

ArtiFacts Sponsored a Vince Pitelka Workshop June 3-6, 2010

A number of SACA members were in attendance and had this to share:





[Vince Pitelka](#) led a workshop, Handbuilding: Tricks of -the Trade at [ArtiFacts Studio](#) June 3-6. The workshop started with participants learning how to make large coil built pots. He uses a method he learned from a Nigerian potter. Participants were encouraged to go big and were excited by how quickly their pots grew. The remainder of the workshop focused on how to create various forms from textured slabs. Pitelka uses a variety of bisque stamps he makes himself. Some participants made their own stamps during the workshop. One of the interesting method Pitelka shared was to use a series of geometric templates to create a variety of forms. The templates are graduated triangles, squares, rectangles, trapezoids with the largest side size being 6 inches. One could make larger ones but these were the base templates he uses in teaching and with his work. Each side of the templates is labeled with the length in inches so in creating various forms all one needs to do is match the numbers of different templates. In his work he combines these with other specialized templates to create teapots, bottles, cups, mugs, and other closed forms.

On Friday night, Pitelka gave an engaging lecture at the University of Arizona about his work. He discussed his personal and artistic influences tracing them in his work throughout his career. He began his ceramics career as a production potter in California but then moved to Massachusetts to pursue a MFA. While in graduate school he began exploring colored clay and created large plates with intricate images using a variety of colored clay loaves. It took hundreds of templates to work out the composition of a single plate. He then began making sculptural pieces still incorporating colored loaves. In describing his current work he states, "my work reinterprets traditional vessels originally designed for common utilitarian and industrial applications with function rather than beauty in mind. Today, such vessels often seem beautiful, underscoring the way function informs aesthetics through the history of utilitarian ware. [These pieces are created using textured slabs.] The coil-built vessels are inspired by storage jars and jugs from medieval Japanese, ancient Aegean, and Early American sources, while the slab-built work comes from common Industrial storage and pouring vessels such as gas and oil cans" For more on his work, workshop, and the Appalachian Center for Craft Tennessee Technological University where he currently teaches check out his [website](#).