

AN INTRODUCTION TO WOOD-FIRING

Wood-firing pottery is an ancient technique, which has seen a recent contemporary revival around the world. We, at the Frederick Pottery School, are fortunate in that the instructing staff is well versed in the current method of wood firing. **As a school**, we now have multiple opportunities to join master-potter John Thies at his Monocacy Pottery Studio, near Thurmont, MD to fire his wood-fueled kiln as **an extra curricular scheduled addition to our normal class format**.

John, and one or more FPS instructors will guide each **group of 8 students** through the forming, glazing, loading, firing, unloading and clean-up cycle. **A meeting of participants and your wood firing instructor will take place ten to 2 pm during the first Sunday Wood Fire Open Studio. Please plan to be there.** Some organized teamwork, energy, and time is required of each participant.

John's kiln-type is called a 'Manabigama' (Mana-bi-gama) which, in Japanese; 'Mana' means 'to educate' or 'learn.' 'bi' means 'thing of beauty' and 'gama' means kiln – a beautiful, learning kiln.

The kiln is fired completely with wood-fuel only and is extremely efficient. It produces beautiful, natural 'flashed-and-ashed' surfaces on the fired wares. These surfaces are reminiscent of admirable pots made throughout history (see wood-firing photo album).

These wood-firing programs are **open to all FPS registered students** of all skill levels – beginners to advanced – throwers and hand builders alike. Registered FPS students may sign-up for one or more – or all – of the scheduled firings.

DETAILS & DIRECTIONS:

- **Sign-up:** Choose a wood-firing session, which fits your schedule. Add your name & information to the Wood-Firing Session Sign-up Sheet (located in the Wood-firing notebook) to reserve your spot.
- **Cost** is \$170.00 per wood-firing session and is due, if you choose in two parts; \$50.00 at sign-up & the balance of \$120.00 at the beginning of your FPS seasonal session (Spring, Summer I, II, Autumn, etc.) in which your wood-firing is to be held. Your other option is to pay-in-full at time of reservation. Please, submit your fees to your FPS class instructor. Note that wood-firing fees are in addition to your regular FPS class session fees.
- **Clay:** Each participant must procure the wood fire clay they wish to use. There are various wood fire clays available from Clayworks Supply, Baltimore (ph:

410-235-5998). Or, FPS will have a small selection of wood fire clays available @ \$20 per 25 lb. bag. If you chose to go out-of-house, please okay your clay choices' with your wood fire instructor. **Note:** the FPS Cone 6 stoneware clays (red/brown & white) are **NOT** suitable for wood firing. Recycle your wood fire clay scraps, wheel trimmings and throwing water into the FPS dry scrap bin or through the screened bins.

- **Kiln Space:** Your wood fire session gives you about 4.5 square feet of kiln space. This a about the size of the one cubby at FPS with **pots not touching** or **about 15 to 20 medium-sized, wheel-thrown pots, averaging 1-lb. (or less), to 2-lbs. or more.**
- The best **forms** to make for your wood firing are cylinder-shaped or rounded; hand-built or wheel-thrown. Covered jars, casseroles, cups and mugs, pitcher, vase and bottle forms are recommended. Hand-built pots are also acceptable. Large, wide, open forms, such as bowls and platters will not be fired. However, smaller bowls **can** be made and fired in the wood kiln, if they are made in pairs with identical top diameters, and ample thick, wide rims. They will be 'stacked' in the kiln rim-to-rim, to protect the inside glazed surface from falling debris, which can occur during the firing.
- Be sure to **mark your wood-fire pots** – **1.** With your class #: **2.** Your signature & **3.** Stamp each pot with the communal wood-fire stamp. This stamp is in a cup container on the instructor's desk.
- You can make your wood-fire pots during your FPS class time, during any **Friday evening or Saturday Open Studio or Sunday Open Studio.** All Open Studios cost \$3.00 per hour. Come and meet your 'crew' during the monitored Sunday Open Studio sessions from 10am to 2pm (for wood-firing potters only). Each Sunday Open Studio session will need to be monitored, so please check the classroom calendar for dates & times.
- Cycle your wood-fire pots through FPS bisque firings, as normal. The FPS in-house white slip is suitable for wood firing. All work must be bisqued, glazed, boxed and ready for wood firing by noontime, the day of loading (Day 1).
- **An average wood-firing time-line:**
 - Day 1 - Load kiln: Meet @ 12n @ FPS & 1-5pm @ kiln site**
 - Day 2 - Fire kiln: 6am-6pm**
 - Day 3 - Unload kiln + clean up: TBA by group**

A TYPICAL WOOD-FIRING SESSION REQUIRES:

- **Sign-up** & commitment for a specific firing, which fits your schedule, on calendar sheet. Include name & telephone #.
- A \$170.00 payment.
- Procure your wood fire clay.
- Make enough pots to fill one cubby. This is about 15 to 20 pieces of pottery.
- Bisque fire your wood-fire pots, as per normal at & by FPS.
- Glaze your wood-fire pots. Glaze is provided.
- Transport pottery from FPS to kiln site, day of kiln loading.
- Load the kiln: on site.
- Fire the kiln.
- Unload the kiln.
- Kiln & site clean up.

SAFETY!!

Proper Personal Attire:

- 1) Cotton/Nature fiber Clothing Required: No synthetic fiber allowed. Must wear long sleeves and long pants.
- 2) Closed toe shoes/boots are required.
- 3) All long hair must be pulled up into a ponytail, braided or covered with a hat.
- 4) Safety goggles will be worn when working with the kiln. These will be provided by FPS.

During the Firing:

- 1) Dehydration can be an issue when wood firing. Please bring an ample personal supply of water.
- 2) When splitting wood, leather work gloves (provide by you) must be worn, along with a face shield, which will be provided by FPS.
- 3) When stoking the kiln, over-sized thermal gloves must be worn (provided by FPS).
- 4) A clean work area must be maintained. This means all flammable debris must be kept away from the kiln.
- 5) All students will know where the fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located.

PROPER ATTIRE AND FOLLOWING OF ALL SAFETY RULES ARE STRICTLY REQUIRED FOR FULL PARTICIPTION.