

• Presidents message

Dear fellow potters,

What is Craftsmanship?

About 5 years ago I began being a frequent juror at our biannual jurying. I thoroughly enjoy the process of seeing another's work as it is. I got to hear the 'Thank You's'. And, I got to hear the dissatisfaction from people not passing their jurying. Frequently they'd been told by a friend, a potter, a teacher that they'd pass the jury for sure. Not passing, they not only took it personally—of course—but were angry at the jurors and the process.

After thinking about this for awhile I saw there were two issues. First, we claimed to be an educational organization and the jury process as constituted wasn't educational. Second, we claimed that craftsmanship was important, but the jurying was based on 40% craftsmanship, 30% aesthetics and 30% personal identity. Many of the people who were not passing the jury were not passing because of low personal identity scores. A metric that it can take years of evolution to manifest.

I proposed that we alter the jurying process to include a pre-jury that would serve as a critique and increase their chances of passing the final jury, and that we restructure the scoring so that craftsmanship had the most weight. The jury committee come up with the details of the current system where craftsmanship is 60%, aesthetics 30%, and personal identity 10%.

Recently I was talking with students about craftsmanship and had the idea of asking some of our juried members to write a paragraph on craftsmanship. I found the process of getting that "knowing" what it is into words a valuable one. I suggest you allow that question to gestate for you and write your own statement on Craftsmanship. If you do, and you wish, you can send your statement to me and we'll have a page on our new website where these statements live.

CRAFTSMANSHIP is overall symmetry, balance, and pleasant tactile experience. No sharp edges, rims or bottoms!!! Safety first is a goal. —

Victoria Littlejohn

Defining CRAFTSMANSHIP is an interesting dilemma for me, because you can be a fine craftsman and not be an artist, but I don't think you can be an artist without good craft skills. One can be a very fine craftsman following some else's plan, for example, building a fine chest of drawers. By adding beautiful personally designed hand-carved appliques to the drawer and cabinet fronts now changes it from a craft to an art piece. Conversely, I believe one can't create good art without craft training. In summing up, you can be an excellent craftsman without art skills, but you need both craft and art skills to be an artist.

—**Arnie Kubelun**

CRAFTSMANSHIP: The feature of an item or object produced by a skilled artisan or tradesperson that shows quality, beauty, and efficiency of function. —**John Grisafe**

CRAFTSMANSHIP brings what's in my mind's eye to fruition. I have always worked with my hands, making things. I derive satisfaction from slicing food neatly, inking precise lines, stitching straight seams. But the most satisfying experience is the manifestation of a new, creative idea, elevating craftsmanship to art. This is when I'm inspired to hone my hand/eye coordination to a higher level and give full attention to detail and artistic expression. Every new idea presents an excuse to improve my skills, a lifelong endeavor. My art isn't complete until its physical form matches my vision, and this can only happen through craftsmanship. —**Terry Wilson**

CRAFTSMANSHIP is the foundation of creative endeavor. It's a feeling and an attitude of paying attention to the smallest details of process and result. It's doing what the material and use demand even when very few people will notice if one doesn't. It's where the intergenerational knowledge of the human-clay relationship resides and expresses itself. Craftsmanship is the arena not to compromise. Without this strong foundation the whole edifice collapses. When aesthetics and craftsmanship are in harmony, art arises, and the piece of work registers a visceral experience in the body that validates it's just right.

Wyn Matthews