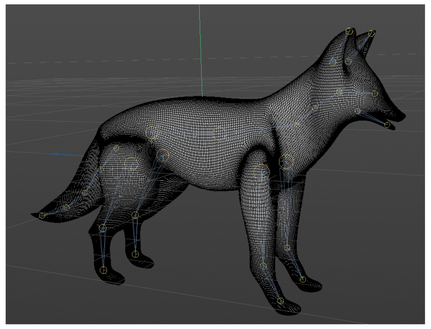
The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree

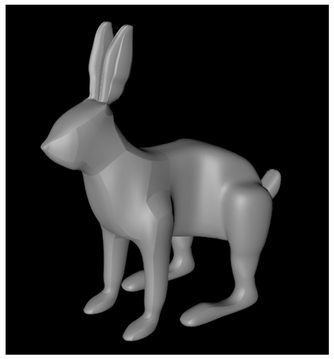
Author: Sela Stazzone
Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ, 07430

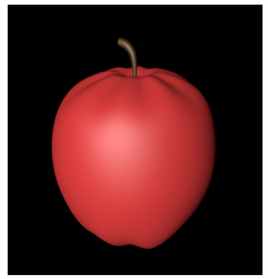
Hand Building Clay Trees

These clay sculptures use a method known as coiling. Coil pottery is one of the oldest human inventions, dating before the Neolithic period. Coil vessels are made by gradually stacking long coils on top of each other to your desired shape. In my piece in particular, the trees have a narrow base that gradually widens and narrows back in towards the neck. The coils are then blended together to create a smooth surface. Once the surface smooth, I sketched out areas I wanted to carve out and add line work to give the vessel more texture and details.



Above: Fox 3D Model
Right: Rabbit 3D Model





Top Right: Apple and Seedling 3D Model

The project encompasses a series of ceramic tree sculptures that integrates augmented reality technology with traditional art-making. The clay sculptures are hand-built using the coil method, a technique as old as humans themselves. Clay supports are used for the internal structure to seamlessly blend the base and the tree branches. Augmented reality (AR) is a process that takes computer-generated images, and animation and superimposes them into the real world. AR elevates visual and sensory reactions that would not otherwise be possible through a traditional ceramic installation. "The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree" is a commonly used phrase to describe a person having similar characteristics to someone they look up to. They mimic their behavior, thoughts, and actions. This installation takes the phrase and alludes to the recent partisan political climate in the United States. The simplistic designs of the animations and the complexity of the ceramic sculptures will complement each other in their physical and digital space.

From the neck up, I experimented with a variety of ways to assemble branches to resemble a tree. The base of the neck is supported with a cross like shape that is attached on the inside to not only divide the base into four quadrants but to also provide support to the branches. The branches themselves are comprised of three slabs of clay. The first slab is the supporting structure, it runs down the middle of the two additional slabs. The two slabs mirror each other in shape and are blended together to create a seamless organic shape. Once the branches are leather-hard (a stage in which the clay is not too dry but just enough to remain in shape) they are attached to the main vessel. The final step is to blend the branches and the main vessel seamlessly, add the finishing bark textures and allow the vessel to dry slowly before it is ready to be fire in the kiln.

Close Up of Branch Construction

Carving Details

Finished Tree Sculpture

Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) technology was invented in 1968 from Harvard computer scientist Ivan Sutherland, however it wasn't until the 90's where AR technology advanced. AR became mainstream with the popular release of Pokémon GO and has become readily accessible to the everyday person.

In my sculpture series AR technology allows me to explore and experiment with the physical components of my sculptures and digital space. In this series I will be using Adobe Aero, it is Adobe's newest program where the creator and import their 2D or 3D designs and implement them into a digital platform. By scanning a surface area using a camera, the application allows the user to add and customize the space with actions, audio and proximity triggers.

Cinema 4D is the animation and 3D modeling software I am using to create my figures and objects to implement into the AR space. With trial and error the animations and models must meet Adobe Aero's guidelines to successfully export and import into the AR software.

Glaze Test Tiles

Before Glaze Firing

Glazing Process

Glaze is liquid glass that when heated and cooled at a variety of temperatures, it vitrifies. During the second firing process the glaze fuses onto the clay body. This process reduces the porosity and creates a stronger bond.

For my pieces I wanted two types of glazes. One that would be able to showcase the fine details of the bark and another glaze that would highlight the base of the trees. For the branches and areas that had a bark texture I chose three shades of brown underglaze. Underglaze has more flexibility and probability on how the colors would appear after fired. Without a clear top coat, underglaze appears matte similar to bark on trees. The glaze for the remaining sections of the piece I chose a brown tone and a bluish grey tone to layer on top of each other. During the firing process these two different glazes fuse together and create a new color. Traditional glazes can be unpredictable and it is best to create test tiles to get a better idea of the results.