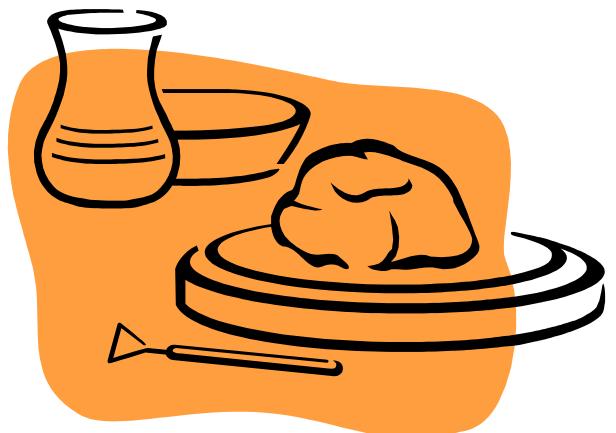


# Colorado State University

## Guide for 4-H Ceramic Judges



## Tips For Judging Ceramics

- Read the general rules and regulations from the county fair book. If you do not receive a copy with other fair information request one to be sent to you. Inquire how the fair wants ribbons and placing awards. If you have any questions, ask the Ceramic Superintendent or County 4-H Agent to clarify them for you.
- Arrive early, walk around, and look at the entire exhibit to analyze the quality of the work representing this particular exhibit. This analysis should tell you what level the majority of entrants are working at and it will help you in judging.
- Remember, the main purpose of your evaluation in the 4-H competitive exhibits is to encourage competitive spirit and help with the education in this area. Age must be considered when you are evaluation exhibits. An 8-11 year old will not in most cases, be able to do as high a quality of work than a member age 12 and up.

However, you do have some that are the exception to the rule. Where you are judging open or closed type of fairs, you must give that child the benefit of the doubt and judge accordingly.

- When you are giving statements of evaluation, always start off with a complimentary remark,

then constructive criticism and then end with another complimentary remark with a little encouragement for next years entry.

- The comment area of the score sheets should also be utilized when you are using the interview method of judging. This will help the member to improve on skills for the next year by reviewing your comments. Again, put in some of those complementary remarks for encouragement.



# Ceramics Judging

## **Exhibit Requirements:**

Units 1-4:

- a. Complete two learning projects
- b. Complete one or more projects for exhibit consideration
- c. Include before and after pictures of projects that are altered in design
- d. Completed e-Record
- e. Three technique sheets listing three new skills learned.

Units 5 and 6:

- a. Complete one project
- b. Three technique sheets listing three new skills learned
- c. Completed e-record

## **Standards for Evaluation**

### **Unit 1 Glazes**

1. Crackle Glaze should have an even network of crazes and you should not see any evidence of fingerprints, caused sometimes by handling the bisque or the raw glaze before firing.

Semi-transparent and semi-opaque glazes are best used on highly detailed pieces. One can experience great difficulty completing a plain piece with a smooth appearance.

2. Satin Matte and Texture Glazes will show brush strokes if these types of glazes are not applied evenly. A nice texture can be accomplished by using a sponge. Texture must be even.
3. Signs of an overglazed piece can be detected by turning the piece back and forth in a good light. Even though the glaze feels very smooth, tiny blisters will appear under the finish.

4. Stilt marks will be prominent even if stilt marks have been smoothed. Also, refer to pg. 14 and problem 14.
5. Glazes containing a high level of lead, i.e., crackle glaze and textural glaze, are not suitable for pieces, which will be used as food containers.

### **Unit 2 Underglazes**

1. Translucent underglazes are usually used for brush stroke design work. The design should be well balanced as well as good color combination. The age of the child is a big factor and should be considered in your evaluation.
2. Opaque underglaze color should be even in color, showing no streaks and the application should be smooth, without ripples. If a sponge was used, the texture must be even.

### **Unit 3 Overglazes**

1. Mother of Pearls should be bright with a variegation of colors. Brush strokes should not be visible from over working the luster.
2. Decals will have a (blow out) or loss of the design if air or water is left under the design. Decals are not recommended for dinnerware pieces.
3. Brush strokes should be complimentary to the design work.

4. You should not see brush strokes and judge similar to opaque underglazes.

## **Unit 4**    **Unfired Finishes**

1. Unfired finishes are designed for decorative items only.
2. Shadowing and highlighting should have a very natural look and have no brush strokes unless it is intended for design work.
3. The base coat should show bright and clear through the antiquing. There should not be any brush strokes evident on the base coat unless it is intended for design work.
4. The base coat should be smooth under the stenciled design. The design must be sharp not fuzzy.

## **Judging Dolls**

### **Unit 5**    **Porcelain Dolls**

#### **Cleaning and Jointing**

#### **Seams**

Seam lines should have no "trench" look and you should not be able to feel seam lines with your fingers.

#### **Pinholes**

All pinholes should have been repaired. In order to check for pinholes, it may be necessary to push up sleeves or raise a skirt.

#### **Finger Separation**

Fingers should be examined carefully to judge whether or not they should be separated. Some antique reproduction dolls have a

definite finger separation while others do not. This is why it is important that a judge be knowledgeable in all kinds of dolls.

#### **Proper Sockets**

Examine the doll carefully. Have the sockets in the body been cut so large that the arms and legs are only held together by the elastic? Openings that are too small are just as bad as those that are too large. Either way, the fit will be all wrong.

#### **HEAD and BODY**

#### **Eyes, Glass, Fitting of Eye**

Are both eye sockets cut the same size? Has the thickness of the clay

been beveled around the eye sockets? Do the glass eyes fit snug without the plaster showing? Are they of a size that is appropriate to the head? In reproduction dolls the eyes should be as near to the original as possible. Googlies and other such dolls have overly large eyes and a good judge should be able to recognize if the eyes are appropriate for the specific reproduction being judged.

### **Eyes, Painted, Application of Color**

Color should be good; not uneven. This holds true for all types of dolls. Is the highlight in the right position? Is the iris round or square? Some reproduction dolls have a very thin application. A judge should be able to know what is proper.

### **SHAPE AND SIZE TO HEAD**

Eyes should look natural and be in proportion to the total face. Exceptions are googlies and other large eyed dolls. Learn to recognize the different antique dolls and the eye shape required for authenticity.

### **Eyebrows, Application of Color**

The color should be even and appropriate for the doll, i.e., a toddler doll would not have very dark, heavy eyebrows. The eyebrows on antique reproduction dolls should have clearly defined brush strokes. Know what to look for by studying antique dolls and doll books.

Information from N.C.A.E.F. and I.C.A. Judges Manual.

## **Unit 6 Hand Construction with Stoneware**

1. The hand-modeled piece should show originality both in form and finish. Technique sheet should reflect continuity.
2. Raku has drawn much interest among the 4-H young people lately. It has been updated and "refined" by Paul Soldner (and others) in the 1960's to suit American tastes. This updating includes the use of metallic and iridescent glazes and blackening of the clay body through heavy reduction after the piece has been removed from the kiln. Although the glazing and reduction are in marked contrast to the austerity and simplicity of the Japanese form, the American style of Raku is an exciting, fast, gratifying form of artistic expression not equaled by any other form of ceramic experience.

Raku has many forms and styles, as does any other pottery discipline. From refined thrown, carved and detailed pieces with complicated glaze, themes to simple hand-built coiled or slab constructed pots, Raku gives a completely new set of standards to judge by.

What would be considered a flaw in a stoneware pot may be a highlight in a Raku pot. This does not mean that sloppy construction or a bad glaze is to be rewarded. Bad is bad, but do not discount a bubble in the glaze, or even a crack in the piece itself as long as all of the happy accidents are eye appealing.

3. Pieces from slab, pinch, coil and thrown, should not be any thicker than  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Thickness should be

uniform throughout the piece. The form should not be tilted or lopsided unless it is in the design, which should be balanced, and eye appealing. Technique sheet should reflect continuity. Hand formed flowers should be pedal thin and edges be smooth and rounded.



## Technique of Judging Ceramics

There is a notable difference between a good and a poor judge of ceramics. This difference is in the extent of involvement in ceramics and the creative process of art. As a judge, you should always be learning and seeking more knowledge. Learn to observe color, line and texture in all areas of life.

Make sure you understand the art principles of design, balance, and color. Ask questions about ALL ceramic products, not just the ones you use. Learn techniques—attend as many seminars and classes as possible. Judging, like life, is a decision-making process. These decisions cannot be made unless the judge is knowledgeable. As a judge, you must make many decisions. These decisions

should not be made lightly, but should be given much thought.

As the ceramics judge, you will need to be familiar with the following items: design, appropriate for function, proportion of design to the piece, balance of design, color, relation to design, originality, addition to design decal or pattern, greenware adaptation, interpretation of design or pattern, use of color, unique use of normal, function of a piece, workmanship, casting, clean-up and construction, perfection of technique, proper media, firing and degree of difficulty and learn what function they have in judging a ceramic piece.

### Design

Designing is the act of arranging things to create a single eye-pleasing effect. Your first step in designing is to train your eyes to see form. It is the framework of your design. Form can create or suggest whether visual or actual material and it always occupies space. This occupied space is known as positive space while unoccupied (empty) space is known as negative space.

Learning to arrange these spaces is the basis of good design. This technique is called space breaking. There are many ways to break space and the tools we have to work with are known as design elements---space, shape, form, line, color, value, and texture. How we use these elements determines the quality of the design. To combine these elements we are given additional tools to work with. These tools are known as design principles---balance, dominance, repetition, movement, contrast, unity, and variety.

The trick in designing is to look not only at the shapes, but at the background area. Keep in mind that you need

restful negative areas. Textural qualities provide a vital element to design and should never be ignored. Actual texture is that which can be sensed by touch, while visual texture is perceived by our eyes. Movement in design is the path that our eyes follow as we look at it. If a definite center or interest is not established, our eyes become tired and move aimlessly about. You must create a path for the eyes to follow. Dullness in a design can be avoided by using variety—a change of color or a texture, a change of a line or a shape, etc.

The design principle of dominance should be maintained throughout the design. One color, one line, one shape, etc., should be emphasized so that it dominates. This can be more easily done by repetition of shape, color, line, value or texture. The repetition of some of these elements within a design tends to hold the over all design together and gives it unity.

### Appropriate For Function

Was the ceramic piece designed or adapted to perform some duty? If so,

what? Did the artist intend for the piece to serve as a utility item or just for decorative purposes?

Two examples:

A plate with a snow scene done in a textured glaze.

A bowl, heavily textured on the outside.

If either plate or the bowl was intended for food use, then neither would be functional. However, if the plate was for decorative purposes only, and the bowl was adapted to be a planter, then both are functional. **Good judgment should rule here, as many things have multiple purposes.**

One should consider the weight of the piece, the proper choice of clay for the purpose intended and the thickness of the walls, whether hand built, cast or wheel thrown.

Utility items such as ashtrays or food and beverage containers should have no unfired media or specialty glazes (crackle, textural, etc.) on them. A pitcher with a poor pouring spout would not be functional. If the spout problem was due to poor design, then points would be subtracted here. However, if due to the cleaning of the ware, then points would be deleted under workmanship. If the piece has decoration, it should be appropriate. For example:

Applied decoration, such as dimensional flower, would not be appropriate on an item used to serve food, as food particles would be hard, if not impossible to wash out. Decoration must fit the function of the piece.

## Proportion of Design to the Piece

Is the design/pattern either too large or too small for the piece? A design too small may appear to be lost, while a design too large may overpower the piece or appear to be squeezed. The size of the design should be in proportion to the size of the piece. Each kind of space has its own requirements. Three-dimensional shapes (vases, cylinders, boxes, etc.) must be treated differently than two-dimensional shapes (plates,

plaques, tiles, etc.) as only one part of the form is visible at one time. However, all parts must relate to each other.

Geometric shapes such as a circle would require a different treatment of the design than a square or a rectangle. Every design must fit the space it occupies and relate to the total form. This can only be accomplished by analyzing the lines and shape of the ceramic ware. Study the shape. Let your eyes be the judge.

## Balance of Design

Does the design create a sense of equilibrium by the arrangement of the design element? If not, why? Listed below are the three basic types of balance:

1. Symmetrical balance (formal) means the weight of the design elements are distributed equally from a centerline. Example: the human body, a butterfly.
2. Asymmetrical balance (informal) means a centerline or point is ignored and the design elements are balanced visually though not in an identical fashion. This is the less peaceful, but more interesting and is more commonly used in design.
3. Axial balance (radiation) means that lines radiated from a common axis. Example: the rays of the sun, petals of a flower.

In design, when balance is ignored, a work of art may be unpleasantly one-sized or without coherence unless somehow compensated for through the use of color and good proportionate areas. You can balance a small area against a larger area by contrast. Listed below are three ways to achieve contrast in design.

1. Contrast of color--hue, value or intensity.
2. Contrast of texture—smooth, rough, matt, glossy.

### 3. Contrast of shape—round, square, large, small.

Balance of design applies to the ceramic ware as well as to the actual decoration. No amount of good decoration can save a poorly designed piece. With the large selection of greenware that is available today, no hobbyist or professional has an excuse to enter a piece that has not been cast well or that is lopsided, distorted, or in general, seems out of balance. This applies not only to cast ware, but to hand built, wheel-thrown and greenware combinations.

When judging the form of the ware, look for a good relationship between the several proportions that make up the form. In other words, the length, height, depth and shape should have good balance.

## Color

All color theory is based on the principle that color is a visual sensation created by the wavelength of light rays. In the rainbow, we see an array of colors known as a spectrum caused by the reflections of the light rays from the sun. The color wheel is an enclosed circle of the spectrum. The strongest colors noted in the spectrum are red, blue, and yellow. These colors are called primary colors. The primary color system is the most widely accepted method of applying color theory to painting.

## Value of Color

Does the piece have a good dark and light balance? If not, is there too little or too much contrast? Have the color values been used to the best advantage? One of the best ways to study light and dark structure is to look at black and white photography. In art, one should always determine the lightest and darkest values and paint within this range. If this procedure is followed, you will never have a work of art that is either too dark or too light.

You cannot use color without considering values. Use our tints and shades to their fullest advantage. When

modified, they should be made into distinct colors.

### Example:

a red with white added may have a pale chalky look, yet a red with just enough white added could be a crisp pink.

A red with blue added may have just a bluish cast, yet a red with just enough blue could create a lovely violet.

## Intensity of Color

Is there good contrast between the bright and dull colors? If two colors are of the same value yet differ in brightness, this difference is intensity. The color of less intensity will seem dull or graying even when mixed with white to lighten it. The color of higher intensity, even though it may be darker, will still be brighter. Small areas of bright intense colors will balance large areas of less intense dull colors.

In judging scenes, ask yourself does it have good color perspective? You may find that the artist followed all the rules on linear perspective yet his/her work lacks depth. The reason for this is that colors change according to distance and atmospheric conditions. The more intense the color, the closer it will seem in distance and the less intense the color, the further away.

Atmospheric conditions, such as a sunny day or a cloudy day, affect how you see color visually. On a cloudy day, all colors become grayish unless there is enough light to see color.

### Example:

A winter scene on a cloudy day—a grayish blue would make the snow seem icier, yet if the sun would break through the clouds, the snow would have a yellow tint.

## Color Harmony

Color harmony is a pleasing arrangement of colors that work well together. The success of any color

scheme is in the relationship of the colors, not the color itself. Choosing colors that go well together is simply a matter of knowing colors and color principles. The most important consideration of color in design is that amount and placement of the color. When these two rules are observed, every color works well with every other color---they are truly democratic.

When considering the "amount" of color, a good rule is to avoid equal areas of color. In "placement" of color, remember that each color is influenced by the color next to it. A good rule to follow is that colors should never demand equal attention.

The color wheel is the tool used to select harmonious hues to work with. Several methods can be employed to combine colors, but the three most successful ways are:

Monochromatic Scheme,  
Example: dark greens to light greens. A monochromatic scheme is restful, attractive, and possesses simplicity.

Related Scheme, Example: yellow green, green, blue green. Related scheme is restful, subtle and is always harmonious.

Complementary Scheme,  
Example: green and red. Complementary scheme is interesting, lively and vibrant and offers the greatest degree of contrast.

## Relation to Design

Does the color enrich the design? If not, why? Does it overpower or detract from the design? Color is the life of ceramics and deserves time and thought in selection. Almost any design can be ruined with a gaudy or poorly executed color scheme. As a judge, you must decide it is a good color scheme and if it is effective. To be effective, it should relate to the design, playing down the

bad points and emphasizing the good ones—study the design. An artist should not select colors because they are forced on him/her by subject matter, but because they add interest and life to the design.

As a judge it is very important not to let personal color preferences influence your decisions as you judge.

## Originality

To imagine is to create, but we cannot create from nothing so our minds modify existing forms and images that we are familiar with. Originality in design is really a product of the artist's inventive talent. It is the personal vision of the artist that makes a design different.

In judging originality, one should look for the unique way the artist has combined and defined his work or art. Remember, you are not judging workmanship, design or color here, but only as they relate to originality as defined above.

## Addition to Design, Decal or Pattern

Addition to anything is when you have added to it. The question is whether the addition is to the betterment of the design. Addition to design may be done by repeating a section of the same design, by combining several decals or patterns to make one design, by adding background color such as china painting around a decal, adding texture to a design, etc. It is not whether you add one or several additions to the existing design, but that the addition adds a new vital interest.

## Greenware Adaptation

Adaptation is the process of changing the look, function or decorative quality of a piece through addition or subtraction from the original piece. Do not confuse greenware adaptation with greenware combinations, as this is only one-way, that greenware can be changed. When

judging adaptation, remember that you are looking for the unusual way that this has been accomplished. The change should add beauty and strength to the existing form or design.

### **Interpretation of Design or Pattern**

Interpretation of design is the rendering of a work of art so as to bring out the meaning or to indicate one's particular conception of it. Every artist has a unique style of his or her own and in time can be recognized by this style. It is this style that is brought into play when the artist gives his/her interpretation to a design or a pattern.

It is your duty, as a judge, to decide whether the artist has given an original interpretation to his/her design or pattern.

### **Use of Color**

Color can excite and move one to create beautiful and unusual color effects. It is a powerful tool to enrich a design. It is the unique way the artist has used color to create a fresh new approaches to his/her design. Remember, we are judging color here only as it applies to originality.

### **Unique Use of Normal Function of a Piece**

When the normal function of a piece has been changed, the judge must decide if the newfound use is indeed unique. Has it been well thought out? Some changes are so minor, such as slots to enable a figurine to become a cardholder, or holes to change a teddy bear to a tooth brush holder, etc., that they only change the function, but do nothing toward creating a new original idea.

### **Workmanship**

Workmanship covers five very important phases of ceramics---casting and clean

up; firing; product knowledge; perfection and difficulty of technique. In judging, it is here that most points will be subtracted. No amount of decoration can save a poorly cast or constructed piece. It is the responsibility of the artist to start with a good piece of greenware, whether he/she actually made the piece or purchased it. Do not hesitate to subtract points for a piece that is poorly designed, lopsided, too heavy or distorted in any way. As a judge, workmanship should be your first consideration.

### **Casting, Clean-Up and Construction**

A well cast piece is a must—no distortion, no rings, no runs or drips or slip and not too heavy for the purpose intended. Boxes and lids should be of even thickness. In clean up, the seam lines should have no trench look and all pinholes, etc., should have been repaired. No debris or bumps should be inside the piece. All hand-built or wheel thrown pieces should be of uniform thickness and well constructed. All mending and joining should be undetectable. Careful attention should be given that all lids and covers fit boxes, jars, canister, etc. Cups, pitchers, etc., should sit level and should have smooth lips and pouring spouts. Examine the ware carefully.

### **Perfection of Technique**

Perfection of technique covers many, many aspects of ceramic decoration. Decoration should not be confused with design, as it is only a part of the design. The purpose of decoration is to add beauty and interest. One shape may suggest an area for decoration and another may be complete in itself, and need no decoration.

To judge you must be knowledgeable in as many techniques as possible. Do not forget the art knowledge that is needed for many of these techniques. You should be knowledgeable in perspective

drawing and painting of features, drawing of animals, etc. If a street scene has poor perspective, points would be subtracted.

## Proper Media

Get into the habit of reading the labels on the bottles of various manufacturer's products. You will be surprised at the knowledge you can gain from them. This includes gold, luster, decals, unfired medias, glazes, underglazes, etc. Know the proper application for various products. If glazes or underglazes have thin spots or streaks, if a matt glaze shows uneven brush marks, if gold has a poor color or appears purplish—then points would be subtracted. Remember it is the media and how it is used that is judged here.

## Firing

Regardless of how much skill goes into the creation of a piece, if it is not fired properly everything is lost. Firing ceramic ware to the bisque stage is relatively easy. The main purpose of this firing is to harden the ware and to drive out any moisture and gases remaining in it. Glaze firing requires that the ware be stilted and these sharp stilt marks must be removed after firing. There should be no glaze runs or drips on the piece. Many glaze defects may occur in firing. A good judge must be aware of such defects and be able to recognize them. One should be knowledgeable in the firing of porcelain, stoneware, and overglazes, as they have different firing requirements.

## Degree of Difficulty

There are many techniques that present a greater risk of failure to the artist, due to the degree of difficulty in executing them. Several examples: controlled glazing is more difficult to achieve than just applying one glaze to a piece. Piece (fretwork) a piece that has worked in which most of the clay body has been removed is more difficult than a piece

with one area removed. The more times a piece is fired, the greater the risk. As a judge, you must be knowledgeable so that you will have an understanding of the risk that each artist takes and appreciate the difficulty that was involved.

(information from N.C.A.E.F. and I.C.A. Judges manual)