



Elizabeth Lessard

2022 Spring

Capstone - Pottery

Department of Art and Art History

Artist Statement:

My current body of work is wheel thrown place settings for the table. Each are based on different historical or traditional ceramic forms. I look for pots that I find striking: an unusual form, an interesting surface decoration, or an exciting material. The choice of creating these pieces on the wheel is important. The wheel is a tool that has been used by potters for thousands of years and is an active part of the living history of ceramics.

I've chosen five different historical traditions from across the globe, selected specific ceramic pieces from each culture, and then used those pots as inspiration for each place setting: American traditional, Mexican folk, Japanese Oribe ware, Song Dynasty, and ancient Crete. All of the decisions I made in reinterpreting my place settings are informed by their historical source. This involves how I chose the specific clay body and surface decoration for each set. On my Oribe set, for example, I used a stoneware clay, a black slip motif, and a green copper glaze to mimic the surface of the specific Oribe ware objects I was referencing. From there the pieces are fired in different kilns to help reflect the finishes of the historical pieces.

I am working through these ideas to gain a greater understanding of the history of pottery and craft. In a bachelor of fine arts program, there is often a gap of information on craft history in the traditional survey courses. Ceramics is so closely tied to history and tradition as it is a material that humans have been creating with since as early as 28,000 BCE. It is hard to avoid historical influence in a ceramic practice, but I am trying to go beyond that basic impact in my current body of work. These five different dinnerware sets became a collaboration between me and the historical references that I chose.

I chose five styles to focus on because my familial dinner table is set with five places. All of us coming together is a significant part of my life and has a large impact on the way that I look at the world. The learning and growth that happens in those spaces of coming together creates a deeper understanding. Different ceramic histories come together for me to give me a similar deeper understanding of my own artistic practice. While all five of us are separate people and all five of these styles are unrelated they come together to form a wealth of knowledge. I am trying to physically represent these melding histories by giving them a literal seat at the table.

Technical Statement:

My artistic processes started with finding historical forms and surfaces that were striking to me. From there I look deeper into ceramics from that time period and culture. I gather information from these objects like the kind of clay that was used, the forms, the appearance of the glaze, the motifs that were used on the surface. With this information I design a table ware set. This involves a little bit of sketching in my notebook, but I mostly explore form while I'm making. I will mix or purchase a clay body that works well for the objects that I am referencing. From there I start throwing on a kick wheel. I throw the large plates first, then the small plates, then the small bowl, then the cup, and then the large bowl. I find throwing in this order helps me understand the forms I'm creating more. From the plates I will learn what the lips of the objects will look like. From the bowls I learn what the curves will look like. I take that information and use that to create the cups. I create the large bowl by trying to match the form of the small bowl.

I make all of these objects by measuring out specific amounts of clay and throwing them on the wheel. I made multiple of each object to help me explore form and to use in case I trimmed through one or it cracked while drying or firing. I threw the plates and large bowls to a specific dimension, but everything else was thrown to fit what I wanted the form to look like. Once each object is thrown it has to dry before I trim it or finish the pot's foot. I trimmed and finished the bottoms of each object to complete the form. This allows me another space to implement historical inspiration. While things are leatherhard and continuing to dry I will apply slips if the design calls for it. Once the slip motif is applied I dry the pieces completely and then bisque fire them. The temperature for bisquing varies according to the clay body I use.

Once the objects are bisqued I apply glaze. I use glazes that I have tested that reference the historical objects I chose. Each glaze was applied with a brush. Depending on the aesthetic I was trying to achieve I did more or less coats of the glaze and left specific parts of the pots unglazed such as the lip or the foot ring. Once glaze is applied the pieces are fired one last time. The temperature and kiln atmosphere varies from set to set depending on clay and the aesthetic that I was trying to achieve.

Turner Beauty ^6

Nepheline Syenite	37.5
Spodumene	25
Whiting	2.5
Dolomite	27.5
ZircoPax	12
Veegum	1

V.C. Easy Gloss IV ^6

Cornwall Stone	47
Gerstley Borate	47
Ball Clay	6
Veegum	1
CMC Powder	1

Oribe V3 ^6

Nepheline Syenite	48.59
Silica	21.23
Whiting	17.51
Gerstley Borate	13.16
EPK	4.52
CMC Powder	1
Copper Carbonate	5
Bentonite	2

AC Base ^04

Barium Carbonate	12
Gerstley Borate	22
Custer Feldspar	40
Whiting	12
Zinc	4
Flint	10
Veegum	1
CMC Powder	1
Cobalt Carbonate	5
Vanadium Stain	8
Dark Red Stain	6
Dark Turquoise Stain	8
Chrome Tin Violet Stain	5

ZAM Super Body Clay Body ^6**Laguna Coleman Porcelain ^10****Terra Sigillata ^04**

OM4 Ball Clay	43.75
Sodium Silicate	1
Water	75
50 Mesh Grog	2

Gabby's Red Clay ^04

Gold Art	25
Hawthorne Bond	20
Red Art	55
Talc	5
Assorted Mesh Grog	15
Water	80
Paper	75

Porcelain Slip ^6

Porcelain	1
Water	2
Red Iron Oxide	.2

Black Slip ^6

Grolleg	30
Tile #6	25
C&C Ball Clay	10
Kona F-4	15
Flint	20
CMC Powder	1.5
Black Iron Oxide	12
Black Mason Stain	7
Cobalt Oxide	2

Title**Original Format**

Figure 1: Oribe Dinnerware Set	Stoneware clay, 17 ½" x 13 ½" x 4 ½"
Figure 2: Oribe Serving Bowl	Stoneware clay, 7 ¾" x 7 ¾" x 4 ¾"
Figure 3: American Traditional Dinnerware Set	Stoneware clay, 17 ½" x 13 ½" x 5"
Figure 4: American Traditional Serving Bowl	Stoneware clay, 7 ¾" x 7 ¾" x 4 ¾"
Figure 5: Crete Dinnerware Set	Porcelain clay, 17 ½" x 13 1/3" x 5 ¾"
Figure 6: Crete Serving Bowl	Porcelain clay, 6 ½" x 6 ½" x 5"
Figure 7: Mexican Folk Dinnerware Set	Earthenware clay, 17 ½" x 13 ½" x 5"
Figure 8: Mexican Folk Serving Bowl	Earthenware clay, 8" x 8" x 4 ½"
Figure 9: Song Dynasty Dinnerware Set	Porcelain clay, 17 ½" x 13 ½" x 4 ¾"
Figure 10: Song Dynasty Serving Bowl	Porcelain clay, 7 ¼" x 7 ¼" x 5"



Figure 1: Oribe Dinnerware Set



Figure 2: Oribe Serving Bowl



Figure 3: American Traditional Dinnerware Set



Figure 4: American Traditional Serving Bowl



Figure 5: Crete Dinnerware Set



Figure 6: Crete Serving Bowl



Figure 7: Mexican Folk Dinnerware Set



Figure 8: Mexican Folk Serving Bowl



Figure 9: Song Dynasty Dinnerware Set



Figure 10: Song Dynasty Serving Bowl