



The Great Ceramicist Throw Down

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Fifth Grade

High Tech Elementary Mesa

Our fifth grade artists learned from and were inspired by local San Diego ceramicists to create multiple pieces of claywork representing a diverse range of cultures and styles. They competed for the title of “Ceramicist of the Year” while learning how to form three dimensional pieces with a variety of techniques such as pinching, coiling, slab rolling, and pottery wheel throwing. They created all sorts of pieces like pots, bowls, cups, plates, figurines, statues, and wall art. They learned clay wedging and testing, glazing, loading and unloading the kiln. The artists worked very hard to craft their masterpieces and were able to showcase the fruit of their labor at an exhibition in a studio space in downtown San Diego. Students, loved ones, community members, and our artist experts were all in attendance to celebrate their amazing accomplishments and recognize the six appointed ceramicists of the year.

Teacher Reflection

I learned how powerful it was to have professional artists come in and visit to demonstrate various clay forming skills. It made the project very special for our artists. I honestly could have taught the students most of the skills the visiting artists shared but it wouldn't have been as cool and powerful coming from me because they're too used to working with me. I found joy in taking the back seat in the classroom so the students could be wowed and inspired by new people. They got to see, hold, and feel their ceramic work and see their strong presence online and in the art world. If I could change anything in the next iteration it would be to have the expert artists come in and work with the artists for more than one visit. It could have been even more impactful to have that direct feedback from the original demonstrators of the skills that they were implementing.

—*Gabrielle DuThinh Clark*

Student Reflection

I loved the project because we got to have fun with clay and learn a new form of art. I enjoyed using the pottery wheel to make different shapes and see how you can manipulate it with cool methods. Learning from an expert artist felt reassuring in the sense of “you know what he/she is doing” and is an expert. It felt powerful in a way being able to learn from a person who has done this many times to help you do your best. My experience overall was phenomenal, I would love to do the project/work with clay again as it was so fun. The finished product is something you can always remember and is more than just a ceramic item, you know the journey it took to get finished.

—*Hiroto T*

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