aesthetic solutions to visual issues and challenges.

(British Columbia Department of Education, 1983)

These goals aim to create an environment that encourages students to think expansively at all times, not just when specifically asked.

In the literature review, I will address the importance of context and ceramic history in the classroom, teacher preparation, and classroom structures. Afterwards, in my observations section, I will review the ceramic classrooms that I visited in the spring of 2012. Next, I will present my proposed curriculum and a sample introductory unit that I developed for a Ceramics I course. Then in the final chapter, I will review what I have accomplished and present my recommendations.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Moving Beyond A Skills Based Curriculum

"Often, (high school) ceramics curriculum is a potpourri of vocational education, recreational activity, make-and-take projects, and self expression rooted in formalism." (Sessions, 1999, p.7)

When students come into a high school art room to draw or paint, they already have some significant experience with two-dimensional practices. From a very early age, children doodle and color because the materials are readily available. A foundation has already been laid, and basic skills can quickly become refined. Students are then able to follow with experimentation and concept building. Ceramics is different in that high school students often have minimal (if any) prior experience with clay. It is for this reason that building skills and techniques within a ceramic classroom are so important, for without the knowledge and practice, students cannot successfully execute their ideas. However, a skills-based approach, one that primarily emphasizes process, is very limiting. While consideration for skills and techniques can and should still be present, this should not be the singular driving force within the classroom.

> Ceramics production can become a conduit to strengthen student learning in a multi-dimensional manner by employing information from the world of ceramics. A new perspective in ceramic education can keep the craftsmanship, creativity and skill level intact, while concurrently addressing the treasure of educational opportunities. (Sessions, 1996-97, p.104)

Otherwise, a secondary level ceramic art class becomes a place where students are taught to perform specific tasks with limited higher order thinking. After all, it is not the goal

in a high school art class to train career artists; the goal is to further expose students to the arts in a manner that challenges them intellectually. Students in a studio ceramics class learn most by doing, by experimenting, by failing, and then trying again. As an instructor, my job is to provide information, inspiration, and a supportive environment that allows each student to develop his or her skills and gain a sense of confidence that what they have made has value.

What context?

Students practice the craft, but their ideas, which are supported by contextual learning, make the products art; and the combining of the creation and contemplation of artworks can lead to a more meaningful experience and sustained student interest.

Students in ceramics need to understand the rich legacy historical pottery offers as well as contemporary issues faced by artists working in clay. Whether one works within parameters of utilitarian pottery, one-of a kind-vessels connecting historic pottery to more contemporary ideas, or with clay sculpture and conceptual art, the student should understand their own intent and the context in which their work exists. This understanding is developed over time through critiques, slide lectures and discussion of clay objects and their place in our world. As a proponent of inquiry based learning, Lampert (2006) states that during these classroom discussions, students consider various content issues and are required to think deeply… developing responses to open-ended questions; upon hearing the varied responses of fellow classmates, students are able to link the new ideas of classmates with their own existing thoughts.

Ceramic History

A major part of ceramic context is ceramic history. As we grow and develop mentally, we create an image database for two-dimensional images which is very helpful for drawing and painting, but we often lack a sufficient database for three dimensional objects. One reason for this is that ceramic works are presented in early art history simply because they are the only pieces to survive thousands of years, then rarely presented in the rest of art history, which is odd since ceramic practice is vast, long lived, and global. Another reason is a lack of widespread exposure to handmade ceramic items as the act of making ceramics has become more industrialized (Rawson,1984).

> The forms of clay, the refinements of the process, and the multitude of uses are so numerous...clay is not a product of the past, it is today one of the most widely used materials for useful objects. (Mattil, 1965, p.121)

With ever expanding technological advances, this statement is more true today than it was in 1965. We interact with ceramic materials in one form or another every day. Ceramic works contain a record of the achievement of mankind, "since the values and beliefs of a people are uniquely manifested in the art forms they produce." (Paterakis,1975, p.53) Therefore, in the ceramic classroom it is important to bridge ancient and contemporary works to have a complete instead of a partial view of art history in terms of the medium.

Ceramic classes have a unique set of teaching challenges. There is often no textbook, no curriculum guide, and comparably fewer resources available for students. This has traditionally limited the amount of investigative study and historical reference that have been applied to a high school ceramic class. As a result, the course has often developed into one with a strong emphasis on technique. As I continue to develop more structure and historical

content into the class, I find myself considering a number of questions about the nature of ceramics and how this applied project can achieve the goals I listed above. Naturally, I prefer to start at the beginning. How does art evolve in the world? How do we understand art? Once we address these questions, we can begin to look at specific questions related to pottery. How did people learn to make pottery and why? What function did these early works serve? What techniques did the ancient potters use to create their wares? Then moving on to deeper inquiry, making connections to the social functions of ceramics not just from a single viewpoint, but considering how our interactions with the medium can be influenced by a social context. These considerations could be small (comparing how we use ceramic objects in our homes) or big (examining a piece as it fits within or moves beyond a cultural identity) (Smith & Smith,1970).

The students can be exposed to a range of ceramic history from an anthropological perspective that encourages them to participate in discussions and receive immediate feedback on their ideas. These explorations serve to broaden their view of ceramics and provide a basis for aesthetic judgment (Rawson,1984).

Teacher Preparation/Action

There has been a call for a different approach to high school ceramics for at least the past 50 years because "Pre-teachers are not instructed on how to translate the studio-based model into content-based art education methodology and sound educational objective for ceramic education" (Sessions, 1996, pg6) and often teach the way of their own studio based college experience which is better suited for the artist rather than the high school student. I believe that this perpetuation of production-only ceramic curriculum influences a limited public opinion about ceramic's place within the arts.

As teachers, we have the opportunity through the influences we have on students to inform the larger community. I agree with Michael (1980, p.16) that, "Good teachers...help students to understand and enjoy the challenge of the problem, a new vocabulary, revelations of the self, and the excitement of learning in a new area." The first experience with a material is always a fresh one, and anything done with it is a discovery. The trick is to equip the students to go as far as their interest will take them so that art production doesn't become a "weary pursuit" (Portchmouth,1971). A student who is required to make multiple cups for no reason other than skill development is likely to become disinterested. Therefore, it is not enough for art teachers to be well informed or practiced in the skills of their profession, but to be able to foster in the students eagerness beyond the scope of a project demonstrates another level of teacher quality.

Classroom Practices

"...it is one of the functions of art to provide a kind of insight which is eminently worth having but cannot be derived from the study of any other subject" (Smith & Smith, 1970, p.86)

I believe the greatest benefit of learning within the arts is learning to see alternative solutions to problems. Through challenging students to take a step beyond and through the responses teachers make as students work on those tasks, teachers urge students to experiment, to discover what happens, to play around, and to try out alternatives (Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein, 1999). One of the main goals of an art teacher should be creating an atmosphere that encourages risk taking and exchanges the concept of mistakes for learning opportunities. *Studio Thinking* (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan,2007) lays out the three main components of the studio structure:

Demo/Lecture

"…a brief, visually rich lecture by the teacher to the class (or to a small group) that conveys information that students will use immediately. Students see authentic art being made, tools being used, or images of work made by others." (Hetland, et al, 2007, p. 15)

For me, the term "lecture" has a negative connotation; I would prefer discussion. Any time that I am addressing the students, I don't want the exchange to be one sided. I expect some kind of verbal reciprocation. Much of what is discussed in the art room is a mixture of facts and opinions. By incorporating inquiry based instruction with a visual emphasis- whether it is an image, a video, a physical item or activity. Students are able to constantly re-evaluate their ideas based on what they see and hear with the chance to share and the benefit of instant feedback.

***Students* at Work**

Here students work independently on a project, typically one introduced to them in a Demonstration-Lecture. As the Students work, the teacher circles the room offering timely interventions on an informal basis, In a Students-at-Work session, students' primary means for learning about art is through doing. The teacher provides the resources, the challenge, and the individual guidance. (Hetland, et al, 2007, p.18)

The teacher takes a step back to let the students address the task given; seeing to issues as they arise and holding informal critiques for individuals; constantly assessing the needs and direction of the students but still providing the freedom to work. Every action with the clay allows the students to understand the essential qualities of the media for instinctive manipulation to overcome the difficulties of the process. At this time students can be sharing process and product problems and solutions with others, building community within the classroom. Students are also engaging in occasional informal critique with one another as they work in close proximity.

Critique

...a chance for students and teachers to reflect as a group on their work and working process. In Critiques, art making is paused, so that students and teacher can reflect the work and process of creation. (Hetland, et al, 2007, p.21)

In the general curriculum, students perform tasks and are assessed upon completion and given a grade with or without commentary. As grading in the arts can seem arbitrary to others, a critique serves to help students recognize when their work is successful or when things can be improved. Often, students are wary of critique because sharing work with a large group is an uncertain process that can make them feel vulnerable. Stokrocki (2005) promotes everyday assessment in a variety of formats that are generally informal. Everyday assessment has the benefit of providing direct feedback at a time when it is most helpful to the student. While students are able and encouraged to be reflective during discussions and when working, critique serves to focus the mind as students process artwork, think about what does or does not work, and why. As students become more comfortable with the idea of critique through assessment prompts, they are more likely to perform self assessment and be more aware and critical of their own art making decisions. In this way, assessment not only measures learning, but also promotes artistic growth. Effective critiques help develop personal awareness and responsiveness and should produce "students who are willing to divorce themselves from the obvious, to avoid the cliché, and to look beyond stereotypes and banalities" (Rawson, 1984, p.8).

These studio structures do not have to follow in an ordered script. An impromptu demonstration/announcement may interrupt all students at work, a small portion of the group, or just an individual as it may be extremely relevant to the task at hand. Smooth transitions

rely on the cooperation of both the teacher and students with a general consistency as the course progresses.

This literature review has shown that there has been a call to action for more intellectual focus in secondary ceramic curriculum. It is my hope that this is not an issue for very much longer. The next chapter will look at five ceramic classrooms in North Georgia with exemplary art programs and explore the inner workings of each.

Chapter Three
Observations

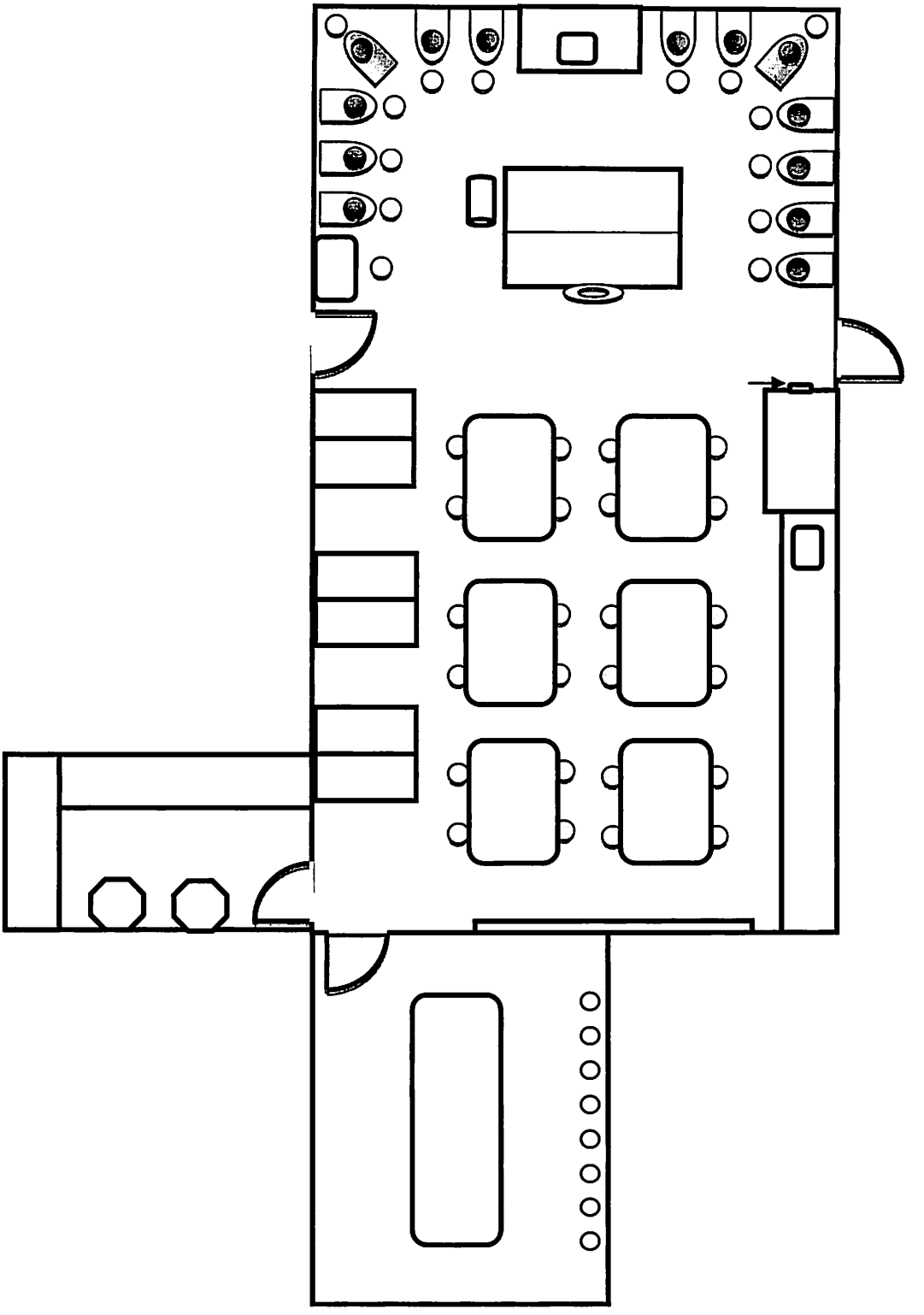
The goal of these observations is to view current ceramics instruction and methods in order to move beyond the traditional ceramics approach in schools with a strong art program. During the spring semester of 2012, I compiled a list of teachers in the northern Georgia area (known for their ceramic focus and successful art programs) from several individuals with knowledge of the field. I sent emails to each candidate on my list, asking if I could observe their classroom. Out of twelve possible candidates, five responded back and I was able to set up dates and times for observation at their convenience. All of the teachers observed had degrees with a concentration in either ceramics or sculpture. My visits to each school lasted for a whole day in order to see how advanced ceramic courses differed from the beginner levels. Though I was not able to witness the introductory or critique day for any class, each teacher was more than willing to explain the inner workings of the classroom at each of the different stages of a project.

General questions asked of every teacher included…

- What materials are available for each class level?
- How are sketchbooks used?
- How much outside work/inspiration gathering are students expected to do?
- Are projects focused more on vessel or sculptural forms?
- How often does the class discuss historical/contemporary forms?

These initial questions would lead to interesting discussions about classroom management, examples of past lesson plans, and students who were excited to show off finished projects. I will present a classroom layout for each school and will omit the names of schools and teachers so that they may remain anonymous.

School A
Classroom Setup



At School A, there are six classes per day, each lasting a little more than an hour. The school offers a wide range of art classes and has multiple art rooms all in the same area. Because there are several art teachers, they are usually able to teach courses based on their area of concentration. Some of the art teachers must switch rooms throughout the day depending on the different courses they are teaching. For example: the ceramics teacher moves to another room for 2D design while a sculpture class occupies the ceramics classroom. This is the smallest art room I have ever seen; despite the room's limited square footage, it is set up for a very efficient use of space. Every cabinet and shelf has a big, bold label. There are a few art posters and strategically placed on each wall is a sheet of paper briefly describing the current unit and requirements of the project.

This is the first time I have seen a pug mill in a high school classroom, which also saves space from not needing large wooden or plaster boards for reclaim. There is an air dryer for hands near the sink, eliminating the cost and mess of paper towels. The work tables are fairly low, which gives the students a good angle to work on and view their pieces. There's not a single chair in the whole classroom-it's all stools. These are low enough to be pushed under the tables, another valuable space saver. Many of the tools are made from wood or metal scraps in the shop class. They work just as well as commercial tools, save a lot of money in the budget for other supplies, and are easily replaced.

Despite the limited area to work, the classroom has 13 wheels, the most I have seen in a high school. Nearly all of the wheels face a wall on which small diagrams with example cutaway forms, lids, bodies, feet, and spouts placed there by the teacher. The student could easily place their own reference images or sketches up as well. The downside to this setup is that the position of the wheels makes it awkward to help students when all the wheels are full

without disturbing someone else. The teacher does demonstrations on one of the two corner wheels so that the entire class can gather and see the demo clearly.

All class levels use the same clay, off-white stoneware that fires to cone 6. Due to limited classroom space, the clay is stored in another location in the school away from the ceramics room. All of the glazes are mixed by either the teacher or an advanced student. The teacher does not like to use commercial glazes because he believes that it makes the students' work seem too crafty. The glazes are in five gallon buckets outside because there is no room inside, and this makes cleanup very easy.

The students at School A needed very little direction when it comes to cleanup. Usually the teacher reminds the students of the time left in class, and the students begin clearing their work area, though sometimes the students are so engrossed in the project that it is difficult getting them to stop working.

In ceramics I, the students come in and get straight to work unless the teacher has a demo or an announcement. The teacher gave a demo on waxing and glazing during the day that I observed. His instructions were straightforward and not only did he tell the students what he wanted them to do, but he also had several examples of what not to do and why certain things were a bad idea. The demo was fast enough for the student to not get bored, but not so fast that they couldn't follow. Again, because of limited space, not all students could wax and glaze at the same time. The projects are slightly staggered so that the students have several different things they could be working on while waiting for another work area to open. The students make their own sketchbooks at the beginning of the course. These are small, consisting of ten pages of computer paper folded into a single signature and stapled.

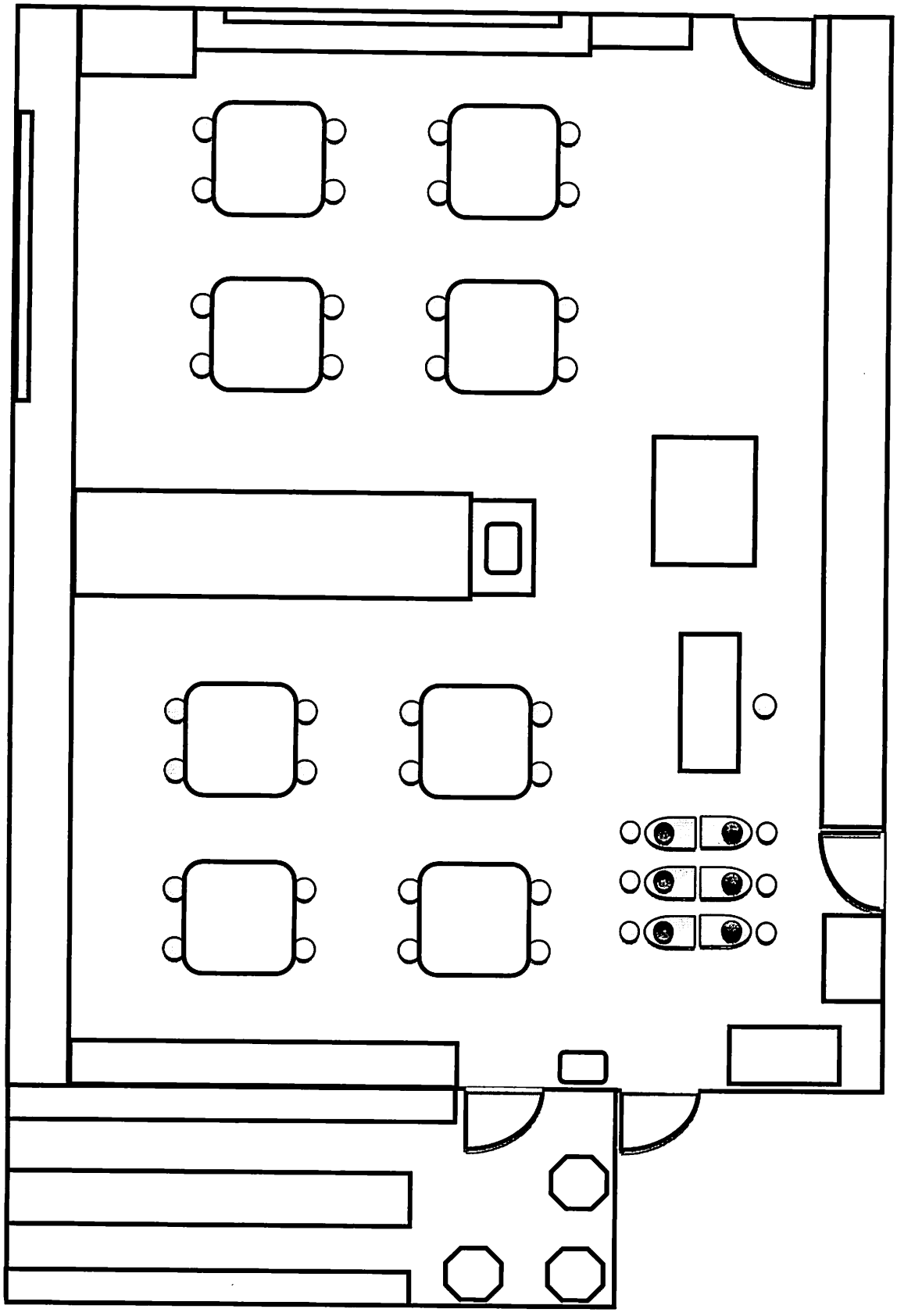
These are for briefly sketching ideas, taking notes, and remembering the glazes used on a piece. Students are not expected to work in these outside of class.

For ceramics II, the semester is divided between throwing and sculpture. Half of the class begins to learn to throw, while the other half works on sculptural forms, building upon the skill and concepts from Ceramics I. The students then switch places in the middle of the semester. There are fewer students in this class, which means that no one is fighting for elbow room. The classroom atmosphere is more focused than Ceramics I. Students are encouraging each other and offering tips or advice.

Ceramics III is treated more like an independent study. These advanced students choose four artists whose work they admire, trying to copy at least six works from each- learning more tips, tricks, and techniques independently. The students then focus on a series of their own work that showcases artistic growth. By the end of semester, students should have 30-40 works, the exact amount is not important. In the advanced course, the students are graded by the strength of the work, not by a completion of a specific number of works. The goal is for the advanced students to find their voice. They are pushed to develop their own style, to sign their work without making a mark.

The teacher at School A feels that a majority of how we learn is in two dimensions, both literally and figuratively. He wants the students to be able to approach things from different viewpoints rather than a "one problem, one solution-kind of thinking." He also hopes to develop in the students an appreciation for things that are handcrafted, regardless of the media, through appreciation for the process. Providing students with the knowledge of how much work goes into things that they use every day: what goes into planning, execution of a design, and working through pitfalls.

School B
ClassroomSetup



School B takes its art program very seriously. The school has four art teachers who host four specialized classrooms, which are: Ceramics/AP, Drawing/Painting, Jewelry/Photo, and Art History/Graphic Design. Each art teacher can expect to teach 3 to 4 different classes each semester. The teacher I observed hosts 3D design, Ceramics, and AP Art.

This is one of the largest art rooms I have seen in a high school. Once again I see low tables with stools that can be pushed under the tables to open more space. There are posters for single artists, galleries, and universities as well as quotes about art. All cabinets and containers are clearly labeled for contents. Each class has its own set of shelves so that work does not get mixed up or lost. Two blank spaces on the wall and countertop serve as critique areas for 2D and 3D projects.

There are a few different types of clay in the storage room. 3D Design uses Lizella clay, and the ceramic courses use a buff stoneware. Advanced students have the option of using paper clay. About 70% of the budget goes toward clay; the classes will go through around 10,000 lbs. in a year. Though the teacher prefers the variability of hand mixed glazes and the natural look of wood ash, the students use only commercial glazes. The upside is that there is no wasted material, almost no mess, and more controlled results. His kilns will last longer as well because he only fires to cone 05.

Students come into the class and immediately get to work. Once everyone is settled, the teacher makes a few announcements pertaining to the project and asks for big questions that pertain to the whole class. Small questions are addressed individually so that class work time is not wasted. The teacher will alternate between allowing the students to come to him with questions/sketchbooks and circulating the room to do in progress critiques. Sketchbooks are checked as needed for assignments and project ideas/research. At the beginning of a

project, the students are required to do research based on the prompts given by the teacher. During my observation, the students were working on a project that required them to abstract forms found in nature. The students needed 9 to 12 examples that they found interesting that also fit an aspect of the project. Then the students must do at least four sketches that are inspired by their research. The students are notified when a sketchbook check needs to be done. Instead of having to go through 30 sketchbooks at the same time, the teacher asks the students to bring their sketchbook to him when they are ready for a check over a two-day period. This is less intrusive on class time, and the student is better prepared to discuss the content of the sketchbook.

There is only one ceramic class offered at School B. Students may take it up to three times and still receive additional credits. These students are expected to do more advanced work. The teacher rotates through different lessons each semester so that he and the repeating students do not get bored. He likes to alternate the projects between functional and sculptural approaches; eventually, the students will blend the two. The teacher does the project with the students, often staying a step ahead and having more than one example besides the demo pieces-similar to the way a cooking show works.

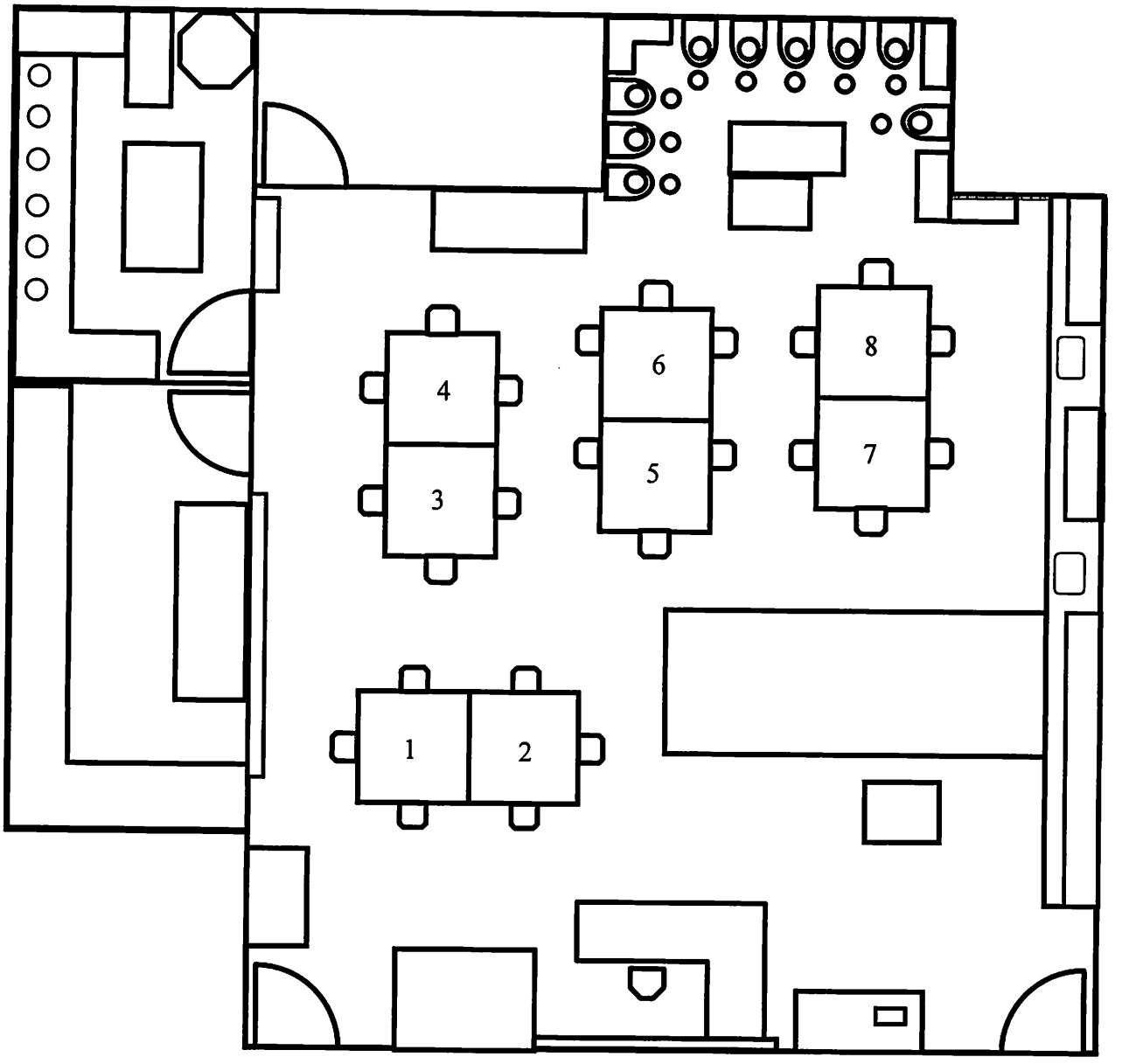
The teacher will give a ten and a five minute time announcement, and the room is expected to be clean by the bell. The students are aware of what a clean room looks like. At the last two minutes, the teacher briefly scans the room and casually announces areas of the room that are not yet satisfactory. This gives the person or persons responsible to fix the problem without being called out.

Students who are interested in throwing must sign up for a wheel a few days at a time on one of the classroom's six wheels. Wheel cleanup is a much more involved process, and if

a wheel is not clean, it is very easy to find the culprit. Students who do not clean their wheel must clean all six wheels the next day. This only happens a few times before everyone gets the message.

For the past few years, this teacher has been working with administrators and students to create permanent exhibitions throughout the school based on chosen themes. So far they have had permanent displays created in the main hall, the library, and the cafeteria. The displays get a lot of positive feedback from the student body and faculty. During critique, the teacher avoids broad questions because he is less likely to get the kind of feedback that he is looking for. He starts by asking pointed questions and guides the students into taking a more active role with minimal prompting. The teacher tries to give the students opportunities for creative problem solving, always telling them to go beyond the obvious and look for new possibilities.

School C
Classroom Setup



The classroom at School C is comparable to a science lab in size. The tables are small, which would make classroom rearrangement easy and all of the chairs have tennis balls on the feet to eliminate noise when the chairs are moved. The room is used for 3D,

sculpture, and ceramics. It is equipped for students to work with several different media types. Examples and past projects are on display around the room-at eye level, high on the top of cabinets, and even hanging from the ceiling. Among these are also props for sculpture and ceramic history lessons. The classroom contains several sets of books including sculpture, art history, and three ceramic textbooks. Students are required to present sketches to be reviewed before beginning each project, but a specific sketchbook for notes and ideas is not necessary. The teacher provides *a lot* of images and reference materials when introducing a project. She considers this a good form of image flooding because the students do not have a mental image library when it comes to ceramics-certainly not when compared to drawing and painting.

There are students in Ceramics I, II, and sometimes III in the same class time. There is not enough demand to have Ceramics II and III as independent classes. This means that there is a lot of project overlap. A single class time could need multiple demonstrations and introductions for each level. The teacher tries to incorporate humor in demonstrations, she believes that the students will be better able to remember the instructions this way.

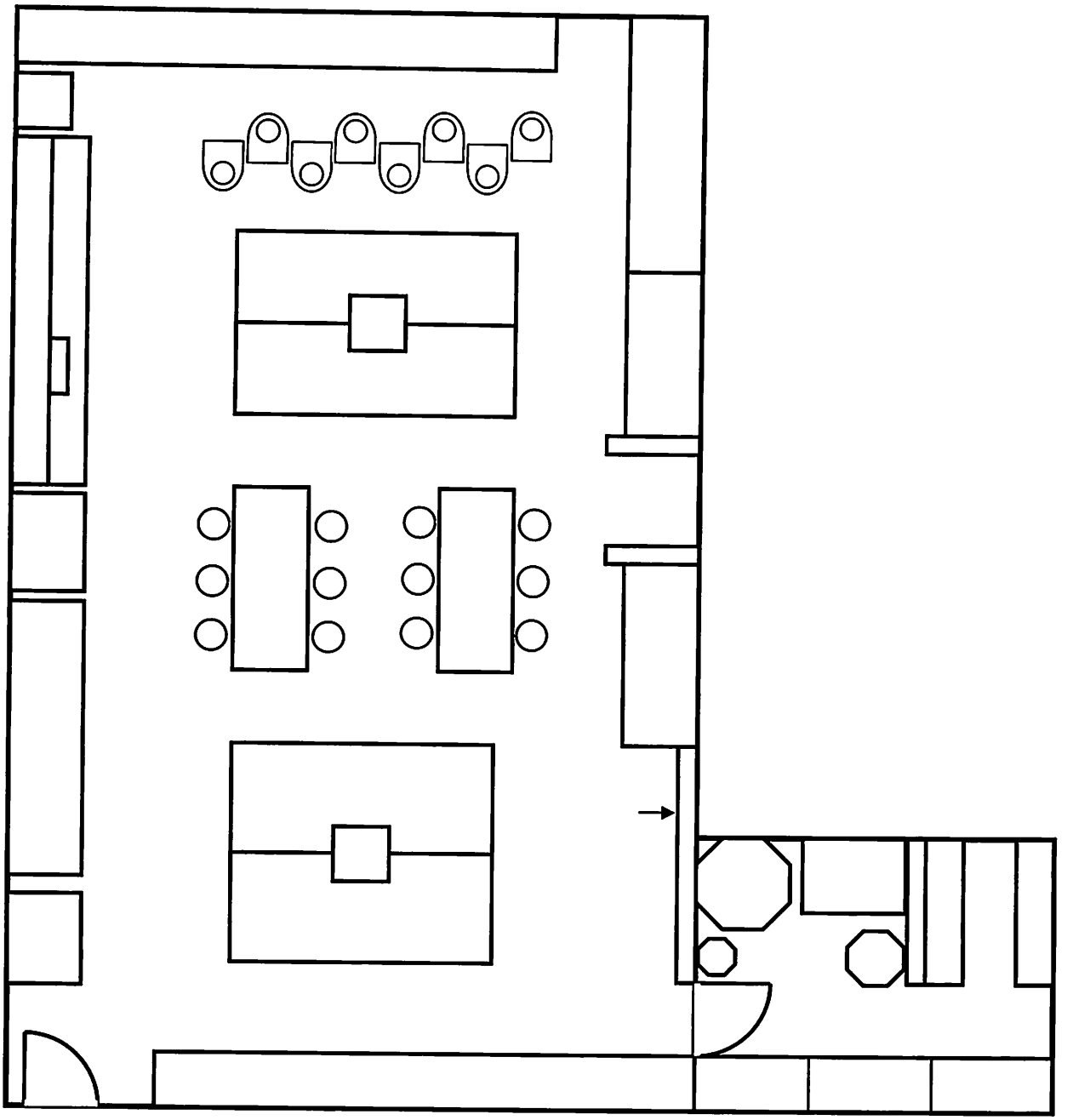
The teacher emphasizes an economical use of clay; students are taught to put scraps back into storage before the clay becomes too hard. The inevitable small bits of clay are turned into slip which means virtually no clay reclaim. The classes use hand mixed glazes for most of the projects and acrylic paints for the rest.

Each worktable in the classroom is assigned a number. Tools that are used every day are stored in numbered buckets that correspond to those on the tables. This makes for quicker set up and cleaning. The students are expected to clean their own workspace, but each day,

students at a selected number table clean the communal areas. The numbers are cycled through so that no one table has to clean more than the others.

The teacher places minimal emphasis on throwing. Instead of making entire finished forms on the wheel, students make small thrown parts for use with other projects. This use of the wheel makes it easier for students to be more selective about the forms they are making rather than keeping the first attempt. I believe this also allows the students to be more independent when working on the wheel which is ideal, especially when teaching multiple levels in the same class time.

School D
Classroom Setup



School D is a private school. Its ceramic studio is a very small room, but this is not an issue since classes max out at thirteen students. While other schools have foundations classes in 2D or 3D as prerequisites for higher level courses, School D has one foundation class in

which the semester is divided by thirds. Students spend one-third of the semester in drawing/painting, one-third in photography, and one-third in ceramics. After that semester, the students are able to continue with the studio courses that most interest them.

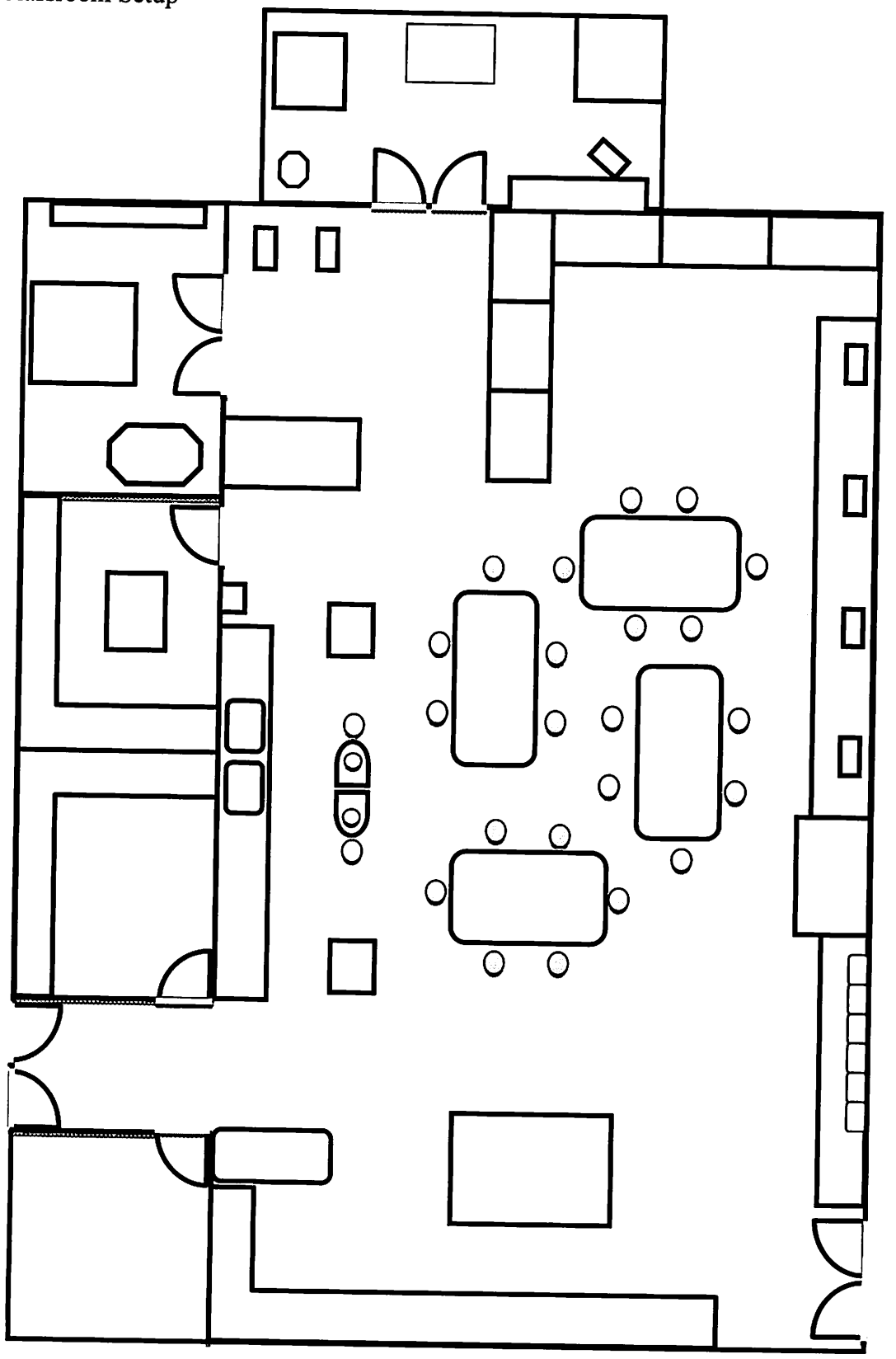
The classroom employs an open-shelf setup making everything easily visible and accessible. Students work at one of two communal work spaces. This promotes discussion between individuals and groups. In each class, the students clean their work areas with little prompting; those who are glazing use newspaper to protect their workstations which makes for a very fast and easy cleanup. At the end of the day, the last class does a more comprehensive cleanup of the room.

All class levels use the same type of clay to eliminate the need to sort work for different firing temperatures. The teacher encourages an economical use of clay and stresses the importance of proper storage, so that any bits of extra clay are made into slip, and no reclaim is necessary-exactly the same way it is done at School C. The classroom stocks a combination of commercial underglazes and hand-mixed glazes. The teacher sends his glaze recipe to a company that delivers the dry mix to the classroom; all that is left to do is add water. This eliminates the need for storing extra glaze material. It also limits opportunities for student to gain a deeper understanding of glazes.

Students are not expected to maintain a sketchbook and preplanning for a project is minimal. The teacher collects books, magazines, and images for the students to use for reference materials; students are not expected to look for their own reference images outside of class, and therefore many will not. Because the students at School D are being groomed for high end careers such as CEO's or doctors, less than a handful of students in 15 years

even considered to pursue art beyond high school. With this in mind, the teacher's goal is to, "create future patrons of the arts or at least people with good taste."

School E
Classroom Setup



The classroom at School E is designed to host the following classes: 3D foundations, Ceramics 1 & 2, Jewelry, Sculpture, and Advanced 3D (combining the few students from each concentration who wish to continue into a single course that allows for independent study). The teacher grins as he describes his classroom as a "perfectly organized system that each semester begins a slow, inescapable decline into chaos" through the fight for project storage, misplacement of items, and the inability of students to see things that are right in from of them. Despite the teacher's claim, a majority of the students seem to know their way around with minimal direction.

A rolling cart contains all the books and magazines used for reference in the classroom. The cart and its contents look well used, and there was quite often at least one person perusing the selection. Woodward students do not have to keep sketchbooks, however three-four sketches are required for each project. Only after students pick one sketch to refine can they begin working; multiple sketches on any scrap of paper can be seen poking out of the drawers assigned for student use. There is always a little bit of project overlap since due dates are flexible, but class critiques take place as soon as everyone is finished either building or glazing. There are no written assignments for any of the art courses since, according to the teacher, "They have enough to write for the general subjects."

The students are able to choose three different colored clays-each one will reach cone 9/10. The storage room hosts both commercial and hand-mixed glazes that are carefully labeled for low, medium, and high temperatures. There are also a wide range of kiln atmospheres to choose from. All of this variation means that the students are not limited by the material availability. With those choices, comes a responsibility to understand how the glazes work both with the clay and the kilns. Beginning students are encouraged to do glaze

tests before blindly committing to an unknown glaze while advanced classes must find or alter glaze recipes, test them, and use their final product on one of their projects.

The guidelines for projects given are specific in terms of size, function, or theme; but students are generally able to do anything as long as it fits within the original specification. The current project was to create a *working* fountain. There were absolutes-like space and openings to fit the pump, but there were no other limitations. This kind of project creates opportunities for creative problem solving and the class is likely to provide multiple solutions. The main goal for this teacher is, "encouraging thoughtful engagement and confidence in decision making skills, and a sense of pride in one's own work."

Observational Afterthoughts

There were several things that I observed fairly consistently. Firstly, there was high rigor in these ceramic courses and the students were eager to come in and get right to work. There were ample resources in the classrooms for students to gather information during the school day, but the students were still expected to do work of their own outside of the classroom. I also observed that students were engaging each other in discussions and informal critiques often without prompting in a majority of the classrooms.

One thing that struck me during these observations was the importance of foundation courses. These classes function to level the playing field for all students, giving them the necessary technical and conceptual skills to compete with confidence as they move through their high school art experience. The teachers were very helpful with tips and advice for classroom management or money saving tricks. In some ways, their comments were similar and in other ways totally on opposite ends of the spectrum. Each of the five teachers had a different perspective on whether to buy or make glazes and whether to let students mix

glazes or not. I found that the size of the room or sophistication of tools available matters little if the classroom is well organized and the students are actively engaged. I observed that the attitudes of students towards the subject of ceramics directly affected the work being made; and that the classrooms where there were more students who were excelling demonstrated a commitment to contextual learning and individual research.

Chapter Four
Proposed Curriculum

Overview

I want my classroom to be a place where every individual finds the resources needed to learn, grow and succeed. My goal is for my students to become more acutely aware of the arts and the role they play in everyday experiences. I believe in teaching that provides a strong support for the foundations of ceramic art, while maintaining a flexible but guided path to the students' growth and development as socially engaged members of the arts. Ultimately, I want to promote an appreciation of ceramics in its historical context, yet also an understanding of its significance in the contemporary.

I am committed to a learning environment that is:

- A place of mutual respect, where students are able to express their ideas without fear of ridicule.
- A place that stimulates curiosity and creativity.
- A place that sets high expectations and standards of achievement.
- A place that provides opportunities for critical thinking and problem solving.

I am also committed to a learning community that fosters:

- A commitment to engaged learning.
- A sense of personal integrity and self worth.
- An appreciation for the richness of diversity.
- Opportunities for extracurricular growth.
- The achievement of each individual's potential.

(Georgia Dept. of Education, 2009)

Based on my observations, I have found that I can best achieve these goals by first laying a strong foundation of classroom management and organization. Within this structure, students are given a certain level of autonomy and responsibility. I believe that students who have a more active role in their education will reach higher levels of achievement.

Ceramics I

This course is based on the student's individual discovery of the ceramics medium and the variety of formal and structural possibilities within the discipline. Beginning with the foundations of building with clay, the students will learn basic construction techniques. This provides the knowledge base needed to move to more advanced processes and finishing materials, and students can develop an appreciation for ceramics at the historical and contemporary level. Each assignment and learned method is a stepping-stone to the next project and future work. Utilization of these techniques will allow students to more effectively communicate their ideas in this medium.

Group discussions, individual critiques, and journaling augment the studio experience to develop communication skills for analysis and critical thought. Development of ideas, approaches to problem solving and a push for creative thinking are important aspects of the course. The ceramic studio encourages alternative approaches, exploration and experimentation within a context of individual research, critical analysis, and reflection. Accordingly, the acquisition of skills is framed by theoretical and contextual studies that examine the historical, social, and cultural settings of ceramics.

Ceramics II

At the intermediate level, course work builds upon the knowledge base gained in the previous course. Students expand technical skills while increasing focus on specialized, personal, and creative investigations of the material. Experimentation and risk taking in technique, vision, and concept are key objectives. Research and collecting source material in

areas of personal interest will be emphasized. Through this investigation, students can achieve a greater understanding of context for their work.

In the curriculum, an overarching conceptual theme unifies the group experience while students choose their own ideas and subjects. Students continue to expand and refine technical and conceptual skills pertaining to their chosen forms and concepts. Students will continue to extend their facility with the medium and may shift their focus to adopt ceramic methods and materials such as clay body alteration or alternative firing methods that are appropriate to their ideas. The course is designed to help students recognize the possibilities and growth of an individual point of view in art making and its presentation. Students will develop and strengthen skills to articulate-through discussion, writing, and research– messages, meanings, and functions of ceramic art. The course will further examine ceramic art in relation to historical and contemporary forms, personal creations, and the potential for new creations. Individual technical, visual, and conceptual growth is the challenge of the semester.

Ceramics III

As the students advance in technical skill and mental process, they will be encouraged to find a concentration in the vessel or sculpture as the center of their art production. This series of work focuses on problem solving skills and intellectual thought in mastering and applying the principles and concepts encountered when creating art at an advanced level.

In the vessel curriculum, students learn to throw and hand construct advanced compound forms. Students acquire more complex knowledge of glazes, surface embellishment, and subject matter for decoration. Issues of utility, design and craft are

examined. There is an emphasis on enhancing skills to analyze the details of utilitarian and one-of-a-kind vessel forms.

Students choosing the sculpture concentration explore the use of the medium as it is used in architecture-on the wall as with tiles or in a relief format as well as sculpture in the round. Students identify and develop a personal approach to imagery, form, and the surface considerations of painting, relief, pattern, color, texture, and composition by designing, producing, and installing works.

Students will establish a direction and intent for a final body of work that will be exhibited at the end of the semester in a chosen venue. Sustaining an idea, while continually challenging the artistic, visual, and technical processes, is the goal for students in this course. Individual research and the investigation of historic ceramic and/or contemporary art practice are expected of each student. Individual and group critiques are conducted throughout the semester. Each student is expected to present an artist statement detailing their artistic research and studio development.

Students are required to demonstrate a strong work ethic and a passionate pursuit for investigating personal artistic strengths and goals throughout the semester.

Sample Introductory Unit: Exploring Early Ceramic Practices At the Secondary Level

My overarching goal in this unit of study on ceramic history is that students will begin to understand how ideas are revealed through their art and how throughout the history of art, we find similar patterns that can be useful in helping us develop relevant perceptions of people in their specific historical context. Also, I believe that in as much as this may be true, it allows my students the opportunity to connect themselves to history. Because I

believe this is applicable to all times of human existence, these topics and the questions I pose here will be revisited on a number of occasions throughout the course of the year.

This introductory unit lasts for the first two and a half weeks of the semester, during which, students can explore ways that ceramic objects can give clues about how they were used in the past and provide insight into the ideology of the cultures that created them. Students will examine a variety of ceramic vessels, discuss their meanings, functions, and original contexts, and create their own personally inspired clay vessels. I will now present the lesson plans for my unit in backwards design format. This will be followed by a narrative account of my reflections as I implemented the lessons during my student teaching experience.

Unit Rationale

There is a long history of ceramic art in almost all developed cultures, and often, ceramic objects are all the evidence left from vanished cultures. Students will explore ceramic techniques and styles of various cultures from the Paleolithic age to contemporary practices. They will come to understand art as a major force that is created by a culture but can in turn inspire change in a people. Students are encouraged to analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, using such conclusions to inform their own art making. They will explore the different reasons for making art, how similar cultural aspects can be vastly different, and what is or is not considered art. Having information about a work of art beyond just what can be seen, and gives the student an opportunity for a more informed reaction to the work of others.

Unit Exploring Early Ceramic Practices at the Secondary Level
Grade Level Art I **Teacher** J. Henry

Unit/Lesson Overview

Lesson 1
Student will be introduced to the concept of art as means of communication and to the origins of ceramics by using the images from the Lascaux Caves. This is combined with an archeological discussion on how art can give us clues to knowledge about the past. Tools and forming methods will be discussed. Students will also be asked to make connections between ancient and contemporary art in terms of concept and technical practices.

Lesson 2
In this lesson, students will become familiar with the vocabulary and processes of ceramics. This is a good first gradient for introducing students to what is possible in the creation of ceramic pieces. Different construction methods will be addressed as well as the maintenance and safety procedures for studio equipment. As part of the production aspect of this lesson, students will research various techniques to texture clay tiles.

Lesson 3
This project will allow the students to imagine themselves in the Paleolithic age – making small figures that are human or animal. Using additive or subtractive methods, they must make objects that have personal relevance and be able to articulate the reasons for their decisions.

Lesson 4
Students will learn and practice formal critique methods both verbally and written with multiple opportunities to critique work by the teacher and fellow students.

Established Goals

VAHSSCCU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.
-c. Identifies how the issues of time, place, and culture are reflected in selected art works.
-d. Analyzes the relationship of decorative and functional qualities in sculptures from diverse cultures.
VAHSSCC.1
-b. Identifies specific knowledge and skills from other disciplines that inform the planning and execution of sculpture (chemistry, physics, and history).
-c. Understands how knowledge of the artifacts of sculpture enriches and enhances the study of history.
VAHSSCPR.3
-d. Practices studio safety and correct care in the operation of tools and equipment.
VAHSSCPR.4
h. Maintains notes and class information.

j. Practices technique.
k. Experiments with media and technique - uses as a process journal.

Understandings

Big Ideas:
Exploration of the medium
Interpretation of ceramic works
Spark an understanding of societal influences on production

Specific Understandings:
Tool identification
The importance of structure-hollow vs. solid
Art and technology began nearly simultaneously.
Students will understand the pros and cons of additive and subtractive methods.

Misunderstandings
Students will learn about beginning ceramic practices but may confuse this with modern practices. Ancient humans did not have the tools and machinery that we have today; pieces were fired in pits or small bonfires. Tools were often sticks, rocks or anything found in nature.

Essential Questions

- What were the origins of art?
- What was the significance of ancient art?
- What can we learn from the art of the past tell us? – **Art**ifacts (Sometimes, what we understand of a culture comes from interpretations of the art that survived.)
- How has the role of ceramics changed throughout history into modern day?
- What are the different stages of the ceramic process?

What other questions will focus this unit/lesson?

- How did life for ancient humans differ from ours today/how is it the same?
- How can clay be manipulated/what are its limitations?
- How can multiple interpretations be made about the same piece?

What will students understand as a result of this unit/lesson?

Students will need to know . . .	Students will be able to . . .
• Maximum safe thickness for clay • Studio safety • Steps for writing a critique	• Express criticism beyond "I like it" or "I don't like it" • Identify the different stages that clay goes through • Appreciate ancient art forms as a means of learning about early human existence

Performance Tasks, Projects

Participation in discussion of ancient man and early art practices
Practicing verbal art interpretation
Introduction to studio/tools/safety
Testing Local Clays- Assignment
Texture Tiles- Assignment
Animal/People Totems- Assignment
Written Critique

Other Evidence; observations, work samples, student self-assessment.

- Written critique of another student's work
- Verbal reflection on project, "What would I have done differently?

By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?

Project
20pts Sketches
30pts Concept
50pts Craftsmanship

Critique
25pts Description
25pts Analysis
25pts Interpretation
25pts Evaluation

Learning Activities

Lesson 1- 30min
Intro Powerpoint for Ancient Ceramics
Begin with ancient man, introduce a few cave images, identify animals, discuss with students what motivations could man have for creating these images, social contexts, painting techniques and materials. Start with lesson 2 if time allows.

Lesson 1.5 – 15 min
What is Clay?
-Students will be asked to locate and bring in samples of natural clay.
-Teacher will find and bring in multiple samples.
-Class will discuss clay properties and identify which is clay and which is dirt.

Lesson 2
Tools & Texture
3 – 45 minutes classes

In this lesson, students will become familiar with the vocabulary and processes of ceramics. This is a good first activity for introducing students to what is possible for surface texture. Different construction methods will be addressed as well as the maintenance and safety

procedures for studio equipment.
-Teacher

- Introduce students to the work of Gary Jackson (see Appendix D)-using stamps to create texture
- explain what the difference between texture and a symbol
- explain to students about slips and engobes, so they may also use them on the tiles and each student will have a better idea of how he or she will incorporate surface decoration later.
- demonstrate how the slab roller works and the safety procedures for it

-Students will split into groups of 3. Each student is responsible for making 6 clay tiles 2" square with texture. All tiles within a single group cannot be repeated. Each group should finish with at least 18 tiles/textures. Tile edges and corners need to be rounded off as they will become sharp when fired.
-Teacher should hot glue fired tiles to a previously selected area in the classroom that is easily visible for students to view the different options for texture when they begin lesson 4.

Lesson 3
Figurines
4 Days

This project will allow the students to imagine themselves in the Paleolithic age – making small figures that are human or animal. Using additive or subtractive methods, they must make objects that have personal relevance and be able to articulate the reasons for their decisions. Example: I would like to be taller and more graceful, so I might create a giraffe.

-Teacher and students will discuss ancient ceramic objects in the same way that ancient cave art was discussed-materials, subject matter, and social context.
-Teacher will demonstrate different building techniques and proper use of hand tools.
-Students must brainstorm an animal or person to make out of clay. Maximum size is 8" and minimum size is 3", clay cannot be more than half an inch thick at any point. Students need to make several sketches of their choice from different angles, positions, and styles; and select their best idea to execute.
-Teacher will place projects in kiln when finished and dry.

Lesson 4
Criticism
3 Days

-While the projects are being fired, students will be presented with a ceramic object similar to the current project. Teacher will review each step in the Feldman criticism model. *See Appendix* For each step, students will work individually to write at least one paragraph. At the end of the allotted time, students will share the contents of their paragraphs.
-When students finish painting, they must trade projects with another student and begin writing a critique of the piece.
-Students who do not have work to trade for any reason will critique a poster of a ceramic work.

Important vocabulary and definitions

- **Clay**- a natural earthy material that is plastic when wet, used for making bricks, pottery, etc.
- **Pit Firing**-firing process that occurs in the ground without the use of any insulating material
- **Glaze**- to give a vitreous surface or coating to (a ceramic or the like), as by the application of a substance or by fusion of the body.
- **Artifact**-a handmade object, as a tool, or the remains of one, as a shard of pottery, characteristic of an earlier time or cultural stage, especially such an object found at an archaeological excavation.
- **Shards**-broken bits of pottery
- **Wedging**-to remove air from a clay body by a subtle rocking and folding motion
- **Slab** –a flattened piece of clay
- **Texture**- the visual and especially tactile quality of a surface: *rough texture.*
- **Incising** -to make (marks, figures, etc.) by cutting; engrave; carve.
- **Stamping** – to make an impression upon a surface with an object
- **Additive Method**- adding material to change a form
- **Subtractive Method**-subtracting material to change a form
- **Score and Slip**-method of scratching two clay surfaces and adding slip between them for the purpose of creating a secure connection

Dictionary.com

Resources

Selected Images – See Powerpoint in Appendix D
Teacher Examples

Materials

Clay
Ceramic Tools
Plastic Bags
Canvas
Rolling Pins or Slab Roller
Forks
Spoons
Stamps
Any non-conventional tools the students can find
Notebook
Shovels
Mesh Screens
Buckets
Rulers
Sketchbooks

Clean-up Procedures

Clean Up (Every Day)
Wipe Down Tables

Store/Reclaim Clay Clean and Put Tools Away Store Projects on Shelf

Lesson 1

I began with the powerpoint found in Appendix D. It had a few more slides near the beginning because I asked the students to describe to me what a cave man looked like, how he acted, etc. I received several answers, all appropriate for the first two slides – a cartoon cave man who could be described as a lumbering oaf, and "cave art" that had been done by a five-year-old. The students are all nodding because this fit into their preconceptions. I move to the next slide, the Geico Cavemen, and say that while this image is also not accurate, ancient humans were intelligent and sophisticated individuals.

I explain that at a certain point in our history as a species we were not just surviving, we began to thrive. We look at several examples and I'm throwing question after question at them....Why are ancient humans drawing animals? How easy are these animals to identify? Are those arrows or bits of grain? Sometimes the answers are all the same and sometimes they differ, but I am asking them to explain to me and to themselves how they came to an answer, getting each student to identify the clues in the image, taking the beginning steps towards critique. We soon move on to ceramics and I ask what they already know about the process and I fill in the gaps, tying back into the theme of ancient humans and how the practice of ceramics is old – going back nearly to the mastery of fire and in most ways the process is the same today with a few more technological refinements.

The class started looking at clay animals (still looking at context clues) and the reasons why these were made. Humans still make ceramic animals and I asked the class to think about a few contemporary examples and if they could give an example of an incredibly popular ceramic animal...piggy banks! Sometimes when I ask this question the answers

come very quickly or I get a bunch of blank stares. Even when the class was stuck, or no one was brave enough to answer, I threw out a clue. I didn't want to just give away an answer, because this would only reinforce the silence. I explained that later on we would be making our own animals or figures, but that ours must also have meaning and significance. We had enough time left, so I pulled out some samples of clay (both natural and processed) at various stages. Students formed into small groups and received one of the samples. Each group examined their sample and jotted down as much about it as they can. As they worked, I called out different ways for further examination. Temperature, texture, smell, color, etc. Each group shared their descriptions with the class and then the whole class sorted the samples by type of clay and then in order of stages based on the information they have gathered. This began to get the students comfortable with self-reliance - attempting to answer their own questions or to ask questions from each other before going directly to the teacher.

Lesson 2

The class had another look at the powerpoint and the students were introduced to the work of Gary Jackson, who makes hundreds of his own stamps and test tiles to gain a better understanding of how his glazes react to different textures. We discussed how addressing the surface of a piece is just as important as creating the form. Now that the students were able to identify the different stages that clay goes through, I went over studio safety, how to use the slab roller/how to make slabs by hand, and then did a demonstration on making tiles as I explained what I was expecting them to do for this lesson. We would be making our own tiles and I gave the students the dimensions that I wanted for the tiles so that we could test the shrink rate after the firing and demonstrated how to smooth out the edges so that the tiles would be easier to handle later. We would experiment with the tools available and with

anything else the students could think of to create texture on a tile. I asked the students to think about what kind objects that ancient humans had to create texture. The class divided into groups again, but with different people than the day before as we are trying to establish a rapport with more than just the same few individuals. Each student understood that as an individual, he or she was responsible for making six tiles with a different texture on each, but within a group of three or four people, no two tiles can have the same texture. Once again the students had to collaborate to accomplish a task. These tiles would be used for our glaze tests in a later lesson. As some students began to finish early, I instructed the students to brainstorm and document ideas in their sketchbook for an animal or a human figure to create for the next lesson-encouraging them to think back to day one on the topics we discussed.

Lesson 3

Upon completion of the tiles, I had another demonstration on forming methods and how to slip and score. The class had a short review-looking back at the ancient animal and human figures and discussed the requirements for the project. These projects were meant to have personal relevance and the students should have been able to articulate the reasons for their decisions. The students were shown examples of sketchbook pages to help them understand what I was asking them to do. Students would then show me their sketchbooks to obtain clay and begin working.

Lesson 4

The animal/human figures were loaded into the kiln, and while they were firing, I discussed with the class about the Feldman critique as a more in depth approach to critiquing a work of art in a written format. I set up a bulletin board similar to the one found in

Appendix E with a poster of a ceramic work that fit within the criteria of the project. The board was divided into quadrants that each addressed a different step in the critique with questions and prompts to keep students from getting stuck. The students each had a textbook with a chapter that further described the steps of a critique as well as posters around the room that highlighted each step.

I brought in one of my pieces that fit the theme of the project for the class to practice the Feldman method as both a group and individually. We discussed what makes a good description and that sometimes a quick list can help to organize thoughts before writing. Then we would write for eight minutes; along with the multiple sources that the students can look to in the classroom, I am also calling out different ways to look at the work. I would pick a few people to share what they wrote, letting the class hear the similarities and differences about the same ceramic work. We continued in a similar fashion for the rest of the steps.

After the projects were fired and the students had colored the surface with something other than glaze – natural clay, shoe polish, etc., each student had to trade his or her own work for the work of someone else. I instructed the students to use the structure of the Feldman method but not to make the writing so dry, to add a little creative flair. I believe that the quality of the projects was still affected by the limited experience that the students had with clay, but by switching work, students were able to take a fresh look at the project without the pressure of critiquing their own work.

Chapter Five
Closing Comments

As Sessions(1999) frequently reminds us, there are inequalities in teaching the 2D and 3D arts. This became apparent to me as I looked back on my early observations and by noticing in the majority of school art textbooks a strong bias towards drawing and painting. I wanted to create a curriculum and develop teaching methods that fostered meaningful experiences and dialogue within the ceramics classroom. I am proposing an approach to ceramic curriculum that requires a significant amount of effort from both the teacher and the students in order to create a worthwhile experience through clay. My intent is to go beyond simply supporting students as they learn concepts and skills as these relate to personal levels of achievement but to push the connection of ideas that leads towards or furthers exploration (Lampert, 2006). I wanted to avoid a superficial approach to ceramics curriculum as I felt that this was not beneficial in the long term to any student involved.

During my student teaching I developed a unit that not only introduced the students to ceramics but also allowed the students to explore artworks and engage themselves in a way they hadn't before. By combining the seemingly opposing critique methods of Barrett and Feldman within discussions and writing, I was presented with comments and observations that were more insightful than I expected. That alone was enough for me to feel that what I was doing had an impact. Of course not everything went perfectly and I had to know what else I could be doing in the classroom to accomplish my goals. I was able to set up one day observations at well- established ceramics classrooms. Essentially I was collecting "snapshots" of these classrooms where I had to interpret what was going on and which factors made the program a success.

While I had a clear idea of the outcomes I was aiming for, I was less clear initially about how those outcomes could be accomplished or by what methods I would have success. Between teaching my unit at my high school placement and observing at five outstanding ceramic classrooms, I now have a better understanding of the strategies I will use as I begin my teaching career.

Recommendations

I believe that strong classroom management is the foundation towards creating my vision of an exceptional ceramics program. Establishing a routine and setting clear expectations are key parts of implementing good studio habits in the classroom. If everyone is clear on day to day procedures, then the teacher is able to shift his or her energies towards providing the students with higher intellectual pursuits, and it becomes easier to accomplish tasks with desired results.

Another major component of my plan is to give students more responsibility and opportunities to drive their own experiences. For example: having the teacher ask more questions that are intended to spark student commentary can lead to more student participation and to more confident and in depth sessions. This can be accomplished by initially prompting an investigation of how our definitions of art are as individual as we are and then leading into personal aesthetics. Continually providing opportunities for active dialogue further connects the students to the medium which can lead to a deeper combination of skills, judgment, and experience.

I also believe that sketchbooks are incredibly important in any art course. Sketchbooks are a tool that not only helps the teacher to visualize what a student is trying to communicate, but they also help the student develop ideas for their work. It is a place to store

notes, research, and thoughts that need to be saved for later – more often than not a safer place to store information than the human brain. A sketchbook allows students to establish a dialogue with themselves, which can lead to greater success. For these reasons students should be encouraged to use their sketchbooks on a regular basis, not just when prompted. In future research, I would like to see a case study that looks at the level of correlation between using a sketchbook and the quality of work/depth of discussion participation of students in the ceramics classroom.

The introductory unit provided not only introduces students to the medium, but also lays the foundation for procedures and expectations for each of the studio structures (demonstration/discussion, students at work, and critique) for the rest of the introductory and subsequent courses. The unit also establishes an environment of dialogue and interaction between all members of the classroom. The activities presented also expose the students to both verbal and written critique.

Student driven inquiry is the best description of what I want to achieve in my approach to teaching ceramics. This approach can be used to develop critical thinking and problem solving. Such inquiry teaches students to ask questions, seek information, and draw conclusions about the meaning of artworks from a variety of sources. As students become able to move beyond the curriculum and investigate topics independently, they can begin to generate their own questions and approaches. This type of authentic research will be more interesting and more appealing to the student than traditional teacher-directed methods. Eventually students realize that within the limitations of the media exists infinite possibility.

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APPENDIX: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FOR THE CLASSROOM

Appendix A. Classroom Handouts

Sketchbooks and Notes: Introductory Handout
Think ceramic artists don't draw?
Think again! Ceramic artists draw all the time...in fact, drawing is very important to your success as a student of ceramics! Your sketchbook will be your notebook, textbook, and idea book for this class.

You must bring your sketchbook to every class! Sometimes you will be asked to take notes in your sketchbook or to do other assigned sketchbook work during class. You may finish an assignment early or have some free time in class. If you ever find yourself with extra time, put some extra effort into your sketchbook assignments. You are never limited to just your class assignments – extra effort in your sketchbook demonstrates that you are learning to think as an artist.

HOW TO USE A CERAMICS SKETCHBOOK
Your sketchbook assignments will usually be any one or combination of three different sketchbook uses. These categories comprise how many artists use their sketchbooks. It is a good idea to date or label your entries for future reference. As you become more comfortable keeping a sketchbook, you may come up with other purposes for it!

Drawing/Planning
When you are going to create a work of art that may take an extended period of time, it is important that you have a good plan for your design. A planning assignment will often ask you to do a series of 'thumbnail sketches' – an artist's brainstorm – for a project. You can do many thumbnail sketches on one page of your sketchbook! Thumbnails can be used to work out ideas for content, composition, color schemes, or other aspects of your project. You do not have to draw well in order to complete Ceramics sketchbook assignments. Just try your best!

Examples:

-In class, we're working on a sculpture based on organic forms. Sketch five organic forms you find in your kitchen or backyard. Choose your favorite and develop it in detail, including its projected size, areas of texture, colors, etc.

-We're working on wheel thrown cups in class. In your sketchbook, work out four ideas for a matching set of at least three thrown cups. How will your cups relate to each other in terms of design?

Questions to ask yourself...

1. How is the piece to be used?
2. How do you want the work to look?
3. What materials/tools are available?
4. How will you accomplish this task?

Research

Sometimes you may need some visual references for your project. For instance – if you want to do a sculpture of a tree, you will need some pictures or drawings of a tree to help you evoke realism. We will be looking at some periods and movements in art history, and some of our projects will be based on these. So, for instance, you may need to collect some works by an artist and/or some information about an artist whose work you may want to emulate. Any visual images or reference materials you collect must be secured with a glue stick in your sketchbook.

Examples:

-We will be working on a project in class involving sculpting an animal. Collect 8-10 images of animals you may be interested in sculpting and paste them in your sketchbook.

-Choose one of the artists whose work we viewed in class. Write a brief paragraph about this artist, and find three ceramic works by this artist and include them in your sketchbook.

Response

You will be required to read some articles relating to art history, contemporary issues in art, and/or societal issues. We will be having class discussions, and may also watch an occasional relevant video in class. When you are asked to respond to a reading, discussion, or video, your response can include drawing, writing, research, or any combination, and should be fully address the prompt. Your response should present your perspective and/or personal thoughts on the content.

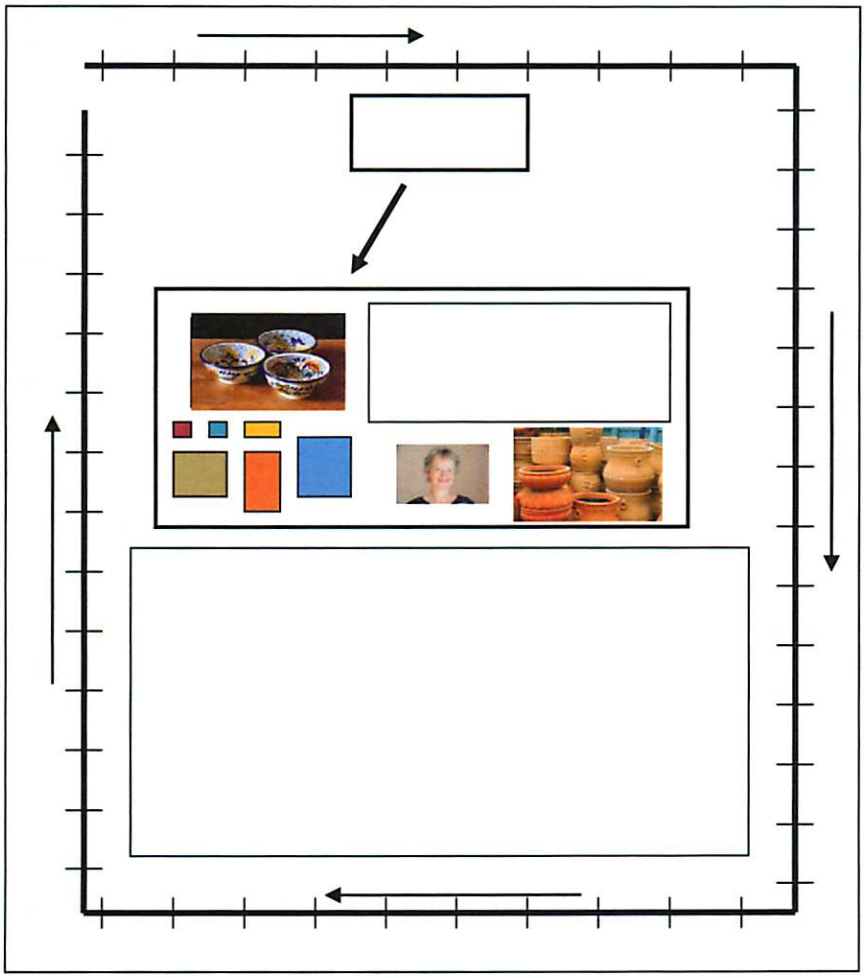
Handouts that are distributed in class (including this one) need to be kept in your sketchbook. The folder will be checked periodically, and assigned a homework grade. It must be brought to class every day...you may leave yours on your shelf if you like. Your individual and creative responses are valuable.

These guidelines are a starting place – they represent the minimum expectations. Alternate solutions that demonstrate extra effort, creativity, and learning are encouraged and expected!

GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN!

Appendix B. Ceramic History Timeline

Ceramics has always been one of the essential components of technological progress and civilized life. When placed in a natural humanistic and/or cultural context, art can reveal a range of ever-changing images and attitudes as artists express opinions of themselves, their social surroundings, and their place in the world. To promote further understanding, a portion of the wall space in the classroom will be devoted to a ceramic history timeline. This would be an interactive set up in which the teacher and the students take part in adding to the display with a section devoted to highlighting specific topics as they change each week or from project to project.



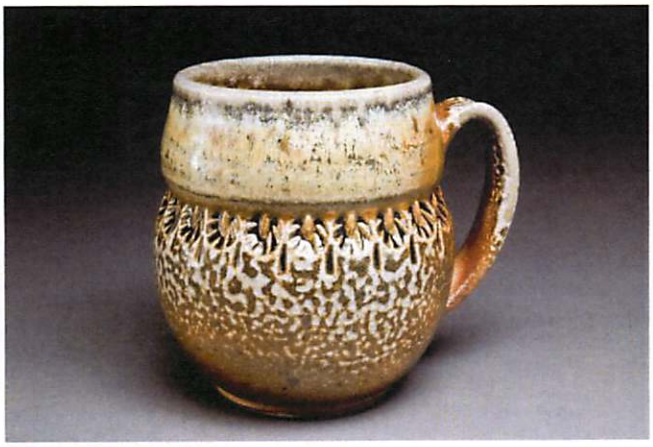
Appendix C. Ceramic Artists

In my classroom, I will work with my students to compile a list of ceramic artists in conjunction with the ceramic history timeline. This list will serve as a spring board for students doing assigned and independent research. Students will add to the list as they "discover" more artists. Each year, this research (as well as other names) will be added to a physical and digital database in addition to the collection of books for classroom resources.

Example: Gary Jackson

Website -http://firewhenreadypottery.com

Examples of work



Brief artist statement

I have always been drawn to details.

The geometric designs found in nature.
The textures of fabrics & surfaces.
The repetition of patterns in everyday life.

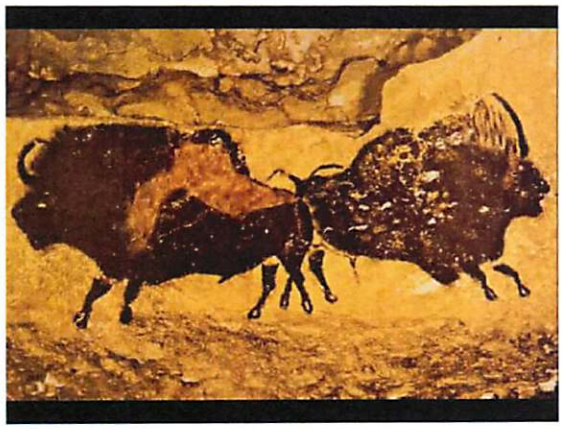
Noticing the fine details around me and appreciating how they create a larger picture. So many people rush through life without ever seeing the world around them. The fragile ferns and the overlapping shadows they create. The geometric fan of a palm frond. The play of light through colored leaves in autumn. Nature's designs are all around us if we just take time to notice. All of the subtle beauty that one would miss if they never took time to open their eyes. I try to capture and share a little of that beauty in my work. The fine details. The larger picture.

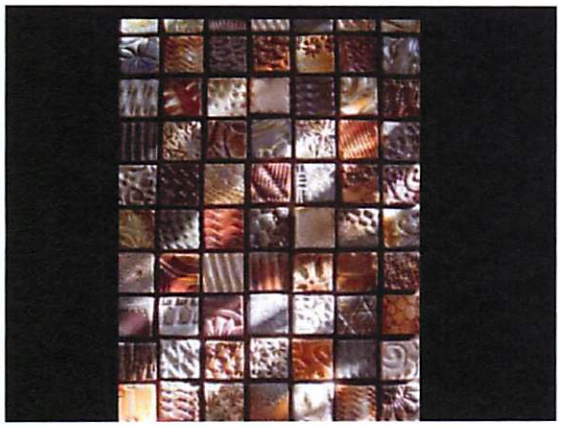
My view of life is seen through the little things,
appreciating the subtle nuances and enjoying the world that surrounds us.
And if it's not fun... don't do it.

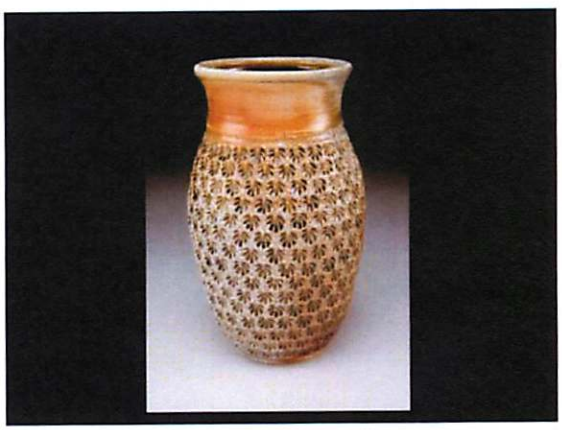
It's all about the details.

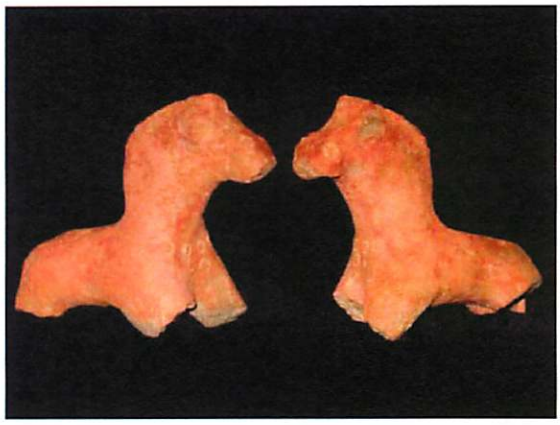
Appendix D.

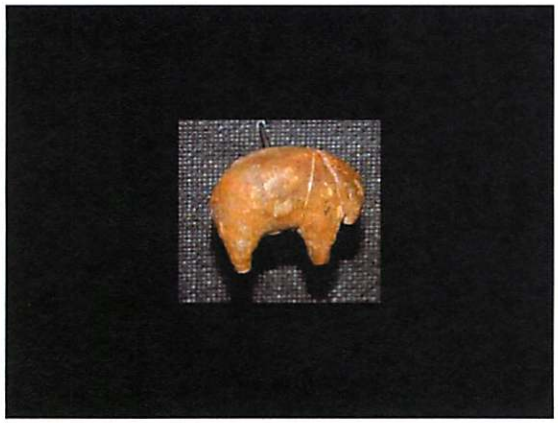
Ceramics
The Ancient Art

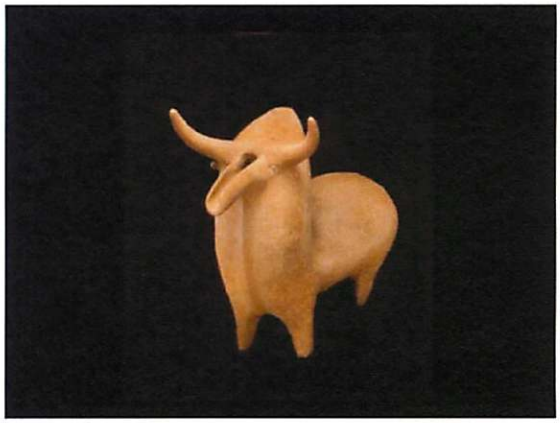


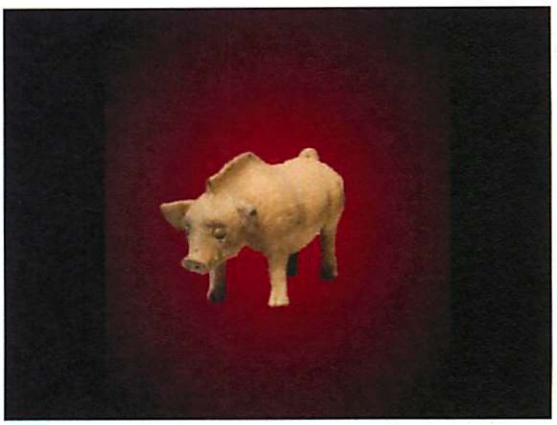


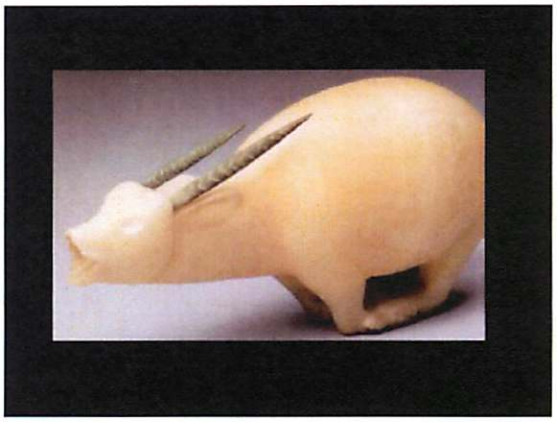


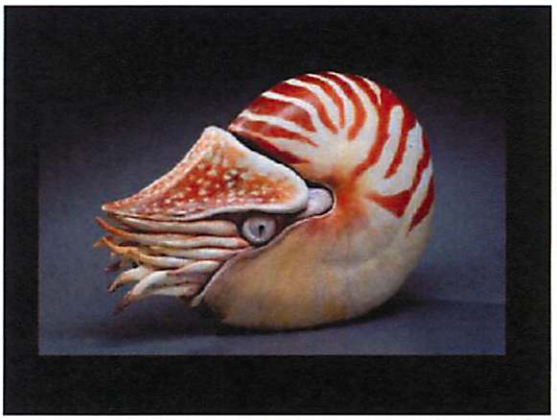


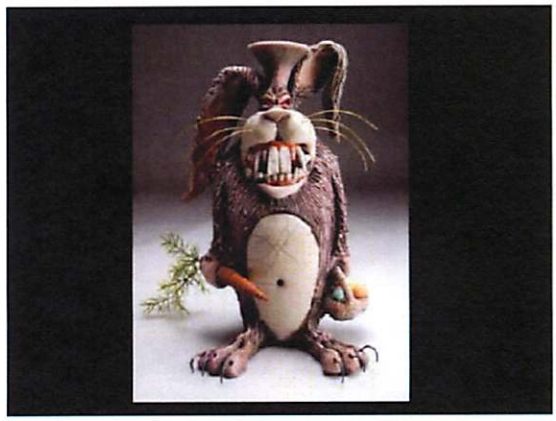


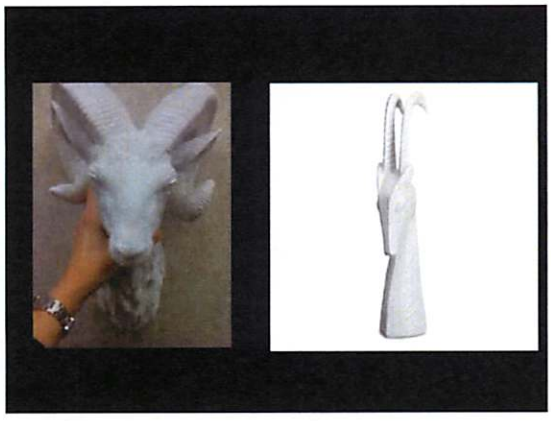


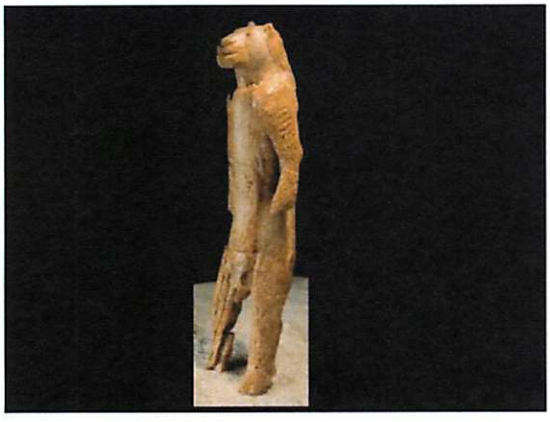












Appendix E.

1 Description

This stage is like taking inventory. You want to come up with a list of everything you see in the work. Stick to the facts. **Imagine that you are describing the artwork to someone over the telephone.**

-Name of artist, title of work, and media.
-2D or 3D?
-What is the subject matter? Or is it abstract?
-What kinds of colors do you see? How would you describe them?
-What shapes can you see? Organic or Geometric?
- Are there lines in the work? If so, what kinds of lines are they?
- What sort of textures do you see? Real or Implied?

3 Interpret Try to figure out what the artwork is about. Your own perspectives, associations and experiences meet with "the evidence" found in the work of art. All art works are about something. Some art works are about color, their subject matter, and social or cultural issues. Some art works are very accessible — that is, relatively easy for the viewer to understand what the artist was doing. Other works are highly intellectual, and might not be as easy for us to readily know what the artist was thinking about.

-What is the theme or subject of the work? What mood or emotions does the artwork communicate?

-What is the work about; what so you think it means?

-Why do you think that artist created this work?

-What do you think the artist's view of the world is?

Use the vocabulary you learned in class.

2 Analyze

Try to figure out what the artist has done to achieve certain effects. You should refer to your first impressions and try to explain how the artwork achieves that reaction.

-What do you notice about the artist's choice of materials?
-What grabs your attention in the work?
-Do you see any relationship to the things you listed during the description stage?
-What sort of effect do the colors have on the artwork?
-How as the artist used shapes within the work of art?
-Look at the lines. Has the artist used them as an important or dominant part of the work, or do they play a different roll?
-What role does texture play in the work?
-How has the artist used light in the work(s)? Is there the illusion of a scene with lights and shadows, or does the artist use light and dark values in a more abstracted way?

4 Evaluate

This is a culminating and reflecting activity. You need to come to some conclusions about the artwork based on all the information you have gathered and on your interpretations.

-Have your thoughts or feelings about the artwork changed since your first impression? If so, how? What made you change your mind?
-What have you seen or learned from this work that you might apply to your own art work or your own thinking?
-Do you find that the work communicates an idea, feeling or principle that would have value for others?
-Does the work lack value or worth? Why do you think this is so? Could the reason you find the work lacking come from a poor use of the elements of art? Could the subject matter by unappealing, unimaginative, or repulsive?
-Rather than seeing the work as being very effective or without total value, does the work fall somewhere in-between? Do you think that the work is just o.k.? What do you base this opinion on? The use of elements of art? Lack of personal expression?