

# **Portfolio & Technical Research**

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## Research - Electric And Gas Kilns

My interest in modern kilns began while I was a studio technician as an undergraduate at Ohio Northern University. There, I learned to change firing elements, troubleshoot both manual and automatic kiln sitting devices, and atmospheric conditions of firing, such as reduction and oxidation. I was also in charge of making sure that various clay bodies were mixed according to the intended use and firing temperature. This brought into focus the need to match materials and equipment at an early stage of my development as an artist.

## Research – Clay, Wood and Kilns

Independently, I studied the history of clay cultures, particularly those of my Asian roots: China, Korea and Japan, but also other major historic ceramics centers of Harappa, the Mediterranean (Greek, Turkish, Italian, French), and the Americas: Mississippian, and Pueblo.

First, I knew that I enjoyed producing works in more than one style, and would probably never have just one voice. I feel at peace with functional, wood fired works, and at the same time, I like the challenge of using other materials and firing methods in producing sculptural works. My research on the connection between clay and kilns focus on what excited me most: wood fired kilns.

During my residencies at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in Japan, where I researched varying aspects of wood firing, from the clay body, the wood used to fire, glazes (if used) , the design of the kiln and the firing process itself. Although I fired in a number of different kilns at Shigaraki, I fell in love with the Ittekoi for its versatility in working both glazed and unglazed work, and for the ability to fire alone.

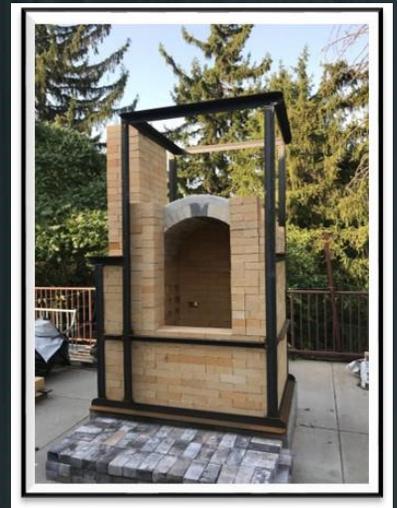
I received the plans from the Shigaraki Ceramic Culture Park to build the first one of its type outside of Japan. And have built four, to date. Compare three of these kilns below:



Original Ittekoi, Shigaraki, Japan



1<sup>st</sup> Version of the Ittekoi at OU.



4<sup>th</sup> Version of the Ittekoi at CSI.

I was impressed by how cleanly the Ittekoi fired, as it was able to do both ash and glazed firings without any saggars or second chambers to protect the lighter colored glazes from direct ash deposits. The works that came from each of the kilns were similar, but had their own unique flavors. After more than 25 firings between the two kilns the differences were clearly identified as a result of the clays and wood used to fire.

### From the Japan Ittekoi



Image 1



Image 2

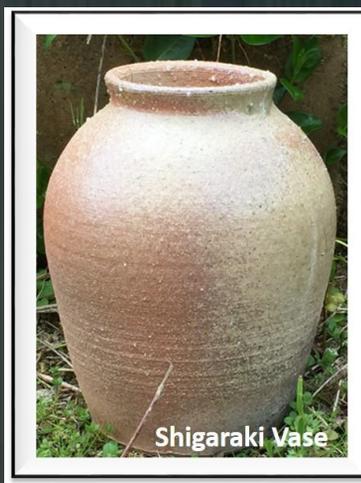


Image 3

### From the Ittekoi at U. of OK

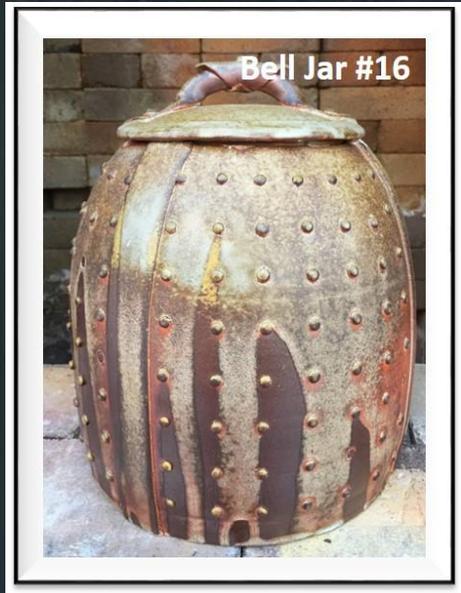


Image 4

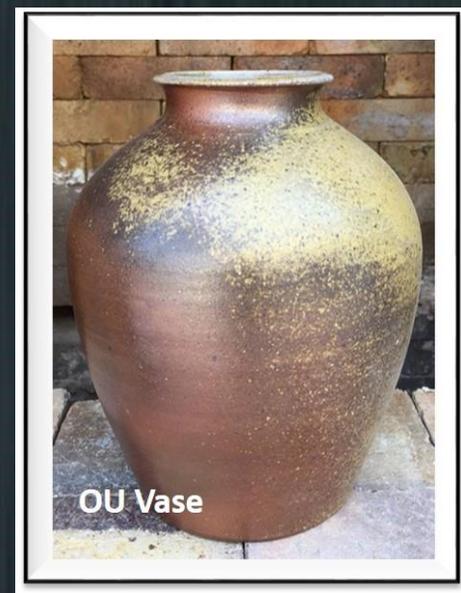


Image 5

## Firing Results – Three Different Wood-fired Kilns

Using my annual pilgrimage to St. Petersburg, FL and access to the Anagama at the Morean Clay Center, I tried firing the same materials that I used in the U.S. Ittekoi, and fired in a 5 day fired Anagama to see how the results compared. Below are the comparisons.



*Image 6*

- 1. and 2. are from an 18 hour firing in the U.S. Ittekoi
- 3. and 4. are from a 36 hour firing in the same U.S. Ittekoi
- 5. and 6. are from a 5 day firing in the Morean Clay Center's Anagama
- 7. is the results of a 3 day firing in a different Anagama

## MFA Exhibit

### “The Night Before – Battles of a First Generation Artist Radicant.”

My research continued from materials and equipment, taking a u-turn to history.

Armed with information from dozens of personal firings and participating in other firings regarding wood types and differing ashes, clay bodies, firing styles and techniques, I began have been able to predict (to a certain extent) the results across the variable. I wanted to use that information to recreate the feeling, texture and stylistic details of women from history, whom I felt had a similar characteristic to myself, namely “radicants of culture.” which culminated in my MFA graduate thesis work.

The MFA exhibit was entitled “The Night Before – Battles of a First Generation Artist Radicant.” It utilized various firing types (wood, gas, electric), various structures (wheel, hand, tile, sculpted, bas relief, etc.) and various media (clay, plaster, fiber, etc.) to express the idea that art is changed by the cultural contexts of both artists and audience. The exhibit consisted of dozens of pieces, each representing specific messages..

The first group of pieces, chronologically, was a set of female samurai called “Onna Bushi.” These were small test pieces, measuring about 22” in height. They were made from clay, then cast molded into plaster figures. The intention was to enlarge the model into a life-sized piece, but several construction accidents destroyed the Ittekoiln, and “adjustments had to be made.” (See “Chimera” later, for details.)

### *“Onna Bushi*



*Image 7*

*The Onna Bushi, or female samurai, not only represent the many woman who protect children and families, but also those women who go beyond their gender, to an existence where humanity is their strong point, and this humanity makes them strong as well. They are loyal, brave and often the unsung heroes. Just like in ancient days, when people had to do what was necessary to survive, these Onna Bushi also represent the super-heroes of today.*

## *“Teapot Set” from The Night Before”*

Similarities between cultures were also identified during my research, such as the case with the purposes, meaning and traditions associated with the “Last Supper” in Christianity and the Tea Ceremony in Japan. Just like Christ gathered his disciples for a last supper, Japanese Lords and Samurai would gather the clan together for a final drink, usually rice wine. Conversely, expected survivors: the women and children, were conversely served tea, a symbol of health and vitality.



*Image 8*

***The Pot.*** Represents the vessel that delivers life, daily nutrients, which are not always just food and drink. Green tea represents life and vitality.

***The Lone Tea Cup.*** This cup is made of a blend of Eastern Gray Ohio Clay and Oklahoma Red (from under the main art complex at the University of Oklahoma). It represents the influences of my studies...over 25 years in Ohio and 3 years in Oklahoma...as well as the concept of “blending” as part of the transfer of radicant arts.

***The Table.*** This is cured (and very hard) White Oak from Bethel, Ohio, 25 miles east of Cincinnati. It represents the firmness of the community’s cultural ties, and those worth sharing with others. This piece of oak is estimated at over 200 years of age, and like culture it takes time to grow and refine. This piece was hand finished, using only linseed oil, so as to leave its natural colors.

***The Mat.*** This bamboo mat represents the actual characteristics of bamboo: strength through flexibility. Flexibility to adapt is a basic quality of a radicant artist.

***The Bricks.*** Bricks from the destroyed kiln were used here symbolically as a symbol of resilience, and to unify the exhibit.

***“Outside-In Bell Jar – Looks Can Be Deceiving”***  
**(from The Night Before)**



**Image 9**

***Outside-In Bell Jar - Appearances Can Be Deceiving.***

*This single bell jar, different from all the others, sat alone on a short pedestal, asking viewers to look down, in hopes of it being noticed, and once opened by viewers, making it easier to see the inside. It was neither lofty or majestic. On the outside, it is plain and simple, maybe even comely. It has the same shape and structure as the other bell jars in the exhibit, but it doesn't have the impact. It doesn't appear to be especially strong...or even special at all. But looks can be deceiving.*

*This bell jar has the rivets on the inside, out of view. This piece has inner strength, and was not there to impress anyone. One must look inside, try to get to know this bell jar, and if one merely walks away without lifting the lid, the viewer will miss the most important message of the exhibit. This bell jar contrasts the simple and the ornate...the strong and the weak...effort and fortune, and was in the center of the group. It whispers the quiet message to the village "you without me wouldn't be, and I without you, would not become, for I made you...and you made me." Together we are strong.*

*This bell jar is my persona, the radicant artist, both simple and complex.*

## MFA Exhibit – Main Characters

The exhibit's three main characters follow on the next three pages. These three represent Naotora Ii (井伊直虎), Eleonora di Toledo (Eleanora of Toledo) and a faceless composite character who is a chimera of Misty Copeland and myself.

### *Homage to Naotora Ii\** Life-sized Armor of Female Daimyo



Image 10

*\* Naotora Ii was a 16<sup>th</sup> century feudal lord, one of few women to hold that title. All ceramic portions of this armor were fired in the Ittekoi at the University of Oklahoma. All fabric portions were fashioned by the artist.*

## *Homage to Eleonora di Toledo\**

Spanish Mother of the Italian Aristocrat Medici Family



*Image 11*

H: 64" D: 62" (Mixed media) About 900 handmade /hand sculpted tiles  
Gas & electric Fired at Cone 10 Stoneware;  
hand sewn silk/nylon blend material; attached with nylon chord.

# Chimera<sup>★</sup>

Prima Ballerina Misty Copeland & the Artist

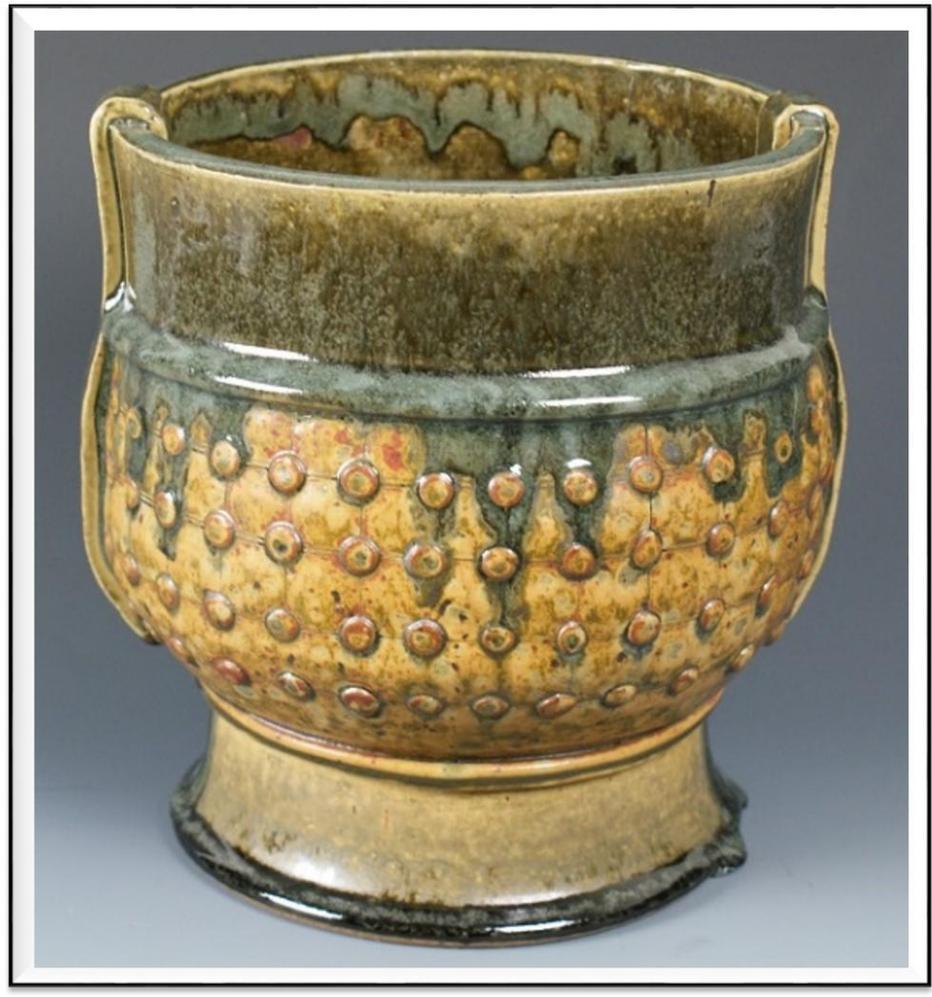


*\* This was intended to be TWO life-sized figures, but construction of a new kiln yard destroyed the kiln in which the other halves were being fired. The artist is an admirer of Misty Copeland, one of the first African American Prima Ballerina; after studying or teaching classical ballet for nearly 50 years, this became the artist's way of maintaining her identity as a dancer.*

Image 12

H: 62" W: 26" D: 28" (Mixed media) Wood-fired Cone 10 Stoneware; woven into hand sewn silk/nylon blend material.

*"The Urn"*



*Image 13*

*Winner of Best in Show and Best in Ceramics ONU; People's Choice, Fairborn Art Association; Best in Show, Sevier County Commissioners (UT) Art Show*

*“Conflict Resolved”*



*Image 14*

*Now in the Richard Notkin Collection.*

*"Persimmon"*



*Image 15*

*Now in the Belle Axton Collection.*

*“Crystal Teapot”*



*Image 16*

*“Bell Jar #12”*



*Image 17*

*Now in the Joanna Underwood Collection.*

*“Bell Jar #22”*



*Image 1*

*“Teapot Set”*



*Image 19*

*“Bell Jar #34”*



*Image 20*

*Wood-fired Bell Jar, Stoneware, Cone 10, from the Ittekoi at CSI*