

**P
A
R
A
L
L
E
L**



MONICA PROTACIO

2023 Capstone Project Document

To my ADHD,
thank you.



MONICA PROTACIO

2023 Capstone Project Document

Cover Photo: Fig. 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS



05 Acknowledgements

08 Meet the Maker

10 Comprehending

15 Connecting the Dots

17 Translation

18 Articulate



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



21 Playing with Fire

24 Happy Accidents

26 Mindful Moments

31 Cherries on Top

34 Appendix

35 Bibliography





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this space to thank the people who have made it possible for me to learn and thrive as an artist during my time at Sheridan. This capstone project would not have been possible without everyone's support.

Matthew, my life partner and my biggest fan. Your love brightens my life. I am eternally grateful to you... and Libby.

My classmates and studiomates, for the lively banter and the constant reminders to stay hydrated.

Danika, my wonderful therapist, for showing me that I'm capable of being kind and compassionate to myself and others.

Sydni, for your emotional and academic support, "body double" phone calls, and friendship.

To the chefs I worked with before Sheridan, for teaching me the ways of the kitchen more than culinary school ever did.

My professors and teachers, your guidance and feedback helped me find myself within my craft.

My fellow artists and potters, for the infinite pool of inspiration that keeps our community growing

Last but certainly not least, my family.

Thank you all.

M E E T
THE
M
A
K
E
R



Fig. 5

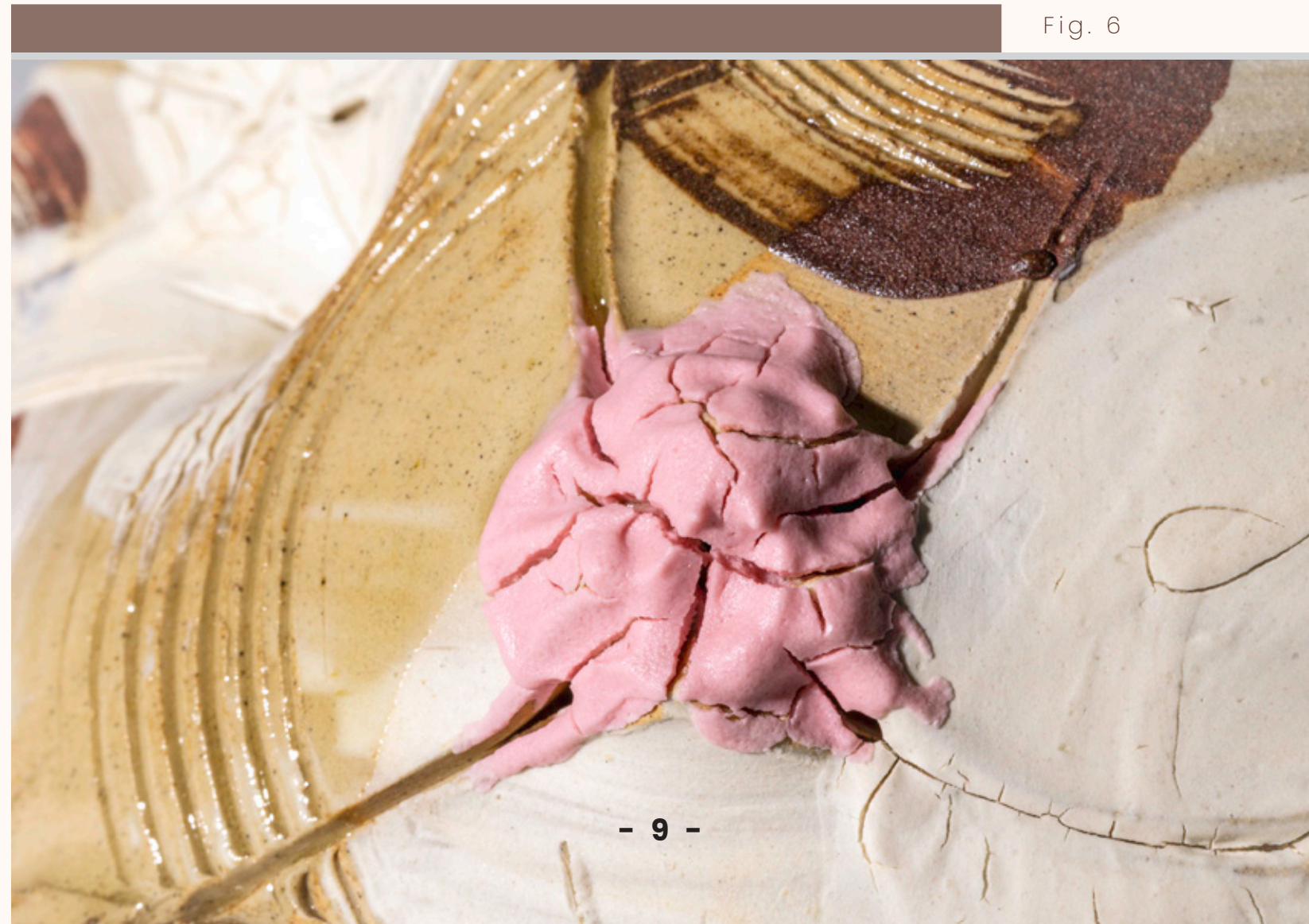
MONICA PROTACIO

Filipino-Canadian, cook, artist, functional potter.



Monica is a Filipino-Canadian artist who specializes in functional ceramics inspired by her neurodivergence.

Fig. 6



COMPREHENDING



Fig. 7

I used to work in hospitality as a cook, server, and barista; the hustle and bustle kept me excited. Forms of art where I can get my hands dirty served as my main outlets of expression where I can feel my most authentic self, like traditional drawing with charcoal and painting with my hands.



When I was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, my constant need for new kinds of stimulation over my formative years started to make sense.

After a few years working in the restaurant industry and doing art as a hobby, I decided to enroll in the Art Fundamentals program at Sheridan. Through that program, I discovered ceramics and it has been integral to my journey to learning more about my ADHD and how it impacts me daily.



Fig. 8





Fig. 9

**Even the common articles
made for daily use become
endowed with beauty when
they are loved.**

— Soetsu Yanagi



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

CONNECTING THE DOTS



My body of work is the result of creating a safe space for my neurodivergence, which I translate in clay. It consists of functional vessels marked by intuitive gestures and spontaneity, with every alteration being analogous to my experiences living with ADHD.

I am greatly influenced by what I consider the main parallel between clay and cooking: the hands-on approach to the processes used to highlight the natural properties of materials and ingredients respectively. Textured surfaces superimposed onto altered forms represent a healthier relationship with my neurodivergence through self-acceptance and compassion.





Fig. 12

TRANSLATION

During my time as a cook, I approached new dishes by looking at my ingredients first. I would consider one as the star ingredient and use everything else to highlight its innate qualities. Realizing the transferable skills I have from cooking, I learned to apply this process in my ceramic practice.

I consider clay as the main ingredient, using inclusions, slips, pigments, glazes as my other ingredients. I am essentially using the elements to transform natural materials into tangible art that highlights their best qualities.

ARTICULATE

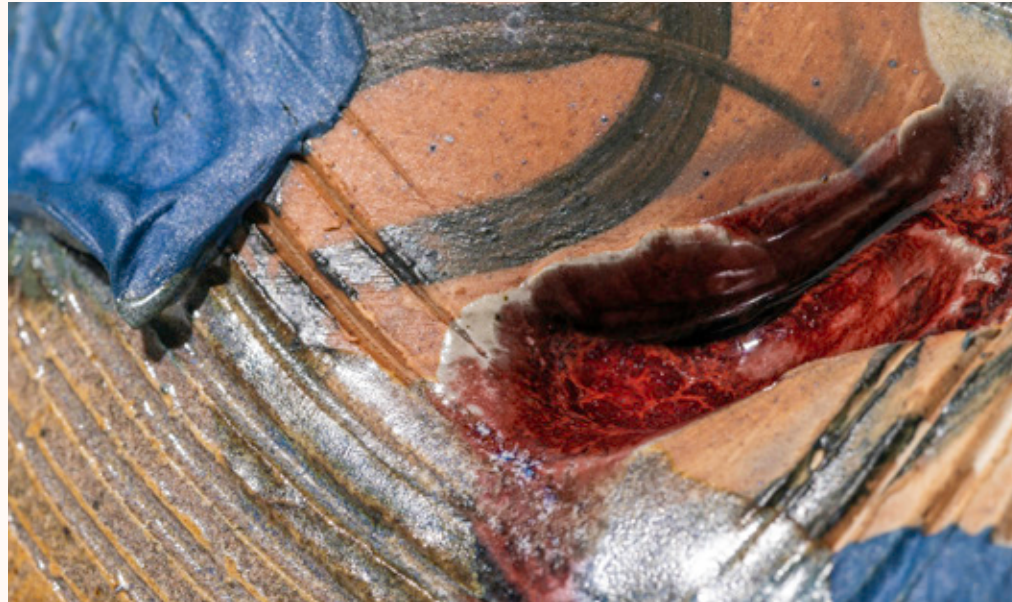


Fig. 13

On the wheel, I start by making perfect forms to create a blank canvas, a space made just for my ADHD to feel welcome, not denied. I use whatever tools are readily available to me; sometimes it's a trimming tool and other times it's a piece of scrap wood I found under my shelf. It reminds me of cooking before a much needed grocery trip. I cook with whatever I have left in my fridge using condiments and spices I have on hand to make something delicious. In both cases, I welcome happy accidents, permitting myself to let go and just go with the flow.

The process of altering the soft forms feels more like a conversation between my hands, the tools, and the clay. Every pinch is an icebreaker, a swift brushstroke of slip is a compliment, and each corner hit is an interjection. Sometimes it feels like my ADHD and the clay are speaking different languages, and my hands help translate their intentions to each other.

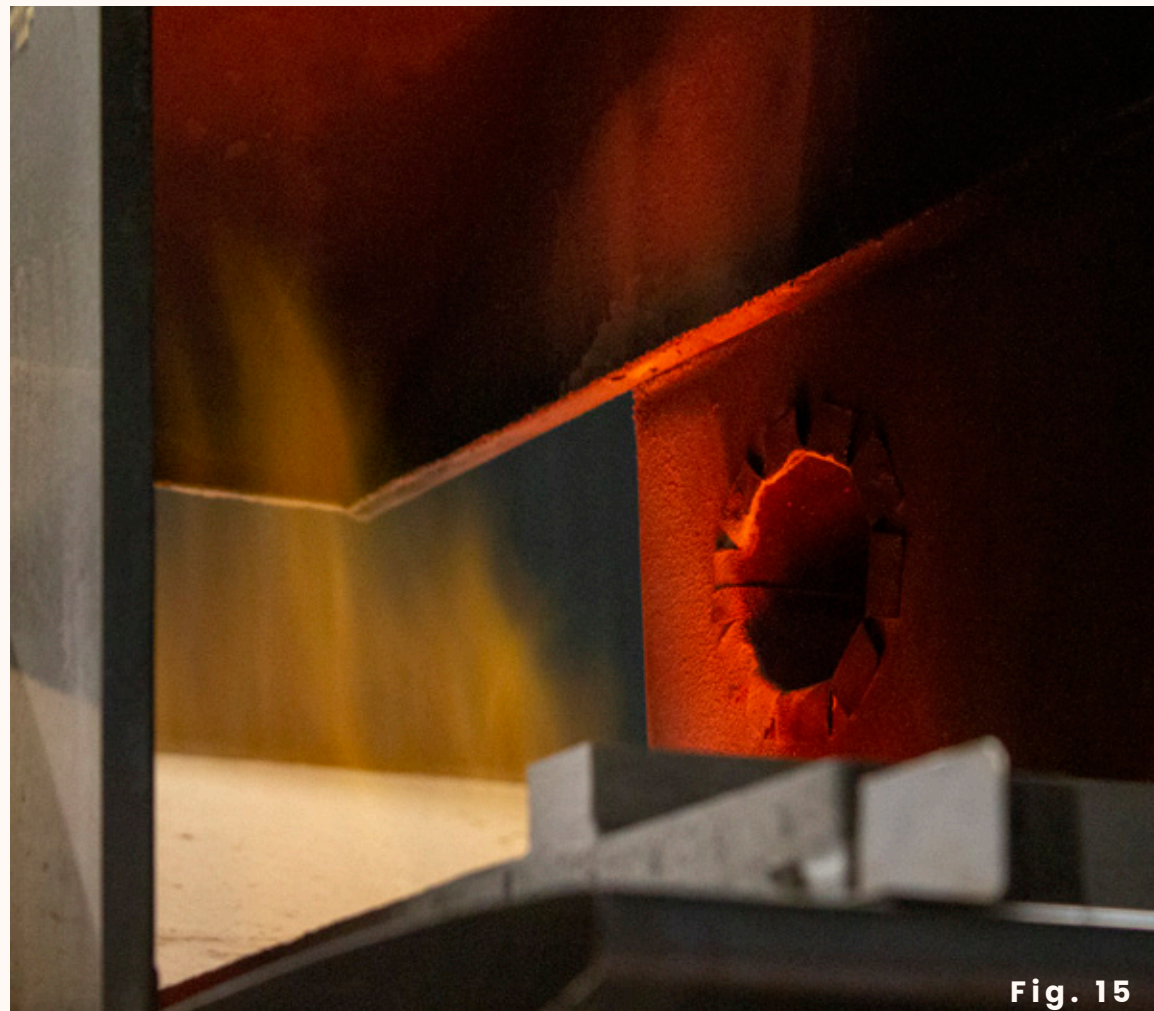
Later on, I thought, why stop the conversation at soft clay? Why not invite unpredictability and serendipity through atmospheric firing?



Fig. 14

I rarely end up in the place I think I'm going because the clay has its own ideas. I like the feeling of being led by the material.

— Jami Porter Lara



PLAYING WITH FIRE

I let the ash, salt, and soda in the kiln contribute to the conversation. Firing in other atmospheres introduced a different language of surfaces that I can utilize. It took me a while to learn this new language; with some help from my peers and instructors, I was fluent enough to have a conversation in the language of atmospheric firing.



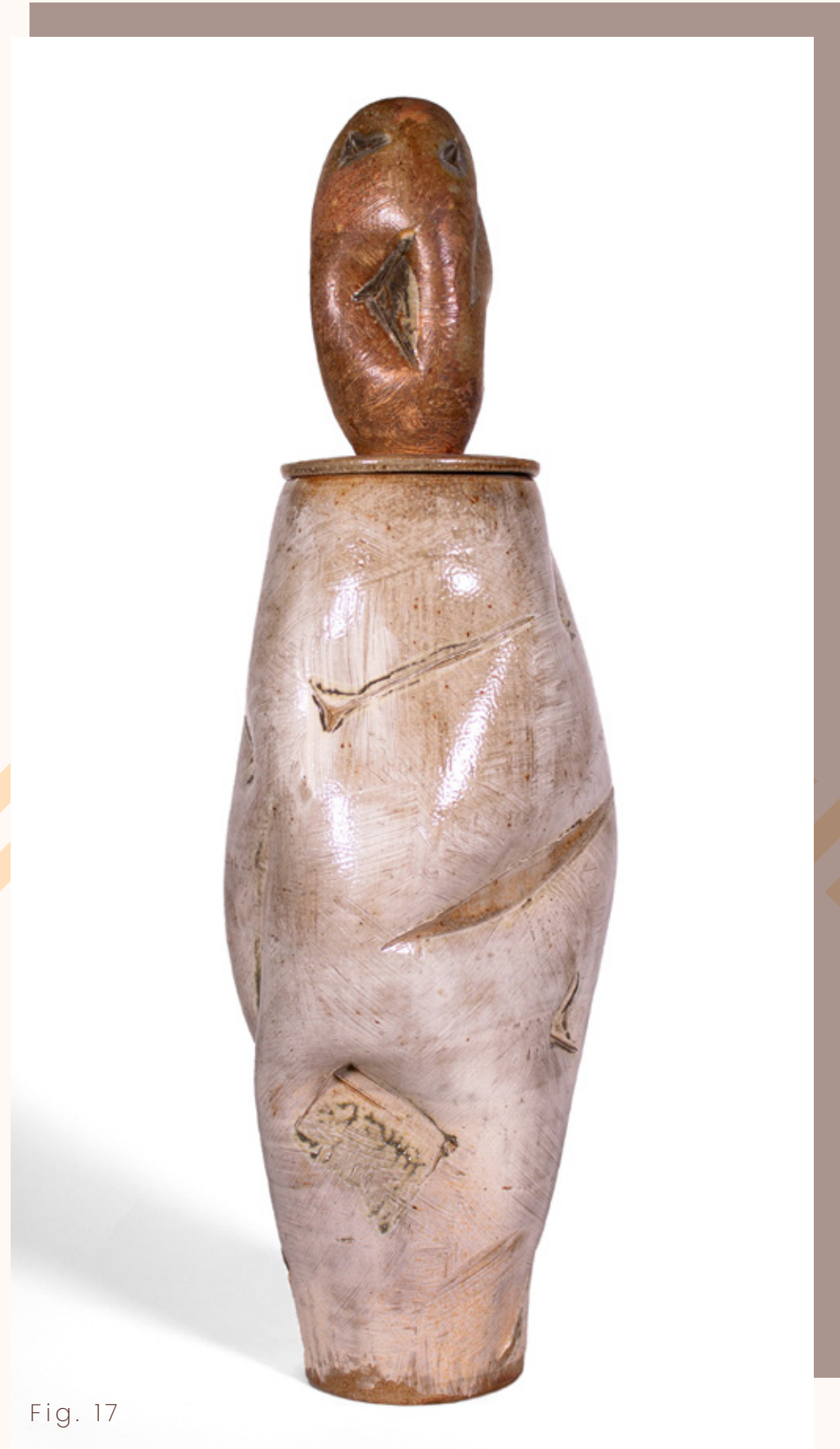


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

Uncertainty led to excitement; this was new, fresh, and unknown. I don't get disappointed when a new dish that I try doesn't work out, it means I get to learn from it and try again.

Unloading the soda kiln felt like Christmas morning. Each pot was kissed by the flames and adorned a soda-glazed surface.

HAPPY ACCIDENTS

Letting the excitement fuel my motivation, I played with different forms, handles, experimental surfaces, and saw how the soda firing interacts with them. I stopped trying to fit into the neurotypical society, instead I'm carving out a shape I know I can fit in, where I feel accepted.



Fig. 19

Various slips and glazes applied to create layered surfaces onto altered forms represent my journey to cultivating a healthier relationship with my neurodivergence.



Fig. 20

MINDFUL



Fig. 21

People with ADHD often experience waves of hyperactivity and inattention. We experience rejection sensitivity and executive dysfunction more frequently during our low points.

MOMENT



With the help of therapy, I've grown to reframe how I cope during the lows. When the excitement of making and firing eventually dies down, I take advantage of my low energy days to reflect on my work and let my body rest. I think about which parts made me happy, when I felt stressed, and most importantly, I acknowledge the progress I have made.



Fig. 22



Retrospectively, I realized why I gravitated towards making functional vessels especially for my capstone project. My therapist lent me a jar shaped like a brain to write thank you notes addressed to my ADHD. After all the progress I've made through therapy and introspection, I've grown to appreciate my neurodivergence so much more that now I need a bigger vessel to contain my gratitude.



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

CHERRIES ON TOP

Since I now have a lot of jars to fill, I'd like to share a few of my gratitude entries dedicated to my ADHD:

Thank you for keeping me curious and always eager to learn something new.

Thank you for making me resourceful when neurotypical society gets harder to navigate.



Fig. 26

Thank you for letting me indulge in my passions and hobbies with childlike wonder. Making ceramics, cooking food, and learning new things all contribute to creating a kinder environment for me and my neurodivergent brain to coexist.



Fig. 27

Without my ADHD, I would not have found the parallels in all my interests that help me comprehend my own self and ultimately the world around me.

APPENDIX

- Fig. 1 Sand, Texture Study. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 2 Happenstance, detail. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 3 Parallel II, detail. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 4 Parallel I, detail. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 5 Artist's Portrait. Photo by Matthew Gleeson
- Fig. 6 Happenstance, detail. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 7 Celadon mug, detail. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 8 Celadon mug, 2022. Reduction-fired stoneware, glaze. 4.2" L x 3.5" W x 5.1" H, Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 9 Buttoned cup, detail. Photo by Luca Papini.
- Fig. 10 Buttoned cup, 2022. Wood-fired stoneware, slip, glaze. 3.75" L x 3.25" W x 5.5" H, Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 11 Sharing Teapot, 2022. Soda-fired stoneware, slips, glaze. 7.5" L x 6" W x 10" H, Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 12 Parallel II, detail. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 13 Gratitude Moon Jar, detail. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 14 Gratitude Moon Jar, 2022 Stoneware, slips, glazes. 8.5" L x 8.25" W x 11.5" H. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 15 Reduction flames. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 16 Spraying Soda. Photo by Mallory Gresch
- Fig. 17 Spraying Soda 2. Photo by Mallory Gresch
- Fig. 18 Ambient, 2022. Salt-fired stoneware, slip, glaze. 6" L x 6.25" W x 21" H. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 19 Grog, Texture Study. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 20 Hands-On, 2023 Soda-fired porcelain, slips, glazes. 6.5" L x 6.5" W x 22" H. Photo by Monica Protacio

- Fig. 21 Dry Clay, Texture Study. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 22 Round Vase, detail. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 23 Happenstance, 2022. Stoneware, slips, glazes. 7.25" L x 7.75" W x 14.25" H. Photo by Luca Papini
- Fig. 24 Parallel I, detail. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 25 Parallel II, 2023. Soda-fired stoneware, slip, glaze. 7.8" L x 7.4" W x 27" H. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 26 Parallel I, 2023. Soda-fired stoneware, slip, glaze. 7.8" L x 7.4" W x 27" H. Photo by Monica Protacio
- Fig. 27 Ribbed cup, 2023. Soda-fired porcelain, glaze. 4.5" L x 4.3" W x 4.9" H. Photo by Monica Protacio

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hopper, Robin. "Making Marks: Discovering the Ceramic Surface." Krause Publications, 2004.
- Koren, Leonard. "Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers." Imperfect Publishing, 2008.
- Protacio, Monica. Personal therapy notes. 2022. Oakville, ON
- Turner, Anderson. "Surface Decoration Techniques." The American Ceramic Society, 2014.
- Yanagi, Soetsu. "Beauty of Everyday Things." Penguin Classics. 2019, Japan.
- Lesser, Casey. "Artists Shaping the Future of Ceramics." *Artsy*, 22 Feb. 2017, <http://artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-20-artists-shaping-future-ceramics>.





MONICA PROTACIO
2023

