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JOMON POTTERY: INFLUENCE, STYLE, TECHNIQUE

by

Zachary Cervenka

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

Andrew Casto
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2019

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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JOMON POTTERY: INFLUENCE, STYLE, TECHNIQUE
ZACHARY CERVENKA
SPRING 2019
ANDREW CASTO
SCHOOL OF ART AND ART HISTORY

I have been researching Japanese art and culture for most of my college career, studying it for classes, papers, and presentation. The purpose of this honors project was to further explore the creation of ceramic objects and its unique position in the larger sphere of Japanese culture, art, and art history by immersing myself in its origins, Jomon pottery, by learning from and trying to recreate this traditional ceramic process.

From Junko Habu's *Ancient Jomon of Japan* and Jonathan Kidder Jr's *The Jomon pottery of Japan*, I found that the forms of the earliest examples of Jomon ceramic ware are comparable in shape to objects found in Korea during the same time period. This suggests an early interaction between these two early cultures. Creating perfect reproductions or replications of specific Jomon objects was not my aim. Thus, for this project I stepped away from the wheel, and investigated the process of coil and pinch building that would have been used throughout the Jomon era. This involved building the shape of the vessel over several hours, layer by layer, in contrast to the immediacy of throwing on the wheel. I used three different clay bodies for this project: a modern stoneware, earthenware, and black clay body mix that is analogous with clay found in Japan. I found it difficult to achieve larger forms with the red, and black mix compared to the modern clay body as the objects would collapse while wet. This leads me to believe that, though similar, there are additional ingredients that are present in the clay body from Japan that are important to structural integrity that have not been accounted for by the recipe that I used. I used the plates, photos, and illustrations from *Ancient Jomon of Japan* and *The Jomon pottery of Japan* to guide the style of decoration using different types of cord and strings, hatch marks with woodens tool, and coils of clay. I created several objects that followed the ornamentation of a specific region, picking and choosing aesthetic elements from that region I found to be interesting. I pit fired the objects to achieve a traditionally accurate coloration.

I was fascinated with experiencing the ceramic process from the perspective of people from so long ago. From hand mixing the clay to having to slowly build up each object I felt myself being transported back in time. I found carving into the coils of the red, and black mixes to be particularly fascinating as it allowed me to dig deeper into the object creating a greater play of texture and a wider range in shifts of color. Though I have discovered several mark making techniques that I find myself incorporating into my practice, I find myself more interested in researching Jomon objects rather than recreating them. I find myself in a better position to engage with the Japanese art history community, while having a better understanding of the art world around me.