

The Clay Artists of San Diego Art Scholarship (CASD) and the San Diego County Arts Education Association (SDCAEA) provided me with the opportunity to dedicate two weeks to furthering my education with the clay medium, specifically clay decorating techniques as taught by Tracy and David Gamble. I intentionally chose this session to learn new application techniques with underglazes, such as decorating pencils and moist underglazes applied to achieve a watercolor effect on bisque-ware. Among other underglaze techniques, I experienced various methods of image transfers, sgraffito, and stretching and rolling of soft leather-hard clay after applying numerous coats of underglazes. Enjoyable was particularly image transfer onto poured slip and making my own brushes from deer or squirrel hair and bamboo. Being exposed to David's technical knowledge of electric kilns, glaze mixing and application, different clay bodies, and contemporary clay artists, will be of immeasurable value to me in the ceramic classroom for years to come.

My experiences here in Penland provided me with more than learning and production techniques. To be provided time and a supportive space as a full time high school teacher, to fully immerse myself in an artistic environment with other artists, was a first a bit challenging. Being around full-time artists, many professional, highly successful with a particular focus, I felt at first somewhat intimidated. Having earned an Art Education degree 18 years ago, I have taught many courses in 2D and 3D art production. However, I don't consider myself an accomplished artist in any of these areas. With insecurities come hidden strengths I discovered about myself. I have discovered a new and deeper passion for the clay medium and surprised myself daily with my accomplishments in the course. For example, I was able to throw many functional pieces in a fairly short amount of time under Tracy's excellent guidance, something I had not experienced in almost 20 years and was convinced I could no longer do.

In addition, I truly value the patient input and support of my course-mates, new friend I found in other classes, the two wonderful TAs, Emma and Didem, and the Penland community. I know have a clear idea about what aspects to infuse into my current 3D technical course curriculum, most addressing clay decorating and building techniques and how to best design an advanced level ceramic course incorporating new vessel forms and textures, using clay surface like a blank "canvas" and using clay for sculptures. (non-functional)

Dedicating two weeks to specific crafts in an "artistic excellena" environment, being fully immersed and supported with no outside distractions, is a cherished luxury for any artist. As a full time high school teacher, this experience is especially impactful. As a person who is usually in a giving and supporting role, this reversal of tasks has given me a feeling of artistic accomplishment, a deep level of tranquility compared to my often stressful teaching life. It has provided me with tremendous joy and peace originating from the serene nature of North Carolina and Penland's approach to teaching crafts.

Please continue to offer this scholarship to others. It has opened my heart and eyes to new possibilities and passions within a wider support network.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured background. The signature reads "Silvia Widmer" in a cursive script, followed by a long horizontal flourish line.