

buttons: quotidian sculpture

Project Statement

images

1. How this concept connects to the idea of ***Crafting your everyday life***.

This project came out of the convergence of several interests. I planned this project with an awareness of the limited time remaining in the year, and the promise of life post-Reed. Personal craft projects are among the many things I have set aside in the final stretch of my time here, and one of the things I am most excited to be able to return to. As such, I wanted to pick a ceramic form that could have a life as a part of continuing projects post-grad.

I settled on buttons for a number of reasons. First, they have the potential to exist as a part of any number of future projects, either my own or those of any number of friends of mine with crafts of their own. Gifting is a component to this project as well, which I like to think of as a means to collaborate across a distance. Second, buttons offer the opportunity to experiment more freely with glaze combinations. And finally, I find buttons conceptually rich, evoking familial tenderness, comfort, and the kind of ritualized gestures and quotidian usage that so often makes crafted objects special.

2. What was your chosen form/forms and how do the materials and or form relate to your ideas. (i.e., you used hand died cloth to make napkins for each family member as well as cups etc....)

My forms for this project were very simple, I used extruded cylinders which I worked individually into buttons using a small tube to punch out holes, and a combination of thumb imprints and a wooden rib. Some of the more irregular button forms were made by hand only. Each button was glazed with three glazes: an underglaze on the bottom and in the holes to allow for me to fire them without sticking and add color to the holes without them sealing up, and two layered high fire glazes on the top. I tried to choose a mixture of classic glaze combinations, and some that were more out of my comfort zone. As you can see, this produced a mixture of elegant, and somewhat unsightly results, which was part of my aim. I wanted to experiment both with unconventional button forms and unconventional surfaces in the interest of elevating buttons from their usual purely functional status to make them an eye-catching and artful element of the garments they will be a part of.

I also made a small handbuilt vessel using slabs and glazed in dusty blue and ohata red to store the buttons in an artful and careful manner until they are sent to or sewed into their final destination.

3. Technically what did you learn (i.e., a new method or refining one you have worked with.)

As I have mentioned, I used this project to push myself to be more experimental with my glazes. I also attempted to make a number of beads/ceramic jewelry forms, thinking of them similarly

as aspirations toward future projects. This involved learning how to use a more complex stiling method, for which I had to suspend the pieces using wire. Unfortunately, a number of pieces didn't survive this process. I did include the two successful pieces at the end of my image slideshow.

4. Who is the audience and how is this integrated into your everyday life? Do you hope to have this work in your life or the lives of others? What will it give you or them when using and viewing this? What is the difference between making an object for a personal space rather than a public forum (i.e., a gallery)?

It is central to my project that these pieces should be engaged with through use, either in my life or in the lives of those I gift them to. My interest in buttons arose from thinking about their status as part of the everyday rituals of dressing. By bringing craft into those rituals, we may draw attention to them. Although I plan to use some of these buttons to precipitate future projects, I also am drawn to the idea of gifting some to people dear to me and find a certain sweetness in the thought of these objects made by my hands, coming into my recipients lives as something for them to handle daily. The idea of these pieces as the starting point, or as a component of craft projects to come is at the heart of this project. As such, the type of attention I hope to focus on buttons, and the associated acts of making and dressing, can only come about through having them inhabit everyday personal life, rather than display in a public gallery setting.

5. What Crafts people/artists/ideas/histories/ concepts do you relate to or gather inspiration from when making work? Is your work more technical than conceptual, more conceptual than technical or both?

I was greatly inspired by studio potter Lucy Rie, who took up ceramic and glass button-making in WWII England after button factories were requisitioned to produce buttons for soldiers' uniforms. While Rie's existing practice consisted of a rigorous commitment to her signature forms and glazes, she used button-making as a way to work more playfully and experimentally, as well as an opportunity to develop new glaze recipes.