

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

Of Mice and Men

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## Abstract

Throughout my research, I have been researching how to express the ways in which environment, culture and society make an impact both internally and externally. Powerful cultural, political, and socio-economic forces shape identity and determine morals, values and ultimately the trajectory of one's life. Inspired by the world around me and my experience in life both past and present, I use things witnessed both as a kid and as a young adult, where self-survival is everything, and the struggle I endured, as inspiration. My work is a means to express my understanding of how life is from the experience of the culture into which I was born and to bring awareness to the struggle to survive at the bottom. Experiences in my formative years generated a desire to make work that can be a voice for the people who do not have one, the people who are struggling to survive in this world and can relate with this story of living a life with little control over circumstances. Survival and success is a game but not everyone can play.

## Thesis Outline

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## Title

The title of my thesis exhibition “Of Mice and Men” is referenced from the book by John Steinbeck. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a parable about what it means to be human. The title *Of Mice and Men* symbolically represents the way mankind seeks to destroy those who seemingly hold no value within society. Mice are not valued much in society. They are often seen as a nuisance, and mankind often seeks to destroy them. The significance of the title is in the futility of planning and the inevitability of failure if the odds are stacked against you. The novel is a condemnation of the American Dream, as has been said before but it also reflects on some of the principles of the American Constitution. All men are not created equal in the eyes of humanity.

## **THE ONLY COLOR I SEE IS GREEN**

Poverty is the state of not having enough material possessions or income for a person's basic needs for survival. Poverty does have diverse social, economic, and political causes and effects. The lower class in the United States refers to individuals who are at, or near, the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Generally, lower class individuals work easily filled employment positions that have little prestige or economic compensation.

Poverty is calculated by income, but many studies have found that a greater share of Americans are in asset poverty. Almost half of Americans lack the savings to handle an unexpected financial setback like a lost job or a broken car. Growing up, everyone I knew lived with the fear of losing their jobs. The fear comes from so much more than just that, it is not that simple. Where I come from, when a person loses their job, their life and the lives of their family are literally and immediately in jeopardy. It is a matter of life and death. If you are lucky you have enough money for one more month of rent saved up. Savings are nonexistent. Where I come from you don't answer numbers you don't know because you expect it to be a debt collector. I still don't answer numbers I don't know.

When I was a child for what seems like years, every night when I went to bed my mom would come into the room to say goodnight. I am not sure when it started, but I began to say a rhyme or a prayer of sorts that she had to stand there and listen to every single night before she shut that door. It was a bunch of random words that rhymed together, it didn't make any sense and it wasn't very long. To me this random rhyme, or poem, was me wishing that my mom would get out of debt, that she wouldn't have to worry about money anymore. How does poverty affect children? I still remember this,

poem, word for word. Poverty disproportionately affects children. About one in five American children – nearly 15 million – live in poverty, and nearly twice as many experience poverty at some point during their childhood. Historically, this is an improvement: the child poverty rate fell to a record low in 2016. However, childhood poverty has significant and enduring effects on children themselves and on the economy as a whole. Childhood poverty impacts achievement, health and mental and emotional wellness both during childhood and later in life. When I was a child, I grew up understanding we were poor, but because it was all I knew I didn't know what I was missing out on, in my mind I had a pretty great childhood, my mom made multiple sacrifices to make sure of that. How does a child make sense of being poor? What does being poor mean to them and how does it affect them? Do they truly understand?<sup>1</sup>

Recently I was looking at a variety of images of bacteria, viruses, mold, and fungus. The fascination was inspired by current events and the obsession came from the diverse, imaginative and unique, forms, colors, patterns, textures, visual aspects that are hard to believe that they actually exist. I



*Tony Baker, "Touch", Ceramic, 5' x 10', 2020*

began to look at these things that grow and thrive in harsh environments, and relate them to people who grow and thrive in harsh environments, I saw them as figurative, living, alive, thriving. What these things began to symbolize became incredibly poetic to me.

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<sup>1</sup> Kneebone, Elizabeth, and Alan Berube. *Confronting suburban poverty in America*. Brookings Institution Press, 2013.

My mom understood the importance of getting an education. Because of this, she got one of the families at the daycare she worked at to let us use their address so she could enroll me into good schools. Where you live determines the quality of education you receive. Everyone else I know wasn't that lucky. School in underprivileged neighborhoods is like prison. It is about survival, not education. You have to walk tall with your chest out and if someone starts something with you and you don't do anything about it you're seen as a "punk ass bitch", forever to be looked down on, beat up, and possibly robbed. It's like a war zone. I have heard of instances of people rolling up to schools when it's in session, jumping out their car, running into a classroom and beating down one of the students, then darting out and not getting caught. You might be able to hide on the streets but when you go to class, they know exactly where you are. Children who are born into poverty are likely to remain poor, particularly without access to high-quality education. Recent research has consistently found that place matters significantly when it comes to addressing poverty. Scholars have mapped intergenerational mobility in zip codes across the country, finding large variations between cities and neighborhoods. Where you grow up matters a lot, independent of other factors such as your home environment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kneebone, Elizabeth, and Alan Berube. *Confronting suburban poverty in America*. Brookings Institution Press, 2013.



Tony Baker, "Inside Out", Ceramic, 3' x 1' x 9, 2019

Every day I would travel from the bad part of town to the good to go to school, literally just across the railroad tracks. Every day I noticed my dirty, grimy depressing part of town and the nice, clean, fresh, new part of town, the right side of the tracks. I was an observer, sometimes I felt as if I never fully belonged to either side. Trapped between two cultures, two classes, two worlds, and each world didn't understand the other, but I did, I could see the differences because I lived two lives. Urban decay is the sociological process by which a previously functioning city, or part of a city, falls into disrepair. It may feature deindustrialization, depopulation or deurbanization, economic restructuring, abandoned buildings or infrastructure, high local unemployment, increased poverty, fragmented families, low overall living standards or quality of life, political disenfranchisement and crime. Another characteristic of urban decay is blight—the visual, psychological, and physical effects of living among empty lots, buildings and condemned houses.<sup>3</sup>

One of the ways I symbolize this urban decay is by using materials from the built environment. The materials one sees every day and is surrounded by; bricks, columns, metal sheeting and riveting. I represent these materials in clay and use ordinary house

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<sup>3</sup> Abbott, A. Stress and the city: Urban decay. *Nature* 490, 162–164 (2012)

paint to color them. I use paint because that is what we do with structures in the built environment, we paint them. Doing this brings the object more into reality for me. I paint them in a way that the paint appears to be wearing off, chipped, aged, distressed, out dated, layered, as it is in a neighborhood that has little funding to maintain infrastructure. The colors are chosen specifically to make the work appear either to stand out and be noticed or to blend into the environment.



*Tony Baker, "The Miseducation of Tony Baker", Ceramic, 2018*



*Tony Baker, "The Miseducation of Tony Baker", Ceramic, 2018*

All the cities around LA have their own distinct characteristics. As I would drive through them, I started noticing the piping that was spread out all over the place. The way these pipes were

constructed were vastly different

from city to city, and to me they seemed figurative. I notice how these pipes were either colored to stand out, painted with bright noticeable colors, or to blend in, painted the same colors of the environment to hide and not be noticed. I started thinking about people in our society that were made to either stand out or blend in. The piping also mimics the



body in terms of function. The piping on the sides of building carried liquid and gas to help the building function. Similarly, our body is filled with tubes that carry important gases and fluid that help us function. I began intuitively building these piping structures, giving



*Tony Baker, "The Miseducation of Tony Baker", Ceramic, 2018*

them living, figurative qualities as if they were people. All of the different structures were connected to each other showing how everything is influenced by each other. Everything is a part of this vicious system and one can't help but be influenced by their surroundings.



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

I turned the capitol into a urinal, with a blank protest sign, discarded littered items and a child's tool set. I placed the tools by the system of piping as if they were there to fix it, but they are not real tools and cannot actually fix anything, mimicking the inability

for policy makers to fix our broken system. Education is considered an equalizer and a route out of poverty – but barriers within the system can maintain and exacerbate inequalities. Divergence begins as early as preschool, with many families unable to afford what research shows is a critical support for young children. The United States has one of

the lowest preschool enrollment rates of economically comparable countries. Primary and secondary schools struggle to meet students' needs with the amount of funding they receive, and the system often fails its most vulnerable students. An average of 84 percent of students graduate from high school on time, with much lower figures for black, Hispanic and low-income students. Dropout rates are higher in states and cities with greater income inequality and even higher for poorer children in those areas. A college degree is considered almost a prerequisite for a good job in today's economy, but economic barriers remain high. The average college graduate owes over \$39,000 in student loans – and put together, Americans owe \$620 billion more in student loan debt than they do in credit card debt.<sup>4</sup>

The system is set up against people from underprivileged backgrounds as mentioned along with so many more. So you're left with resorting to paying the bills by any means necessary. A life of crime. But you don't think of yourself as a criminal, because what you do is the norm. Selling drugs, stolen goods, breaking into cars, stealing copper. Anything to make money, to support yourself, your family, or your habit. With this



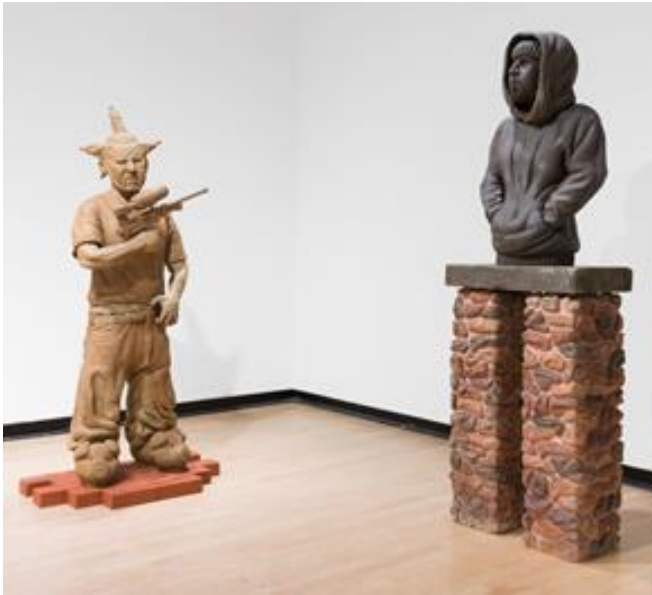
*Tony Baker, "Path", Ceramic, 2019*

piece on the right, I was considering the different career paths that one takes. Either you get a labor job barely getting by, or you hustle any way you can, usually by selling drugs, it is easy to be a drug dealer when everyone you know does drugs. A close friend of mine

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<sup>4</sup> Kneebone, Elizabeth, and Alan Berube. *Confronting suburban poverty in America*. Brookings Institution Press, 2013.

was in and out of jail for years. Towards the end of his life, he was really trying to change. I remember having conversations with him, he was struggling to stay out of the game, the money was too tempting and too easy. Unfortunately, I was not able to see the end of that story, because his story was ended for him.



*Tony Baker, "Self Portrait", Ceramic, 2018*

Growing up, college was talked about as this far away dream; the possibility of going was mentioned but talked about in a way that the odds were not very likely; working to make money was a priority. I remember trying to get my cousin to go to college shortly after starting community college. I

tried to entice him with the 6k they give you for an academic school year for zero income people. He looked at me, looked down and said, "I'm not like "them" man I can't do all that. He said "I'm not like, "THEM", an average person would ask who is them, what do you mean, but I knew exactly what he meant by saying "them". He meant the normal people from the other side, the well-behaved, well-spoken, proper language using, educated going to school and having a career, law-abiding citizens. "THEM". The work in the image to the left are self-portraits. One very reflective, internal, isolated confined by the material from his surroundings and the other filled with attitude and humor representing the sub culture he is a part of and identifies with.

## *INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE*

If I had to describe my work in one word, it would be “Influence”. Influence is a major theme in my work. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Influence is defined by “the power to change or affect someone or something: the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to

happen.” A person or thing that affects someone or something in an important way”.

There are a number of major social influence topics, including persuasion, compliance, conformity, obedience, dissonance and self-attribution, conditioning and social learning, attitude-behavior relations, attitude involvement, prejudice, nonverbal communication, and even subliminal influence. Individual thoughts and actions influence cultural norms and practices as they evolve over time, and these cultural norms and practices influence



*Tony Baker, "The Miseducation of Tony Baker", Ceramic, 2018*



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

the thoughts and actions of individuals. Social influence comprises the ways in which individuals change their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment. My work has always been about cause and effect. What put a person in this particular predicament and the effect it has internally on the individual. I explore both avenues within my work. There are a number of ways that I have tried to

express the idea of being influenced by ones surroundings, by ones environment. A common way of expressing these ideas in my work is by intertwining materials from the built environment with the figure. Using shapes and forms that suggest a living form and combining them with industrial piping, architectural elements and materials found in both urban and suburban environments.<sup>5</sup>

Many people suffer from learned helplessness. Can't do this, aren't smart enough for that, couldn't if I even tried. From being told over and over again, seeing examples of, continuously telling yourself, that you are not smart enough, you began to believe it, until you know it. Was it learnt or taught helplessness? At the center of the American ethos – the “American Dream” – is the ideal that all Americans should have the opportunity to succeed and prosper. In the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964,



*Tony Baker, "The Miseducation of Tony Baker", Ceramic, 2018*

lawmakers wrote that it is “the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.” Economic opportunity encompasses everything from quality jobs and job preparation to health care and infrastructure – in other words, the factors that give every individual the chance to achieve their potential.<sup>6</sup> However, the American dream is just

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<sup>5</sup> Zimbardo, P. G., & Leippe, M. R. (1991). The psychology of attitude change and social influence. McGraw-Hill Book Company

<sup>6</sup> Seligman, Martin EP. "Learned helplessness." Annual review of medicine 23.1 (1972): 407-412.

that for many people, a dream. Dreams do not pay the bills. Going to college is not even in the peripherals. Trapped, helpless, isolated.



*Tony Baker, "Internal", Ceramic, 2016*

It is very difficult to get over things that have happened in the past. It is a heavy burden that you carry with you and weighs you down, always in the back of your mind. Negative bias is the tendency to focus on the negative rather than the positive. One is able to better recall insults, negative stimuli, ruminate on the negative and have a stronger response to negative events than positive. This psychological phenomenon explains why it is so difficult to get over negative things and trauma that one has been through which causes these events to have a long lingering effect making the memories of these event more vivid. This bias toward the negative leads you to pay much more attention to the bad things that happen, making them seem much more important than they really are. The evolutionary perspective suggests that this tendency to dwell on the negative is one way the brain tries to keep us safe. The “bad things” that grab our attention and can influence the decisions that we make.<sup>7</sup>

The emotional turmoil that builds over time from pain, suffering, struggling, is kept and bottled up. I have endlessly attempted to express this in multiple ways throughout my work. From figurative, to abstract, figuratively to literally. At first, I

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<sup>7</sup> Habermas, Tilmann, et al. "Stuck in the past: Negative bias, explanatory style, temporal order, and evaluative perspectives in life narratives of clinically depressed individuals." *Depression and Anxiety* 25.11 (2008): E121-E132.

thought there was a perfect way to express it through one piece, but now I know that there are just endless ways of expression, none right, and none wrong, just different.

The work to the right is an example of one way I express this bottled up raw emotion one might have. This work to the right was inspired by a series of work by Robert Arneson where he attempted to express the psychological effects he was dealing with while fighting cancer. I



*Tony Baker, "Internal", Ceramic, 2017*

attempted to create my own version inspired by this series but for me I was trying to express the pain I had bottled up from the years of hardship that I have been through in my life.



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

I remember during one of my darkest times in my life I was coming down off some hard drugs, it was late at night, I was at a friend's house and we were all hanging out and partying. I suddenly had a rush of negative emotions roll over me, I became very depressed and started crying, I did not know why. I

randomly decided to take a few drags from a cigarette for whatever reason and like magic, instantly, the feelings were gone. I felt normal again, no more sadness or depressive thoughts, no more tears. At this point, I made a conscious decision to start smoking cigarettes, something I previously saw as pointless. The psychological effects of

being poor are all encompassing. It consumes you. A culture that normalizes and accepts the use of addictive substances needs them to profit and simply survive the hardships. A lack of medical insurance and a culture of normative self-medicating fuel drug and alcohol abuse. It is a way of coping, of dealing with your daily life. It is one day at a time at the bottom. Self-medicating is a common thing for many people whether it is a conscious decision or not. I have intentionally used this technique in order to get through some hard times. One would think that anti-depressants would be a better answer, but in actuality, it could potentially be worse. If you take the wrong antidepressant and have a negative effect, it can amplify your depressive feelings and even cause you to become suicidal. Your body becomes reliant on these meds after a while. You become physically and mentally addicted.

Humor is a powerful tool if used correctly. Early on, I found out that talking about these heavy and personal topics was hard, not on me, but the viewer. I realized that using humor in my work made the work easier to talk about. In the field of psychology, cognitive dissonance is the perception of contradictory information. Relevant items of information include a person's actions, feelings, ideas, beliefs, values, and things in the environment. Cognitive dissonance is typically experienced as psychological stress when persons participate in an action that goes against one or more of those things. The discomfort is triggered by the person's belief clashing with new information perceived, wherein the individual tries to find a way to resolve the contradiction to reduce their discomfort. Giving the work a lighthearted humorous feeling softens the blow for more serious, hard to talk about issues. It opens up the conversation and allows the viewer to engage in topics that otherwise would cause discomfort.



### **WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET**

Symbolism is an important part of my work. It is one of the key ways of communicating my thoughts and ideas with the viewer, and at times, reaching them on a deeper level. There is a decision that is made on how literal or subtle the symbolic forms take, and depending on the specific installation, I might be leaning towards one side or the other. There is a negative attitude towards work that is “Didactic”. In academia, the word is said with a negative connotation. But, who are you trying to reach with your work? Is it the highly educated and your peers in the field, or is it actual, real, struggling people in this world that do not have a high understanding of the meaning behind contemporary art. I think it is important to reach everyday people with one’s work. The people who are struggling to get by and dealing with the hardships that the educated middleclass or professionals in the field do not have to consider.

Some of the things I use as symbolism are more obvious but I also have things that are more abstract and force the viewer to think and make connections. I have recently created some abstract blobs covered in a foamy glaze. To me these blobs represent the figure, the raw, bottled up, unfiltered emotion that one keeps deep down inside from the hurt they hold carry with them. Using the recognizable everyday objects is a powerful way to create a strong attraction and connection with the viewer. People have their own personal relationship, stories and memories that go with objects of popular culture. Along with this, these objects have a universal, stereotypical, and/ or cultural meaning that they embody. Each of these things is something that I use to my advantage when thinking

about the viewers experience with my work.

Combining the abstract work with these recognizable objects creates an unavoidable power that the viewer is helpless to. They are attracted to both the recognizable objects they have a personal connection with, and understanding of, and they are mystified by these unidentifiable abstract forms and shapes. Abstract form and shapes that have been inspired by things from reality, so there is a subtle understanding of what they are but an even more



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

powerful cloud of mystery and confusion that keeps the viewer contemplating the work, trying to figure out what they are looking at. To the right, this abstract form appears to be alive and growing. It is figurative to me. I place this abstract mass atop a red brick column commonly found in urban areas, which is suggesting there is a relationship between the two. With this, I hint at the influence of a person's environment and surroundings, and how this attributes to one's mental health.

As artist, I believe that we have an important role, to comment and document what is happening in the world that we are currently living in. When people look back at your work a hundred years from now, what will they see, what will they learn? My work is influenced by my past, and it gives me inspiration, but I am also inspired by the present. There are so many important issues in the world that one will be touched by

within their lifetime; I think it is important to make work about this. My most recent installation was inspired by the events of 2020-2021. I titled it "20/20 Vision." I am looking at current events which I examine through symbolism. I explore the



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

isolation and loneliness, the loss of touch and closeness felt on a global level. It is difficult not to think about the state of the world in which we live. Cultural issues, long overlooked, are now in the mainstream and put into the spotlight of political, environmental and social circumstances. Isolated in our homes, in our own little world, with only our thoughts, there is simultaneously an urge to come together to form a big voice.

Prehistoric humans discovered the useful properties of clay and used it for making pottery. Some of the earliest pottery shards have been dated to around 14,000 BC. Clay is used in many modern industrial processes, such as papermaking, cement production, and chemical filtering. Between one-half and two-thirds of the world's population live or work in buildings made with clay, often baked into brick, as an essential part of its load-bearing structure. The unlimited applications that clay and the versatility of the material is what makes it special. It is from the Earth, under our feet as we walk, under our roofs as we sleep, with multiple variations around the world it is as if it's its own species, it is



*Tony Baker, "20/20 Vision", Ceramic, 2021*

living. When fired its stone like quality gives it a sense of permanence, an ability that lets a person's mark last forever, something no other material can do. This is why at times I show the material for what it is with its natural stone like color. Keeping the clay body untreated gives it a naturalistic quality that brings it into reality. My ability to manipulate the material and create anything I imagine with ease is the reason I use the material. It also has a perfect mix of physical and mental that helps with its therapeutic effect. The high attention to detail some objects possess give them a sense of importance. Some of the objects I sculpt are discarded objects, trash commonly found on streets. This attention to detail and time spent elevates them to a higher level and forces the viewer to admire something that otherwise would be ignored. With the installation of these ceramic objects, I create my own world in order to reexamine the world in which we live. The work built on a large scale to consume the viewer just as these feelings do. With recognizable objects and abstract forms used as symbols, and my use of scale to distort perspectives, I create a deeply saturated color that emphasizes this hyperreality to entrance the viewer. Working at a large scale and with installations, helps create this experience. A magnetism occurs when people experience objects that are the same size or larger than they are. It consumes you as you look up and become overwhelmed by its mass and become aware of its importance.

I am compelled to be in the studio working, manipulating the material. Meticulously crafting the work, continuously searching for different ways of expression. Which gives me a sense of purpose and acts as a form of therapy. My artistic practice saved my life and my own



struggle is the fuel that compels me forward. My past is a cloud that will forever be hovering above me, covering me with a gentle layer of darkness, but just maybe, with every step forward, this cloud will start to wither until it dissipates, and the rays of light can shine down once again.

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## TECHNICAL STATEMENT

### Clay

The type of clay I have used since my bfa is called Soldate, specifically Soldate 30, but 60 works too but seems to be more tempermental. It is a cone 10 stoneware which I either take to cone 04-6 depending on the desired surface. Low fire gives it a tan or beige color and around 5 it gets a smokey, earthy light stone brown which gives it the appearance of a ancient artifact from a natural history museum. For cone 5-6 I will do a heavy reduction firing to bring out the natural color of the clay. I will use any colored clays available to give variation to the natural stone like quality the natural untreated ceramic surface has. Usually I will build the structure with the Soldate clay and apply a thin candy coating layer of the colored clay atop by smearing it on the surface and smoothing it out with a rubber rib. This saves money since these colored clays are more expensive and keeps the work structurally sound and shrink rates cohesive. Although I normally use this Soldate clay, any sculpture body clay will do, although if there is too much grog making a smooth detailed surface can be more tricky.

### Tools

The type of tool I use are very basic in general. A wooden and medium rubber rib, fork, knife, wire and a set of handmade wooden detailing tools. These detailing tools are very similar to stone or wood chisels, with different widths and thicknesses. These different sizes allow me to detail the clay surface with percision adding minute detail. The specific design came from tools given to me and made by Ben Jackel. Tools are less important, it is the person using them that determines the quality or the work.

### Glaze/ Surface treatment

#### *Underglaze and Clears*

The only glaze that I normally buy are underglaze and a clear/matte glaze. The store bought clear/matte are reliable and cheap. I recently have been using a recipe to make underglaze in order to save money, it seems to be more reliable than the store bought. I use an airbrush to spray the underglaze at times to give a gradient effect and add highlights, and when applying the matte glaze I will use a spray gun for a thin even coating.

#### *Foamy and Runny*

The foamy glaze I use was a base recipe given to me by Tony Marsh. I use this base recipe and add different oxides, dioxides, carbonates in 5%-10% increments to change the color and give slightly different effects. I also use two runny transparent glazes. A iron heavy glaze which has the appearance of tree sap, and a cooper carb and lithium glaze that gives a hint of blue, it is glaze I use when imatating glass. When combining these 3 glazes an interaction happens between the materials and create beautiful and sometimes disturbing visual effects.

#### *Natural Clay Color*

When fired clays stone like quality gives it a sense of permanence, an ability that lets a person's mark last forever, something no other material can do. This is why at times I

show the material for what it is with its natural stone like color firing to a cone 5-6 reduction. Keeping the clay body untreated gives it a naturalistic quality that brings it into reality. Many of the light and dark browns, reds and tans are usually the natural clay color.

#### Alternative Surface Treatments

There are a few alternative treatments to the surface that I do. When it comes to mimicking architectural materials from the built environment I will typically use paint because that is what we do with them, we paint them. Adding layers of color or black to mimic a deteriorating, old painted surface. For me, painting them brings them more into reality. Occasionally I will use wax when treating the natural ceramic or underglazed surface which makes the color more vibrant.

#### Firing

I use a wide range of firing temperatures and atmospheres. Normally I will fire the work to cone 04, the low fire range. The only reason to go higher than that when firing sculpture, is if there is a reason to. When keeping the natural clay color in the work I will fire it to cone 5 or 6. This temperature is high enough to give the ceramic a dark rich color, but not too high to cause unnecessary damage. The only time or reason I would do reduction is for this rich natural color ceramic can have and I go to cone 5 or 6 when doing it. Depending on the thickness and wetness of the piece I'm firing, I will usually candle with the pioletts at around 250 degrees for 24 – 48 hours.

#### Extra safe electric firing cycle:

180 at 12 hrs  
 250 at 12 hrs  
 300 at 12 hrs  
 50 an hr to 500  
 108 an hr to 1100  
 140 an hr to Finish

#### Instalation

When making and thinking about work I think in terms of installation. I do not make one object and think of it as a finished piece, I think of it as one piece to the larger whole. I do not use pedestals, I create the work with how it will be displayed in mind and if an object needs to be elevated I will incorporate it into the design of the piece. I think about how everything I put into the space interacts with each other, creating an environment for the viewer and myself to immerse themselves in. I'm usually very subtle with the things I use funneling the viewers thoughts but leaving room for interpretation and for the viewer to create their own narrative. I build everything in pieces whenever necessary. This makes the work easier to transport to the kiln safely, store, ship, transport, and to simply create things with the material that could not have been made otherwise. When pieces do not fit together properly I will use a cement grinder and blade which will grind or cut through ceramics as if it were wood. At times adhesive is needed and if it is a weight bearing object I will use PC-7, and if it isn't I will use a simple two part clear epoxy.