



Comfort
IN CLAY

WRITTEN BY ALASSANDRA ROJO

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAYDEN ROJO & TRISTEN LACHAPELLE



Table of Contents

1

ARTIST STATEMENT

4

FUNCTION

9

CALM

12

PATTERN

16

TEXTURE

20

FABRICATION

28

GLAZE

34

ABOUT

36

APPEDIX

37

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Final Year Capstone Project submitted to Sheridan College, in fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelors Degree in Craft and Design, specailizing in cerarmics.

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Academic Year (2022/2023)



Figure 1

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am often drawn to pattern, balance, and symmetry for the calm space they offer within the fluctuating ebbs and flows of life. The intricacy found in Persian rugs, Indian block-printed textiles and Middle Eastern architecture inspires my elaborate designs. Combining soft slabs and wheel-thrown components, I create a variety of functional pieces, all with the intention of enhancing the home and daily life. I enjoy the process of making my own moulds, templates and mark-making tools. Using handcrafted stamps, I create floral compositions and blooming patterns on my pieces; producing detailed, embossed surface designs. Having the ability to create my own patterns provides me with the space to express my own sense of harmony and flow.

There is such a power and beauty
that can be found in being a maker; we
have the ability to take our most inner
thoughts, ideas and emotions and birth
them into the physical world.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

FUNCTION

As a maker, I pride myself with having the ability to turn my ideas into objects. At a young age, I fell in love with the idea of transforming one medium into something new or different. If my doll needed new clothes, I would find an old sock and turn it into a dress. If I wanted a new scarf, I would find spare yarn and crochet accessories myself. I remember spending one summer saving old bedroom furniture from the landfill and refinishing the set with a fresh coat of paint. I have always enjoyed the process of creating for function, as I feel I am helping these objects find new purpose.

When making work in my current practice, I gravitate towards making functional ware with the hopes of my pieces fulfilling a purpose for the user. I feel honoured to have others use my work within their daily lives, as I feel a little piece of myself is apart of their everyday living.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

*“If you have a strong purpose in
life, you don't have to be pushed.
Your passion will drive you
there.”*

- ROY T. BENNETT,
THE LIGHT IN THE HEART



Figure 10

CALM

I have always been an innately anxious person. Over the years, I have worked on learning how to manage my emotions; focusing on appreciating the present moment for what it is, rather than what may come after. Working with clay offers the opportunity to sit within a creative, quiet space and offers a tranquil sanctuary from the chaotic world. My pieces derive from this calm energy, which is shared through my work with the others around me. Each piece intends to bring a sense of calm, harmony, and balance to a space.

*“Worrying does not take
away tomorrow’s troubles.
It takes away today’s
peace.”*

- RANDY ARMSTRONG



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 14



Figure 13



Figure 15

PATTERN

My designs are heavily influenced by Islamic art, including Iznik pottery, Persian rugs, and Middle Eastern architecture. Many works display geometric and vegetative patterns, often creating a sense of movement and symmetry (Brandstatter, 2017). According to holy Islamic scriptures, the figurative representation of Allah, or God, is forbidden in all forms of artwork (El Diwani, 1999). This led to the creation of geometric designs, arabesques, tessellations, and calligraphic embellishments (El Diwani, 1999).

Patterns are expected, constant, and predictable – all qualities an anxious individual finds soothing. I often surround myself with pattern, as I feel a sense of calm when seeing repetition within the busyness of day-to-day living. It is understandable why I am drawn to creating work that embodies these qualities.

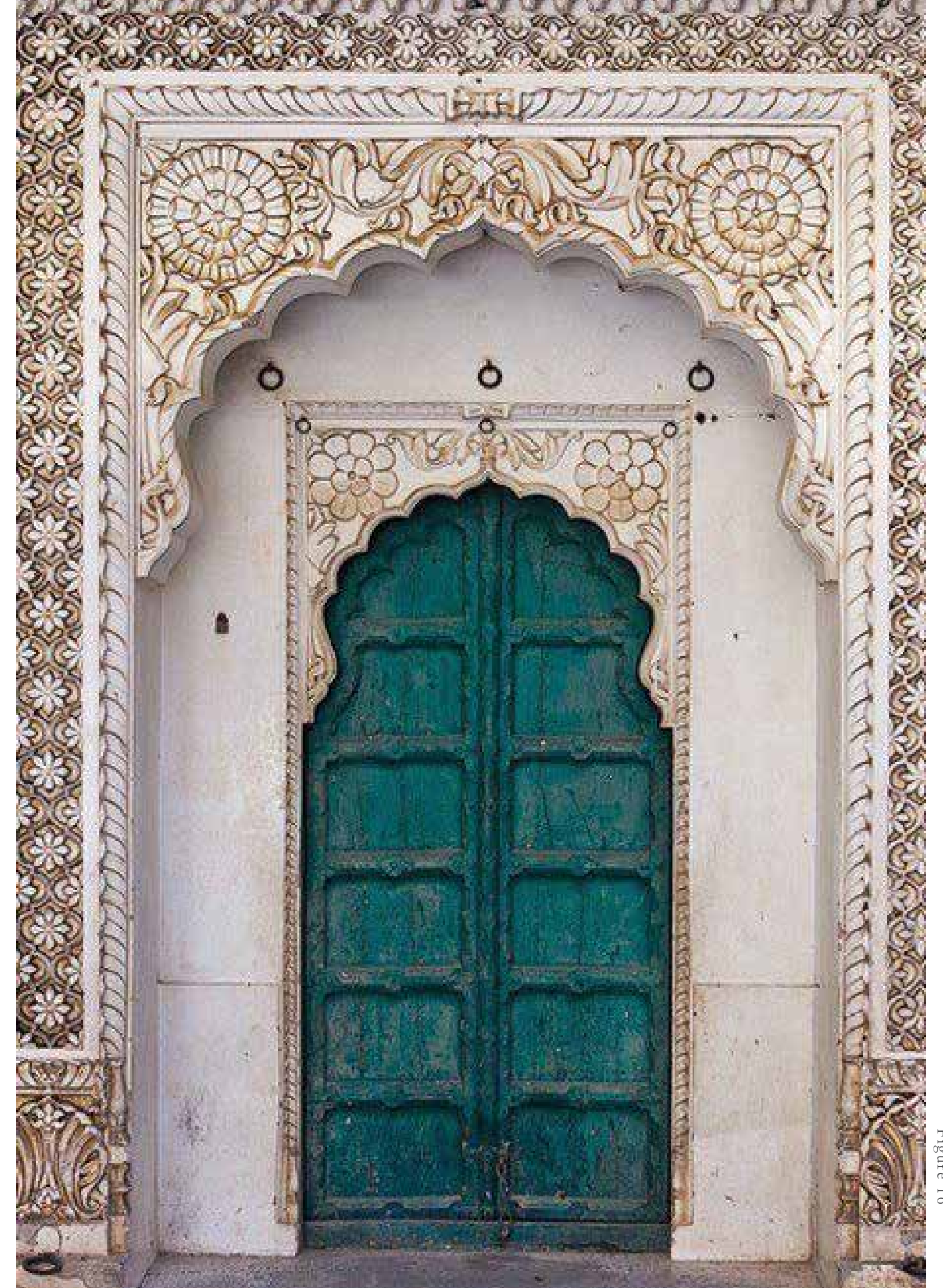


Figure 16



Figure 17

“Art is the imposing of a pattern on experience, and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern.”

- ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

TEXTURE

I enjoy the process of making my own moulds, templates, and mark-making tools. The process of designing and hand carving stamps have played a crucial role within my work. Linoleum block is traditionally used for block printing. However, I find this material perfect for clay stamps. Lino is stiff enough to press into soft slabs, but flexible enough to pull away without ripping the clay. I am able to create a range of large to small, detailed designs using the various attachments on the carving tool. The process of repeatedly carving through this buttery material offers a therapeutic experience. It is satisfying to see and feel the texture these stamps create.



Figure 19

FABRICATION

Within my practice, I use a combination of wheel-throwing and hand-building techniques. Soft slabs are used to make the main elements of a piece, such as the walls a jar or neck of a vase. Rolling out a couple of large sheets, around ¼ inch thick, is usually the first thing I do when I come into studio. To strengthen the slab and minimize cracking, I use a metal rib to compress both sides before letting it set up. Finding the right stiffness can be challenging. The slab should be soft enough to wedge back up again but stiff enough that it will not collapse in on itself. Cracking can result from the slab becoming too dry, as it will fail to stretch when being manipulated.



Figure 20

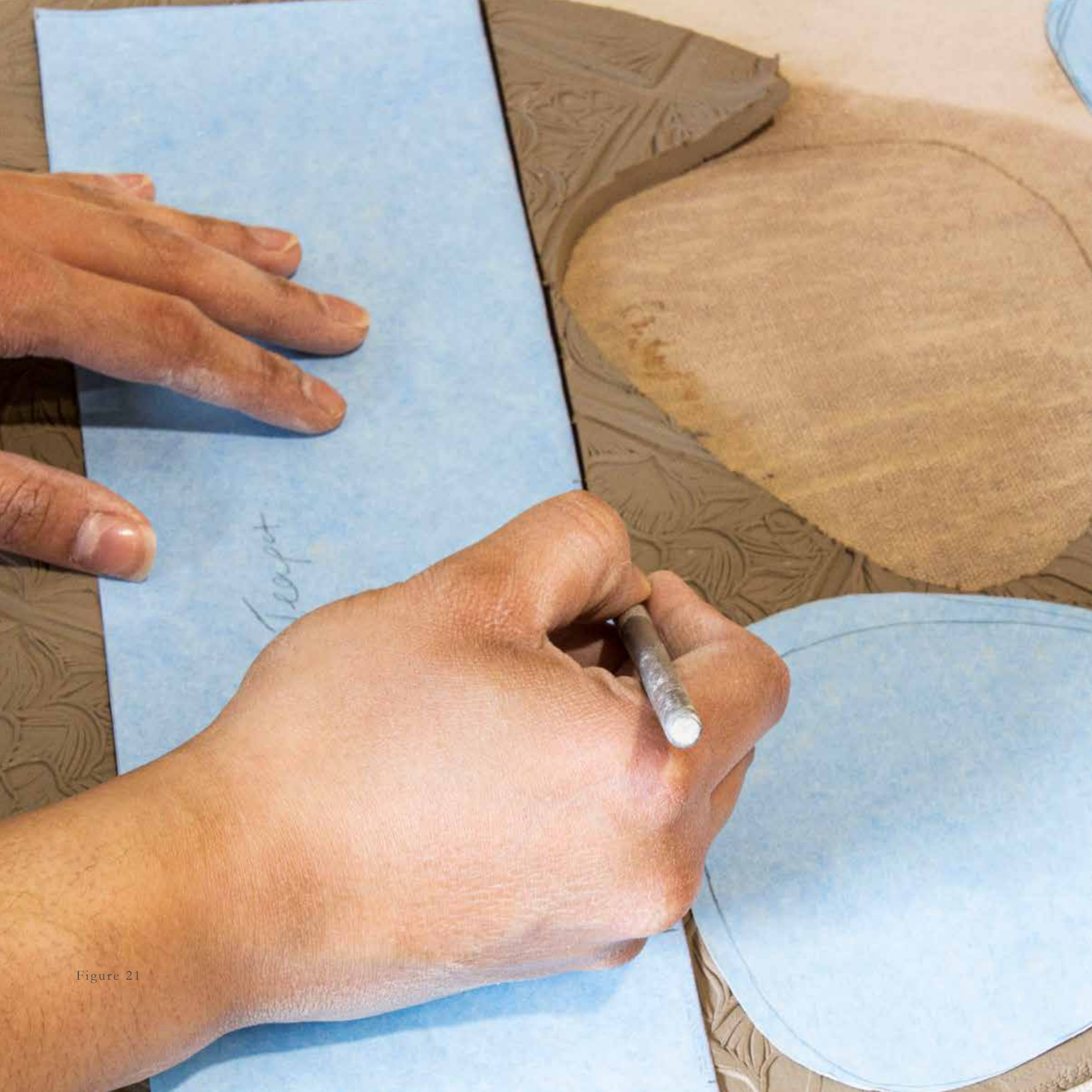


Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 24



Figure 23

Next, I use my handcrafted lino stamps to emboss the surface and cut out various shapes using paper templates. While the slab is still soft, I cut both ends at a 45-degree angle and attach them together to create the initial cylinder form. In order to create intricate forms, I dart the slab walls by taking small triangular sections from the top of the cylinder and bend these two points inwards. Using a ruler, I measure the depth of the cut, making each incision consistent and mark out the number of darting points necessary to construct the desired form.



Figure 25

Subsequently, wheel-thrown parts are added to the slab components to make the base, transition points, and smaller features of a piece. I use a heat gun to quickly dry the wheel-thrown parts to a similar stiffness of the slab components. This is to ensure all of the components dry evenly and minimizes the risk of slumping, warping and cracking. I usually construct the pieces on the wheel-head, so it is easy to move and keep in a circular form.



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

GLAZE

I have always been drawn to an earthy, neutral colour palette. Using modern interior house trends, I gravitate towards whites, creams, sage greens, pastel pinks, and soft yellows. Neutral colours give my work the opportunity to complement a variety of interior spaces. These glazes range from matte to glossy, and are semi-opaque in coverage.



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35

In contrast, some of my work is raku fired, producing a bold, iridescent and glossy finish. From day one, I have always been in love with the process of raku firing. I enjoy the intimate experience of watching the glaze melt, feeling the fire, carrying my pieces from the kiln to the pit and drenching the piece in water.



Figure 36



Figure 37





About

From a young age, Alassandra has always been drawn towards the arts and would frequently find herself dabbling in a diverse array of crafts and hobbies. In the fall of 2019, she attended her first ceramic class at Sheridan College and immediately fell in love with the medium. Alassandra is looking forward to graduating with a Bachelors Degree in Craft and Design, specializing in ceramics and hopes to pursue a career within arts administration. No matter where she goes, Alassandra will always intertwine her love for the arts within her day-to-day life.

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APPENDIX

- Figure 1:** In Studio Shot 1, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 2:** Bloom Vase Series 3 Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 3:** Bloom Vase Series 1 Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 4:** Bloom Vase Series 4, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 5:** Gulnar Flower Dish, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 6:** Iris Flower Mug, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 7:** Saffron Paisley Mug, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 8:** Bloom Jar Series Arrangement 1, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 9:** Bloom Jar Series Arrangement 2, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 10:** Persian Rose Vase (Small), 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 11:** Bloom Series Vase 2, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 12:** The Metropolitan Museum. (1970). *The ‘Nigde’ Carpet* [Photograph]. The Met, New York City, NY, United States. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451367?ft=the+nidge+carpet&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=10>
- Figure 13:** The Royal Ontario Museum. (2019). *Tile with Split-Palmettes and Floral Vines in Cobalt Blue and Turquoise* [Photograph]. The ROM, Toronto, ON, Canada. <https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/397533/tilewith-splitpalmettes-and-floral-vines-in-cobalt-blue-an?ctx=af61e6f1-7440-4765-8d10-190b058ac0c4&id6>
- Figure 14:** The Metropolitan Museum. (n.d.). *Dish* [Photograph]. The Met, New York City, NY, United States. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/444887?deptids=14&what=Ceramics&ao=on&ft=*&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=13
- Figure 15:** The Victoria and Albert Museum. (2009). *Tile* [Photograph]. V&A. London, England. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O279212/tile-unknown/>
- Figure 16:** Scoop Empire. (2023). *Moroccan Door* [Photograph]. Scoop Empire. <https://scoopempire.com/beautiful-doors-middle-east-seem-lead-worlds/>
- Figure 17:** Rosa Dish, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 18:** In Studio Shot 2, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 19:** Mug Arrangement, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 20:** In Studio Shot 3, 2023, *Photography taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 21:** In Studio Shot 4, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 22:** In Studio Shot 5, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 23:** In Studio Shot 6, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 24:** In Studio Shot 7, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 25:** In Studio Shot 8, 2023, *Photograph taken by Tristen Lachapelle*
- Figure 26:** Bloom Vase Series 4, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 27:** Bloom Vase Series 1, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 28:** Bloom Vase Series 3, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 29:** Gulnar Flower Jar (small) Detail, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 30:** Saffron Paisley Jar (small) Detail, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 31:** Bloom Vase Series 1 Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 32:** Persian Rose Mug Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 33:** Paisley Rose Mug Detail, 2022, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 34:** Persian Rose Raku Vase Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 35:** Rose Raku Vase Detail, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 36:** Gulnar Flower Raku Vase, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 37:** Saffron Paisley raku Vase, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 38:** Raku Vase Arrangement, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*
- Figure 39:** Bloom Vase, Mug, and Dish Series Arrangement, 2023, *Photograph taken by Jayden Rojo*

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Figure 39

A. Rojo
Ceramics



2022/2023