

## LESSON PLAN: Exploring Ceramics

By Amy Wunsch and Cynthia Lofquist, June 2008

### Key Idea:

Ceramics is one of the oldest art forms in human history. Ceramic processes have been used to create durable and versatile functional objects, decorative pieces, and sculpture in nearly every culture throughout the world. Contemporary ceramic artists challenge us to redefine the boundaries between decorative art or “craft” and fine art. They may use traditional vessel forms, sculptural forms, natural textures, and they might explore a variety of ceramic processes (slab building, wheel throwing, coiling, etc.) and surface treatments (glazes, patterning, etc.).



### Objectives:

1. Students will participate in an instructor-led tour through the campus to discuss several ceramic works in the collection.
2. Students will create sculpture using air-dry clay. Students will use at least two of the following ceramic processes to create their artwork: pinching, coiling, or slab technique. The sculptural piece will be hollow and may be either a **closed** or **open** form. Students will decide whether their art work will be **functional** or **decorative, abstract** or **representational**. Students will use some surface treatment to unify their piece (patterning, texturing, color application, etc.).

### Vocabulary:

**abstract** = the modification of a natural form by simplification or distortion.

**representational** = art which is based on images which can be found in the world, or at least in the artist's imagination; i.e., images which can be named or recognized.

**narrative** = art work which is primarily concerned with the telling of stories.

**functional** = having or serving a utilitarian purpose.

**decorative** = serving to embellish; ornamental.

**expressionistic** = leaning toward the expression of emotion over description; certain characteristics predominate: bright color; harsh contrasts of black and white; exaggerated form; distortion or elongation of figures, etc.

**open form** = open from the (often hollow) core of a form to the outside.

**closed form** = closed off from the (often hollow) core of a form to the outside.

### Evaluation:

Students will divide into pairs and use the following questions to discuss and evaluate each other's art work:

- How did you include all the elements in the assignment? (at least 2 ceramic processes; a hollow, closed or open form; a surface treatment unifies the composition)
- Which type of ceramic style did you choose? (functional or decorative; abstract or representational)
- Which artwork in the museum (or campus) most inspired you when you were creating your own work?

### Tour Artwork Images:



**Shio Kusaka** (Japanese American, b. 1972)

*dinosaur 7*, 2014

Clay

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.126



**Toshiko Takaezu** (American, b. 1922 - d. 2011)

*Form #15*, 1990

Stoneware

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010.11

Gift of Dean E. Thompson, Overland Park, KS



**Betty Woodman** (American, b. 1930- d. 2018)  
*Kimono Vases, "Plum Blossom"*, 1991  
Earthenware and glaze  
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991.10



**Yoshiro Ikeda** (Japanese-American, b. 1947 - d. 2014)

*Untitled, 2001*

Stoneware

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002.12

Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation



**Malcolm Mobutu Smith** (American, b. 1969)  
*MocheSpoke Cloud Cup*, 2005  
Thrown and altered multi-fired porcelain-stoneware, slip and glaze  
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008.53  
Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer