



*First and Last Breath*, by Kate MacDowell, is a piece of art that was built in 2010 using hand-built porcelain and mixed media to create a 11"x 9"x 12", monochromatic sculpture. This work displays a white mother rabbit which is shown wearing a gas mask while in a protective stance with one foot raised off of the ground. She seems to be frightened by something,

because her ears are upright, and her head is cocked. Beneath the startled mother lies her young, which appear to be newborn and weak, with their frail bodies and closed eyes.

By building a monochromatic, colorless sculpture, MacDowell created an artwork that relies on the light and its asymmetrical shape to create shading on its own, creating natural shadows. The natural shadows work to define the important features of the structure, and highlight the textures throughout the piece. The gas mask appears to be smoother than the rest of the piece while the fur on the large rabbit seems coarse and shaggy. The texture of the young rabbits is a happy medium between the mother's fur and the gas mask, being presented as a loose skin that could be both smooth and rough at times, giving all of the rabbits an overall natural look. Both a geometric and an organic shape is present throughout the entire sculpture; with the mask being geometric, while the rabbit and its young would be described as organic. An oval shape for the ears seems to repeat as well as the circles which are presented on the gas mask.

This sculpture appears to be in the round, because whichever way you gaze at it, you will always be able to notice something new. There is not just one section of this piece that seems to be more important than everything else. Overall, the space of the sculpture is used very well, with the gas mask jutting out from the rest of the figure, and the young rabbits under the mother. The young help create a balance between the shape of the head and gas mask with the bottom section of the artwork. There appears to be very little space between the young and the mother, which helps the babies pop out from the rest of the sculpture. Line plays a huge role on creating movement. The lines in the mask point back to the face and radiate from a point located near the eye. There is also a line that moves your eyes from the ears to the paw, and the paw points directly to the baby rabbits. The ears could also appear to be angled as if to point to the young

### **Introduction**

In the introduction, the author gives us the basic facts about the artwork and a simple description of the subject matter.

### **Body**

The author makes a point to explain the impression of the color scheme, lighting, textures, and shape.

The author explains the use of space, eye movement, and line.

as well. Overall, the rabbit's proportion is about equal when compared to the size in which it would be presented in reality. The gas mask; however, would not be of an actual size. This particular gas mask would be the size for an animal, when it would normally be sized for a human. Rhythm is also present throughout the artwork with the circle shape being in all of the creature's eyes as well as the circles in the mask. There is also harmony in the rabbit compared to its nature, and variety with the gas mask being man-made while the rabbits come from nature.

As the viewer may analyze this sculpture, it is completely obvious that the mask is the focal point of the entire piece. The focal point is created firstly, by using convergence. Both the ears and the feet seem to be angled to point towards the gas mask as well the babies that seem to be looking up towards the gas mask. An unusual object, such as the gas mask, also creates the focal point. The mask is not parallel in nature when compared to the rabbit; instead, the mask comes from human life. Contrast also works to highlight the gas mask by giving the mask a smoother texture and shape, protruding the mask from the face, and using this geometric shape while the rest of the sculpture contains organic shapes. All of these ideas add up to the fact that the gas mask is an odd object to have in an artwork, and creates questioning as to the mother is wearing a gas mask. The title shows life and death, with the young just being born, and possibly dying shortly after as the result of disaster. It creates a feeling of distress and sorrow, as the young can be looked as taking their first breath, which may or my not be toxic. The mask suggests that the mother is preparing for disaster, and that she senses danger by her stance.

The author explains the use of proportion, rhythm, and harmony.

### **Interpretation**

The author made a choice to explain why the focal point is the focal point here as part of her interpretation. She also refers to the title and what it might imply in wrapping up her thoughts about what the piece means.