THE INDEX OF CRAFT;
AN ESSAY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MFA THESIS
EXHIBITION
CONTRAST: CONTAINING CLARITY
A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Fine Arts

by
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APPROVAL

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled:

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Presented by William M Wilkey, a candidate for the degree of Master of Fine Art and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS iv
ABSTRACT v

CHAPTER
I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
II. FOUNDATIONS .................................................................. 6
III. FUNCTION ...................................................................... 10
IV. PRACTICES & PROCEDURES ............................................. 15
V. SUMMARY ....................................................................... 19

REFERENCES 20
EXHIBITION IMAGES 21
VITA 24
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Beaker Set, 2013</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Two Quart Lidded Juice Pitcher Series</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pitcher Profile</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Tools on the table</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sugar Jar, 2013, (detail)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Quadrant Teapot Series, 2014</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Santa Maria Del Fiore</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Tools at Work</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Whiskey Set, 2014</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Medium Serving Bowl, 2013</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Injecting soda solution into the kiln</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE INDEX OF CRAFT;
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EXHIBITION CONTRAST: CONTAINING CLARITY

Bill Wilkey
R. Bede Clarke, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This thesis paper supports the Master of Fine Arts exhibition at the George Caleb Bingham Gallery, The University of Missouri-Columbia, from April 28th through May 2nd, 2014. The exhibition, *Contrast: Containing Clarity*, is comprised of 95 unique ceramic pieces, which are presented as groupings on pedestals and wall mounted boxes.

The exhibition presents the artist’s exploration of form and surface used to make pots within the concept of lasting permanence and connections to humanity. Making marks on pots as an index of self to share with others during an intimate utilitarian experience.

Topics discussed are the influences, concepts, techniques, and methods used to create functional pottery. Included are process images, detail images, source content, and images of selected works.
I. INTRODUCTION

Everyone must leave something behind when they die, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched in some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree, or that flower you planted, you’re there. It doesn’t matter what you do, he said, just as long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that is like you after you take your hands away. The difference between a person who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching. The lawn cutter might just as well not have been there at all; the gardener will be there a lifetime. (Bradbury, p.156-157)

Recently, this passage from Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury became very meaningful while making pottery in my own studio. When I heard it, thoughts of producing items that last came to mind. Then, trying to justify the investment of time necessary to make an object that will survive, the choice to make pottery dovetails neatly into this concept of permanence and connection to humanity. The Master of Fine Arts thesis exhibition: Contrast: Containing Clarity is a physical example of what these qualities represent.

Contrast is a principle of design that uses oppositional forces to gain clarity, which helps to individualize or separate. Like Bradbury’s gardener, my hope is to make distinguishable or contrasting marks in clay and to use that as an opportunity to make an impression that upholds the quality of craft while also imparting the message of the maker. Like a footprint’s impression in the sand, the indication of a presence can also be called an index. I use the term ‘index’ in the way 20th century art critic Rosalind Krauss uses in an essay called, Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. She states: “By index I mean that type of sign which arises as the physical manifestation of a cause, of which traces, imprints, and clues are example…It speaks of a literal manifestation of presence in a way that is like a weather vane’s registration of the wind…a message that translates into the statement ‘I am here’.” (Krauss, p.59) Creating objects to the best of my ability is a way of leaving a physical legacy or making an indexical mark that I can be proud of. This crafted
mark helps to make my voice known. Because of her writing on this subject, I correlate these marks on the surface as well as the forms as my literal presence that resonates throughout the body of work discussed in this thesis, *The Index of Craft*.

Bradbury’s passage also brings to mind the actual materials I employ in order to leave something behind. Clay as a material goes through many transformations. It comes from the ground; I take dry material, mix with water, manipulate the moist clay with the hand, and it changes into ceramics during firing. It is undeniably different after it has been touched. The hand is continually revealed in the work through investigation and use. This touch isn’t arbitrary; it is purposeful and seeks to establish clarity through distinction. By bringing attention to every facet of the work, I am imploring the user to seek out individuality within each piece. Through this awareness, the case is made for producing ceramics that doesn’t compromise the search for identity within the repetitious process. Instead, it shows the many paths the work can take as seen in the variation of size and proportion throughout each form and the effects of placement within the kiln (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Beaker Set, 2013](image)

My past individual experiences relates to Bradbury’s concept. For example, one year, as a Christmas gift, my father and I made some stacking bookshelves for my cousin who was about to graduate. These particular shelves were designed with the compact college dorm in mind. While we were getting materials at the hardware store, we could have just as easily gone to another aisle and picked out a pre-fabricated bookshelf in a box; instead we bought pine shelf board. We could have used construction screws to quickly
assemble them; instead, we took the time to pre-drill, glue, and sink finishing nails to fasten each side as well as hide the hole by covering it over with wax. We could have left it at that; instead, we smoothed the surface of every square inch of the shelf, especially the handholds needed for transport. Time and care were poured into the gift. Seeing the satisfaction that both my father had during the making, and that my cousin would go on to have through use and appreciation for the shelves, left a lasting impression.

This lasting impression of appreciation is the result I intend the work to have. With my Two Quart Lidded Juice Pitcher series (Figure 2), I started by throwing clay on the wheel. Even though it was the same increment, each pitcher in the series turns out a little bit different because I don't find it interesting to measure the finished thrown piece. Rather, as a point of craftsmanship, I let the amount of clay dictate the size through methodical throwing from one form to the next. As I finish the body of each pitcher, I continue to sculpt and react to the form, and finalize each part with layers of texture. Satisfaction comes from taking the time to have a hand in the entire process of making. Since time is also a precious gift of one’s self, I take pride in knowing that I have poured myself into these pots to ensure they are well made. Like my father’s bookshelf, seeing people use and appreciate my work is fulfilling.

I also think about that satisfaction within the object’s intended use. It is my hope to be able to provide that sense of trust in utility to someone else through the user’s respect of
my steadfast pottery. While on a school trip in Italy, this lasting presence Bradbury talks about was echoed in the domes surrounding their city centers. Particularly the dome in Florence; this beautifully stalwart example of renaissance architecture gave me a calming sense of security while traveling in and around the city. Coming back to America, I felt as though I should imbue the next series of work with unwavering and assured qualities of ancient Italian architecture as a way to provide what I saw lacking in our relatively young culture. The results of infusing these observations are trustworthy pots that are confident. One should not have to guess what they are about. They imply how many fingers belong in the handle, and from where to drink or place the hand. The pots don’t claim to be bossy, but there is a sense of guidance in the same way buildings are designed to direct the passage of people through them.

My hope is for the work to appeal to the user through initial attraction to form, something much like a budding relationship. Then, earn trust through interaction, and after deciding to live with the pots for a while, an idiosyncratic connection develops in the same way one eventually discovers the personality quirks of a long time spouse. It is my hope that after continued use, one may arrive at a new discovery within the subtle surface, or from feeling a newly discovered layer of texture on the handle. With this discovery, the relationship between the object and user is revitalized. This situation would not happen if trust were not initially conveyed in the piece. My interpretation of trust is conveyed within consistent lines and sturdy forms which gives a feeling of solidity, and conviction to the pots. These qualities help to provide assurance, much like the dome gave me while traversing through Florence (Figure 3). This is enhanced within the act of engaging the work. Lifting a pot by a handle or bringing a rim to mouth helps to further cultivate a relationship of trust between the user and the maker by providing an enriched intimate utilitarian experience.
My experiences of building a shelf with my father and enjoying Italian culture represent both individual and universal aspects of humanity. One universal aspect that my work hinges on is that of eating and drinking, which is essential. This work has a familiar foothold that helps connect it to any user. Humanity also offers an attempt to abide by systems of order to help regulate life. This is characterized through form and pattern within my work. Unfortunately, structure doesn't always work the way we intend it to, leaving situations that are inevitably beyond our control. The firing method I use in the work represents these chaotic qualities. Through atmospheric firing the seriousness of the pot’s textured surface takes on a less dominant role lending to a sense of balance between the structured form and the inconsistent effects of the kiln on the surface. The best results are obtained when the textured surface is both accentuated while simultaneously being masked in different areas. These qualities are ones that I find to be true in me and then mirrored in the making of pottery. The attempt to obsess over details and then finally giving up complete control yields a more potent object. This contrast of elements is dependent upon one another to complete the piece. Without one or the other, the balance of form and surface would not be reached. The precarious stability of casual control in my personality resides within each pot after I take my hands away. This ensures that the clay is not only transformed, but also evidence of the fact that I will be there a lifetime. Like the gardener, my index of craft remains.

Figure 3. Pitcher Profile
Countless individuals have selflessly given of their knowledge making it possible to be the artist that I am. This reminds me of an old saying, “If you ever see a turtle on a fencepost, you know it didn’t get there by itself.”

As I have gained knowledge and experience, I’ve talked to a lot of potters, and most of them have related a captivating moment when they discovered clay as this magic material moving fluidly on the wheel. For me, that moment came in high school during our first ceramics project. One of my art teachers threw on the potter’s wheel, and for a demonstration, he made a tall cylinder. In my mind and memory it had to have been two feet tall. Because of my parents exposing me to the creative process at an early age, I felt I had a grasp on all aspects of “art making.” I was very wrong. He warned that he made it look easy, and that it would be a challenge. Being youthfully naive, his words fell on deaf ears. As a result, I proceeded to fail miserably, while not being on the wheel for more than a minute before the clay was ripped off due to a serious lack of familiarity with the process. From that failure and through the rest of high school, my aim was to get better and to make sound pots. This simple goal continues to be the driving force in my art practice today.

As a new college student, I learned from Professor Vince Pitelka and the creative competition at the Appalachian Center for Craft. Being there established a work ethic in the studio where if individuals weren’t filling ware carts on a consistent basis, there was a problem. When finishing my undergraduate degree at East Tennessee State University, the teachings of Professor Don Davis instilled a sensitivity of form and a critical eye. Without these skills, it would not have been possible to continue on to graduate school. During graduate school at the University of Missouri, my professors, Joseph Pintz and Bede Clarke pushed me to seek the essence of my work, whatever that encompassed.
While these people have had a direct personal impact on my aesthetic, others have also had an influence, whether it is through workshops held at craft schools, conversations among friends, or lectures given at universities. My major influences include: Michael Simon, Nick Joerling, Pete Pinnell, Simon Levin, Tara Wilson, and Kenyon Hansen. All my actions in the studio are a direct effect of the words and work of these people and their ideas and techniques for making pottery.

The words of some voices speak louder than others. Ideas from William Morris and John Ruskin’s British craft revival merged into ceramics through Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach. In the early twentieth century, these two used the ideas of considered craft and Japanese folk pottery to begin the premise for the Mingei style of studio pottery. Nearly all practicing studio potters today can be traced back to these roots. One of Bernard Leach’s apprentices, Warren MacKenzie, brought the Mingei philosophy to America while teaching at the University of Minnesota. As a result, the Minnesota region has since become a constant force in functional pottery making which has come to be known as the Mingei-Sota style. MacKenzie was able to teach this “craft as art” philosophy to several generations.

One earlier generation is still impacting the contemporary ceramics scene today. From that early generation, many of today’s prominent clay artists originate. I connect with one individual most of all. Michael Simon’s life and work not only influence me, but most of the contemporary artists I previously listed after him. The end result of his steady progress from one kiln load to the next is a cohesive body of work, built throughout a lifetime in clay. Like many potters before Simon, his methodical studio practice serves as a tried and true formula for success.
Observing Simon’s pottery gives me the permission to squeeze, cut, and obsess over my own work. Several years ago in an article interview by Mark Shapiro for *The Studio Potter Magazine*, Simon spoke about his life as a potter and the main themes behind his work. In the interview, he spoke about striking a balance between form and surface. According to Simon, altering the pot and giving it planes made it easier to decorate the surface (Shapiro, p.74). For the same reasons, I softly square my pots to divide the space to be patterned. I enjoy simple repetitive lines similar to Simon’s use of slip decoration. Since these patterns encompass the entirety of the pot, it also relates them to Morris’ designs on wallpaper that encompass the home. The patterns of texture on the pots result from sculpting the form with several tools. Different metal rasps and serrated ribs are used to articulate the form, then layers of pattern made with the same tools speak to the process each piece has gone through (Figure 4). Simon’s forms are made in a similar approach. They speak to the journey of their own creation. The way he cuts excess clay away is not hidden within his surface; it is celebrated by the tension in which the decoration holds on to each facet.

In the same way, I seek to find tension from one facet to another by alternating elements of design within the entirety of the piece. For example, the *Sugar Jar* in the exhibition has many layers of disparity that help to push this division (Figure 5). Glossy surfaces meet matte, fine textures meet coarse, and vertical lines meet horizontal. This use
of contrast throughout all surface decoration points to changes within the direction of the pot, both in the facets during making and in the direction of the flame during firing.

Michael Simon’s choice of firing reflects the characteristics he wants his pots to accentuate. The soft surface that his salt kiln atmosphere produces adds to the visual depth of Simon’s pottery. Subtle differences in color and slight variations in form become nuances of the firing. In Simon’s book, *Evolution*, he talks about firing the salt kiln. When the firing is over, he says, “A pot can lose its voice all together, or it might surpass any expectations. Until the kiln cools, the potter hopes.” (Simon, p.81)

With my own work, my hope is for each step of the process to add to the completion of the piece, just as each part of my influences and instruction has added to the whole of my aesthetic by being the voices of trust and the foundation I build from. I am extremely grateful for the situations that have set my path to cross with each one.
II. FUNCTION

*Have nothing in your houses that you don’t know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.* (Morris, p. 108)

I appreciate how William Morris uses “beautiful” as the subjective term, and “useful” as the objective term in his golden rule. The hierarchy of *knowing* use before *believing* beauty is one that strikes a chord within me. Knowing something is useful inherently means it was once necessary. This is not to say that what you know to be useful should not be beautiful either; there is beauty within function. The blend of use within the search for beauty compels me to keep making. With the innovation of ceramics, the idea of culture evolved because of the functioning ability to keep and store food, transforming a nomadic society into an agrarian one. Ceramics was an integral part of every day life from that time up until the industrial revolution.

Several thousand years of ceramic history holds a tremendous weight over my shoulders. Because handmade ceramics are no longer a necessity, I feel responsible and take joy in preserving the legacy of making things of use from clay. Bernard Leach observed, “The continued production of utilities without delight in making and using is bound to produce only boredom and to end in sterility.” (Leach, p.13) This comment was pointing to trends within industry such as the willingness to give up individual contact with and consideration of material in order to produce vast quantities of items with the lesser attributes he describes. His comment might be slightly extreme, but I enjoy the passion behind it. Within making a series, I take great pride in reacting to each piece individually with attention to minute details. For instance, the *Quadrant Teapot Series* (Figure 6) consists of three teapots that have unique attributes while also sharing common elements.
Each one is made the same, glazed the same, and fired the same. The difference comes in taking each step with an effort to give each pot a voice of its own. The repetition of form allows me to play with line and realize form. So, the tallest teapot naturally has the longest handle and spout. These teapots are the same in most ways, yet they can also stand alone amid the lineup. Combatting the industry of making with individual attention, my hope is to retain the mark of the maker within a lasting object. What better way to preserve an index of humanity than on the shelves and tables on which they themselves reside, serving as a reminder of what was once necessary?

Before starting graduate school, the chance to view the preservation of history first hand presented itself. I took a trip to Italy to see Renaissance era architecture when I was finishing my undergraduate coursework. My last course was conducted at an organic vineyard and estate near Siena. We used terra cotta clay to make pots in a converted pig-barn ceramic studio, and the class took field trips to Florence and Siena. Having never been out of the country before, I started noticing the differences in culture. One of the differences I observed was the way Italians live with their past. Their rich ceramic history permeates everything within their culture, from the bricks beneath their feet to the buildings above their heads. Seeing this made me understand the youth of America and the absence of clear
historical symbols of civilization such as the domes scattered across Italy. When I returned to America, the pots then took on the symbol of deep culture within the utilitarian object.

While touring Florence, the class made the hike to the top of Fillipo Brunelleschi’s Dome (Figure 7). Never having stood on top of a building completed in the 15th century, I found the experience unforgettable. Encountering the profiles of the dome from a distance makes it seem as though it is completely in the round, much like the initial impression of my pots. One must get closer to the building to see that it is, in fact, faceted and polygonal. Just as the pots I make, once the user interacts with the work, planar sides become evident. Like discovering the interior of a bowl when finishing soup, the class was able to get a glimpse of the inner construction the higher we ascended.

Seeing that the dome used double wall construction, and the inner and outer bricks were laid in a spiral pattern from the crest to the base, helped me realize why it took over a century to complete. Constructing with this kind of permanence in mind lets me breathe a little easier if pulling a handle or carving a pattern takes longer than I think it should given that the pot can potentially function beyond my existence if care is taken. The time spent is worthwhile when the end result of the functional experience is trusted. The dome continues to weather and endure as a symbol of solidity as everyday culture weaves in and around it.
My work suggests these same qualities within the act of utility, with their unwavering profiles and corrosive surfaces while preserving the essence of culture.

Creating useful objects that seek beauty maintains a gregarious desire to be a part of a person’s daily life. This stems from a wanting to belong. Being a part of anything suggests one is making an effort to contribute to a larger whole. The overarching theme of sustaining life is that we all have to eat and drink, making it possible for my work to contribute on this basic level. In that way, I can connect with anyone. Because of the fact that everyone performs eating and drinking with utilitarian objects, functional work can sometimes be overlooked. It then becomes my job to overcome this hurdle by making the work as well as I can, so it can do what it needs to do. Beyond that, it has an opportunity to bring pause to the user as a meal winds to a close, or interacts within the space the pots reside.

To practice what I preach, collecting the work of other makers is another compulsion, which then becomes part of the family. An object’s history builds from one meal and drink to the next. After a while, the cup that gets picked for morning coffee becomes an extension of the maker. When in use, the maker’s personal connection to the user is strengthened. The time and place the cup was obtained comes to mind, reinforcing the bonded relationship with the individual vessel and by extension, the relationship between the maker becomes a part of the experience. The cup’s story also survives beyond the intentions of the maker. The cup quietly fulfills its function outside the control of its creator.

Functionality is the language in which utilitarian craft is held accountable. I value it as a creative parameter to work within. If not for function, ceramics would be just another material to sculpt with. Function has enabled sustainability through storage and consumption of food throughout millennia. This link between clay and function, until relatively recently, has been necessary. The need to make objects of use from clay is still essential as a means of artistic expression. I need the work to have the opportunity of use
and through that it is bestowed with an undeniable purpose. In function, the message of the artist can also be delivered within the intimate atmosphere of the home.

While in use, my forms impart the sturdiness and permanence that Brunelleschi’s Dome suggests. Making this purposeful work takes time. This symbolizes the culture I am wanted to bring back from Italy, and what I found lacking in ours. An eagerness to forgo history and the story it tells, for the new and the now. Wanting to share my experience and my story, I make forms that one can abide by and trust in as a way to gain attention and assure others of the legitimacy of ceramics as a utilitarian material. If my work can also function outside of utility, as a stronghold of habit among a frenzied day, then my hopes to contribute are sustained.
My work in the studio begins and revolves around material selection. Clay comes in many varieties that complement each other, and involves mixing several together to become what is known as a clay body. My clay body contains: kaolins from Georgia and Florida, ball clays from Kentucky and Tennessee, feldspars from South Dakota and North Carolina, and fireclay as well as silica sand from Missouri. This clay body is adapted from traditional recipes, but specific to my process giving me a unique confluence of materials that become the foundation for making, decorating, and firing the work.

Once the clay is mixed, it makes its way into the studio cycle, starting with the potter’s wheel. I typically throw a series of no less than six forms. Making multiples gives me a chance to work on line and proportion like a painter sketches. It also makes room within the series to experiment as well as fail. Using basic pottery tools simplifies the throwing process. As the pot comes to the finishing stages, I alter it from round pots to soft geometric shapes by pushing and squishing them. This loosely divides the work into facets. After they dry to a leather hard stage, the pots then transition to a decorating wheel on a worktable that becomes covered in trimmings (Figure 8). There, I continue to define the exterior of the form with facets using a series of different rasping and texturing tools. My current body of work evolved from this particular part of the process. The patterning of the work originates from the use of these sculpting and texturing tools to articulate
each form. After the form has been trimmed sufficiently, the marks that remain from rasping away the surface begin to intrigue me. The lines speak of the process the piece has been through, so I intentionally leave them on the pot. Over time, the patterns develop as a way to emphasize the change of direction from one facet to another by using different tools for each one. There is a base layer of vertical texture lines left from rasping the form down to its essence. Then another texture layer is added in an opposing direction. Lastly, a final layer of fine texture is added to the surface. The intention behind these layers of information is to have visual depth that is highlighted through nuances from the firing by catching it like a net (Figure 9). Some patterns are more complicated than others. The more complex forms have additions like handles, lids, knobs, and spouts, which are matched with more involved patterns. With these additions, the pots go on to the next stage.

Before I can let the pots dry, contrasting slips (liquid clay) are applied to alternating facets on the leather hard pots intended for the wood kiln. The slips I use for the soda kiln are applied after they have been through the bisque kiln (a lower temperature firing). Once they come out of the electric kiln bisque firing, the pots have transformed into ceramics. The geological clock has been reset, making the once malleable clay a hard rock-like material. The bisque is necessary in order to glaze the work without risk of cracking from the clay absorbing the water too quickly. The bisque pots are more durable, but still porous, allowing the glaze and slip to bond to the surface.

The two types of glazes found in the work are situated on the either end of the glaze spectrum. On one end, the translucent glazes are used to emphasize the surface. On the
other end, opaque glazes are used to mask the surface, which gets partially revealed as the firing corrodes the high points of texture away. I use both types of glaze to contrast the slips I have already applied. Variables such as placement in the kiln, application thickness, and the ebb and flow of atmosphere all play a role in the outcome of the glaze surface enabling the kiln firing to have the last word on how the pots are finished.

The two firing methods I utilize produce different outcomes as well. The wood-firing kiln must have a large quantity of wood processed and dried, sometimes before the pots are even made. Loading the kiln takes time because each piece has to be thoughtfully loaded in order to encourage the flame path over the work (Figure 10). Constant attention must be given throughout the entire process. The rewards for that amount of devotion are pots that can never truly be repeated, only mimicked. When the work is taken out of the kiln, the evidence of loading as an aesthetic tool becomes clear.

Unloading the soda kiln also yields unique pots, but through a slightly different process. One difference is the fuel source, which is natural gas. The atmosphere doesn’t come naturally like in the wood kiln. Instead, a soda ash solution is injected into the kiln at peak temperature as a way to introduce an atmosphere that leaves distinctive marks on the surface.
work (Figure 11). As in the wood kiln, time is needed to carefully put the work on the shelves in order to create turbulence in the kiln. The atmosphere in the soda kiln becomes more dramatic than the wood kiln. Because of this, I use more glazes that showcase that contrast.

After the work is fired, critical analysis is the inevitable final step. Without critically looking at the work coming out of the kiln, it becomes stale and difficult to move through cycles of making. The encouragement that comes from resolving a particular problem when moving to one firing and the next keeps me headed back into the studio. Because of all the intangibles of the firing, resolution is never truly complete. It only creates more possibilities for new risks, and then new solutions, and so on.
V. SUMMARY

Working in clay is a true joy. Within it’s process, clay contains the virtues that I seek: discipline, purpose, and community. I consider it an honor to continue the rich history of pottery making.

From the beginnings of working with clay during high school, to setting the lights for this thesis exhibition, the work and I have gone through many transformations. However, the constant is the continuing desire to make functional objects that leave a lasting mark. That is, as if to say, “I am here, and these are the things I hold dear.”

The steps toward making this statement on a functional pot start with influences from past people and experiences. This object of purpose has been intentionally made from the bottom up. From the foundation of material choice to the particulars of the firing, these actions are done with hopes to bring attention to the nuances of each handmade piece, setting it apart from any other. Each part of making, decorating, and firing is individually celebrated while the piece is being used.

The finished pieces are analyzed within the perspective of my academic upbringing and my individual experience. The vessels represent qualities of solidity, trust, and the satisfaction of making. This is the index of craft, the balance of many steps during the making of something useful in order to leave a mark of expression on clay.
REFERENCES


EXHIBITION IMAGES
Bill Wilkey (b. 1986) was born and raised near Knoxville, Tennessee. He received his BFA from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee in 2011. Since moving to Missouri to earn his MFA, Wilkey has sought to learn different methods of firing which has taken him to places like Penland School of Crafts in Western North Carolina and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, on the coast of Maine. Wilkey development with these techniques has abled him to be shown nationally in nearly twenty-five exhibitions while at Missouri. This includes three consecutive Nationally Juried Student Exhibitions in conjunction with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts conference (NCECA) in Seattle, Houston, and Milwaukee. He has recently been featured in Ceramics Monthly as a 2014 Emerging Artist. He has also received the Lincoln Fellowship and a long-term residency from The Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana.

Bill Wilkey continues to work as an artist; he plans to further establish a professional career as a maker of pottery wherever that takes him.