

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

Time is a Flat Circle

Jake Brodsky

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts, School of Art and Design
Division of Ceramic Art
New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University
Alfred, New York

2023

Jake Brodsky, MFA

Thesis Advisors: Stephanie Hanes, Johnathan Hopp, Walter McConnell,
Lindsay Montgomery, Linda Sikora, Adero Willard

Abstract

I make pots. I enjoy asking nuanced questions of form as well as big-picture questions of what pots do in our world, but it is the latter which has guided my research this year. My work is rooted in ideas of life, death, and transformation. Ceramics is a time-based medium, and I have been exploring the concept of time in different formats in my work: repetition as a marker of time, time in the context of funerary vessels, the time of visible transformation and melting that happens in the kiln, and time expressed through the drying of wet clay. Things happen linearly in the transformation of clay to ceramic, but from my perspective as a maker, this linear progression, repeated many times, becomes cyclical. There is a rhythm to working in repetition that creates an infinite amount of potential expression.

Acknowledgments

I have a huge amount of gratitude for many people at Alfred and beyond for helping me get to this point. I want to thank:

My partner Ceci, for her incredible support, patience, and ability to listen and ground me during these two years, and for all her help setting up my thesis show! I couldn't have done it without her.

My mother, for her unwavering and steady encouragement and love.

My father, for the moral and philosophical foundation he provided for me.

My advisors during my four semesters at Alfred: Adero Willard, Matt Kelleher, and Linda Sikora, for their time and generosity every week; and Walter McConnell, who in my final semester helped me tremendously with the installation of my show and bringing my ideas to fruition.

The other faculty I was able to meet with and learn from: Stephanie Hanes, Johnathan Hopp, Lindsay Montgomery, Jason Green, Meghan Smythe Wayne Higby, Meghan Jones, Shawn Murrey, Keith Simpson, Hannah Thompsett, and James Tingey.

Mary Barringer, for the helpful edits and conversations in the writing process.

A second thanks to Shawn Murrey and Hannah Thompsett for all of their work and help with everything from kiln problems to installation questions. Alfred is so lucky to have these two.

My cohort, and the grad classes of 2022 and 2024, for the conversations and inspiration that occurred on a daily basis.

Paige O'Toole, my amazing show partner, for being a great friend, providing fantastic feedback, trying to help me understand Gen Z, and constantly inspiring me with her work – and of course for the love of her cat, Titian.

Shushank Shrestha, for his calm, steady energy and friendship.

Katie Fee, Jackie Head, and Jolie Ngo, for being great role models and friends, and always inspiring me with their work and kindness.

Olin Gannon, for help with most everything I've done this year.

All of my mentors and teachers over the years, without whom I would not be here. In particular, I want to thank Sarah Jaeger, Liz Quackenbush, and Amanda Salov for their guidance and conversations.

I grew up in Helena, Montana, a place with a rich ceramic history as the site of the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts. My parents owned handmade pots by some of the many people who have lived and made work in Helena, and the work of potters such as Sarah Jaeger and Josh DeWeese informed my ideas of how pots can add to one's life as well as the qualities of pots that draw my attention. This knowledge was learned through handling physical objects rather than through images. The way I touch clay is rooted in the tactile quality found in the pots I grew up with.

I have spent lots of time this year asking myself why I am making the work I am making, and at this moment in time. How do my hands interpret the deep knowledge of pots that my body knows? What is the relevance of this work in the 21st century?

I am equally interested in ideas of what pots do in our world as in particular formal qualities of pots. I enjoy asking nuanced questions about forms, but big-picture questions about pots fascinate me – questions about how they exist in our lives and in society. The conversations I have had this year about these questions have opened up new avenues for ideas and work in my studio. These big-picture questions have led me to certain choices for displaying work in my thesis show which are designed to elicit questions from the viewer about the role of pots in an individual's life and in our world.

A core concern in my practice is the ways my pots prompt use and engagement. Objects can acquire their own kind of agency "once they become enmeshed in a texture of social relationships... social agency can be exercised

relative to ‘things’ and social agency can be exercised by ‘things’.”¹ This idea falls under the concept of relational aesthetics, which is described as “aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.”² Relational aesthetics encompass the complexities of ceramic pots – objects which have an inherent social context and actively participate in human relations. Studying pots through this lens allows me to examine the social relations they represent and produce, as well as to understand this as a theoretical and practical foundation of my work.

Celebrating Life

I make tableware meant for eating, drinking, and serving food, which I consider to be a choice to affirm and celebrate life. I use satiny glazes to elicit feelings of gentleness and longing through touch, which is often an unconscious response but is vitally important. The tactile softness combined with supple, voluminous forms, communicates fullness and comfort. The glazes I use on these pots, through their satin and opaque surface, seem to absorb and emit light, rather than reflecting it.

In my show, I focused on the production and display of two forms of tableware: plates and cups. These forms essentialize the category of tableware as a tool which connects us to the basic necessities of food and drink. Paul Mathieu describes objects as being of two types: tools and containers, which are not mutually exclusive or absolute, but complimentary. Tools, he says, are active,

¹ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 17.

² Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 112.

and their conceptual premise is utility.³ Under this framework, I began to understand plates and cups as tools for basic human needs.

The question of how to display the pots in my show became a generative conversation in my head and in meetings with faculty. In my show, tableware represents the idea of an entity, with many similar parts comprising something greater than themselves. These are known, familiar objects, but their placement in the gallery makes them inaccessible and less familiar. I am interested in the ways that these pots can fulfill a function beyond their primary one when they are part of a grouping.⁴ I decided to hang plates on the wall, which distances them from their function as a tool in relation to ourselves and creates a secondary function where they are in relation to each other through the use of color and pattern.

Things happen linearly in the transformation of clay to ceramic, but from my perspective as a maker, this linear progression, repeated many times, becomes cyclical. There is a rhythm to working in repetition that creates an infinite amount of potential expression. In philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche refers to this concept as eternal recurrence, or eternal return: things happen over and over, repeating throughout time.⁵ I think of this idea as an affirmation of life and it is foundational to my motivations as a person and maker – and to the title of my thesis, which is a quote from a television show that references Nietzsche and his ideas.

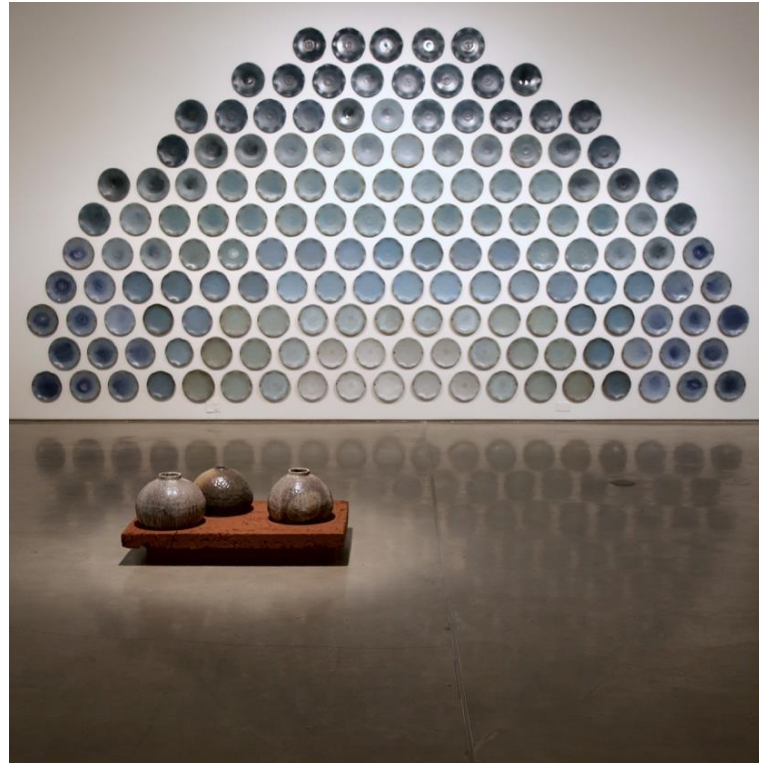
³ Mathieu, *Object Theory*, 116.

⁴ Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 67.

⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 238.

Repetition is an integral part of my making process which allows me to hone in on the particulars of a form, and when used as a system for display, it indicates an element of time and labor through the scale of work.

Installing the plates in this way alludes to historic and contemporary displays of plates on walls. These plates are distinctly utilitarian in their forms and glazes, which reference my lineage of



Big Sky, Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, May 2023

western studio pottery. However, as the viewer backs further away from the wall, the object loses prominence to the overall image of the pixelated sky.

I called this installation of plates *Big Sky*, named after my home state and the expansive sky there. I often attempt to take pictures of the sky during sunrises and sunsets, despite the fact that the pictures never capture the essence of the real thing. Though I don't consciously use the word beauty when thinking about my work, beautiful things certainly inspire copies and repetition⁶ – the desire to capture the beauty of the transformation of the sky is

⁶ Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 3.

unquestionably what first compelled me to produce this wall of plates. I was influenced in the shape and structure of the installation by a Georgia O'Keefe painting called *Light Coming on the Plains* and by an instrument called a cyanometer, which measures the color of blue in the sky. The contrast between the cool tones of the glazes and the warmth of the clay plinth in front of the wall creates an atmosphere that is enhanced by the scale of the pattern stretching out across the wall.⁷

Tactility is paramount to my ideas and work – feeling is transmitted and embodied in my pots through touch. As tools, pots are extensions of our bodies.⁸ Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, touch was considered to provide a necessary supplement to sight in museum collections. As historian Constance Classen and anthropologist David Howes argue in an essay called *Museum as Sensescape*,

“Solely viewing a collection was considered a superficial means of apprehending it. Taking the time to touch artifacts, to turn them over in one's hands, showed a more profound interest. Touch, furthermore, was believed to have access to interior truths of which sight was unaware.”⁹

I do not want to prioritize visual over tactile experience with this work, but rather than asking people to touch the pots in the gallery, I decided to explore ways that display and design can prompt the desire to touch, use, or engage with objects.

Cups are perhaps the most familiar and accessible pottery form. In my show, I piled an assortment of seventy cups in a large bowl, glazed in a wide range of colors, to prompt the idea that these pots are bountiful and not precious.

⁷ Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 44.

⁸ Anna Hickey-Moody writes that “we cannot assume a clear boundary between objects and persons.” Hickey-Moody, 18.

⁹ Classen and Howes, *Museum as Sensescape*, 202.

Next to this bowl, I placed a similarly large but nearly empty bowl with just five cups in it. As I stacked the cups higher and more precariously in the first bowl, I realized that stacking them in this way provokes a wave of anxiety due to their precariousness. I became curious about contrasting the comfortability of these satiny cups with feelings of anxiety and fear.



Too Much of a Good Thing

On the wall behind this display is a shelf, which holds seven cups with handles. These cups sit on wood fired tiles, which serve as saucers – places for the cups to rest. The cups have a vocabulary that is recognizable to anyone familiar with 20th century studio pottery, with straightforward but varying forms, throwing lines, and pulled handles. However, the handles are oriented in ways that make these cups unfamiliar and confusing. It's unclear from looking at them if they would be awkward to carry, which gives prominence to the tactile experience of holding them. Their design elicits a response to want to pick them

up to see how they feel.



Cups and Saucers

My glazed pots begin on a potters' wheel, which is an important tool for my current ideas. While enabling repetition through speed, the wheel also allows for variations in form, something that is not as easy to achieve with more industrial processes. I enjoy this ability to quickly alter a decision as it gives prominence to intuition and positive judgment. There is a rhythm to working in repetition that creates an infinite amount of potential expression.

I have been embracing more process marks in my work lately than I used to. I realized that I don't like the way the erasure of marks made by my hands removes me, the individual, from the work. These are handmade pots, after all, and I want them to feel as such. I am choosing to use my hands and a wheel to make these pots, rather than a more mechanized system.

I have focused on making work that is sensitive to the nuances of my materials and processes. This means being attentive to the work at its different stages, responding and emphasizing qualities I am drawn to at each stage. I enjoy throwing with soft clay, and so I often accentuate interior volume and throwing lines. Embracing the marks of my working process has led me to use wet slip on the surface of my work. I enjoy the way the combed slip creates

layers of depth by emphasizing throwing lines and volume, and the increased tactility this surface provides.

Transformation

Much of my interest in working with clay comes from properties that are inherent to the material. Ceramics is a time-based medium. Clay undergoes a transformation, from soft and malleable into hard stone. I love working with soft clay, but it is the transformation it undergoes which provides a conceptual foundation for my ideas.

I wanted to explore the concept of time in my show, and I decided to make a plinth out of wet clay in the gallery to highlight one aspect of the transformation clay undergoes on its journey to becoming ceramic. I was excited to see what would happen in the space with the addition of wet clay and what would happen as the clay dried and cracked. I had never done an installation like this and I went into it with few expectations, other than wanting the surface of the plinth to have a language of press-molded clay, with its folds, cracks, and irregularities. I knew I would be using thick, fired ceramic slabs in my show that were made in a press mold, and I wanted the plinth to reference these fired slabs. I thought about covering the clay plinth throughout the drying process to preserve the freshness of the clay, which I enjoyed on the opening night, but I wanted to see the piece transform throughout the length of the show.



Wood Fired Vessels atop Clay Plinth

On top of this plinth sit three bulbous, squat wood fired vessels. The surfaces of these vessels have a harshness that contrasts with my glazed pots. The process of firing a kiln with wood and the results from these firings directly reference time and the transformation the material undergoes in the kiln, capturing melted and unmelted bits of wood ash that come into contact with the work. The surfaces also more abstractly reference landscapes, the earth, and fire. This last association, in particular, has the potential to overwhelm the container-ness of the vessel, and so I tend towards simpler forms that describe one geometry. The power of fire is alluring and I am wary of it, as it often clouds my own ability to think clearly about my work. Gaston Bachelard describes the

reverie fire produces in humans, saying “it has the power to warp the minds of the clearest thinkers.”¹⁰

In order to stay focused with this body of work, I give myself parameters. I view these vessels as containers, which are “articulated around the transition



Wood Fired Vessels

between exterior and interior.”¹¹ I have become fixated on the delineation of exterior and interior when making these vessels. How does this delineation happen? Is the purpose to keep the interior and exterior separate or to bridge them? Is the interior accessible?

Unlike my tableware, where I work in sets producing boards of nearly identical pots, I approach these vessels as an exploration of variation in form and surface. I don’t like to approach this firing process being too fixated on a specific surface effect, but instead I view this work as an artifact of a place and time in the kiln. Firing a wood kiln is an activity that requires me to be extremely present with the process, and tending a fire is also one of the most primordial human activities. It is an active process which feels like a simultaneous connection to the past, present, and future. The work inside of the kiln captures the transformation

¹⁰ Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, 2.

¹¹ Mathieu, *Object Theory*, 117.

that occurs in the material during the firing. This expression of transformation is something I have realized I seek in many parts of my practice.

As objects which typify and embody transformation, flowers have a literal and metaphorical presence in my practice. I have been adding floral embellishments to my tableware, which is another way for me to embrace moments in my process of handling clay when it is at its softest and most malleable. The lifespan of a flower – from seed, to bloom, to dead shell – serves as an artifact of time. I find it ironic that flowers are given to grieving family members when a loved one has died. This gift is a celebration of life but also a reminder of its fragility, and of the transformation that we all undergo. Within days of receiving flowers, a grieving person is made witness to the process of death before their own eyes.

Celebrating Death

While I view my tableware as a celebration of life, I have felt compelled lately to address death in my work. Pots are containers of food and drink, but also of memories, people, and places. The history of ceramic vessels' use in celebrating death has begun to resonate with me in the last year as I have sifted through my grief at the death of several people close to me.

My father was diagnosed with a terminal cancer when I was 22 years old, and he died less than a year later. I faced much of my grief while he was still alive, but it took me years to be willing to confront and understand the ways his death shaped me. Confronting death at this age pushed me to fully pursue ceramics as a means of understanding the ways people navigate life and death.

A few years after my father's death, I spent two weeks floating the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon with some close family and friends. As we floated down the river, past layers of rock which show evidence of millions of years of time, I was introduced firsthand to the idea of deep time, or geologic time.¹² This concept has helped me to contextualize my grief within the immensity of our universe, as well as to understand more about my interest in ceramics, which is a material that inherently speaks of deep time. Once clay is transformed into its vitrified state, it has a lifespan that is closer to that of rocks than to ours.

In trying to fathom the immensity of time, I have repeatedly come back to the power of ceramic vessels as metaphor for our bodies and the relationships we form with others. Many writers and thinkers refer to human bodies as vessels. We understand pots through bodily associations, referring to their feet, belly, shoulders, neck, and lips. The way a pot is handled while it is made gives it its character, and the way it is glazed is how it is dressed. These are the aesthetic qualities of a pot – what, then, is the metaphor for how a pot functions?

The display of jars in my show is a manifestation of an idea that has been swirling in my head for years: of the connection between using local clay in my process and the connection between vessels and bodies. Intuitively, it felt right to connect these two concepts in a display of funerary jars. Using local materials is not a new concept – really, using materials that are *not* local is only a recent phenomenon in the history of object making – but it stands in sharp contrast to

¹² McPhee, *Basin and Range*, 17.

the present-day age of global accessibility. We are so used to consuming things from around the world, either instantaneously or with free two-day shipping, that it is easy to forget about the materiality of these things.



Markers of a Place and Time, Cinerary Jars

The shale around Alfred is tangible and solid – it is a rock. In the scope of deep time, this material is constantly changing: growing and eroding in a cyclical manner. A million years ago it had a much different form, and a million years from now it will also be much different. But in 2023, when I go to the creek and collect some shale, grind it down and add 10-20% calcium carbonate to it, it forms a lovely satin glaze when heated to approximately 2300 degrees Fahrenheit. It seems appropriate to use a local rock for jars meant to inter a person's ashes. Like people, this work is tethered to a place and time.

Humans only occupy a small amount of space for a fleeting amount of time. Tombstones describe the place and time a person occupied during their life, which means that grave markers are literal markers of a place and time. I have been firing thick slabs in the wood kiln for over a year, and only recently made the connection between these objects and tombstones. The slabs are a similar size and have a similar patina to the weathered rock tombstones around Alfred. Like tombstones, these slabs are markers of a place and time (in the kiln), and of the people who worked long hours feeding the fire. In my show, I used

some of these slabs as shelves for funerary jars in reference to a columbarium, and I also hung a selection of these slabs on a wall to exist on their own.



Markers of a Place and Time, Wood Fired Slabs and Tombstone in Alfred Cemetery

I have been using the phrases ‘funerary jar’ or ‘cinerary jar’ instead of ‘urn’ so as to keep this vessel in the same categorical concept as a jar used for food or other items. What really differentiates a cinerary jar from a food storage jar? What qualities does someone want in a jar meant to hold a person’s ashes? Should the form swell with volume, or be more sturdy? Is the space inside of these jars meant to be accessible?

The language of form tells us about the intended utility of vessels. A handle or knob on a pot is a form of communication that tells us, “pick me up,” and we do – people instinctively reach out to knobs and handles to lift, pull, hold. The absence of a knob on a lid is a more subtle form of communication that may give pause or invite a more intimate engagement. I chose a cannister form to

make the funerary jars for my show, as this form is direct and grounding. There are no frills to these jars, no extra adornment. They are unapologetic.



Markers of a Place and Time, Cinerary Jars

Bibliography

- Bachelard, Gaston, and Alan Ross. *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, 1964.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects*, 1968.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, 1998.
- Classen, Constance, and David Howes. "The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts." In *Routledge EBooks*, 199–222, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003086611-11>.
- Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency*, 1998.
- Hickey-Moody, Anna, and Tara Page. *Arts, Pedagogy and Cultural Resistance: New Materialisms*, 2015. <https://philpapers.org/rec/HICAPA-2>.
- Mathieu, Paul. "Object Theory." In *Utopic Impulses: Contemporary Ceramics Practice*, 111—127, 2008.
- McPhee, John. *Basin and Range*, 1981.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Pearce, Susan. *On Collecting*, 1995.
- Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Technical Statement

Material research has been a major component of my education at Alfred, and I think of it as a part of, and not separate from, my work and ideas. I have narrowed my focus to two separate bodies of work, though there is overlap between them. The first is made up of high-fired dark stoneware pots with satin glazes; the second is primarily hand built, wood fired work made up of sculptural clay bodies with higher amounts of aggregate.

I found that it was challenging for me to switch between these bodies of work during the same making cycle. Therefore, I had concentrated periods of time when I was making hand-built work for the wood kiln, or making thrown pots for the gas kiln, but I was mostly not doing both at once. I would often work for 3-4 weeks making work for the wood kiln, and then switch back to working on the glazed pots for 4-8 weeks. Sometimes this interrupted the progress I was making in one type of work, but it also gave me the opportunity to reset and refresh my mind and studio. I imagine I will continue to work in this way after school, although hopefully with a little more time to sit in each type of work before moving on. While the methods of working and the fired results are different between these two bodies of work, the ideas are related and feed each other.

Glazed Pots

I wanted a high-fire clay body that is very dark in reduction and doesn't have any bloating, slumping, or dunting issues. I am really happy with the clay body I settled on – it throws well, hand builds well, is forgiving with attachments, and is the color of 75% dark chocolate when fired to ^9 reduction. It can also be fired in the wood kiln and/or reduction cooled, resulting in a dark metallic color. It fits the glazes I have been using well. It is cheap to mix and is very easy to mix in the Muller (4 full bags) or to do 2-125 lb. batches in a row in a Soldner. I don't usually pug my clay, but I started to this year with this clay to save my wrists from all of the wedging necessary to make the plates in my show.

Jake's Dark Stoneware:

Tile 6 Kaolin	20
Kentucky Stone	20

Greenstripe Fireclay 20

Newman Red 20

Minspar 16

Silica 4

Bentonite +2

Fine Grog +4

100 Mesh Kyanite +4

Satin Glazes

I love satin glazes. Yum yum yum. I spent a lot of time in my first year studying satin glazes that I have used or know about, looking at their chemical composition and UMF. I realized that most of the ones I like are high in magnesium and sit close to the 5:1 Silica:Alumina line on the Stull chart. This line divides matte glazes from glossy glazes on the chart, when fired to cone 10/11. I started creating my own recipes, and by the end of my first year had some promising ones. Many of them fall between 5:1—6:1 Silica:Alumina on Stull. The following glaze became the basis for much of the further testing I did in my second year. It is opaque due to the high amount of magnesium and has a lovely satin texture at cone 10.

Brodsky Satin White:

Mahavir Feldspar 45

EPK 20

Dolomite 14

Silica 14

Whiting 7

When I started this research, I was firing to a hard cone 10 down in reduction. I started firing about a cone cooler for a variety of reasons – mostly, my clay body would start “plucking” a little bit on the shelves when it was hotter, and I felt that I could get a similar glaze result firing cooler. I also decided I wanted the glaze to move a little bit more, to show the texture I was creating by adding slip, while still remaining satiny. Therefore, I adapted my satin white glaze to melt a little more, with a little bit lower amount of heat work. These adaptations went through many

iterations, but I landed on this one, which is the base for most of my glazed work now.

^9 Yummy Satin:

Mahavir Feldspar	55
EPK	15
Dolomite	10
Whiting	10
Silica	5
Ferro Frit 3249	5

There is nothing revolutionary about these glazes – in fact, I wanted them to be as simple as possible, and they are quite similar chemically and behaviorally to other fantastic satin glazes. It is not lost on me that they are similar to some of Val Cushing's satin high-fire glazes. This research enabled me to learn about glaze development within a specific category of glazes, and I learned a lot by responding to the results from one glazing cycle to the next as I was firing glaze kilns weekly for much of my second year in school. Because of the high clay content in these glazes, they need to be applied relatively thickly, so I mix them thicker than other glazes and bisque fairly low (^010 ish). Rather than use calcined kaolin, I learned to work with the thickness of the glaze to achieve results I like. When fired to the sweet spot (^9 down, ^10 starting to bend), I am able to get variation in the surface and color where glaze thickness differs. I became particularly attuned to these effects with my plates, and I now intentionally glaze the middle of the plates thicker than the rims. This accentuates the slip decoration on each plate and creates a gradient of satin to gloss from the rim to inside of the plate.

Color

I have been using stains and oxides to achieve different colors with these high-magnesium glazes. Not all stains work with these glazes. Some don't work because of the glaze chemistry and some don't work because they are fired in reduction. I have been combining stains to get different colors and combining stains with oxides to alter the colors. Nickel in particular modifies many of the

stains nicely. I used too many color variations to include them all, but this is a list of stains that worked with these glazes (or did something different than expected, but which I still used). With most of them I added 2-5% stain to the glaze, occasionally using more. Unless stated otherwise, all of these are Mason stains.

Zirconium Vanadium Blue

Pansy Purple (goes dark blue)

Lavender

Cobalt Alumina Blue (goes purpleish – cobalt seems to go purple with high magnesia glazes?)

Lavender (makes glazes considerably more matte, even with just 2% stain)

Manganese Alumina Pink (makes glazes considerably more matte, even with just 2% stain)

Tangerine

Mango

Evergreen

Zirconium yellow

Pemco Silver Gray

The gradient of color in *Big Sky*, my installation of plates on the wall, was made primarily by using one blue Mason stain (ZrVn Blue) and altering the saturation and tint of the color by adjusting the amount of stain in the glaze and adding in small amounts of other stains and oxides. The additional stains and oxides I used were Lavender, Pansy, Cobalt-free Black, and Nickel Oxide.

After all of this testing, I may transition to firing this work in cone 6 oxidation next year. Even though I will have to formulate new glazes and develop new understandings of what stains will work with these glazes, I think much of this research will translate to a new temperature range.

Alfred Shale

In addition, I have explored using the shale from this region as a component in clay bodies, as a slip, and as a glaze ingredient. Because I was primarily working with ^9/10 clay bodies and glazes this year, I wanted these recipes to work in this temperature range as well. I settled on three different

glaze recipes using the shale, which I used on all of the jars in my installation, *Markers of a Place and Time*. They can be fired in oxidation or reduction with different effects. Both of these glazes also look nice when cooled in reduction – they are darker and more matte. With both of these recipes, I weighed the shale and ball milled it for 24 hours before combining it with the other materials.

Satin Shale:

Alfred Shale 80-90

Whiting 10-20

Shale Ash Glaze:

Alfred Shale 37.5

Custer Feldspar 37.5

Wood Ash 25

Sculptural Wood Fire Clay Bodies

I came to Alfred excited about the wood fired train kiln, as I had previously helped fire many train kilns and felt comfortable utilizing this kiln as a tool. In my first year I tested lots of clay bodies in different styles of firings, which expanded my knowledge of how different materials respond to the process of wood firing. In my second year, I decided to focus my wood fired work on hand built vessel forms using clay bodies that are suited to coiling and slab building larger forms. (By larger, I mean work with a maximum width of about 2' or a maximum height of 3.5', as these are the internal dimensions of the kiln.)

I started learning about the composition of sculptural clay bodies by talking with friends and faculty at Alfred and by looking at other people's recipes: those of Matt Wedel, Shawn Murray, and Chengou Yu were helpful for gauging ratios of clay-to-grog and what size grog to use. The bodies I started making had between 20-35% aggregate material. I tried different "porcelains" using molochite and kyanite as the aggregate, and I also worked on developing some dark stoneware bodies. I wanted these clay bodies to build well, dry well, and have active and variable colors in a wood kiln. I settled on two clay bodies for this work in my second year, but I would love to continue testing and refining these recipes.

“Porcelain” Sculpture for Wood Firing:

Tile 6 Kaolin	20
Helmer Kaolin	10
XX Sagger	20
Minspar	20
Pyrax HS	10
50 Mesh Molochite	10
35 Mesh Kyanite	10
Bentonite	+1

I put “porcelain” in quotes because the lines have blurred for me on what is considered a porcelain clay body. If you took out the molochite and kyanite from this body and added silica, you would have a porcelain throwing body, albeit a dirty one. The color of this body has more contrast towards the front of the kiln – I think it, like many porcelains, develops color best when it is held above cone 9/10 for many hours. It builds up layers of ash nicely and gets fairly glassy when this happens. I learned to appreciate the results from this body when it was fired towards the back of the kiln, but it is more quiet and much more dry.

Brodsky Sculpture (BS):

Lincoln Fireclay	20
Greenstripe Fireclay	20
Gauge Red Clay	10
Minspar	15
Medium Grog	20
35 Mesh Kyanite	15

This body has a higher grog content and is more forgiving than the porcelain body. It isn’t as plastic as the porcelain body, however, because it has so much grog and so little clay. It is dark when fired to cone 10 and goes almost black when reduction cooled. I enjoyed firing this body throughout the kiln – it builds up ash in a much less dramatic and obvious way than the porcelain body. It is quite dense and feels vitrified, but is still somewhat porous because of the high amount of large grog particles.