



STATE OF CERAMICS *.edu edition*

Cultural Objects & Ritual

an exercise by Cathy Lu

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Read:

The Body Rituals Among the Nacirema, Horace Miner, 1956

(this reading is available for download at <https://a-bprojects.com/state-of-ceramics/>)

Description:

For this activity, we will be reexamining everyday objects and the stories they tell us about the cultural rituals we participate in by recreating or reinterpreting these objects in clay. Rituals are any sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or objects performed in a specific place. They can range from a religious ceremony, sitting with your family for meals, going to work or school, mourning, or dating rituals. Our everyday objects are embedded with culture, and the everyday actions we perform with those objects are our rituals.

Exercise:

Step 1: Cultural Bodies: What cultures are you part of?

10 - 15 minutes:

Make a list of all the cultures (communities) you are a part of. These may include nationalities, ethnicities, gender identities, your generation, interest groups like arts communities, sports communities, etc. You can consider current cultural events that you are now experiencing - a global pandemic, racial reckonings, protest movements, etc. Perhaps there are cultures that you are not intentionally part of - capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

Step 2: Choose your ritual object

10 -15 mins

Narrow down your list of cultural communities to 1 or 2 that feel most meaningful. Now list the different rituals performed by that community, and think of the related objects. For example, the ritual of a family eating a meal together might utilize objects like dinnerware, or the objects (spatula, chopsticks, etc) used to prepare the meal.

Step 3: (Optional) Research that object

Do you have it? Look at its details. Look it up online - where/when/why it was made. Is there someone (a relative, friend, neighbor, etc) you can interview about this object?

Step 4: Create the object

1+ hours

Use clay to begin to recreate the object. Will it be a replica, an interpretation, an exaggeration or an extrapolation? Will it be the same scale or the same weight as the original object?

Step 5: (Optional) Use the object

Will you keep the object unfired and allow it to change with time? Do you wash it with water? Do you wear it until it falls apart? Do you fire it and use it? Will you use it for its original ritual purpose or will you create a new one?

Step 6: (Optional) Share the object

Consider sharing a photo of your object on Instagram by using the hashtag #CulturalObjectsRitual or email your photo to Cathy: cathyclu@gmail.com and/or have your object with you for the upcoming Zoom discussion.