

Fires blazing, ceramics glazing

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Over the weekend of Jan. 26, some students from the art department took a trip over to Mt. Hood Community College to fire up their ceramics in the wood burning kiln. Mt. Hood had invited them to use it, because at CCC there are only electric, gas, soda and raku kilns.

"The ceramic process is such that you have to fire the work in order to complete it and the earliest means of firing work was a wood firing. We were invited to go to Mt. Hood Community College to work with one of their small wood fire kilns," said Katy McFadden, who works as adjunct faculty in the art department.

There were six students who took the trip, along with McFadden, to the college. The students who participated in the event included Amanda Katzenmeyer, Kathleen Pearson, Mardene Aos, Matthew Anderegg, Tom Cook and Tracey Gates. This was a two day event and took a lot of hard work and detailed preparation to get everything just right.

To fire ceramic work doesn't mean to burn it. It is a term used that means to bake; after a mold has been formed into its desired shape, it is left to dry for approximately 24 hours and then it is placed into a kiln where it is then fired. Firing a piece of ceramic work applies heat to the piece and hardens or glazes it.

"The kiln was fired with approximately a cord of wood during the course of a 24-hour period," said McFadden.

Getting the wood burning kiln ready is different than other kilns. Although it's not as easy

as it seems, it isn't just starting up a fire, students had to slowly bring up the heat until it reached the perfect temperature.

Pearson had five pieces that she finished using the wood burning kiln.

"We did use some of the glazes that they had there, but you don't have to glaze if you don't want to. We glazed in areas and on the inside, because in a wood firing kiln, the wood ash itself creates a glaze and glazes your pottery," said Pearson.

"It takes like an entire day, day and a half to cool down and then we came back and unloaded on Wednesday," Pearson added.

"This is my first time so we were just learning and Mt. Hood was good enough to let us fire and they even let us use their glazes and they helped us through the whole process," said Pearson.

This is Matthew Anderegg's second year at CCC and only his second term in the art department. This was also his first time using a wood burning kiln and said it was a lot different than the other kilns he's used to. He also said that it is a lot more work.

"There's more control because you're constantly feeding the fire so it relies more on you rather than a kiln. You just turn it on and it takes care of itself so there's a lot more that comes out of it in character," said Anderegg.

Pearson also agreed with Anderegg on the fact that using the wood kiln was a lot more hands on.

Using a wood firing kiln can be very new and a great experience for many art students, especially when they have never used one before. It changes the outcome of their projects and puts new light on the art of ceramics.



These are two of the pottery pieces that Kathleen Pearson created using the fire burning kiln at Mt. Hood CC.



Kathleen Pearson, left, picks up a piece of her pottery to set aside, while working with fellow students. This is her first time using a wood burning kiln at Mt. Hood CC.

Photo above and left by Emily Rask The Clackamas Print



This is a glimpse into the wood burning kiln as it finishes pieces of ceramics for the CCC students. These students participated in the firing and helped the Mt. Hood students set up the kiln.

Photo contributed by Katy McFadden