STUDENT RAKU FIRINGS AT WATERSHED



Watershed is pleased to offer Raku firing opportunities for high school and college students with teacher supervision. Please watch the video tutorial and review the general Raku information provided on Watershed's website. The information below offers additional guidance to help educators plan for a successful Raku firing at Watershed.

I. SCHEDULING

Anticipate four hours for a Raku firing. The following is a suggested schedule for the day:

- Introduction with Watershed staff, unpack glazed pots, and load kiln: 45 minutes
- Firing the kiln 2 hours
- Unloading the kiln, combustion and glaze reduction: 30 minutes
- Clean-up, review of work and process, pack up: 45 minutes

If groups plan to glaze their work on site and/or anticipate multiple kiln loads, additional time should be scheduled. Allow for an additional hour if glazing on-site. Sequential firings take about an hour since the kiln is already hot. Having planned activities during the period the kiln is firing is recommended.

II. GLAZE CONSIDERATIONS

Glazing ceramics is just as important a part of the process as forming the work. All work should be bisqued prior to glazing. Having all the work glazed prior to arrival will save time and allow for less rushed, more thoughtful, application. Raku glazes are notorious for running. Care should be taken to ensure glazes are applied evenly and not too thickly. Overlapping glazes should be minimized and kept far from the base of the work. At least 3/8" space should be maintained between any glaze and the base of the piece. Commercial glazes formulated for reliable results in Raku firings are readily available through pottery supply stores.

III. SIZES & SHAPES OF WORK

Kiln capacity varies with the size and shape of work to be loaded. Wide, flat pieces take up much real estate. Likewise, one or two very tall pieces out of a large group of shorter work will eat up a lot of valuable space.

Keeping work more or less uniform in size will allow more work to be loaded. Keep in mind, also, that room must be left surrounding the individual pieces in order to accommodate their easy removal with tongs.

Also, remember that red-hot work must be removed from the kiln with tongs. This favors some shapes over others. Wide, flat work can be difficult to remove. Heavy work may require two people working in unison to safely move the work from kiln to reduction chamber. Thinly potted bowls can crack or break if they must be picked up by the rim. Medium to tall, narrow work is easily maneuvered with tongs (but remember that narrow openings can produce dangerous steam geysers when crash-cooling in water).

IV: CLEANING FIRED WORK

When the work is removed from the reduction chamber it may have soot and charred material adhering to the surface. This is easily removed using a variety of standard dish-washing abrasive sponges and scrub brushes. It is a good idea to have a number of them on hand, along with some liquid dish soap.

V: GENERAL INFORMATION & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Watershed strongly advises that the following information be shared with students prior to their arrival.

Proper attire:

- Students MUST wear closed-toe footwear. No sandals please!
- Long hair should be tied back or tucked under a head covering.
- Long sleeves and long pants preferably cotton or wool. No synthetics.
- Leather gloves with long cuffs (welder's gloves are best available at most hardware stores)

Studio/campus access: Students must stay in the general vicinity of the Raku firing area at Watershed's kiln pad unless they receive permission to enter the studio building to use restroom facilities. A formal tour of the studio facilities can be arranged in advance with Watershed's studio manager.

Food: All groups should bring food and drink; please be sure that students clean up food waste/containers prior to departure.

