

# Pottery VOCABULARY

# Absorption

Water in the clay is absorbed by the hands and surfaces upon which the clay is worked.

# Abstract

- Imagery which departs from representational accuracy (does not look realistic)
- Abstract artists select and then exaggerate or simplify the forms suggested by the world around them



# Alumina

stabilizes the glaze to keep the glaze from  
running off the piece

# Analysis (Step 2)

**How is the work organized?**

List the appropriate

Elements of Art and Principles of Art

that correspond with what you are looking at.

# Applique

Decorative technique that involves adding molded clay to a clay surface



# The Artist

The artist forms the clay.



# Artist Statement

- A basic introduction to the artist's work, thoughts, and artistic background for the viewers' understanding
- A written description of the artist's work written by the artist



# Artist Trading Card

- (**ATCs**) are miniature pieces of art that are traded around the world. Artists create, trade, and collect art at organized "swap" events, either in person or online.
- The only official rule for **ATCs** is the size: 2.5" x 3.5".



# Assemblage

- A three-dimensional composition made of various materials such as found objects, paper, wood, and textiles. A 3D collage



# Banding Wheel

Hand-operated turntable for applying  
wax resist, banded decoration, etc.

Allows the artist to view pot from all  
sides (360 degrees)





# Bat

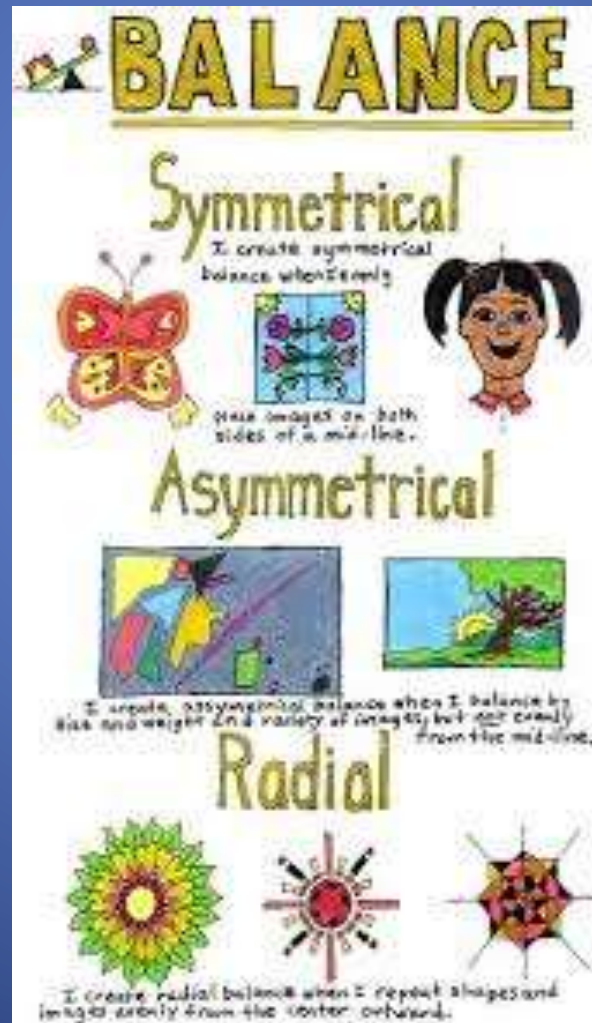
A base for working with clay on the potters wheel. Bats are removable, allowing the artist to throw several pots in one sitting.

Typically be made out of plastic, plaster, wood



# Balance

A sense of stability in the body of work



# Bisque Fire

Unglazed pottery is fired to a temperature that will make the clay strong but porous. Porosity is necessary for the clay to accept the glaze. During this firing the clay will shrink in size, the percentage that the clay shrinks is called the shrinkage rate.



# Bisqueware

ware that has gone through the first firing, low temperature and still remains porous



# Blistering

this is caused by gases escaping when a glaze is firing too fast or the coat of glaze is too thick



# Body

the main part of a vessel, usually the largest

# Bone Dry

LAST stage of greenware when moisture in the clay body has evaporated so the clay surface no longer feels cold



# Box

(often constructed from slabs)

- a container or case, usually rectangular, and often with a lid or removable cover.





# Brushing

a method of applying glaze using even brush strokes by means of a paintbrush. Can be used to avoid thick deposits of glaze where strokes overlap, and also may require several coats depending on the glaze



# Brushing, Dipping, Pouring

The 3 methods of applying  
underglaze or glaze

# Burnishing

uses a smooth object to polish the surface of a leather hard piece that produces a shine when firing at low temperatures





# Calipers

a tool that has a hinge used in measuring  
diameters of clay work

(often used in wheel throwing while creating LIDS to fit a vessel)



# Carbonates

a compound used coloring clay bodies and glazes it is comprised of carbon and other elements

# Centering

the process of aligning the clay on the wheel head to correctly position the clay and make it even



# Ceramics

the art of making and firing items using clay



# Chamber

the area inside the kiln where pottery is placed  
to be fired



# Chuck

a clay form that can be used to trim leather-hard  
pieces of clay

# Clay

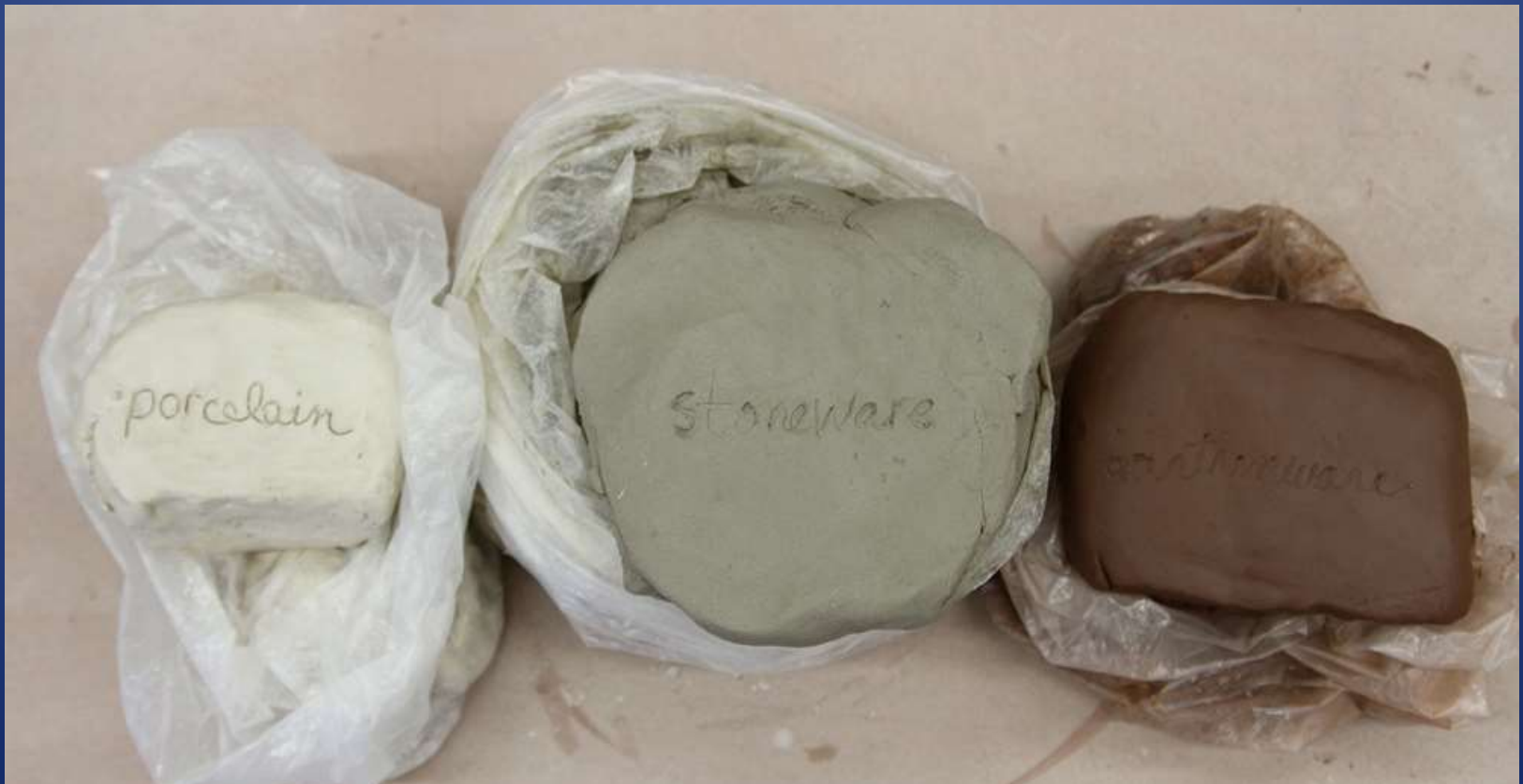
A natural product developed by the earth; made from decomposed granite and rock





# Clay Body

this is a mixture of clay, minerals, and a variety of other ingredients that make up a type of clay



# Coil

- A handbuilding technique used to construct ceramic forms by rolling out coils or ropes of clay, and joining them together with the fingers and various smoothing tools.



# Coil Method

This method of forming clay requires you to roll out long coils that are added to a base. This method allows you to use smaller pieces to construct a larger form allowing you also to control the moisture content more easily.

# Coil Pot

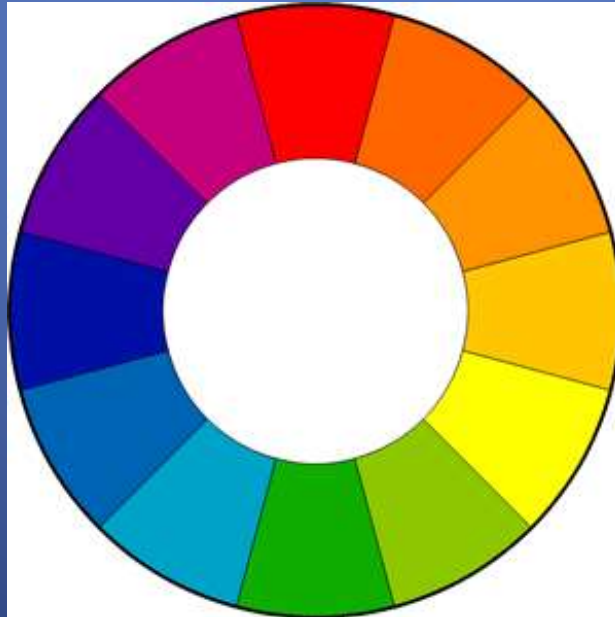
- A form made from stacking, wrapping, and joining long, snake-like ropes of clay
- Coiling is one of the hand-building techniques



# Color

Is an element of art concerning reflected light. Color has three properties.

- 1) Hue, the name of the color, e.g. red, yellow, etc.
- 2) Intensity or the purity and strength of the color such as brightness or dullness and
- 3) Value or the lightness or darkness of the color.





# Colorant

a compound or element that can be added to  
create color in clay, slip, and glaze

# Composition

- The plan, placement, or arrangement of the elements of art in a work.



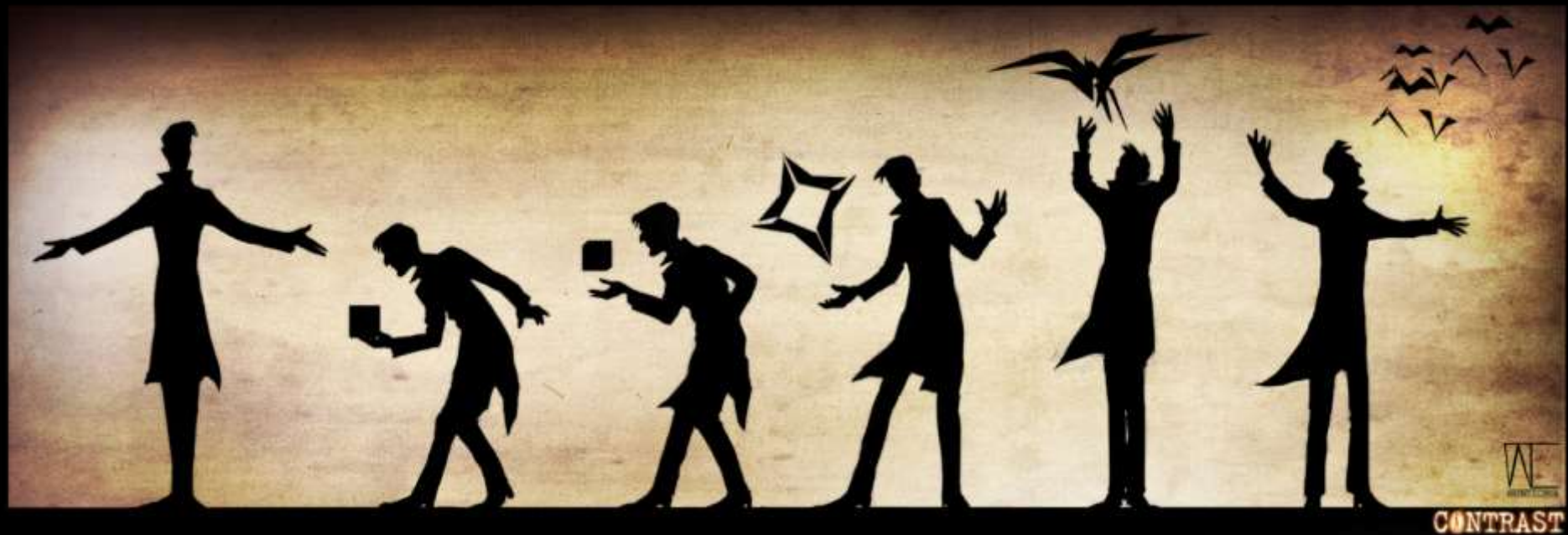
# Coning

- When a mass of clay is worked on a potter's wheel, it is coned by repeatedly drawing it up into a conical shape and then flattening it down to center it on the wheel and shape the mass.
- The first part of this process is known as coning up, the second as coning down.



# Contrast

Extreme differences between light and dark, also refers to contrast in subject matter.



CONTRAST

# Crawling

a glaze defect in which the glaze rolls away from areas of the piece it is on leaving bare parts



# Crazing

a glaze defect resulting from lack of fit between a glaze and the body it is on so that fine cracks appear on the glaze





# Creativity

- The ability or power to create
- Productivity with originality and expressive qualities; imagination, newness, grasping and nurturing inspiration
- Typically requires the artist to work outside of his/her comfort zone



# Critique

- An evaluation or review of an artwork. The Feldman Method of art criticism uses the 4 following steps:
  1. Description
  2. Analyze
  3. Interpretation
  4. Judgement

# Cut and Scoop

- A handbuilding technique in which a ball of clay is formed into a desired shape, which is then hollowed out using loop tools, much like when carving a pumpkin.



# Decorative pottery

- Pottery or sculptural forms which are used for decoration or as an art object.



# Description (Step 1)

**What do you see?**

**List obvious characteristics**

**Describe the literal qualities**

# Dipping

a method of applying glaze to a piece by immersing it in a container of glaze





# Downdraft Kiln

a kiln that draws the heat and flames down through opening located at the base of the kiln

# Dry Footing

removing glaze from the bottom rim of a piece  
so that it can be fired standing on a kiln shelf,  
without stilts



# Earthenware

low fire clay that remains porous after firing

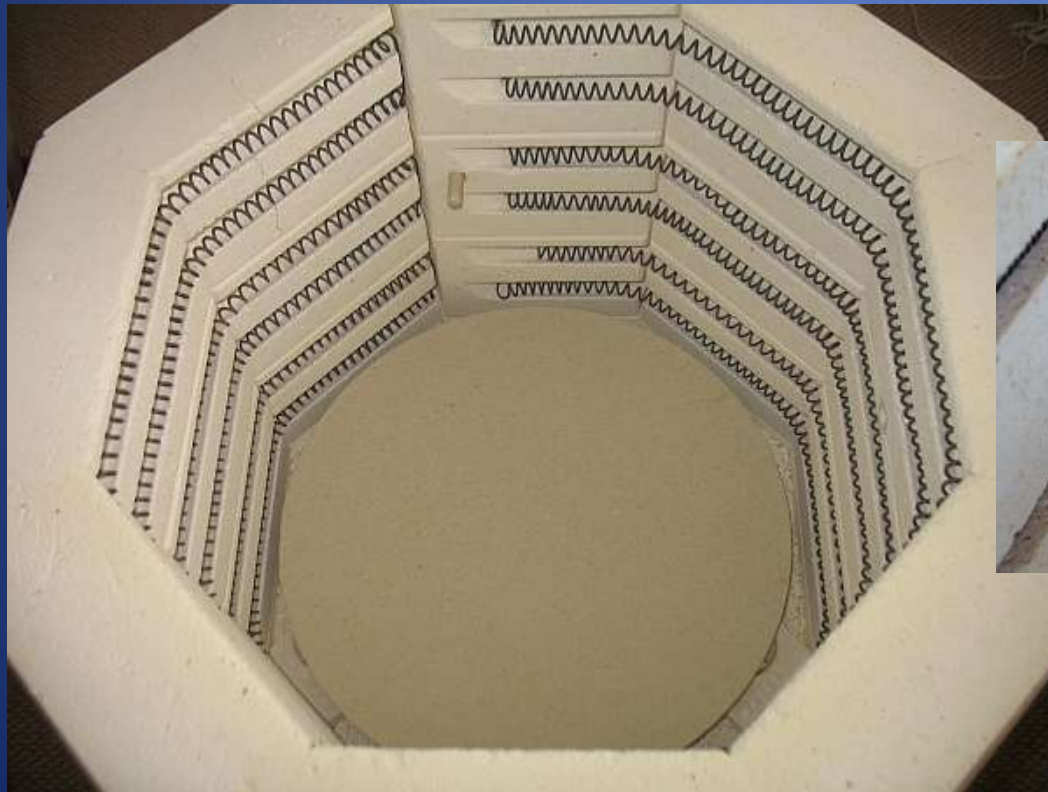
# Elements of Art

The basic foundation/building blocks of art.

1. Line
2. Color
3. Value
4. Texture
5. Form
6. Shape
7. Space

# Elements (kiln)

Coils of high temperature resistance wire that convert electricity to heat





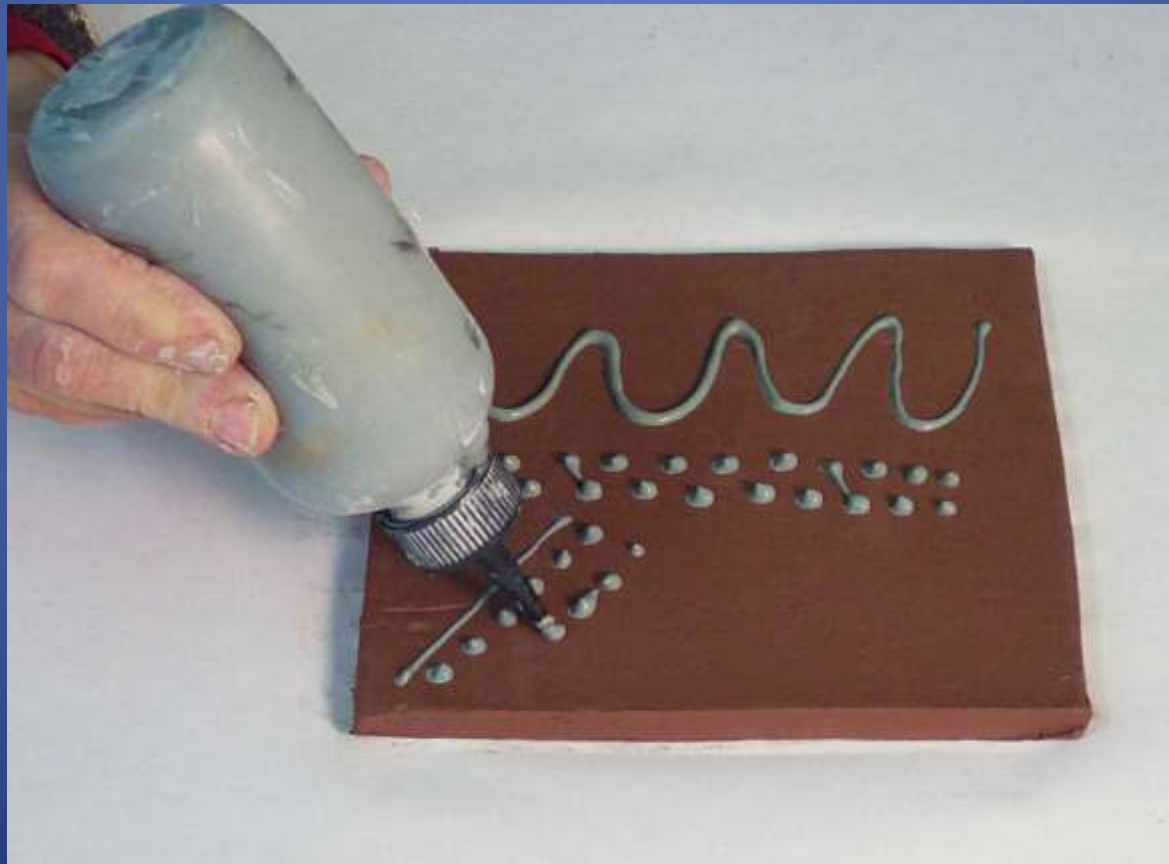
# Emphasis (Focal Point)

A principle of art that refers to developing points of interest to pull the viewer's eye to important parts of the body of the work.



# Engobe

Colored slip; often used in slip trailing designs



# Evaporation

Clay dries when exposed to the air. Humidity (moisture in the air) controls the drying rate.

# Extruding

shaping clay by forcing clay through a die to give it a variety of shapes



# Firebox

the section of the kiln where the fuel is added



# Firing

heating clay to high temperatures in order to  
make it durable and strong

# Flue

an opening in the kiln that allows gases to escape as pottery is fired

# Flux

reduces the temperature at which silica melts

# Foot

the base of the vessel upon which it stands



# Foot Pedal

- Device that regulates on speed on the electric potters wheel.
- An artist will set the speed with the foot pedal and then remove his/her foot to evenly distribute his/her weight





# Form

Is an element of art that is three-dimensional and encloses volume. Cubes, spheres, and cylinders are examples of various forms.



# Functional

refers to pottery that has a use  
(example: cup, bowl, or plate)

# Glaze

a glasslike substance comprised of three basic ingredients: silica, flux, and alumina



# Glaze Fire

Glazed pots are fired to a temperature that will cause the clay to become vitreous (hard, dense and non-porous) and the glaze will mature and form a glass-like substance.

# Glazeware

- Clay that has been applied with glaze or underglazes and then fired for the second time.



# Glossy

shiny surface in glaze

# Gravity

Wet clay is weaker than dry clay and can “Slump” or collapse due to gravity.



# Greenware

any unfired clay, note unfired clay can be recycled, however once it has been fired it cannot be recycled

Plastic, leather-hard, bone-dry

# Grog

crushed ceramics or organic material that makes  
clay more porous



# Harmony

Is achieved in a body of work by using similar elements throughout the work  
harmony gives an uncomplicated look to your work.



# Hand-building

- A term that refers to one of several techniques used to build pottery using only the hands and simple tools, rather than using a potter's wheel.
  - PINCHING
  - COILING
  - SLAB

# High fire

refers to clays and glazes fired to  
cone 8 – cone 12

# High Relief

In this type of sculpture, the forms project further out from the background, has a greater depth and makes use of larger undercuts that show more form



# Hump Mold

(also known as a Drape Mold)

a convex support mold that holds clay in a certain shape until it hardens

**\*work OUTSIDE of the mold\***



# Incise

the process of removing clay by carving





# Inlay

Filling in impressed or incised areas in your clay  
with colored CLAY



# Interpretation (Step 3)

## **What is the message?**

-use the information gained during the first two stages to now determine what is happening in the work, then delve deeper to try and find the meaning.

**What is the message the artist is trying to convey? What qualities in the work are communicating mood, feelings, or ideas?**

# “In the Round”

- A type of sculpture to be viewed from all sides; freestanding. Sculpture surrounded on all sides by space, the opposite of relief.



# Judgment (Step 4)

## **How successful is the work?**

Do not say you like or dislike the work, describe why your opinion is that the work is good or bad.

Example: The feeling created by the emphasis in this painting is so disturbingly overpowering that I have trouble focusing on what else the work may contain. The artist's use of color and emphasis communicates such an intense reaction that I believe this painting is very successful in communicating this idea.

The last part of this section is also **how do you relate to the work of art?**

# Kaolin

or pure clay, typically used in white clay bodies  
like porcelain



# Kiln

is an enclosed structure used to fire clay up to high temperatures. Kilns can be fueled using different materials – electricity, natural gas, wood, coal, propane or oil



# Leather-hard Clay

clay that has dried past plastic, but before bone dry, clay in this stage can still be joined and carved

# Line

Is an element of art which refers to the continuous mark made on some surface by a moving point.

It may be two dimensional, like a pencil mark on a paper or it may be three dimensional (wire) or implied (the edge of a shape or form) often it is an outline, contour or silhouette.



# Lip

the rim at the top of the vessel



# Low fire

refers to clays and glazes fired to cone 015- cone  
02



# Low-mid fire

refers to clays fired to cone 01 – cone 3

# Low Relief

(also known as bas-relief sculpture) – this type of relief uses forms that project only slightly from the background and has a shallow depth



# Luster

a decoration that creates a metallic sheen to a glazed surface



# Maquette

a small, quickly made preliminary version of another larger piece to be created similar to a sketch used in drawing



# MASK

- A covering for all or part of the face, worn to conceal one's identity
- Anything that disguises or conceals the face





# Maturing Point

Time and temperature needed to completely fire a glaze or clay object to the “vitrified” state

# Matte

dull surface in glaze

(glaze is NOT shiny, matte is the opposite of glossy)



# Medium

The material the piece of art is made  
from (Media is plural)

# Mid fire

refers to clays and glazes fired to cone 4 – cone 7

# Mishima

Filling in impressed or incised areas in  
your clay with a colored SLIP

“These mugs were made using a slip inlay technique called mishima. I created the design from sketching branch patterns and creating an abstract image. “





# Mixed Media

A variety of materials used to make a work of art



# Molds

a form used to shape clay



# Mouth

the opening of the vessel

# Movement (visual rhythm)

Adds excitement to your work by showing action and directing the viewer's eye throughout the picture plane.





# Muffle

the area of the kiln that protects the pottery  
from the direct flame, not found in all kiln  
setups



# Neck

the narrower part of the vessel between the shoulder and lip



# Needle Tool

A sharp, needle like tool used for scratching the clay surface.

Cut **AWAY** from yourself



# Non-Functional

refer to pottery with no specific use can be  
sculptural in nature

# Opacifier

an element that can be added to glaze to make a  
glaze opaque

# Opening

the process of making a hole in a centered piece of clay, this process allows the clay to be shaped into its basic form





# Overglaze

a glaze designed to go over another glaze after the piece has been fired once

# Oxidation Atmosphere

an environment created during firing in which oxygen is introduced into the kiln

# Oxide

a compound used coloring clay bodies and glazes it is comprised of oxygen and other elements

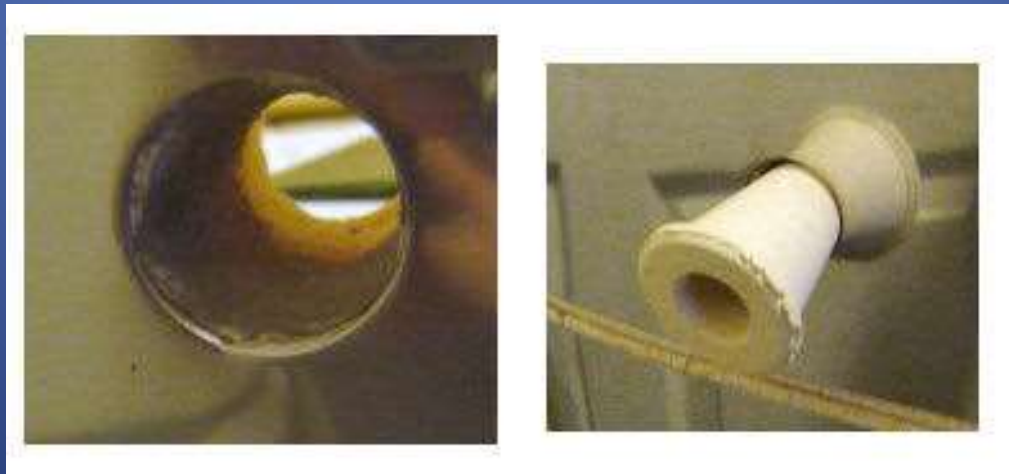
# Paddling

hitting the clay with a flat piece of wood to create strong joints, alter the shape and add texture to clay



# Peephole

a hole in the kiln that allows the operator to view the firing as it progresses





# Piercing

uses a variety of tools to cut holes in clay as decoration \*Negative space \*



# Pinholes

a glaze defect caused by rapid firing, rapid cooling, or by tiny air holes in the clay

# Pinching

- A hand-building technique used to construct pottery. This technique is a method of shaping clay by inserting the thumb of one hand into a ball of clay and lightly pinching between the thumb and the fingers, while slowly rotating the ball of clay in the palm of the other hand.

# Pinch Pot

- Form shaped by hand using a methodical pinching process in which the clay walls are thinned by pinching them with thumb and forefinger.
- It is a basic pot making method often taught to young children or beginners.





# Plasticity

The physical property that allows clay to keep any new form it is given. Clay and soil have essentially the same chemical makeup or formula. The reason clay is plastic is due to the physical difference, not the chemical.





# Pottery

items made out of clay, usually  
includes vessels and functional items

# Potter's Wheel

A device used to throw clay forms or vessels. They can either be manual/ human powered (Kick Wheels) or electric.



# Pouring

a method of applying glaze to by pouring glaze  
into or on the piece

# Porcelain

high fire clay that is pure clay and is usually translucent.

# Portfolio

- A collection of originals or reproductions of an artist's work (actual pieces or digital images)
- Total representation of the artist and his/her talents



# Press Mold (aka Sprig Mold)

Open-form one piece molds into which the clay is poured or pressed



# Principles of Art

How the Elements of Art are organized.

1. Balance
2. Emphasis / Focal Point
3. Variety
4. Rhythm
5. Pattern (repetition)
6. Unity
7. Proportion

# Proportion

Or scale, refers to the relationships of the size of objects in a body of work. Proportion gives a sense of size seen as a relationship of object such as smallness or largeness.

# Pug Mill

- A machine with revolving blades that chop, mix, and de-air ceramic clay
- **Pug (v)** - In ceramics, to mix clay to the plasticity state.



# Pulling

stretching or stroking plastic clay to elongate the clay, typically used in creating handles





# Pyrometric Cones

Small cone-like shapes that are comprised of ceramic materials designed to bend when a certain temperature in the kiln is reached

Melting of the cone automatically  
shuts the kiln OFF



# Reduction Atmosphere

an environment created during firing in which oxygen is restricted into the kiln

# Relief

Sculptural techniques that uses raised surfaces  
that project from the background

# Relief Sculpture

A type of sculpture in which form projects from the background. There are three types of degrees, such as high, low, and sunken.





# Rib

A rubber, metal or wooden tool used to :

- Smooth clay (such as blending coils)
- facilitate wheel throwing of pottery forms.





# Running

this defect occurs when a glaze has too much flux this cause the glaze to run down the pot onto the kiln shelf, it may need to be broken away from the kiln shelf to remove

# Rhythm

Is a type of movement in a work. It is seen in repeating of the elements an example would be shapes and colors. Alternating lights and darks can also give a sense of rhythm.

# Score

- To draw or scratch lines into the clay surface, adding a “tooth” in the clay for attachment of clay pieces



# Sculpture

A 3D work of art.

Such works can be carved, modeled, constructed or cast.

3 Types of Sculptures:  
assemblage, in the round, and relief.

# Sgraffito

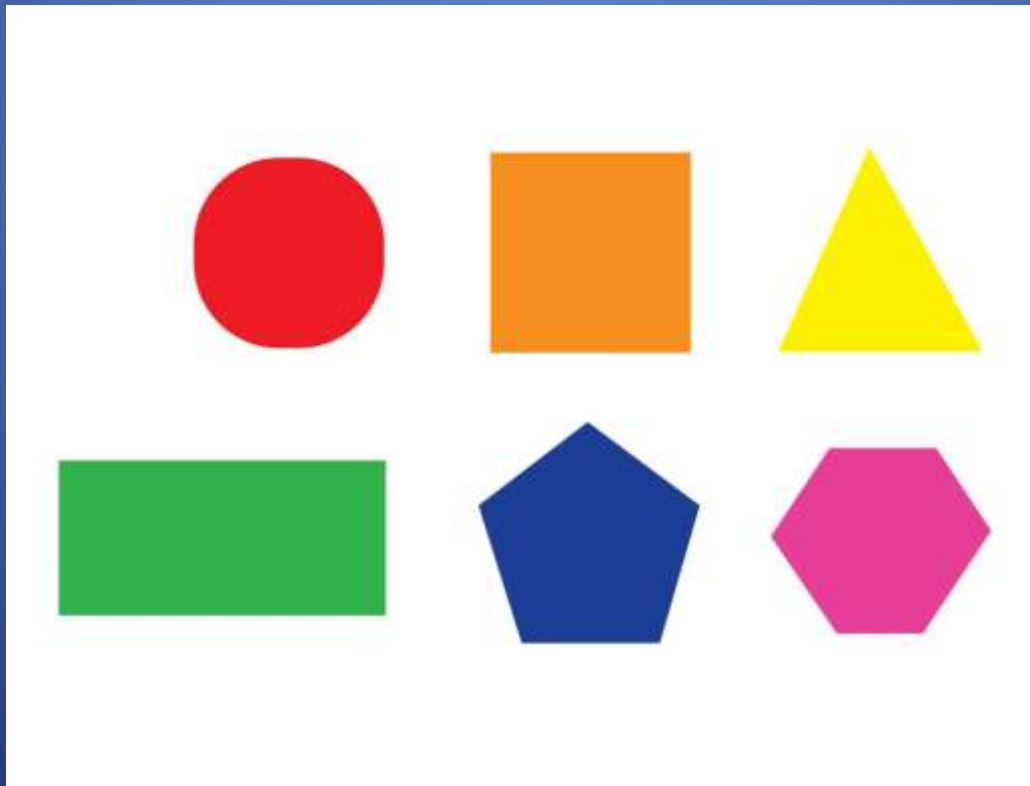
a process in which colored slip is added to the piece and scratched through to reveal the clay body beneath. From the Italian word meaning “scratched through.”





# Shape

Is an enclosed space defined by other elements of art. Shapes may take on the appearance of 2D or 3D objects.



# Shoulder

the part of the vessel that curves typically inward as it approaches the neck



# Shrinkage

As the clay dries, it gets smaller. As the clay is fired it shrinks at a specific shrinkage rate as determined by the type of clay.

# Silica

referred to as the glass former. This is most commonly found in sand

# Slab

- flat “pancake like” piece of clay which can then be cut into shapes and draped over a form, wrapped around a form or built into a box. One of the hand-building techniques



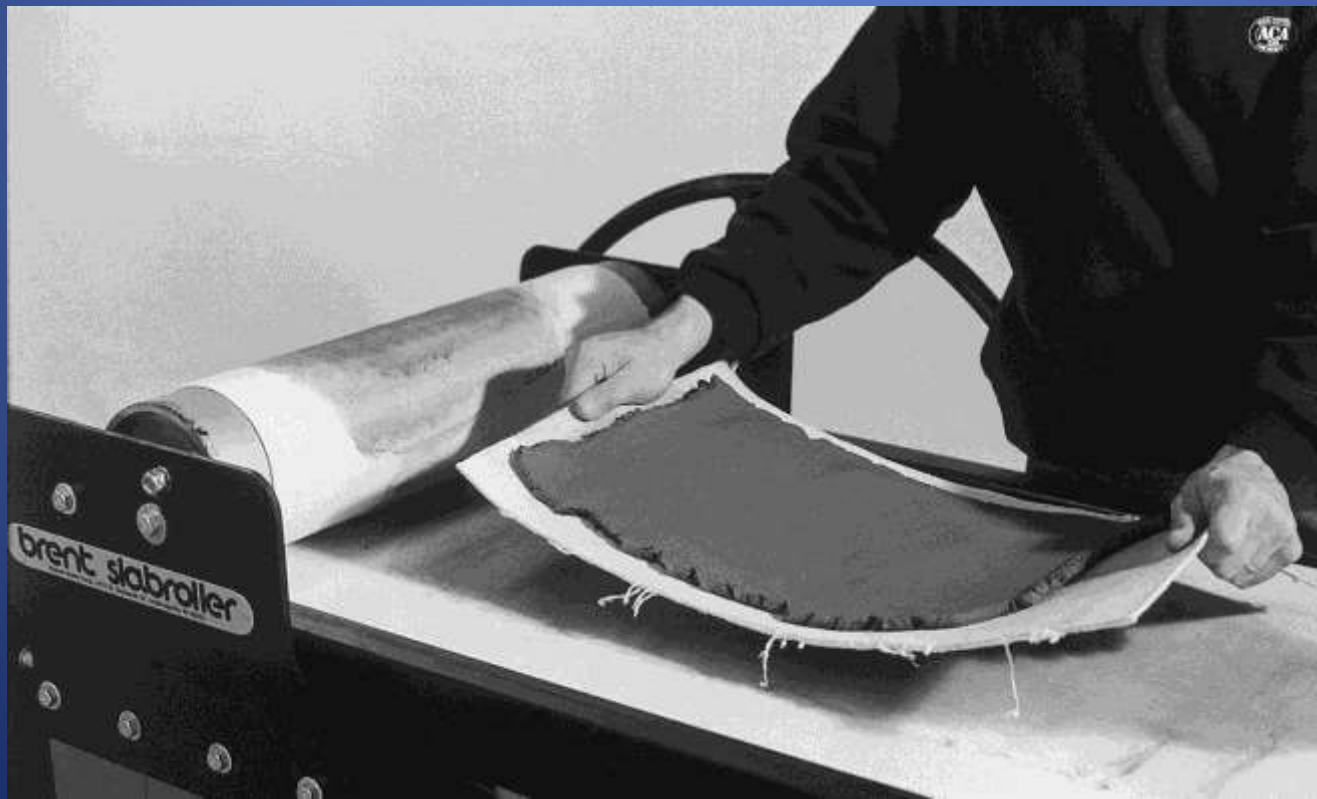


# Slab Method

This method uses slabs of rolled out clay to join together to make vessel. This method also allows you to make larger pieces however additionally this process can be used to make larger surface areas and more geometric forms that would not be as possible using the other methods.

# Slab Roller

- A machine used to produce even slabs by placing clay between two canvas pieces, and then rolling a large pin over the canvas by means of a hand operated wheel



# Slip

a mixture of clay and water, often used as a “glue”, used in joining clay pieces



\*First you SCORE, then you SLIP  
BOTH pieces! \*

# The Slip and Score Method of Joining Clay

1. Make sure both piece contain about the same amount of water (Moisture Content).
2. Score both surfaces to be joined
3. Add slip to one surface
4. Join with force
5. Smooth across the seam



# Slip Trailing

the application of slip to a clay surface using a fine-pointed dispenser.

DRAW designs with slip on Leather-hard piece.  
Offers a raised surface texture and decoration





# Slump Molds

a concave support mold that holds clay in a certain shape until it hardens

*\*work INSIDE the mold\**



# Space

Refers to the distance of area between, around, above or within things. It can be a description for both 2 and 3 dimensional portrayals.

Positive space is the area of the 2D & 3D, shapes or forms within.

Negative space is the area of empty space between, around or above the shapes or forms.

# Splash Pan

- A removable pan surrounding the potters wheel to catch excess water and slip



# Spraying

a method of applying glaze with a spray gun

# Sprig

a relief decoration that is attached to a piece  
with slip





# Stamping

- A decorative technique in which forms or stamps are pressed into the clay to create patterns and textures. Stamping can be done with found objects or stamps designed for clay.



# Stains

pigments used for coloring clay bodies and  
glazes

# Stilts

- A small piece of clay and wire, used to keep a pot away from the kiln floor. Most often used in a glaze firing to keep the clay pieces from sticking to the shelf or kiln.



# Stoneware

mid to high fire clay that is dense, non-porous,  
and hard after firing

# Subject Matter

- That what is represented in the artwork; the substance of the work of art, as distinguished from its form or style



# Teapot

- a container with a lid, spout, and handle, in which tea is made and from which it is poured



- Spout: a pipe, tube, or liplike projection through or by which a liquid is discharged, poured, or conveyed.
- Handle: a part of a form made specifically to be grasped or held by the hand.
- Lid: a removable or hinged cover for closing the opening, usually at the top, of a pot; a movable cover.
- Saucer: a small, round, shallow dish to hold a cup.

# Texture

An element of art that refers to the surface quality or “feel” of an object, such as roughness, smoothness, or softness.

Actual texture can be felt while simulated textures are implied by the way the artist renders areas of the picture.



# Template

- A pattern used as a guide in making a form with accuracy, as when using a stencil.



# Throwing

- The act of creating pottery pieces on the potters wheel, utilizing centripetal force to create evenly symmetric forms

# Translucency

glaze that allow light to pass through



# Trimming

the process of removing clay when the piece has reached the leather hard stage. This process can be used to create a foot on a wheel thrown vessel or trim the vessel to its intended form

# Underglaze

oxides or commercial colorants,  
applied before glaze application  
(paint for clay, exists UNDER clear glaze)



# Unity

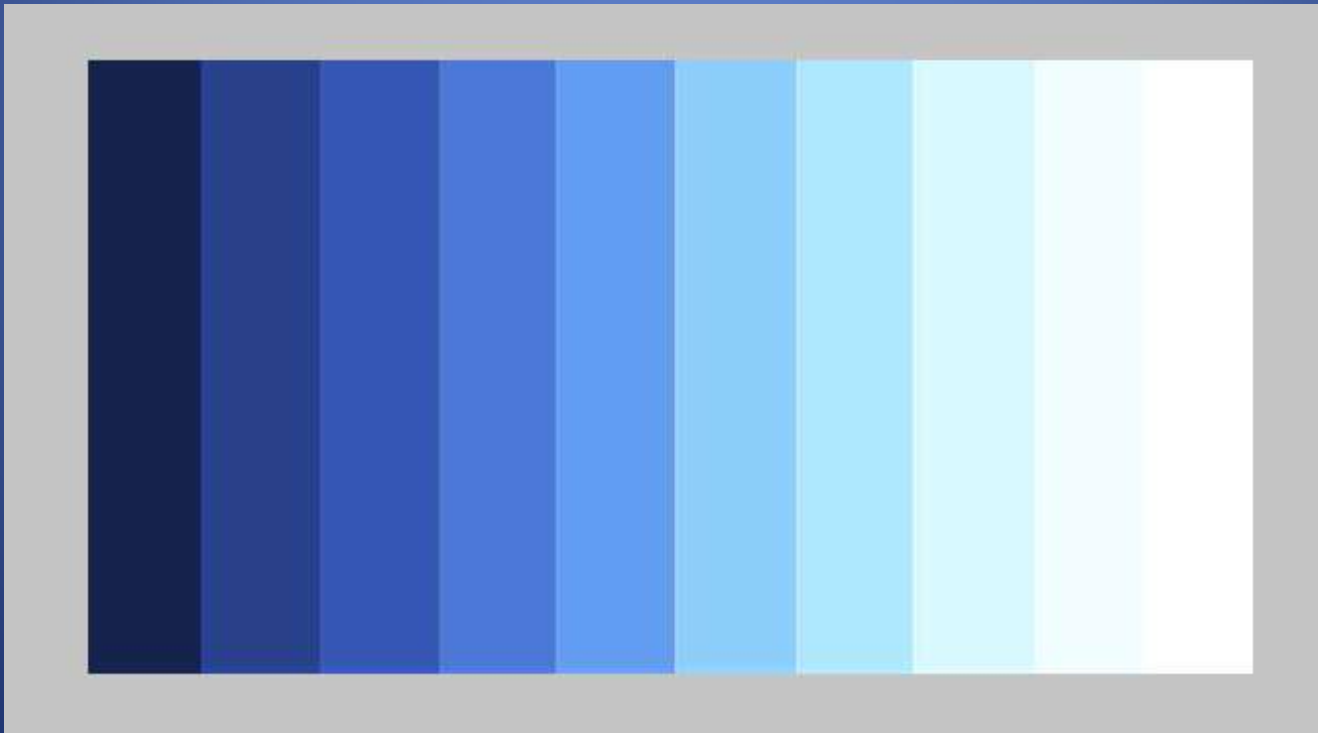
Is seen in a painting or drawing when all the parts equal a whole. Your work should not appear disjointed or confusing.

# Updraft Kiln

is a kiln that draws heat and flames up through  
the top of kiln

# Value

An element of art that describes the lightness or darkness of a color





# Variety

Refers to the differences in the work.

You can achieve variety by using different shapes, textures, colors, and values.

# Vase

a vessel, usually higher/taller than it is wide, used chiefly to hold cut flowers or for decoration

## ***Basic Parts of Pottery Vessels***

### **Foot**

the base of the vessel upon which it stands

### **Body**

the main part of a vessel, usually the largest

### **Shoulder**

the part of the vessel that curves typically inward as it approaches the neck

### **Neck**

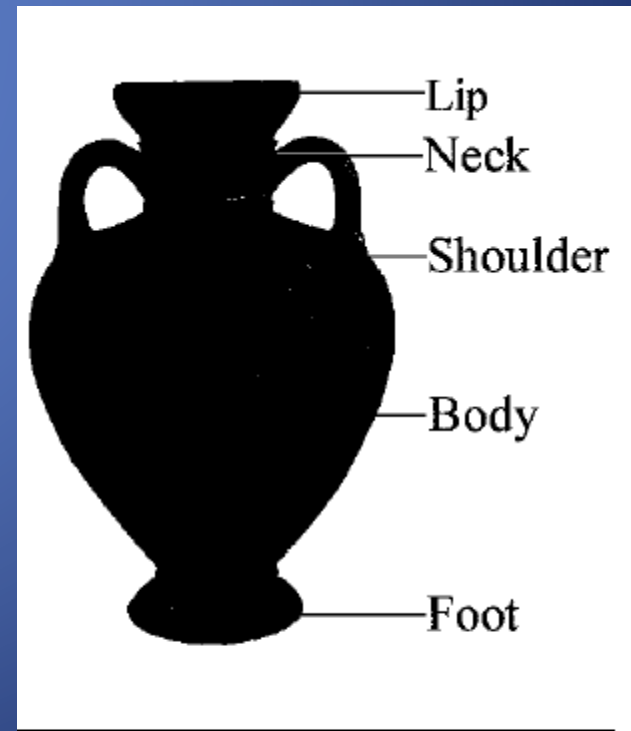
the narrower part of the vessel between the shoulder and lip

### **Mouth**

the opening of the vessel

### **Lip**

the rim at the top of the vessel



# Vessel

a container usually associated with holding  
liquids

# Vitrify

A glassy, non-porous state caused by  
heat or fusion

# Warping

The distortion of clay that occurs in drying or firing. This can be due to gravitational stress, uneven drying, clay body formulation issues, or over-firing





# Wax Resist

the application of melted wax to the foot or body of a clay object to resist the glaze, often used as a decorative technique



# Wedging Clay

Eliminates air bubbles to prevent explosions and makes the clay more consistent.

Types of wedging are Kneading, Wedging, Spiral Wedging and Ram's Head Wedging

# Wheel-head

the flat plate that rotates on the potter's wheel  
and is the surface on which clay is thrown.

# Wheel Throwing

Using a potter's wheel to shape the clay, also known as throwing.

The wheel creates centrifugal force that allows the artist to create forms quickly