



The W Book Project by Selia Karsten – Ceramics: Year 2 Group 2

When I drew my letter in ceramics class – it could have been an “M” or a “W” and I chose “W”. I began to brainstorm words (and the class added more). There was Wow, Wizard, Wave, Wonder, Willow, Why, What, When, Waffle, Water, Wax, Wane, Whisper, Wonky, Whippoorwill, Wicked, Whopper, Work, Window, Winner, Wind, Wisteria, Wiggle, Word, Wife, Wisdom, Winter, Wish, Wiley, Wander.....

I chose the second word I came up with – Wizard and began to research the topic with books from the library and images and text on the Web. I also looked at a number of Artist’s books, sketchbooks and journals for ideas regarding format and layout.

The catalyst for the project came when I found that all images of wizards were male. The counterparts for women were sorceresses and witches and I found those connotations too limiting and possibly (to some readers) negative characters. When I found an image of a wizard with a paint palette and brush, I got the idea to put Georgia O’Keeffe’s face under the wizard’s hat. That led me to think of iconic women in western culture who could be described as being wizards – that is their powerful personas had the potential for alchemy and transforming society with their work and wisdom. I selected the following women as my wizards: Georgia O’Keeffe, Annie Liebowitz, Barbara Walters, Hilary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey and Queen Elizabeth.



The wizard hat became my ceramic piece and I created a maquette. I made a few changes in the design of the hat’s decorations once the larger piece was shaped. My final hat has been glazed but at this writing, has not yet had its second firing. Before the bisque firing, I carved symbols (found in a book on Wizards) onto the brim of the hat (sgraffito) and I attached one clay star to stand on the brim. I painted the hat with black slip and the star with white slip. The star broke off in the bisque firing but will hopefully reattach in the final firing. It has been glazed with a clear limestone glaze.

I don’t anticipate ever creating another large wizard’s hat. I did learn a lot from creating the artist’s book and the hat and I plan to take that inspiration forward into future art work.