

National Clay Week Community Outreach/Social Engagement  
Project Award application

**The GoggleWorks Ancient Kiln Project**

*A proposal by*

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*In conjunction with*  
GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, Reading PA

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**Description of proposed project and communities it intends to reach**

In Fall 2016, I plan to build and fire a fully-functional reconstruction of an ancient 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE kiln uncovered in an archaeological excavation within the historic city of Pompeii, Italy. The building of the kiln is slotted to take place on the outdoor terrace of Reading, PA's GoggleWorks Center for the Arts – a centers whose mission is 'to nurture the arts, foster creativity, promote education and enrich the community'. While this project does serve an academic purpose – it is part of my archaeology dissertation that seeks to development of an algorithm of ancient fuel consumption -- the experiential and experimental nature of the kiln's building and repeated firing provides a wonderful opportunity to create recurring programming that focuses on exposing pottery enthusiasts and students of all levels to a significant and historical aspect of ceramic fabrication. With projected programming aimed at both the extant community at GoggleWorks Center for the Arts as well as public schools in and around the Reading, PA area, the GoggleWorks Ancient Kiln Project aims to bring archaeology to the ceramics community, and archaeology and ceramics to an in-need public school population.

The kiln aimed for recreation has been targeted for a few reasons: in the first place, it was a fairly common type found frequently throughout sites in pre-Roman and Roman Mediterranean, so its recreation would serve to inform researchers about a recurring technological structure. It was known to have fired commonwares – in particular, small drinking vessels and votive cups – which was determined when these wares were pulled out of the kiln's collapsed floor during the University of Cincinnati's 2012 excavation season in Pompeii. Additionally, an associated clay soaking tank was also uncovered, revealing a raw clay deposit. This makes this particular kiln and surrounding ancient ceramic production complex a sort of holy grail – a site that offers to us the kiln, the wares that were fired in it, and even a raw sample of the clay that would have been used to make the forms. In archaeology, this level of completeness is extremely

unusual – and lucky. With all of these puzzle pieces, this complex can be effectively recreated, even down to the actual clay used by ancient potters, and various communities in and around Reading can participate in the kiln's building and firing.

Re-creating this kiln and firing it is an experimental archaeology project. This branch of archaeology re-creates situations of the past to gain further insight about ancient people, behavior, or technology. As such, it is my hope that this project creates a long-running dialogue between potters and students who are interested in archaeology, and archaeologists who study ceramic production. The kiln's positioning at an arts center that is dedicated to community engagement is a facet of the project that was heavily inspired by an ancient kiln that was constructed by Dr. Eleni Hasaki through the University of Arizona ten years ago; by building the kiln on the grounds of a school with a ceramics program, the structure continued to benefit the community long after her specific research goals had been met.<sup>1</sup>

### **Outline the desired outcome of the project and impact on said communities**

Overall, this kiln-building and firing project aims to assess fuel usage in the ancient world – the ideal outcome of the quantitative data collection that will stem from these test firings is the development of an algorithm that can tie kiln size as uncovered at archaeological sites to fuel consumption. With such a tool made available to researchers, particularly those who do not study ceramic production and process, perhaps a better connection can be made between ancient ceramic production and other industries, such as agriculture. Like many academic pursuits, however, this quantitative goal only really serves a niche (academic) community – even in the event that it has far-reaching implications there. The *qualitative* potential of this project, however, stands to have a much greater impact overall. By building programming directed at public schools in and around Reading, PA, and by involving extant GoggleWorks members with the project, the GoggleWorks Ancient Kiln Project seeks to merge academic directives with longer-term community interests and needs – and will hopefully serve as a model for other experimental archaeological projects going forward.

Over the past year, I have been planning this project with the Director of Program Operations at GoggleWorks, James Pastore. An experienced ceramicist himself who formerly ran the GoggleWorks ceramics studios, James knows the needs of the GoggleWorks community, the routes to outreach with local public schools, and the building requirements for building a kiln – all very valuable for this project! A meeting in April 2016 confirmed GoggleWork's enthusiasm for

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<sup>1</sup> Please visit <http://aiatucson.arizona.edu/greek-kiln-project> for further information on Dr. Hasaki's project.

integrating this kiln build and surrounding programming into the center's long-term educational fabric; long-term programmatic goals include a multi-part outreach effort where ceramic fabrication supplies will be taken to local schools, where students will learn a bit about archaeology and ceramics as they create historical forms to be fired in the kiln; this programming is very heavily based upon The Clay Studio's existing Claymobile project within Philadelphia. This effort will culminate with a class trip to experience either or both the firing and unloading of the kiln, ideally connecting the materials used in their projects to archaeology, material science, community, and more.

Additionally, the overall accessibility of archaeological sites, objects, and projects to in-need communities remains a point of increasing attention in the field; while things are indeed changing rapidly, so much of the field remains white and privileged simply due to the fact that historically, it is white communities that have access to archaeological education. While recent years have shown a heartening increase in gender equality within the field, the same cannot be said at this moment of diversity in archaeology – and considering that every corner of the world has its own buried cultures, that fact is very nearly unbelievable. The outreach component of this project specifically aims to bring archaeological education to non-white communities in the hopes that this may help bring some different voices to the field in the future.<sup>2</sup> If this sounds somewhat familiar to anyone who has worked in ceramics at the university level, that's because this very pattern can be observed there, too.

### **Explain how you plan on spending the awarded Amaco product and funding**

The Amaco product award would primarily go toward Amaco pre-mixed clay for essential test firings. While the academic directives of this project will require the kiln to be fired using a re-created version of the raw clay uncovered in excavations in Pompeii, that won't be necessary for the kiln's first firings – and these will be the inaugural firings of the proposed outreach program. Because Amaco's clay is reliable and designed to be used by young students, it's the perfect material to bring this kiln to life. Some of the product budget will be used for a few Amaco engobes for decorating forms in the classroom, as well as tools and paintbrushes to bring to the classes during outreach efforts. Please see the detailed materials budget sheet below.

The funding would go toward kiln upkeep and maintenance and wood purchasing – a long-term goal for GoggleWorks that, while not particularly expensive, would

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<sup>2</sup> According to 2015 US Census data, Reading's demographics do not reflect the overall predominantly-white demographics of Berks County, PA: Reading boasts a very large Latino/Latina/Latinx and/or Hispanic community at nearly 60% of the population, and African-Americans make up about 13% of the population (just to provide a snapshot of the city).