

Honolulu Museum of Art School

Supply List

The Animated Nude

Instructor: Esther Shimazu

Brief Bio

I grew up in warm, madly multicultural suburban Honolulu with a structural engineer dad and a mom who told good stories; a middle child in a horde of noisy, competitive siblings and cousins. I started off drawing on every surface available but once I got my hands on clay at around age five, that was it. Combine my ideal material with a need for building to last and a nerdy interest in natural history and I had something of my own to occupy me till I dropped. Clay was organic, metamorphic and if you didn't knock it onto the floor, more impervious than almost any other medium to dirt, bugs and wear - important in the tropics. I loved it too for its long and honorable functional tradition and excellent archeological record. I worked with the tradition and built them much like pots but with actual shoulders, bellies and feet so they could be sturdy but lightweight and more likely to survive the long process. Animals to start, but people were always the ultimate challenge in expression and gesture. Nudes made sense, discarding the obscuring distraction of clothing and hair. The voluminous bodies and big heads could be contrasted with details and delicacy in the hands and feet and individually inserted teeth. Honing in as closely as I could, they unsurprisingly started to look like my nearest and dearest. And no one was portraying the people I knew growing up in a majority Asian-American population: free to be as undignified or not as they wanted. The niche for making pottery nudes of a cranky Asian persuasion was open, so I took it.

Description of Work

I build my pieces using the usual handbuilding techniques of pinch, coil and slab rather like teapots: in parts that are then fitted together. They are completely hollow except for teeth, ears and digits and are ruthlessly cut apart, carved, scraped and/or smacked around to get an acceptable result before moving on to drying and firing. Along the way, I try to jam in as much individual personality as possible. Surfaces are kept smooth throughout and are hand sanded after both the bisque and high fire. Most color is added at the greenware stage, using commercial underglazes anporcelain slip, brushes and airbrush. After the bisque, a dark oxide is rubbed in, bits that can use some shine like teeth and eyes get touches of clear glaze and the piece gets soft touches and a final overall airbrush of oxides and underglaze. Firing is cone 6 oxidation or very light reduction.

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Program Description

I'll go over how I build my animated pottery figures from teeth and toenails to getting just the right loopy smile as we collaborate and mud wrestle with clay to achieve something with a life of its own. It can get intense but fun. Particular attention will be paid to the most detailed parts: heads, hands and feet. Students should have prior experience with clay, be up for a challenge and should understand how a teapot is made. The aim is a complete small-to-medium-sized nude. After a one-week break to dry and fire, we will return for a one-day finishing session. 12 students max, 15 if everyone's on board.

Attached Images

Hollow, pottery constructed stoneware clay with porcelain eyes and teeth. Commercial underglazes, glazes and oxide stains. Cone 6 oxidation fired.

1. Cool Green, 2010, 7.5" x 15" x 5.5", reclining chartreuse figure
2. Pinch An Inch, 2010, 16.25" x 9" x 10", kneeling figure

Studio Equipment List

table, chair

low turntable or lazy susan

3 bats or workboards, about 12"

rolling pin

piece of canvas, at least 2' x 2'

spray bottle

bucket of water, sponge

small bowl or container for water

small shallow dish for a damp sponge

sheet foam to cushion work in progress

Drycleaner plastic or lightweight clear plastic bags

clay: easy to handle buff to brown cone 10 stoneware throwing body; small amount of porcelain for eyes and teeth

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Participant Tool List

Must have:

- Needle tool
- Fettling knife, other cutting tools for more precise work (small blades, scalpels, frisket knives....)
- Scoring tool to roughen surfaces to be joined (commercial, homemade, section of old hair comb....)
- Rubber and metal scrapers
- Brushes: one large sumi brush
- Bamboo or wooden paddle
- Natural sponges: one seawool for clean-up, one silk or small and flat
- Rolling pin
- Canvas
- Spray bottle
- Drycleaner plastic or lightweight clear plastic bags
- Wet-dry sandpaper, about 180 - 220 grit

Optional but Recommended: (I've collected and use a lot of tools. You Cannot Use Mine):

- Modeling tools of all kinds
- Flat synthetic sable watercolor brushes for fine smoothing of wet clay
- Pointy bamboo BBQ skewers to refine crevices
- Pieces of plastic and metal window screening or greenhouse shade cloth to smooth surfaces
- Various sizes of wooden dowels with whittled and sanded ends of various shapes (different tapers, knife edges, chisel ends, flat ends, incline ends....)
- Sheet foam or a soft pillow to cushion parts in progress
- Smooth wooden or hollow bisque ware eggs and balls, range of sizes, to compress and form from the back or inside
- Wooden balls and eggs, range of sizes, drilled and glued onto sturdy dowels for forming from the inside where you can't otherwise reach. Also known as/usable as throwing sticks.
- If you want to do hair, you might want to bring texturing tools like forks, wire end tools, serrated scrapers or sections of comb