

I make art because I enjoy creating; creating visual interest, creating communicative art, creating something out of nothing. That's why I love pottery so much. It doesn't wholly have to be a visual art, but it can also be functional and tactile. The creation and usage of pottery has developed alongside humans for thousands of years. It has been used as a way to carry water, as an offering within burials, and as gifts from one group of people to the next. And pottery continues to be with us today. It's a serving platter that is only used on special occasions, a favorite coffee mug that is used every morning or a figurine that has been passed down to you. All of these different interactions tell a story, and they create relationships between the object and the user. This also creates a relationship between the user and the artist because they have both individually connected with this object. With my art I want to create a sense of community between myself and those that partake in the using of handmade goods. The work I have come to enjoy making is wheel-thrown dinnerware and kitchenware, because it becomes more of an interactive piece when it leaves me and reaches the user. I make the vessel, and they use it to create and hold their memories.

Much inspiration for my current work comes from many different places. I draw heavily from the philosophies of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which stress the values of simplicity, utility, and beauty. As I've grown as an artist, I have come to appreciate these values and the craftsmanship it takes to achieve them. One particular artist that I look towards in this movement is William Grueby of the Grueby Faience Company, which produced pottery vases and tiles. What drew me to Grueby's work was the simplicity of it. The combined choice of minimal surface decoration and uniform glaze allowed his work to be impactful without overwhelming the space it occupied. I wanted to convey that idea within my work as well, like in my dinnerware set. When designing my set I had to be mindful of the fact that it is used to serve food, so I didn't want it to be so overwhelming in design that it detracted from the dining experience.

The Mingei movement of Japan has also influenced how I view my own work and the message I want to convey. The word *mingei* translates to mean "crafts of the people", and the movement is about focusing on the overlooked beauty of practical work that is used in daily life. The beauty of craft is that it's not just about its physical appearance; it's the entire process it goes through, from being made to being used. Its design is planned with the user in mind, from there on it's how people interact with it, how it's used in their daily rituals. Functional work is intentionally made to be used and appreciated. When I imagine my work and its place in the world, I never imagine it to be in a museum. I always see it in a kitchen cupboard or a dining table. I want my work to be accessible.

In my show I explore the themes of community and connection through the use of pottery. I have done this by creating specific collections within the show that I feel best exemplify those ideas. The first collection that I created consists of 13 pieces of cookware, ancient forms with their modern counterparts, from different countries around the world. My goal was to examine these ancient forms and recreate them using historical techniques that I researched. Then I created a modern form of that ancient cookware, to fit the modern, western kitchen. I wanted to do this, partially to challenge myself, but also to show that many of these forms haven't changed much in the hundreds of years since they were created. They serve their culture and the recipes that have been passed down generation after generation. For the ancient forms of this series, they were all created using low fire terracotta clay, fired to cone 08(1692F) to replicate the lower temperatures of early kilns and pit firings. Before these pieces were fired,

at the leatherhard stage I burnished them with the back of a metal spoon to smooth the surface and improve its waterproofing since I would not be using glaze. After they were fired, I seasoned the cookware with vegetable oil, rubbing it all over the surface and allowing it to fully absorb into the clay. All of my modern forms are wheel-thrown, using a Speckled Buff Stoneware. They were bisque fired to cone 04 (1971F) and then glazed with a glaze formula that I mixed myself, called Moon White. They were then fired to Cone 6 (2232F), by which time they were complete.

My second collection is a 38-piece dinnerware set inspired by contemporary ceramic forms. Each place setting consists of a cup, plate, salad bowl, and soup bowl. I felt a dinnerware set was vital to the theme of my show, because meals are where community is formed. They allow people to sit down, slow down, and actually enjoy each other. Pottery can be used as a vehicle for that to take place. For my set, I opted for a neutral blue-gray glaze and simple surface decoration that enhanced the form without hindering its usability.

Finally, I wanted to showcase other work that had personal meaning to me. I plan on displaying all of the wheel thrown cups I've made throughout college, to show my own personal growth as an artist. Cups have been a small accessible way of sharing with other artists and classmates through mug trades, gifting, etc. They've also been a way for me to look back on my time in school, each cup holding a memory. I've also created a series of wall hangings made of tiles to represent my connection to family. The way that these tiles have been assembled and decorated are inspired by quilted blankets.

Pottery has been a vehicle for me to communicate and connect, in the same way it has been a vehicle for others for thousands of years. Looking over those years, so much has changed within the pottery world, yet sometimes it feels like nothing has changed at all. Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter how many new tools, materials, or techniques there are. We start the same way the first potters started 20,000 years ago; with a ball of clay and our own two hands. That is what connects us, and that is why I love pottery so much.