

art

fall 2001

connections

a teacher resource guide

This teacher resource guide connects to the Dublin Arts Council exhibition *Patterns and Textures*, ceramics by Kaname Takada and aerial photographs by Mark Abrahamson. The exhibition is on view in the Dublin Arts Council gallery, 37 W. Bridge Street, from November 1 through December 22, 2001. Gallery hours are Monday-Friday, 11am -5pm, and Saturday, 10am-2pm.

THEME: Explore the past, present, and future of Japanese ceramic traditions as **functionality** takes on beauty in this exhibit of ceramics by Kaname Takada. Takada's beautifully executed forms strongly echo his Japanese **heritage**; however, his glazes are experimental and his design contemporary. In contrast to the ceramics are the landscape photographs of Mark Abrahamson, aerial photographs of the Savannah River **watershed** in coastal Georgia. Focusing on the destructiveness of pollution on these beautiful wetlands, Abrahamson generates photographs filled with beautiful imagery and natural geometric patterning. Both artists look to the earth in different ways for inspiration, and look to the future in technique and philosophy.

BACKGROUND: Japan has a long history of ceramics, stretching over a period of about 7,000-12,000 years. Japanese ceramics were influenced by the Korean and Chinese cultures, and the techniques used by both cultures were adapted to meet the needs and tastes of the Japanese community. **Tea ceremony**, which became an important part of Japanese culture sometime around 1500AD, greatly influenced the development of Japanese ceramics, as many different types of bowls, jars, and vessels were needed for this beautiful ritual. A ceramic technique called **Raku** - Japanese low-fired ceramic ware - was developed by Chojiro, the first generation of the Raku family, during the late 16th century. Chojiro was introduced to tea master Sen No Rikyu and began making bowls for tea ceremony. It is stated that, "...the origin of Raku ware lay in the making of a single tea bowl for the tea ceremony." Raku tea bowls created for tea ceremony are as important from a visual standpoint as they are from a **tactile** one - tea bowls are made with no handles so that they are cupped in the hands for drinking and so that the warmth of the tea is passed

on to the participant. The way the bowl feels is as important as how beautiful it looks. Some consider Raku tea bowls "the height of Japanese ceramic art."

During the **Meiji period** (1868-1912), a great deal of change took place in Japan, as the influences of the West began to change Japanese society. Although many Japanese potters adapted western innovations and modern styles, the Japanese continue to maintain a high degree of ceramic artistry combining traditional and modern techniques. However, unlike many Western counterparts to Japanese potters, the Japanese embrace accidental effects that resemble natural forms. What would be considered imperfect or unacceptable for many ceramic artists of the west (ridges left by fingers, marks made by tools, the imprint of the hand) are admired and often accentuated in the Japanese **tradition**. To this day, the ceramic tradition is thriving in Japan, with tens of thousands of successful working potters throughout the country.

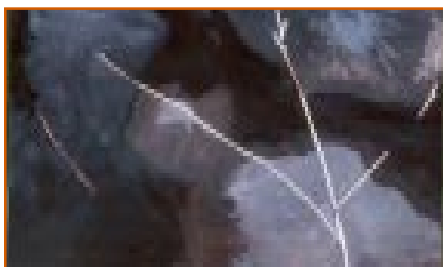
Kaname Takada was born in Chikura, Japan, a small city 100 miles south of Tokyo, on the island of Honshu, on the coast of the Pacific Ocean.

As a young man, Takada entered a military-type high school to become an airplane mechanic, but realized soon that he was not well suited for a strict military life. While waiting to enter another school, he spent a great deal of time with his uncle, Eiichi Kojima, a potter in the city of Kasama, Japan. Mr. Kojima's studio was located in the small city of Kasama, also on the island of Honshu. Kasama is a city of about 30,000 people with a history of ceramics going back approximately 200 years and with almost 200 professionals operating studios today. It was here that Kaname fell in love with ceramics, and although he entered another high school the following year, he spent as much time as he could working in his uncle's studio.

By the time Takada was a junior in high school, he had decided to become a potter, and through his uncle's contacts in Japan, Takada traveled to Ohio, ultimately studying at the Columbus College of Art and Design. He graduated from CCAD in 1989 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ceramics, and attended the University of Notre Dame where he received his Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics in 1992. Kaname Takada has been an Assistant Professor of Ceramics at CCAD since 1992.



top: "8/Bowl-708" - Kaname Takada, 22"x22"x4-1/4", Earthenware, 1996.



bottom: "Footprints" - Mark Abrahamson, Cibachrome, 19-1/2"x12-3/4", 1999.

artist statement: Kaname Takada

"My immediate reaction to a beautiful pot is to touch it. I enjoy holding pots in my hands as much as looking at them. That is the reason why texture is a very important element of my work; it can be enjoyed both visually and factually.

In my work I am trying to bring various elements, form and size of objects, colors and textures of both slip and glazes, and geometric and organic patterns, into a visual harmony without relying on overdrawn concepts or ideas that have nothing to do with art or craft of my work.

Research and development of textured glazes have been a big part of my work for the last several years. In a sense the textured glazes can be considered defective as they crawl (part and expose clay underneath), craze (develops a network of cracks), and blister. All these characteristics are usually considered as flaws. However, I find them esthetically stimulating as they add the visual and esthetical depth to my work.

Because the firing results of these glazes are much less predictable than "regular" glazes each time I open the kiln I experience surprise, excitement, and/or disappointment. The appeal of unpredictable and sometimes chaotic patterns is, I think, direct. It does not need to be intellectually or conceptually comprehended.

Even though Art is increasingly becoming a theory oriented field and art objects becoming investment commodities, I consider my pieces as sensuous objects as I would like the viewer to feel them both by sight and touch. It would be my great pleasure if the viewer can feel my work rather than understand it. My work succeeds when it makes the viewer want to touch and feel it."

artist statement: Mark Abrahamson - Savannah River Suite

"Savannah River Suite, a new work from my *Watershed Investigations* series, is a portfolio of aerial landscape photographs of the Savannah River watershed in coastal Georgia. My focus was water and the impacts of land use upon it. At low altitude from a Cessna 177 with retractable landing gear, I've created narrative abstractions...documents of point and nonpoint factors that adversely impact this watershed. From this perspective I saw a landscape continuously redefined by development and the forces of nature. The subversive formalism of the imagery underscored the deceptive beauty of the land, while the oblique shooting angle added to the ambiguity of the work. With close inspection, the world below was both troubled and complex.

The Lowcountry of Savannah and its environs is a study in contrasts. The land is rich in history (rice fields dating back to the Civil War lie adjacent to the local airport) and the city itself has one of the nation's largest historic districts. The surrounding wetlands are beautiful, giving the landscape a primordial quality. But the land and its waters have been heavily polluted by industry. Residues and by-products from chemical plants lie in retention ponds or directly on the land as if applied by giant paint brushes and rollers. Pollution from a nearby pulp mill saturates the air with sulfur dioxide. ... While some cleanup has occurred, Savannah has a long way to go. Environmental awareness is low and the people seem passive...it's almost as if the South was targeted for this environmental damage."

studio activity

Making a Pinch Tea Bowl

materials:

clay
table covers
fetling knives
shish kabob skewers
tag board
colored slip or underglazes
clear glaze
sponges
needle tools
forks

1. Begin with a small ball of soft clay. Place the ball of clay in one hand and insert the thumb of the other hand down into the middle (almost to the bottom of the clay).
 2. Begin from the bottom and pinch the clay between thumb and fingers while rotating the ball of clay.
 3. Working slowly, rotate the cup while moving fingers up towards the rim of the cup. As the walls thin out, make sure that the walls are an even thickness.
 4. Create a base of clay by rolling a clay coil and attach by slipping and scoring. Smooth edges with a damp sponge. To make the base flat, set the cup carefully on to a flat surface.
- *If the rim is uneven, use a fetling knife to trim off excess and a sponge to smooth.
- **If the shape gets too wide for a cup, fold the wall and smooth out with thumb and forefinger.
5. After the bowl is leather hard, geometric shapes can be added using a scraffito technique or underpainting. Students can use tag board to create patterns for the geometric shapes.

After the tea bowls have been fired, sample teas from around the world.



Shinto Teabowl, Hagoromo (Feather Cloak), d. 13.4”

vocabulary

Bearers of Important Intangible Cultural Assets - Living National Treasures

“During World War II, much of Japan was destroyed, including many of its ancient monuments and works of art. Machines were replacing hard working artisans, and age-old traditions were disappearing. In the 1950’s Japan decided to honor the elders who had devoted their lives to traditional crafts and performing arts. These individuals were given financial aid to practice their arts and to train apprentices.” This policy has been largely responsible for revitalizing traditions that had been passed down through generations of families through oral tradition and were at risk of being lost.

bisque - the first firing of clay without glazes.

bone dry - unfired clay that is free of water and ready to fire.

clay - a moist earth of decomposed rock; used in products such as pottery, bricks, tiles, and sculpture.

Edo Period - a historical period of Japan (1603-1867 AD); also, the ancient name for Tokyo. This is a period in Japan when outside influences were shut off from Japan and the “traditions” of Japan flourished.

firing - making clay products permanent through baking at high temperatures in a kiln.

functionality - when something is used for its designed purpose.

glaze - a glass like coating that makes ceramics waterproof.

greenware - clay in an unfired state .

heritage - what we have inherited from a specific sociocultural group's history and utilize in our lives.

leather hard - unfired clay that isn’t quite dry, yet firm enough to carve or burnish.

tea ceremony (cha no yu) - Chado, the Way of Tea, is a comprehensive cultural practice that embraces the arts, religion, philosophy, and social life - virtually every aspect of life. The underlying ideals are harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility.

Raku - a type of pottery developed in Japan over 400 years ago for tea ceremony and preferred by the Masters of tea because of its humility, tasteful unpretentiousness, simple naturalness, and its deliberate avoidance of luxury...all very intrinsic to the Zen philosophy. A fired unglazed pot is coated with a glazing material and while still cool, placed directly into a red-hot kiln with steel tongs. The first shock of heat can cause a pot to explode or develop large cracks in the clay walls. Once the pot is glowing like a coal in the firing, it is removed, hitting the cooler outside air which produces cracks in the glaze. These cracks are highly prized characteristics of traditional Raku pottery. The pot is then placed into an airtight container filled with leaves, pine needles, or the like, which turns the naked clay foot black and highlights the valuable cracks in the glaze. Sometimes, the pot is placed into cold water to halt the finishing process.

sabi - refers to the concept that changes due to use may make an object more beautiful and valuable. This concept incorporates an appreciation of life cycles and careful, artful mending of damage.

scraffito - scratching design through colored slip to allow the body color to show through.

shino - a type of ceramic used in tea ceremony, distinguished by its soft, white glaze.

suki - subtle elegance referring to beauty in accidental creation or unconventional forms.

tactile - pertaining to the sense of touch.

terra sigillata - a liquid suspension of the finest particles of a clay or mixture of clay that, when fired to around 2000 degrees Fahrenheit, it produces a lustrous, silky surface.

tradition - practices that tie the culture or lived experiences of a person within a group to the past history and memories of the group. Traditions come to us through forms such as: narratives, songs, art and visual culture, food and clothing.

wabi - simplicity; the beauty within a materials used to create the art object, such as patterns found in straw, bamboo, clay, or stone.

watershed - an area drained by a river.

classroom connections

mathematics:

Look at several slides of Kaname Takada and Mark Abrahamson's work. Discuss what is appealing (patterns/colors/textures, etc.). Do boys like different pieces than girls? Do favorites differ by age? Vote on favorite pieces and have teachers and students in other classes vote. Collect the data and discuss it in class. Make circle and bar graphs to show the results. Calculate the percentages.

Reinforce students' knowledge of geometric shapes. Measure diameter and radius; calculate circumference and surface area; concentric circles; explore how circumference and surface area change as diameter changes.

language arts/social studies:

Have each student choose and invent a history for one of Kaname Takada's platters. Have each student write the history, indicating dates and periods of times; tracing family members who might come in contact with it; historical events where it might have been present; and other scenarios.

Look at the images of Kaname Takada's and Mark Abrahamson's. Compare and contrast - how are they similar? How are they different? Have students create a list of descriptive words to describe the works.

science:

Investigation into the earth's crust could begin with clay. What is clay? Where is it found, both geographically and within the earth's crust? How does

heat change things, especially clay? What happens to clay as it is being turned into a piece of ceramic ware? What is the difference between green ware and bisque ware? What other things are changed by heat? How are they changed?

What is a watershed? Where are watersheds typically found? Why are watersheds in danger?

geography:

Where is Japan? What body of water surrounds the islands? How far away from Japan is Ohio?

Where is the Savannah River? Georgia? How far away are these areas from Japan? What similarities exist between the two geographic regions? Differences?

bibliography/additional resources

Shino, Famous Ceramics of Japan 12, Ryoji Kuroda, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, New York, San Francisco, 1984.

In Search of the Spirit, The Living National Treasures of Japan, Sheila Hamanaka and Ayano Ohmi, Morrow Junior Books, New York, 1999.

"Teaching Primary School Children about Japan through Art," Patricia Berg Ward, Eric Digest, April 2000, pgs. 3/4.

www.seattleartmuseum.org - teacher resource center on line with a host of information about teaching Japanese art

credits

Special thanks to Kaname Takada for his assistance in developing these materials.

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art connections

slide list for Takada / Abrahamson Teacher Resource Guide

slide 1 (1988-03)

Piece completed during senior year at Columbus College of Art and Design. Single-fired with terra sigillata. No glazes were used on this piece.

slides 2-6 (1989-01, 1990-40, 1990-02, 1991-01, 1991-02)

Works completed while in graduate school. Maintaining the basic form of platter, experimented with various shapes. Single-fired with terra sigillata without any glazes.

slides 7-8 (1996-07, 1996-06)

These pieces are the first that Mr. Takada experimented on his forms with a combination of glazes, terra sigillata and soda ash. They were multi-fired. Liquid latex and masking tape were used to create glaze patterns.

slides 9-12 (1997-03, 1996-16, 1997-10, 1997-07)

These are pieces preceding current work. Textured glazes, terra sigillata, and soda ash were applied.

slides 13-14 (1996-23, 1997-08)

Pieces on which patterns are carved.

slides 15-18 (2000-08, 2000-04, 2001-02, 2001-01)

Current work.

slides 19-26

Works by Mark Abrahamson

slides 27-28

Japanese art objects.

Shino Teabowl, "Hagoromo" (Feather Cloak). "This heroic piece is thought to be from the Ogaya Mutabora kiln. The potter's hands have put the expansiveness, the grandeur of the Momoyama period itself into this pot. One dreams of pouring hot water into it with a bamboo dipper made by the great Momoyama master Gamo Ujisato. One dreams, too, of some divine intervention that might allow one to sip tea from this bowl..."

Gray Shino Teabowl, design of flying cranes by Toyozo Arakawa. "The flying cranes on this bowl were made by using a wax resist technique. But the bowl shows far more than Arakawa's skill at drawing. Arakawa was born in 1984 and has been designated a 'Living National Treasure.' His discovery of an old Shino kiln at Ogaya in 1930 was a tremendous contribution to ceramics. His works represent the best of modern Shino."

slides 29-30

Influential works by other artists.

Raku Vase by Paul Soldner, 1965, h. 18"

Catching the Dead by Frank Boyden, h. 24"

The significance of their work is that both artists use colored slip in their low-temperature work. What is common between their work and the work of Mr. Takada is the use of large areas of non-glazed slip surface. Soldner's use of slip creates a much drier surface than Boyden's, and Mr. Takada's fits somewhere in between. Mr. Takada also states, "My form is much closer to Boyden's, as the main bodies of his and my work are vessel-oriented with the emphasis on wheel throwing. Soldner's pieces are more 'assembled' than ours."