



# a natural state

**Artist: Billie Anne McKellar**

## **Video 6: Archaeology, B. Artifacts**

Sandra Reinhardt: Well we call an artifact anything that's – well, and archaeological artifact anything that's fifty years or older. So, that can be something like this fragment. It can be a building, it can be a row of stones that are in a straight line or something- anything that will give us some sort of indication that people have been in the area and they've used or changed any kind of materials- made things. But we need for it to be fifty years or more.

What's important to us, is to find a piece of pottery in context, that is, with other artifacts that we may be able to date and get some idea of the age of materials that we're working with, because this has changed so little over time, we really need to have some other artifacts, either projectile points or some trade item to give us an idea of how old something might be, because this is so similar to contemporary pottery. Without a date on it, or without some other material to date it with, it's really hard to take a guess about how old something might be.

This is one piece of Catawba pottery, which is just a fragment and we're really lucky to have it because it has a date on it, which is very unusual for finding fragments, but this is very similar to pottery that has been made by the Catawbas for over a thousand years. We typically find an unglazed surface. This one has been rubbed so that this is a smooth surface, and some mottling from the amount of oxygen in the fire when it was fired. But, the Catawbas have a tradition that's probably the oldest unbroken pottery tradition in the country- east of the Mississippi.

We were recently doing some shovel testing near our building and found this piece of ceramic, which is very similar to what Catawbas are making today. Its unglazed, it's the same type of clay, same technique for building the pot. It has the same firing, and we wouldn't have any idea how old it is, except that we found it with some other artifacts. This is a piece of olive green glass, its got a really tight curve to it, and it's probably a bottle, and we can look through our magic charts and tell, pretty much how old that piece of glass is. We also have a piece of European ceramic. It's a glazed surface with

some blue and white decoration on it and we can date that, so these two pieces will give us a clue of how old this piece of pottery is, but to just find this by itself, we really wouldn't have any idea. It could be 1950, it could be 750- not 750, 950, so we really wouldn't know without some other artifacts with it.  
*End.*