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Preparation

FEATURE ARTICLE

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The lessons of Raku.

Dressed in an apron adorned with remnants of past artistic endeavors, she wipes the perspiration from her brow and dons her protective goggles. Thick, heat-resistant gloves impede her dexterity as she grabs hold of her tongs and gives the nod of approval. The kiln door swings open, and a cloud of shimmering hot air gives way to hours of hard work glistening in the heat. It has all come down to this.

Welcome to *The Great Pottery Throw Down* - a British television series showcasing amateur potters competing in various ceramics challenges. My wife, having received her undergraduate degree in ceramics, has always tried to convey to me the intricacies of working with clay, but it wasn't until we started watching this show that I began to appreciate them.

Each season features one episode focused on the ancient Japanese practice of Raku firing. This technique involves artists removing their pottery from the kiln while it is glowing hot and placing it in a chamber filled with flammable material. As the material sets ablaze, the lid is secured, creating an oxygen-deprived environment producing one-of-a-kind results.

Renowned for its unpredictability, successful Raku firing hinges on meticulous preparation. Here are three lessons that I've garnered from this practice:

1. Draw from Experience

Be it previous failures, internet searches, or conversations with colleagues; a culmination of experiences are what lays the foundation for success. Leverage your surroundings and allow the lessons you've learned to guide your preparation.

2. Be Mindful of the Process

Whether crafting a piece of pottery, executing a project, or tackling a personal goal, successful preparation is rooted in the thoughtful consideration of every phase of the journey. It is through this focused effort that one cultivates a clear understanding of the path that lies ahead.

3. Embrace the Unknown and Adapt

Potters are accustomed to surrendering control. Once a firing begins, the results are out of their hands. They plan for this unpredictability by managing expectations and building adaptability directly into their preparations. Anticipating challenges fosters a proactive approach to problem-solving in the face of adversity.

Preparation is an advantageous component for pursuing any objective. Whether it be artistic, professional, or personal, a well-prepared individual is better equipped for success.

Let the firing commence.

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