

We artists have a complicated but inescapable relationship with boundaries. For at least 150 years it has been a cliché of the romantic imagination that they are the enemy of creativity. But by working in clay we have already embraced one boundary, defying the modernist dictate that art be based in ideas rather than in materials. If we make functional pots, we have adopted another.

Our understanding of what boundaries are and mean begins in our body's spatial intelligence. *In and out, middle and edge, up against, crossing*, are concepts we first learn physically, then metaphorically. Fundamental distinctions – *this* and not *that* – allow us to navigate the world - and to begin in our studios. It's a given that there will be limits to what we can master, what a material can do, and what we can be interested in. The boundary around what consumes our attention and exploration as artists is of utmost important to us, constituting what composer Igor Stravinsky called “the realm of necessity.” Of equal importance is what we do with that boundary. Sometimes a lifetime's worth of clarity, purpose, and energy lies in probing what distinguishes *this* from *that* (say, pottery from sculpture, clay from metal, or bowls from vases). Or a boundary may interest only insofar as we can push at it, stretch it, see how far we can go while still remaining inside. Other times (and other natures) seem to demand a complete elimination of that line – a leap over it, an upending of its primacy or meaning, a focus on what underlies seemingly different disciplines or forms. These different approaches pertain not only to materials and form structures, the basis of studio life, but to time's boundaries and divisions, and to the artificial but necessary mental lines we may draw between work and play, public and private.

What constitutes a useful and meaningful boundary, or a fruitful relationship to one, is a personal matter: one artist's creative structure can be another's deadly rut. Parameters can clarify or restrict (the same thing, really, in opposite guises) and may be most interesting when we get up close and undertake to deeply examine them. Throughout our working lives we embrace, then question or discard, the boundaries around our creative undertaking...only to take up and inscribe new ones. —MB

*And this is one of the major questions of our lives: how we keep boundaries, what permission we have to cross boundaries, and how we do so.*

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