



VISSUAL ESSAY

Experiences in Artistic Education: Pottery Workshop

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Abstract

Ceramic clay is an endless source of possibilities for artistic development and personal growth of the most precious human values. Therefore, training courses from some Chilean universities, through patrimonial legacy, foster beyond the theoretical aspects of classroom and field trips. The workshops seek to merge the matter-life that is clay, from whence man of divine breath came and continues to search for identity, kneading the clay, melting pottery, to build the human being.

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Figure 1. Cusca Risún Workshop, 2006

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The Pottery Workshop “Cusca Risún” 1, which in quechua (1) means “we will go together”, belongs to the Centro de Educación y Trabajo Metropolitano (Metropolitan Education and Work Center), Gendarmería de Chile (Chilean Gendarmerie) dependent, and it is characterized by the work of students with people deprived of their liberty, developing social and vocational rehabilitation, doing educational activities like printing, furniture and footwear training, in addition to other formative, recreational and cultural activities.

In this case the clay, as foundation material, does not necessarily represent an end but a means to reach the objectives mentioned above. Direct experience with heritage elements, seeks to discover our label, approaching a shared identity by a common history.

The pottery workshop was started in 2001, conducted by a visual arts and education professional: professor Raúl Fuentes Romero, performing a wide variety of design lines ranging from murals, pottery reliefs and ornamental masks, to useful objects which are designed, decorated and handicraft worked by the inmates.

Its aim was to specify attractive experiences and give inmates concrete learning tools while working in a suitable environment to express themselves. This was about possible because pottery is viewed as a “worthy, formative and profitable” occupation (R. Fuentes R. Desde el Barro hasta la Cerámica, p. 13).

The main objective of the workshop, therefore, was and still is, the implementation of a methodologically including planned activities in the field of artistic and utilitarian pottery, for inmates who work together to promote their self-esteem, and to obtain and develop social skills, work skills and self-management capacity. Promotion of real possibility of employment in the environment of freedom, once released from prison. Playful insight, expressed through clay in this case, is stimulated on the basis of the development of a plastic experience. This raw material in the environment looks like mud. Once extracted and placed in a decantation and purification process, the plasticity of the clay allows objects to be constructed using various methods. The inmates’ own hands impress individually aesthetic prints on the works, which gradually became solid by drying and are further hardened by “burning” or kiln firing, becoming ceramic. Over several years, through this inmate-student project, different pottery mural projects have been concreted. Among them, exhibitions at Metro de Santiago, and expositions at Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Biblioteca Nacional and several Universities, took part of it.



Figure 2. “Spirits of the earth” Cusca Risún Workshop 2007

Figure 3. Opening CuscaRisún Pottery exhibition Visual Artist and Professor Raúl Fuentes; Elda Balbontín, Coord. Pedagogía Artes Visuales; Sergio Torres Pinto, Rector Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez

Indeed, in 2006 a wide range cooperation agreement was completed with the Catholic University Cardenal Silva Henríquez. A cooperation was formed between the University and the Chilean Gendarmerie and students of different careers who lead the Cusca Risun Workshop, pledging to combine education and training of future professionals with learning in pottery workshops.

The most interesting aspect of this project is that by working together future professionals know the reality of the prisoners, who are young, vulnerable individuals with low educational levels. These inmates have committed crimes of behavior from a social point of view.

They have been prosecuted, convicted, and are in the last stage of the reinstatement process. On the other hand the young inmates have the opportunity to interact with people who have more socially acceptable goals and behaviors and can model their own behavior at the moment of their reintegration into society. Among elective general topics of training offered each semester by the UCSH, special interest arose about Heritage by the involved people; in 3-4 sessions of exchange they noticed this interest, so the topic could be established. The collaborative approach taken by the study of clay promotes a curiosity to learn, appreciate and communicate through personal work. The experience involved the creation of a reproduction of a heritage object. Emphasis was placed on thoughtful analysis and problem solving through the different processes in the practice, starting with the investigation of the ancestral object (pre-Columbian) and drawing a personal design, without diminishing the rigor and proper preparation of the used elements.

Professor Raul Fuentes, described this workshop modeling an article, that details the collective experiences and different methodological steps of works, processes, materials and tools. He refers to the subject with the words, "concern for the development of ceramic sin plastic, in the school level is little oral most non existent, even within the artistic-academic university education" (Fuentes, year, p. 3)

We hope that finally we can bring the necessary change in this situation. "Para que nuestros recuerdos se perpetúen y se vuelvan esperanzas, para que nuestro pasado se vuelva futuro" (M. de Unamuno) ["For our memories to be perpetuated and become hopes, for our past to become future" (M. de Unamuno)].



Figure 4. Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez student modelling in the workshop



In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to generate new consciousness, capable of discerning and creating a new way to look and to act. New ways to assess, to sensitize and inquire through a collaborative patrimonial education will help people to understand and aesthetically experience the feelings and the achievement involved in being a person who not only watches, but from the mud, the work, the technique and rigor produces and recreates in our days, with their own hands and the materials used by our ancestors.

Figure 5. "Mapuche antropomorph vessel". Sebastián Olivares, Psychology student from the Universidad Cardenal Silva Henríquez.

Figure 6. PU CHE KURA (People of Stone) . Mapuche sculpture, Universidad Cardenal Silva Henríquez student

Figura 7. Works presented at the end of the course about National Heritage, Universidad Cardenal Silva Henríquez (2013)



Figura 8. A new looking on Mate. Recreation of Andean culture, Salta (Argentina)





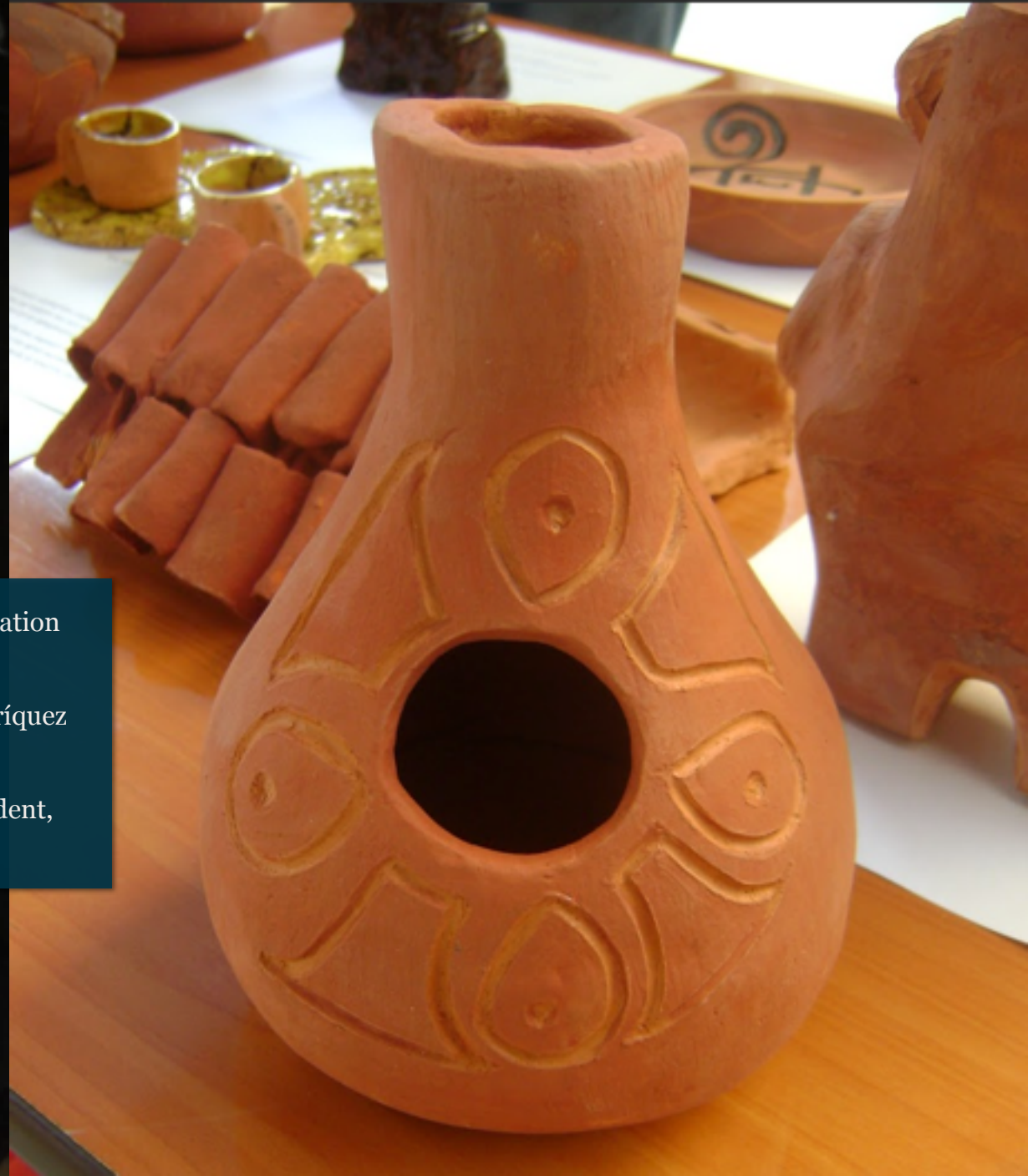
Figure 9. Students of the Pedro de Valdivia University at the workshop Cusca RISUN -Camila Solar Lagos and Catherinen Tania Reyes- May 2015



Figure 10. Camila Solar, a student of Early Childhood Education (UPV), at work in the Cusca RISUN workshop. May 2015

Figure 11. Diaguita bottle. Universidad Cardenal Silva Henríquez student, 2013

Figure 13. Vase, Universidad Cardenal Silva Henríquez student, 2013



REFERENCES

R. Fuentes R. Desde el Barro hasta la Cerámica, p. 13.

NOTES

(1) The quechua or quichua is an originary language from the central Andes, probably Peru, and extends about six countries, above all Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. In the XV century, became a major lingua franca and the Incaic official language.

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Photographic evidence shows the young university students, who, in fear of not being able to achieve the objectives or not having artistic skills, undertook the task with dedication. But, at last, proudly, showing their works in public exhibitions.