

Material Experimentation and Documentation

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During my first year of Graduate studies I find myself immersed in material study, notably those indigenous to Kansas. Dealing with themes of time, change, movement, interaction, and play, I have begun to develop a vocabulary that assumes a relevancy to my contemporaries. My objective for this project is to conduct an extensive investigation of material found in our ceramics studio in addition to clay and rocks dug in this region. While making my research available to others I plan to create a database of my discoveries, engaging in this exploration as a student, an educator and an enthusiast. This accessible resource will serve as a reference to those interested in utilizing and unearthing local material. Offering visual evidence and notes on raw/refined materials, its workability, and the multitude of firing ranges they have been subject to.

Working in conjunction with the chemistry department at Wichita State University I plan to do molecular analysis of as many clay samples as possible. This process takes time and sensitive preparation. Choosing only a few materials to demonstrate the benefits of this process will be essential to understanding its capabilities as a tool to be used in the ceramic process. Identifying and documenting the molecular formulas of a material lets us understand how safe it is, what modifications can be made, and how it will react in the firings.

Ceramic artists, teachers, and students have a wonderfully engaging network. To better my understanding and extend my discoveries to the rest of my field favors only further investigation into this limitless pool of resources. The possibilities are both endless and unique, particularly when you start appropriating local material. I find the importance of this project lies in one's ability to utilize the information made available. My access to commercial material, ceramic facilities, and a passion for locating and utilizing indigenous sources allows for this intense exploration.