

arts

Raku

An oriental process with an American touch

Students gathered outside the Art Center Thursday to learn the Japanese art of raku. They participated in the unique process of firing clay pots and bowls.

Students had spent Tuesday making and preparing clay pots for Thursday's firing. Each pot was covered with premixed pottery glazes that workshop director Judy Teufel prepared. Two different red glazes were used for each would bring out a different color.

Two kilns were set up outside, each constructed of fine brick encircling a propane gas flame, piped in underneath the kiln. All of the bowls and tea cups are place inside; and raku begins.

"Raku is in charge. We're just the vehicles," said Teufel

while waiting to unload the kiln.

"We put in little pieces, like tea bowls and tea cups. Raku works better with smaller pieces, if they are bigger, sometimes they burst and break," Teufel said. "Hopefully, no one is resting on the outcome of the piece," Teufel said, when a clink came from a pot complaining of the heat, sounded from the kiln.

The kiln will heat up until the pots are fired and glowing red hot. Each piece will be removed at 1700 degrees.

Students proudly displayed some earlier products of raku. Molly Weinstein showed some tea cups that had a glaze of Borax of Colmanite and St. Helens ash. The cups had a metallic finish inside which reflected the sun.

"When I drink from a tea cup, I remember the day and you remember the smell of the day it was brought out," says Teufel.

Betty Bursheim, art instructor from West Linn High School, wife of Norm Bursheim art department chair, had three pieces in the kiln.

"I have a variety of planters and a mug," said Bursheim. "The great thing about raku art is it's portable. You can take your kiln blocks and move them," Bursheim said.

The time was just about ripe. Teufel grabbed her "good karma stick," and opens a door once enclosed by fine brick. The pots were glowing red hot, and glaze turned to a liquid.

"They come out one at a time not a dozen at a time," said Teufel. The pots were removed with long tongs and then each pot was placed inside a bucket of hay and papers to cool the piece for ten minutes.

"When they are placed in the hay, that's where those copper reds come out," Teufel explained. "It's an oxygen-hungry fire inside. It's so hungry for oxygen, it steals it from the metals. When we put it in the hay, that's where the



CLOSE OBSERVATIONS NEEDED to make Raku turn out correct. Here Marilyn Schmeer, Dan Mart, and Betty Bursheim do just that.

transformation of oxygen goes back into the metal," Teufel said.

wish on the piece.

One piece that was fitting for the Japanese theme of the day was a wok that came out of the kiln fiery hot. The group prepared a stir fry lunch on the heated wok. "Some students even make their own chopsticks," said Teufel.

After the pieces leave the hay, they go to a bucket of water for the final cooling process. Then "voila" you have a glazed pot that the Raku has prepared for any purpose you



APPLYING FINAL TOUCHES to her pot, Hilary Russell gracefully throws on the glaze.



BEFORE AND AFTER is displayed where a finished pot sits near other Raku pots waiting to be fired.



"WATCH THESE POTS, they're hotter than they look," commented Judy Teufel, Raku workshop advisor (left) while Hilary Russell gives assistance to her.

Story by Kristi Blackman

Photos by Duane Hiersche

Last chance to see play

Will those mad scientists rule the world? Will the inmates in the sanatorium ever accept living there? Why are the inmates scientists or are they scientists?

Come to the play the "Physicists" June 3, 4, and 5 and find out. Curtain goes up at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$3 for adults, \$2 for students and \$1 for CCC students.

