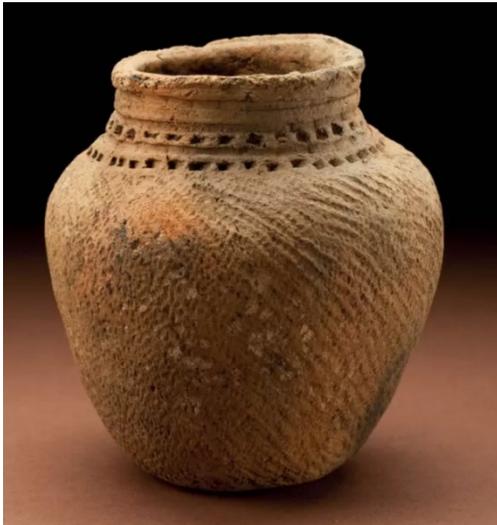


Karl Barclay – ENG 101 – Prof Stalcup

Need something made right? M I Y!



Isn't pottery just Dirt baked in the oven?

What is a MIY? Don't you mean "My"? MIY stands for Make It Yourself, it is the mantra and philosophy of MIY Ceramics, a studio dedicated to Pottery, humanity's oldest craft. The oldest known pottery in the world come from Japan's Jomon culture, which dates back 18,000 years ago. Back then, pottery was

made with just fire and mud. Pottery was made largely for the utility of it at first. Pottery allowed early cultures to create containers for storing food, water and even beer! Pottery

revolutionized cooking by enabling the preparation of previously inedible ingredients due to its resistance to high temperatures, it became a form of cultural expression. Pottery is pivotal to the telling of The Human Story, Early potters even had their own distinct trademarks and all the brand recognition that came with them. Clay work amongst clay workers was so



distinctive from forge to forge that even today ancient clay pots are used by archaeologists

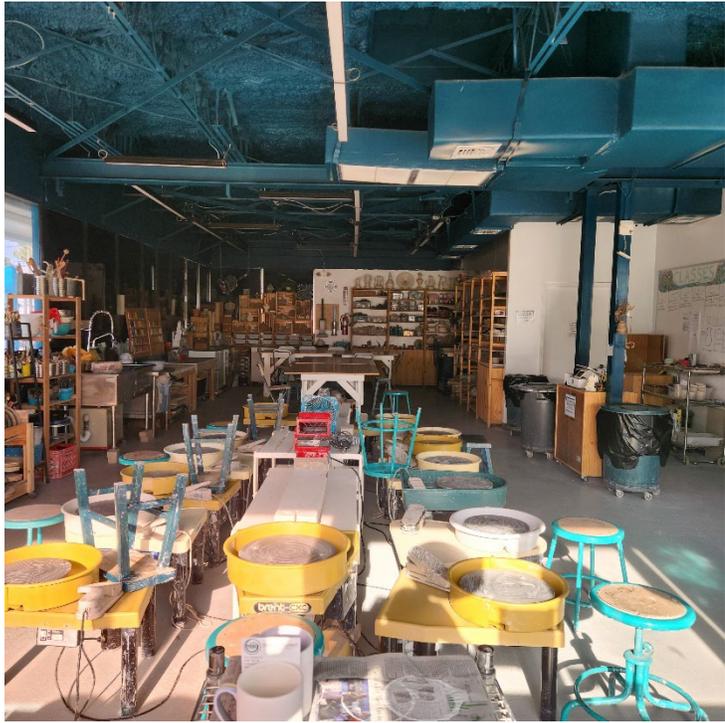


as evidence of social and economic changes throughout history. With clay and a set of tools, you have the freedom to craft everyday essentials like Bowls, plates, mugs, teapots, cookware, certain eating and cooking utensils, tools, and planters. Pottery is not just about making things; now, more than ever, just as our ancestors did, today, pottery is a form of social

and cultural expression. I am a novice potter myself, I started pottery with the intention of making planters for my herb collection, a strictly utilitarian approach. After my first session learning to make ceramics I crafted the bowl seen here, it's much smaller than I remember but I'm filled with such joy gazing at it, knowing I made it and knowing I was apart of a group of people who knew how. The commonness of the skill and the materials involved binds us all together in a sort of strange cosmic way.

Going into MIY the first time I assumed I wouldn't be the only individual attempting to learn pottery for survivalist reasons, little did I know, I would soon understand why not. Denise offered me a shot of American Honey one day at the 2024 Anniversary event. I drank it out of a black glazed handmade shot cup made by one of the artists at MIY, it wasn't perfect. If it was, I'd never have spent the time to look at it properly. Once you've seen one mass produced product, you've seen them all. This shot cup was different, it had a glossy jet-black glaze with tiny shiny speckles that looked almost like little stars baked into the cup. The rim wasn't a uniform height, it was higher in some places than others, so it didn't

touch your nose as you drank from it. It looked like something a child had made at first glance but holding it in my hands and gazing at it, I wanted to keep it. I had questions for the artist but after taking that first swig I forgot them all, Reverting to admiring the beauty of the shot cup. Drinking from that cup made me feel connected to a more primitive aspect of our advanced monkey psychology. it may have just been the booze but I felt at peace with my place in the universe, connected with the people around me, and my cave man ancestors. I wish I'd stayed and spoken with the artist who'd made it. After internally acknowledging my yearning to keep the cup, I immediately placed it on the table with the rest, vowing to make one for myself one day.



The responsibility of defending the poetry in pottery extends beyond the current organization; MIY Ceramics. 'Mud and Fire' was the original haven for the clay workers at MIY Ceramics. Mud and Fire is an ironic and pivotal part of the story of MIY Ceramics story, and even before that Broward Community College was the go-to place to find an enabler of the craft. For eight years, Mud and Fire thrived as a community hub where creativity and camaraderie blossomed. However, in 2012, due to a combination of financial strain and internal conflicts, the beloved studio was forced to close its doors. This studio was not just

a place to create pottery but a second home for many, where the local community could gather, share, and grow together. The sudden closure of Mud and Fire was a profound shock to one young potter, Denise Mendez -one of the studio's most resolute patrons. It was not just a loss of her creative outlet; it felt like losing a part of her family. Her home away from home. Eventually Frustration gave way to action, Denise and her band of artisans decided to take matters into their own hands. Believing firmly that if they couldn't find the perfect pottery studio, they would create one, it is unclear to me who rallied who. What is clear, the fire had been lit, Denise would become the rampart and by 2013, out of the ashes of Fire and Mud, came MIY ceramics. Her new studio was built on the foundations of resilience,



creativity, community spirit and turning personal loss into a new beginning for many.

Today, MIY Ceramics is a twenty-five hundred square foot, owner-operated, open studio devoted to the craft.

Located in Pembroke Pines Florida, they Offer

workshops for adults & kids new to the craft, they host corporate event workshops, and even birthday parties! You can also inquire about take home kits and online classes based

on the session. If you are proficient, an artist membership grants you access to the studio and all its tools every day of the week for a monthly fee. You may also hire an artist to commission art or to do art restoration. The studio is picturesque, offering opportunities as a visual media shoot location. There is also an in-store art gallery displaying Pottery from master artisans with over 30 years of experience in the craft. MIY makes it a point of pride to continually host nonprofit events that build and strengthen the surrounding community.

Initially, one might question the substantial investment in what appears to be “Mud and Fire”. However, after speaking with Denise, it becomes evident to me that pottery is more than just a hobby; it's a form of creative expression and a vehicle for personal fulfillment.

Modernity has often overshadowed ancient crafts. Viktor Frankl, Austrian Psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor and Founder of Logotherapy (a school of Psychotherapy) was profoundly gifted with an appreciation for life and an understanding of human motivation. In his memoir



“Man’s Search for meaning” he writes about his experiences with Nazi Germany and it’s concentration camps. He tells the story of “a people” so vastly superior that they had

evolved beyond the limitations of their old instincts, and began to develop newer ones, and in doing so, forgetting old ones. These old instincts continued to collapse and decline with the rise of the new ones until“...No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people tell him to do (Totalitarianism)”. A very familiar political landscape to me and I hope, to you as well. I think it is also interesting to mention that creating something; as you do when spinning or molding pottery can be involved in the process of Logotherapy.

The team at MIY Ceramics is passionately addressing gaps in the modern education system through an initiative referred to as, “Dream City”. By enabling the exploration of the arts and sciences with state-of-the-art VR goggles and programming labs, it becomes possible to enhance spatial reasoning, foster interest, and increase performance in STEM fields among young children. This approach not only cultivates essential skills but also accomplishes an over-arching goal of instilling a sense of purpose and connection in not just the staff at MIY, but the community as a whole. Additionally, Denise's commitment extends beyond educational initiatives; she actively engages her community through hackathons, early childhood education events, and charity drives that support the homeless and abandoned animals.

Self-Assessment

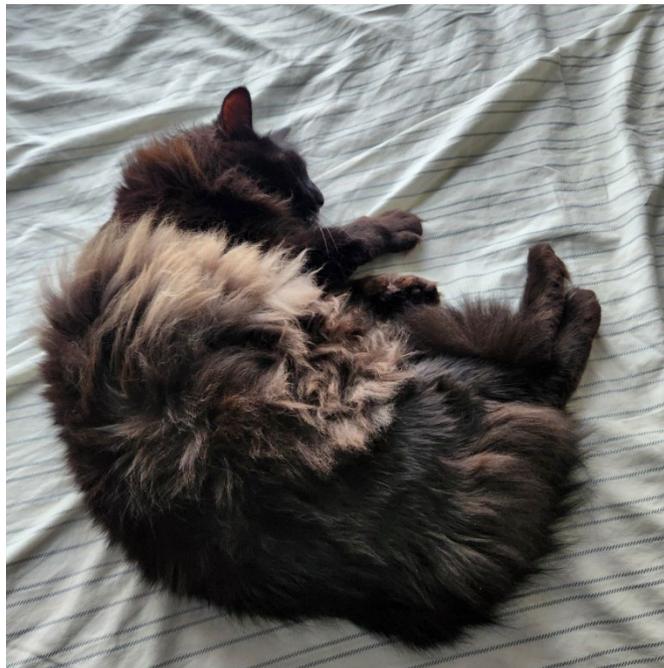
The feedback I Received, made me aware that I need to allocate more energy into talking about what makes pottery cathartic, use more descriptive/sensory language and tell actual stories about what makes pottery cathartic. It's difficult for me to tell stories like that right now as I haven't really bonded with anyone that well at MIY as of yet and you can't rush these things. I ended up telling the story from my own perspective about how I got this weird sense of pride from this primitive looking cup. I mentioned in the introductory paragraph the feeling of connectedness I felt between myself and others who shared the pottery skill. The commonness of the skill and the materials involved binds us all in a sort of strange way. I finally explained some of Viktor Frankl's work and I don't think it looks like a HUGE digression, I think the addition of my own stories, addition of descriptive language as well as a more logical and abstract introductory look at the science of motivation really pulls it together and makes up for it's overall lack of human-ness.

My instructor will most likely notice the new introductory hook, I changed most of the transitional sentences, I added the story about the cup and the paragraph about Viktor Frankl. I didn't bother to mention John Vervaeke anymore because he is kind of a "re-skinned" Viktor Frankl with a YouTube channel. I left John Vervaeke's YouTube channel in the citations if you're interested and I'll also leave an Amazon affiliate link down there as well just in case you're interested in that as well. I spoke a bit about how each artisan

had a trademark that came with brand loyalty but I still didn't expand to much on that as it would have been a huuuge digression.

Citations:

- Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. (n.d.). Oldest pottery. Human Origins. Retrieved from <https://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/behavior/carrying-storing/oldest-pottery>
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- Vervaeke, J. (2023, August 23). Awakening from the Meaning Crisis [Video Playlist]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLND1JCRq8Vuh3f0P5qjrSdb5eC1ZfZwWJ>



Thank you for Reading!! Good night!