

CERAMIC SCULPTURE

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

History, Aesthetics, Criticism

(Questions for all the artworks in this packet are included here)

ARTIST: VonAllen (1950—) Salt Lake City, Utah

TITLE: Coast 1989

MEDIA: Ceramic

SIZE: 48-112~ x 36" x 8"

QUESTIONS: What do you see? How was it made? How big is it? What difference would it make to see it that big? What shapes, ideas, and feelings does this piece make you think of? Why? How could you dance the feeling of this artwork?

The artist says this piece grew out of a series of artworks on movement, inspired by her move from the East Coast to Utah. (See Biography) What about this piece reflects those ideas and feelings? She also says her artworks are inspired by what is going on inside her. What other artists make artworks that are visual representations of parts of themselves—their ideas, feelings, interests, struggles, successes? Why would someone choose art to express who they are? How does your art express who you are? If you were to make an artwork expressing something about who you are right now, what would that art be like?

What might be difficult about making a sculpture this big? (Have someone stand and stretch to show the size of the sculpture) Where could a sculpture this big go? Would you like to have it in your school? How would your response to this sculpture be different if it were the size of your hand, the size of your arm, as tall as your school? Is this a good size, then?

If you saw this sculpture once a month would you get tired of it? Once a week? Why or why not? What is different about abstract sculpture and figurative sculpture? (For example, Cyrus Dallin's work) What is the same? Is one better than the other? Why or why not? Is it better to have both kinds or would it be better to only have one kind? Why? What do you enjoy most about this sculpture?

ARTIST: Joseph Bennion (1952 —) Spring City, Utah

TITLE: Shino-glazed Large Bowl 1996

MEDIA: Ceramic—stoneware with Shino glaze

SIZE: 7-1/2" x 17" x 17"

QUESTIONS: What is this artwork? What is it made from? How was it made? ("Thrown" on a potter's wheel, with decorative pieces added by hand. Then bisque fired to a low temperature, about 1800 degrees, glazed, refired to 2730 degrees.) What is ceramic clay used for? (Dishes, decorative ware, sculpture, light fixtures, toilets, tubs, sinks, floor tile, the tile on the Space Shuttle, etc.) When was clay first used for making pots? ([See An Historical Perspective of Ceramics](#))

Is this bowl also a sculpture? Why or why not? Are all bowls never/always sculpture? Why? What makes an object sculpture? (There are obviously no right or wrong answers for these questions. The controversy over what is fine art and what is "only craft" goes on continually. Help the students to find reasons for their feelings about whether functional objects can be regarded as sculpture, so they can begin to explore aesthetics.) Some sculptors always or mostly make sculptures of people. Is it any different to use the human form to express artistic feelings/ideas than it is to use a vessel shape? (If possible, show the students some slides or photographs of ceramic works that are less obviously functional than Bennion's piece as well as some vessel shapes that are obviously not at all functional. See [Kimono Teapot](#) and [Pua'a Papa'a](#))

What must a potter consider when designing functional ware? Give some examples: (in addition to being visually appealing, a pitcher shouldn't be so heavy it's hard to pour, its spout shouldn't dribble, its handle should be comfortable; a mug should also have a lip that's comfortable in your mouth; casseroles should be easy to serve from, have snug fitting lids with handles, have a glaze that will withstand getting hot and then cold repeatedly, be easy to pick up, etc.) How are these considerations different from those for making decorative ware? Sculpture?

What makes this bowl good quality? What do you like about it? What would you have done differently? Does the glaze suit the shape of the piece? How would you design a large bowl so it was beautiful and useful?

ARTIST: Brian D. Christensen (1963 —) Springville, Utah

TITLE: Faith and Desire 1997

MEDIA: Ceramic (terracotta)

SIZE: 23-1/8" x 21" x 21"

QUESTIONS: What size do you think this piece is? How would you describe this piece to someone else? What "mode" (painting, sculpture, ceramics, pottery, etc.) would you

classify this artwork as? How is this piece the same/different as other vessels (artistic and non-artistic) you have seen? How is this piece the same/different from other sculptures you have seen? Do you think this piece is a narrative (tells a story)? What story could this piece be telling? What forms are familiar/unfamiliar on this piece? What would you title this piece? Do you feel that you understand this piece more or less knowing that the piece is titled "Faith and Desire"? Does this piece feel religious? Why or why not? Does this piece relay a feeling of "ceremony"? Why do you think the artist used negative spaces (holes) in this piece? Does this piece seem static (stationary) or is there a sense of movement? Why or why not?

ARTIST: Joseph Germaine (1945 —) Provo, Utah

TITLE: Pua'a Papa'a (Burnt Pork) 1998

MEDIA: Raku glazed Ceramic

SIZE: 12-3/4" x 15" x 15"

QUESTIONS: What do you think this object is made of? Have you seen one before? Where? The artist is Joseph Germaine, he says it is a kind of vessel. What is a vessel? What is a vase? Is the only object of a ceramic container to hold something? What other purpose can a pottery vessel have besides holding something? Why is there so much difference between art that is made of clay and uses the vessel motif and art that uses colored pigment on canvas and is limited to two dimensions? Have you ever heard anyone ask about a painting, "What's it for?" The common question asked about ceramic art that isn't obviously functional is what's it for. Why do you think that is so?

What is the difference between FINE ART and CRAFT? Why is there a difference? What other "craft" oriented art can you think of? Believe it or not, the artist who made this vessel was interested in trying to say something personal. Can you look at the lines, shapes, colors and textures and the overall form of this piece and make a guess about the artist's intention? Here is a hint: He is from a volcanic island in the middle of the sea. Where is the bottom of a volcanic island? What is the tallest mountain in the world? (it is not Everest; that is the highest but not the tallest)

What is raku? This vessel was raku fired. Can you see evidence of the process? What can you see? Where does the style of firing come from? If Raku is a traditional Japanese style of glazing and firing, why doesn't the vessel look Japanese?

Have you ever worked in ceramic clay? What did it feel like in your hands? Was it fun? If you could design and make a large ceramic vessel that said something personal about you, what would it look like? Why? Any other questions?

ARTIST: Catherine Kuzminski (1944 —) Salt Lake City, Utah

TITLE: Kimono Teapot 1990

MEDIA: low-fire clay decorated with underglazes and metallic gold luster
SIZE: 19-1/2" x 11-3/4" x 5-3/8"

QUESTIONS: What is this artwork? (A teapot) What is the title? What is a kimono? What do kimonos and teapots have to do with each other? What do kimonos and this teapot have to do with each other? What are the figures on the pot? What is the piece made of? What clues do you see that this is not a functional piece—made to be used?

What are some of the differences between functional ware and decorative items? When does a piece of pottery become sculpture? Why? Is this artwork beautiful? Why? Does a piece of art have to be beautiful to be good art? What aesthetic theory does this artwork best fit? Why? ([See the aesthetic theories](#))

Is this a good piece of art? Why or why not? (Use the elements and principles of art to justify your answer)

ARTIST: Andrew S. Watson (1948 —) Provo, Utah
TITLE: Roller-Bug 1996
MEDIA: Ceramic
SIZE: 11" x 12" x 11-1/2"

QUESTIONS: What is this? What is it made of? How big is it? What has the artist used as inspiration? How can you tell? What part of the sculpture looks like a roller bug? What doesn't? Would this piece be better, worse, or just different if it looked more like an actual roller bug? Why do you think the artist chose not to make the sculpture as much like a roller bug as possible? If he had made it more life-like but it was still 12" high, would it look like a roller bug? Why?

How do you think this piece was made? Why do you think the artist made it this particular size? What would be different about a 2" roller bug? A 4' roller bug? Is this sculpture a vessel? Why? What is the sculpture's purpose? What words describe the artwork? What makes it a good sculpture? Why? What object in nature might you use as the inspiration for an artwork?