**SUMMER FURSCA Research**

Name of applicant: Zoe Wilson Date: 02/7/19

Graduation Year: 2019 Major: Art and Psychology

Research Advisor: Lynne Chytilo Advisor’s Department: Art

Title of Project: The Exploration of Energy, Movement and Growth Through Ceramic Sculpture

**Abstract**. *Please provide a short (100 words or less) abstract that describes the work that you are proposing in layman’s terms. The abstract should be understandable by a general audience.*

During the ten weeks, I will focus on creating a cohesive body of work that will become my portfolio for applying to graduate schools, exhibitions, and residencies. This body of work will be composed of 10-15 large scale ceramic hand built sculptures, revolving around the themes of growth, transformation, and energy. I will keep a sketchbook to capture inspiration and help direct me in creating future work. Similarly, I will keep a journal as a way to keep track of my personal growth during this creative experience. By doing both simultaneously, it will allow me to process and problem solve in order to gain a deeper connection with my work.

This would be a continuation of my work during the FURSCA of last summer. The time and space FURSCA offered me, along with the one on one mentorship with Lynne Chytilo was crucial in my development as an artist. I was able to explore methods of building that were new to me and I was able to create a variety of works. These same works will be a center point in my Elkin Isaac presentation this spring. Along with Elkin Isaac, the sculptures will be on display at the Senior Art Exhibition

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I was presented with the opportunity to apply to a student exhibition called *New Art, New Artists: College Student Program* at the Ann Arbor Art Fair from July 18-July21, 2019. This is an exciting chance to exhibit and sell my sculptural works and to receive valuable feedback from the public and other local artists. The application deadline is March 16. The art fair is competitive and acceptance to exhibit is an additional goal for my work over the summer.

I began my college career with the intentions of graduating with a degree in biochemistry. After taking a ceramics course, freshman year, I knew that a career centered on art was what I wanted to pursue. I decided to double major in art and psychology with the hopes of becoming an art therapist. I will need to take another semester in the fall to be complete my double major making me a 9th semester senior. This will allow me to apply for FURSCA this summer.

As an artist, I gravitate toward ceramics because of the malleable nature of clay which makes it an extremely versatile medium. I fell in love with the process of working with my hands to create three dimensional works of art. With this new found passion, I dedicated my time to learning as much as I could about throwing and I quickly developed and refined my skill as a potter. I thrive when I’m problem solving, and I am always seeking new ways to explore other aspects of ceramics that will challenge me to push past the skills I’ve already learned. I was accepted to the FURSCA program in the summer of 2018, and I spent the summer exploring new ideas. I also began experimenting with clay in new and unique ways and some were successes and others were catalysts for learning. FURSCA provided me with the opportunity for self-reflection and most importantly, it gave me the time and space to do so. Art takes time, and the ceramic process can be especially time consuming. It takes time to think of and process ideas and even more time and skill to be able to fully execute those ideas. I ended the summer with a stronger foundation in the medium and a more concise direction for my artistic vision. This process is slowed drastically during the school year because of academics, along side athletic and social organization commitments. I am applying to FURSCA for a second time because my experience last summer was crucial to my development. I am ready to move my work to the next level. I will use the ten weeks to continue to explore and understand new ways of working with clay in order to achieve my goals of exhibiting in Ann Arbor and applying for graduate school.

As a student getting ready to graduate from college, I am searching for what will come after I graduate. I view my sculptures as abstract self-portraits. The work appears to be hungry for growth, just as I am in this new chapter in my life. It’s stretching out but rooted, confined but eager for movement, and chaotic yet stable. I will continue to work with these concepts but I want to experiment with different ways of conveying them.

In my recent pieces, I start by building a base and then add multiple hollow tubes sprouting from it and connecting to each other. Moving forward I want to explore different ways of making these tubes so that I can work faster, more efficiently and use less clay. Last semester, the ceramics department’s artist in residence, Firth MacMillan demonstrated a way of creating her hollow tubes that I have not seen before. She used a paper product to create a form and then wrapped slabs of clay around it. I will explore doing something similar to her technique to create new large-scale sculptures. Once completed, the work I make will build cohesive body to use in my portfolio and graduate school applications.

Along with exploring new building methods, I want to engage in different firing techniques. Not only can I test new surfaces and firing temperatures, it will better prepare me for life outside Albion College. Albion’s studio is very well equipped, more so than most small liberal arts colleges. The experience I will have this summer will allow me to enter into the world of retail, and get my name into the mainstream, create works that are personal and unique based on concepts that are important to me, and to exhibit as I enter into my life after college.

# Methodology

a. The process of ceramics involves many steps and can be time consuming. Because of clays physical properties, I usually work on multiple sculptures at the same time, going back and forth from piece to piece until all of them are complete. In past works I’ve rolled my clay into coils and I connect them by pressing the pieces together. I continue building up and adding coils until I get the desired shape and height. Once I have finished working on the pieces, I allow them to slowly dry out. Once they are completely air dried, I put them through a bisque fire at cone 06 (1828℉). This bisque firing process is very important because it transforms the clay body into a solid but porous state. This allows me to spray or dip it in a mixture of clay, minerals and metallic oxides, called a glaze, and reduces the risk of it breaking. Most of the glazes I will make will be made from raw materials that I carefully weigh out and mix together. Once my glaze is applied to a piece it is ready for the last step, which is the final firing. In this step I have a variety of options. Usually, I use a high fire clay and glazes that fire at cone 10 (2381℉) in a gas kiln. This is quite a lengthy process, as the kiln has 18 cubic feet of firing space, and this could easily take several weeks to create enough work to fill. Daily work sessions will help me get into a routine and create a studio practice.

# Outcomes

By the end of the 10 weeks, I will have created 10-15 large scale sculptural pieces, explored different building and firing methods and have a completed sketchbook and journal. I will use the works from this summer to build a cohesive body of work which will add to my portfolio. I will then use these works to apply to graduate schools, residencies, and exhibitions along with displaying and selling them at the Ann Arbor art fair. This summer will provide me with the materials and space to accomplish these goals.