



Maya Bennet

Artistic Identity Takes Form

City High senior describes the path that got her into ceramics



PHOTOS BY MATISSE ARNONE

By Matisse **Arnone**

Every Tuesday after school, students file down to the art rooms for the City High Art Club. Chatter and laughter fill the room as students get out their projects. In the back of the room on one of the popular pottery wheels, you are likely to see senior Maya Bennet as she works on her latest piece for her art independent study. Although she is now able to shape bowls with ease, Bennett's development as an artist has been a long journey.

"I liked to work with my hands at a young age," Bennett said. "I would just go through the recycling bin in my kitchen in early elementary school, and tape and build things."

Bennet says that she loves art so much because it is such a universal language that can break common barriers language provides. She is particularly drawn to sculpture because of

the interaction possible with the artwork and the freedom it allows the artist.

"It's so creative, there's no set structure to it or an order of operations," Bennett said. "It's interesting because there are so many techniques that have historically been used for sculptural and practical pieces that artists interpret with their own style and build upon."

Even though Bennett has taken classes with Lyudmila Harte at The Harte School of Art in Iowa City since eighth grade, she was originally apprehensive about taking classes at all because she valued her own creative techniques.

"As a kid, I never wanted to take any classes because I felt like art wasn't something that people could just teach you. I wanted to hang on to my creativity," Bennett said.

However, after taking a class, she saw more of the value in art

education.

"It's been a space where I can learn a bunch of different forms," Bennett said. "[The Harte School] offers a variety of mediums, but they teach some excellent technical skills for drawing and painting."

Bennet also has drawn inspiration from various art camps including BSI, Interlochen, and MICA. In traditional school art classes there isn't a big opportunity to learn about ceramics, so she is thankful she had the opportunity to attend more specified camps.

"It was really inspiring and enriching because there's a lot of information that I never had even the opportunity to learn and you don't know what hasn't been taught to you," Bennett said.

In the future, Bennett hopes to start selling her work and is

potentially doing art in college too.

"I can't imagine ceramics and sculpture not being a huge part of my life. I would love to sell my work, maybe do gallery commissions, maybe teach, I'm not really sure, but there are options," Bennett said.

She also hopes to encourage other students who might be curious but apprehensive about getting into art to not be afraid if they have an interest. A big reason that she sees students shy away from art classes is because they think there is only one respected way to create artwork.

"Just let go of the idea that there's a certain way to do art," Bennett said. "Often we look at really good artists as being the artist with the most training and technical ability, but something really special about the City High art program is that it's so experimen-

tal and that's what they're trying to push students to do."

That brings her back to the City High art department. Out of anywhere that someone could try art for the first time, Bennett thinks that City High is a great place to do so because of the relaxing atmosphere in the art room.

"The art club at City High is super open-ended and it's basically just a space where you can use whatever resources are available to you, which is special," Bennett said.

She also added how taking an art class can be a beneficial break from the stresses that other curricular classes often provide.

"I believe that every student should take an art class because using the creative side of your brain is really great for strengthening [work in all] other classes," Bennett said.