



Gianna Santucci

2021 Spring

Capstone - Pottery

Department of Art and Art History

**Artist Statement:**

As an artist I have always been interested in the magical and the weird. Nature has been a powerful force in my life, and I have always associated nature with the idea of enchantment, strangeness, and the extraordinary. Our planet and our universe is cyclical and diverse. I incorporate the idea of that energy, flow, and movement into my work. One specific way that I create this is through my use of glaze, particularly choosing glazes with movement. When I find an intriguing glaze, I continue to explore its potential because each change and interruption in a glaze is inspiring and complex. I want my artwork to create a feeling of wonder for the viewer to create their own story of what it means.

Within my pottery practice I make sculptures and wheel thrown pottery. In my current body of work I am creating large mushroom sculptures. As a whole, the body of work is titled Mushroom Social. I feel that mushrooms are a good representation of how nature can send energy and communicate. Mushrooms are known to function like the internet of nature, the mycelium are like wires that allow plants and trees to communicate through nutrients and electrical impulses. Mushrooms have a unique type of intelligence compared to what humans have. The form of the mushroom is also very alluring with its curves, shapes, and textures. My fascination in this has led me to incorporate many textures and colors into the mushroom sculptures.

The faces on my mushrooms connect the idea of human communication and experience. I am making large-scale mushroom sculptures to try and connect the two very different worlds, one world close to the ground, and one much taller. I'm making a statement about how people need to start relating themselves to nature, plants, animals, fungi and the land. If people continue to live with the mindset of the human experience being the only thing that matters, then we are going to lose so many of these beautiful, intricate, flowing life forms. It is important for humans to decentralize themselves from the experience of life.

**Technical Statement:**

When I build my mushroom sculptures I primarily use a hand building technique with DAM clay. For the stems I use a coil building technique. I roll out large, fat coils to support the large sculptures. After stacking on the coils I smooth them out and pinch the form into the shape I want. Using this technique I am able to build thick walls which in turn support the weight of the structures. I also use slabs for specific parts of the sculptures, then attach the parts with a slipping and scoring technique. Mushroom #2 in this series utilizes a building plan in which I build from the ground up in one piece. As for Mushroom #1, I build in separate parts to increase likeliness for consistent drying and efficient building times. This way I am building both the stem and the cap at the same time. I use a large round plaster mold which I press slabs onto allowing the clay to firm up. I have then quickly built a base, or mushroom cap, for the sculptures.

Texture is also a crucial component within my practice. I utilize my hands to create many of the textures found on the mushrooms. This includes dragging my fingers along the clay body surface, or pinching to create reservoirs for the glaze to melt and settle into. I also use thick slip to integrate texture. I dollop the slip onto the surface then use my fingers to lift and create spikes on the cap of the mushroom. Glaze is an important aspect to my work and is influenced by the various textures I implement while building my mushrooms. I layer glazes to create interesting combinations, effects, and patterns. I am constantly learning and exploring new glaze recipes which I integrate into each new project. I experiment with glaze recipes to try and discover new possibilities by either adding in a new material, lessening one present material and adding more of a different present material or subtracting a present material. Some of the materials that I commonly use with my glazes include nepheline syenite, frit 3134, gerstley borate, whiting, and EPK.

Title	Original Format
Figure 1: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1	Ceramics, 46" x 24" x 24"
Figure 2: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1 (Detail)	Ceramics, 46" x 24" x 24"
Figure 3: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1 (Detail)	Ceramics, 46" x 24" x 24"
Figure 4: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2	Ceramics, 40" x 26" x 24"
Figure 5: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2 (Detail)	Ceramics, 40" x 26" x 24"
Figure 6: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2 (Detail)	Ceramics, 40" x 26" x 24"
Figure 7: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3	Ceramics 24" x 30" x 25"
Figure 8: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)	Ceramics 24" x 30" x 25"
Figure 9: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)	Ceramics 24" x 30" x 25"
Figure 10: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)	Ceramics 24" x 30" x 25"



**Figure 1: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1**



**Figure 2: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1 (Detail)**





**Figure 3: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #1 (Detail)**



**Figure 4: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2**





**Figure 5: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2 (Detail)**



**Figure 6: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #2 (Detail)**



**Figure 7: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3**





**Figure 8: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)**



**Figure 9: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)**





**Figure 10: Mushroom Social, Mushroom #3 (Detail)**