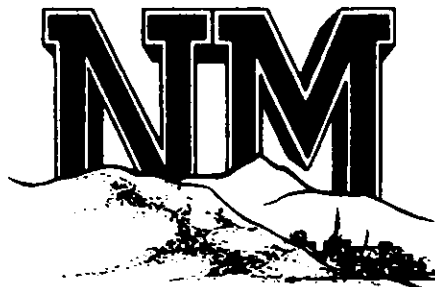


NEW MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL

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Kiln Gods

A bas relief project done in response to a kiln melt-down
submitted by

Paula Sibrack, Head Art Teacher and Ceramics Instructor

Background:

This project served as a sculpture assignment to a Ceramics II class. Students at this level are mostly in grades 11 and 12.

I explained the role of kiln gods as protector of the firing chamber.

Research:

Students spent time in the library researching gods, goddesses, and mythology through the ages in many cultures. Some of the most interesting images were found in Greek, Roman, American Indian, Asian, Hindu, Buddhist, Egyptian, Celtic and South American mythology.

Sources that students found helpful follow:

The Library of World's Myths and Legends, Bedricks Books

Includes volumes on Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Indian mythology

Man, Myth and Magic—Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion, and the Unknown, Marshall Cavendish, Ltd.

Sections on African, Inca and Voo Doo images are especially good

The Toscano Catalogue

Great resource for reproduction gargoyles, free, call 1-800-525-0733

Procedure:

Students brought sketches and a bit of the historic background to class for a discussion. We decided that kiln gods basically fell into two groups: benevolent and fearsome. The first includes angelic, watchful images while the second deals with scary, grotesque creatures. (There was some discussion about whether this distinction reflects these same characteristics in the students.)

Our clay studio has a soffit over the kiln area, and we decided to hang the kiln gods over the kilns on the soffit. For that reason, they took the form of a bas relief. Gargoyles were very popular as an fearsome example of a historic bas relief. I reviewed additive, subtractive, slab, and appliqué methods of construction.

Each student made two kiln gods: one for the clay studio and one take home. Students designed a safe attractive method of hanging the bas relief and were given a choice of glaze or shoe polish to color the kiln gods.

Assessment:

During the final critique students presented their kiln gods, along with the historic component. The method of construction was discussed and the ability of the god to protect – either by nurturing or fear. By the way, we have had no further kiln melt-downs.

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Teaching and Learning