studio talk

Process and Perspectives in Clay

2023







Presented by ceramics MONTHLY PotteryMaking Illustrated

L&L

hotkilns.com

TRUST YOUR KILN

Rajiv Surendra
@rajivsurendra

"My very first solo firing was in an L&L kiln and since then I've formed a special bond with the brand, coincidentally encountering them in multiple shared studio spaces where I've worked independently. The relationship between potter and kiln feels like a life-long one, and I'm very happy to have found my match!"

- Rajiv Surendra • *@rajivsurendra*

CHOOSE YOUR KILN

hotkilns.com/*choose-your-kiln*

Manufactured in Swedesboro, NJ
800-750-8350 • info@hotkilns.com

POTTER'S choice FLUX

CONE 5/6

Piece fired to Cone 6
on Porcelain Clay.

Scan to learn more.

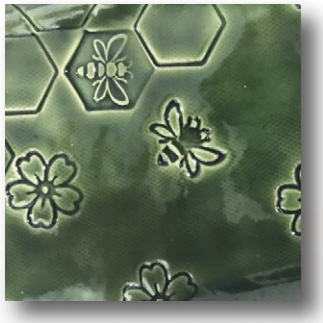
PC Flux - 18
HONEYDEW
TOP COAT

Potter's Choice - 16
PURPLE CRYSTAL
BOTTOM COAT

AMACO

Find more layering examples on Amaco socials! Instagram: @amacobrent TikTok: @americanartclay Facebook: @AMACObrent

spectrum®
GLAZES



New Spectrum Stamps and Rollers

Relyef stamps are made with 3D printers and leave a clearer and cleaner impression because they are made with a graduated angle to smoothly cut into clay. The angle allows you to make your impressions as deep as you like without leaving behind borders or messy lines. All stamps and rollers are made with biodegradable bioplastic material. Ask for these stamps at your local clay and glaze supplier.

All samples were glazed with
Spectrum's Cone 5 Semi-Transparent glazes.

www.spectrumglazes.com • (800) 970-1970

For a free catalogue, please email: sales@spectrumglazes.com

The Bailey AutoFire does all the work!

Photo by Kun Li

Austin Community College

"We have fired our Bailey Studio DLX AutoFire 34/22 kiln for over a year and every time we get fabulous results with our Shinos and reduction glazes.

"Having the shuttle design makes the loading easy on our backs and the Bailey AutoFire Computer Control System (along with the oxyprobe) makes our firings informative, dependable and effortless. We are very pleased with both the reliable operation of the Bailey AutoFire and the impressive energy efficiency!

"We love the convenience of the totally automated firing system and the dependable beautiful reduction results of our Bailey.

"The Bailey Kiln Techs were extremely helpful and always available to advise us on our initial firings.

We highly recommend the Bailey AutoFire Gas Kilns!"

Julie Isaacsen
Art Studios and Exhibitions Coordinator
Austin Community College Art Department
Austin, Tx.

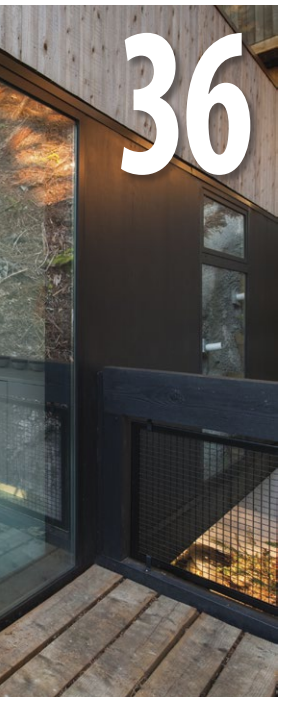
Unrivaled Energy-Efficiency
Rock Solid Trouble Free Automation
Easy to Use Manual Controls
No Need for Expensive Servicing
Virtually Maintenance Free
Stainless Forced Air Combustion
Best Tech Support

POTTERY EQUIPMENT Bailey INNOVATION SINCE 1976

www.baileypottery.com **TOLL FREE** (800) 431-6067

CONTENTS

Cover Top row, left to right: Linda Crossan, Shinro Yamamoto, Bekah Bliss. Middle row, left to right: Brandon Christy, Jason Vantomme. Bottom row, left to right: Timothy Sullivan, Julie Pennington.



Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the third issue of *Studio Talk!* This compendium filled with articles by ceramic makers to watch and discover is brought to you by the staff of *Ceramics Monthly* and *Pottery Making Illustrated*. The following pages feature seven artists who open up to readers about their inspirations, thoughts on ceramic trends, and their roles in the current field. Several of these innovative thinkers also take us step by step through the techniques they use and the tools that help them realize their ideas. Others share a sneak peek into their studios and talk about their day-to-day practices. We hope you enjoy this deep dive into the creative minds and lives of fellow ceramic artists.

Holly Goring
Pottery Making Illustrated
Managing Editor

Katie Reaver
Ceramics Monthly
Interim Editor

studio talk
Process and Perspectives in Clay

Publisher and Managing Director
Bill Janeri

Managing Editor
Holly Goring, *Pottery Making Illustrated*

Interim Editor
Katie Reaver, *Ceramics Monthly*

Editorial Assistant
Kaitlynne Flanigan

Production Manager
Kerry Burgdorfer

National Sales Director
Mona Thiel

Advertising Services
Pam Wilson

Editorial and Advertising Offices
550 Polaris Parkway, Suite 510,
Westerville, OH 43082 USA
editorial@ceramicsmonthly.org

The American Ceramic Society
Executive Director Mark J. Mecklenborg

Studio Talk is published by The American Ceramic Society, 550 Polaris Parkway, Suite 510, Westerville, OH 43082, USA.

www.ceramicartsnetwork.org

ceramics MONTHLY

PotteryMaking Illustrated

CERAMIC ARTS NETWORK

SHIFTING FOCUS

Brandon Christy

1 Grouping of wheel-thrown pots decorated with glaze-painted dogwood flowers. **2** Interior of Brandon Christy's main studio work area at the beginning of a glaze session. **3** Brandon Christy throwing a mug form using red stoneware.

Editors: What role does color play in your work?

Brandon Christy: Color in my work is used much like it is used in nature. In nature, color is used to attract insects and birds for pollination or as a food source. The bright colors that I use in my decoration also catch the eye of a passing viewer and bring them in closer to inspect the decoration and pot closer. Upon closer inspection, the viewer notices the depth of multiple glazes, or the thin lines made from carving into semi-wet glaze using an X-Acto knife to reveal the base glaze below.

Eds: How do you build up the painterly surfaces that are prevalent in your work, and why do you use those specific materials and techniques?

BC: I use multiple layers of glaze to create the decoration or imagery for the visual depth and movement that can only be obtained using glaze. Using glazes also has a way of illuminating the surface that reflects light in a completely different way than using underglaze or slip decoration. With today's availability of stable commercial and recipe glazes the possibilities are literally endless.

Eds: What do you do to push yourself and to stay engaged and develop new forms and narratives?

2

> “After a 14-year hiatus and never having sold pottery, it was a bit of a gamble.”

BC: Wood firing at a local community studio allows me to make new forms to take advantage of the atmosphere of the kiln. Many of the new forms end up making it into my cone-6 lineup of pots. Also getting into a major fine arts ceramics gallery pushed me to focus on making more refined work.

The Studio

In 2020, my wife, twin boys, and I moved to our forever home in the lovely town of Berea, Kentucky. Filled with numerous artists and potters, Berea is known as the crafts capital of Kentucky. It is the perfect place to raise our family. While the property we bought had everything we were looking for in a house, it did not have a dedicated studio space. After trying to hire a contractor or two, and with rising construction material costs, it soon became evident that I needed to build the studio myself. So, in April of 2021, my father-in-law and I started laying out the studio in our backyard. Although I had very little to no building experience, I figured that with a little research, I could build a studio. So, thanks to a few building books, websites, and YouTube, I felt comfortable enough to do the work myself.

It was stressful, hard work, but at the end of the process, I had the largest studio space to make pots in since college. The stress mounted because we were building at the peak of the pandemic, the costs of materials kept rising, and the schedule was rushed by needing a place to make pots for an upcoming gallery exhibition. We built a simple 24×24-foot (576-square-foot) garage-style building that matched the exterior of our house. The studio has several large windows and a 9-foot garage door at the rear of the studio. To give the studio an airy, light feel, I used scissor trusses to give the studio vaulted a 10-foot ceiling, which makes the whole space seem much bigger than it is. There was an existing 10×8-foot (80-square-foot) shed near the site of the studio that I

3

4 Exterior of the studio showing the corner windows and the main and side entrance doors. **5** A batch of square mugs in the process of handles being added. **6** Christy using an X-Acto knife to carve through semi-wet glaze. This reveals the base glaze underneath the painted glaze flower. **7** Pots ready to be photographed. The photo table is also used as a shipping station. **8** *Dogwood Bowl*, 10 in. (25 cm) in diameter, red stoneware, multiple layered glazes, wax resist, fired to cone 6 in oxidation.

ran electricity to and use as my kiln shed. This allowed me to keep all of the fumes and heat out of the studio workspace, which is especially nice during the hot summer months.

The studio workspace is divided into three primary work areas. The area used daily is from my main entry door to a couple of large windows in the corner of the studio, where I have my wheel, clay storage, wedging table, and desk. One of my favorite things about my studio is the large corner windows. They allow me to work as well as watch my children play in the backyard and provide the best natural light for the entire studio. In the opposite front corner away from the windows is my photography area since it is the darkest part of the studio. The large table/shelf that I photograph work on is also where I do all my packing for shipping, as well as storage for shipping supplies.

To the rear of the studio, behind the throwing area, is my glazing area. This corner of my studio has a side-access door that leads to my kiln shed a few feet away. In this area I built a heavy, low worktable that lifts my glaze buckets off the floor and installed shelves for bisque and finished work storage. (The idea of the low glaze table came from my visit to a nonprofit community ceramics studio called Bobtown Arts in Berea. Not having to bend over and dip or stir glazes has been a true back saver!) The last corner has a 9-foot garage door that allows for easy load-in and load-out during

7

8

the craft-show season. This area also is a miscellaneous storage area that contains several ongoing projects such as an electric-to-gas kiln conversion, as well as all my raw material storage.

The center of the studio is a movable workspace. All the tables are on casters and can be moved or configured to any of the spaces in the studio where I'm working at the time. I stand while throwing but wanted to have the ability to move my wheel to different parts of the studio. So, I built a mobile wheel stand from leftover building materials and heavy-duty casters. I also added an elevated shelf to hold ware boards and hooks to hold wire tools so they wouldn't get lost as much. The mobile wheel stand is nice for throwing near the windows, or for waxing in the glaze area. It also makes cleaning around the wheel much easier.

Paying the Bills (and Dues)

In 2002, I graduated from Western Kentucky University with a BFA in ceramics. As a first-generation college graduate, I was kind of lost trying to figure out what to do after school. Having lived near Mammoth Cave National Park my whole life, I was lucky enough to get a trail crew job right out of school. For the next 10 years, I worked on the National Park trail crew, and it allowed me to find my passion for the outdoors, most especially wildflowers. When the park service job finished, I worked as a lineman for a local telephone company. In 2016, my wife received

9 *Sunset Meadow Pitcher*, 8 in. (20 cm) in height, wheel-thrown red stoneware, multiple layers of glazes separated by wax resist, handmade bird stamps, fired to cone 6 in oxidation. **10** *Meadow Bowl*, 6 in. (15 cm) in diameter, wheel-thrown red stoneware, multiple layers of glazes separated by wax resist, fired to cone 6 in oxidation.

a promotion in her job that required us to move to Eastern Kentucky. Since I couldn't keep my lineman job, and we had no children, it gave me the freedom to start making pottery again. After a 14-year hiatus and never having sold pottery, it was a bit of a gamble. At first, I started selling at farmer's markets and local craft fairs. After a year or so I started selling online, then went fully online during the pandemic as most artists did. Now that in-person events are back in full swing, craft fairs and farmer's markets make up 65% of my sales, online sales are around 30%, and gallery sales are around 5%.

Most of my work is made on a potter's wheel using red stoneware clay that I fire to cone 6. My pieces are wheel-thrown, functional pots, comfortable enough for everyday use with one-of-a-kind glaze-painting decoration. The decoration is achieved by using multiple glaze layers separated by wax resist. During the cone-6 firing, the glazes shift and move to abstract the image or landscape decorating the pots. Many of my decorations are inspired by landscapes and scenery from my days working for the park service, past travels to the American West, and the local landscape and flora.

Marketing

For the most part, my marketing has happened organically from social media. I try to use my Instagram and Facebook pages to show not only new work but also how I make my pots. I try not to make my post about selling my art; rather, it's a way to share what I am doing. Oddly enough, this non-aggressive way of advertising has increased my sales every year for the past three years.

As for my in-person events, finishing work is what attracts people. As with most ceramic artwork, it simply looks better in person. Since each pot is a three-dimensional canvas that changes continuously from the front to the back of the pot, it is much better to hold the piece and read its artistic story as you spin it around. The ability to touch and feel the different surfaces and comfort of a handle is just something online sales cannot compete with.

Mind

Time away from the studio is mostly spent with my wife and kids, usually hiking, or riding bikes on the great trails here in Berea. I also spend time in my flower garden outside my studio pulling weeds and adding new plants. One of the best things about living in Berea is the access to a community-fired wood kiln at Bobtown Arts. Making pots for wood firing gives me a chance to experiment with new forms and different making techniques, and lots of times these forms end up being used in my cone-6 work. Plus, it is always great to get together with local potters and talk shop while tossing wood into a wood kiln.

To see more, visit Instagram or Facebook @barkcamppottery.

11 *Fall Chickadee Pitcher,* 9½ in. (24 cm) in height. **12** *Fall Leaves Jar*, 6 in. (15 cm) in height. **11, 12** Wheel-thrown red stoneware, multiple layers of glazes separated with wax resist, fired to cone 6 in oxidation.

A PLACE TO DWELL

By Linda Crossan

1

Editors: What do you see as the current trends in ceramics and where do you see yourself in that field?

Linda Crossan: I have created art in many different mediums, but ceramics really captured my attention like no other. The variety of techniques available to the clay artist allows for exploration into new ways of interpreting historical work. I am most interested in the abstract and the opportunity to reinterpret painting and other mediums in the ceramic pieces I produce. It seems to me that there is room in the clay world for many styles. That is what attracts me to it and keeps my attention.

Eds: What is the most challenging aspect of working in clay (either technically or in terms of building a career)?

LC: Getting the work out there in the world is the hardest part of the process for me. I just want to stay in my studio and create. The process of figuring out how to best make a piece is one of the things I love about the medium. But an artist friend once told me that a piece of art cannot achieve its full purpose unless it is found by someone who loves it. Because my focus is non-functional work I entered pieces in calls for art that I found in the back of *Ceramics Monthly* and on Café (www.callforentry.org), a website that gathers calls for art submissions from all over the country. The idea was to build a portfolio of credits that might help me find a gallery that would be willing to sell my work locally. It was an affirming experience to have my work chosen and included in different shows around the country. And I have gained valuable experience in shipping art. Some of the shows were in-person gallery exhibitions and others were online only.

We are artists and artists aren't always good at the selling part. Today there are more choices for how you put your work out into

> “. . . there is room in the clay world for many styles. That is what attracts me to it and keeps my attention.”

1 Linda Crossan in her studio with a handbuilt sculpture in progress. **2** Studio tables with work in progress. **3** *Fragmentary Blue*, 8 in. (20 cm) in diameter, raku clay, ferric chloride, cobalt carbonate, copper carbonate powders with steel wool, copper wire, various combustible materials including banana peels, coffee grounds, wood chips, horse hair, fired to 1800˚F (982°C) in an aluminum-foil saggar in a raku kiln.

4

5

the world than ever before. The hard part, I think, is figuring out which one feels right to you. I worked in the advertising community long enough to understand the process of promoting a product and now I'd rather spend my time being an artist. So, I have looked for others to fill that role for me. That way, if you're lucky, you can find someone who loves to do the promotion part and then the passions of a community will create a stronger effort for the work.

Eds: What techniques do you use to make work and why?
LC: I love to work on the wheel and to handbuild. The choice to make a piece by throwing or handbuilding depends on what I'm trying to say in the work. Throwing, for me, is a fluid technique that I enjoy immensely. Opening a large bowl is almost a spiritual experience. My work is usually simple in shape so that the chosen surface treatments can be the focus. I've spent time recently focused on throwing pieces that I can raku or saggar fire. I find myself obsessed with atmospheric surfaces that have less predictable results. I also like making more complicated pieces such as teapots and lidded jars. These forms present a different challenge that satisfy my inherited mechanical engineering tendencies.

Handbuilding takes more time and requires a plan from the start. It is also the technique that, for me, is a chance to stretch my creative muscle and make abstract work. I developed a slab coil technique that allows me to better control the form. By offsetting the slabs and working them into each other in an opposite direction, the seams disappear. I then use a wooden spatula to paddle and further shape the piece, creating smooth curves. Because the work requires sturdiness to attain height, I have the chance to step away, look at the work anew each day, and then make adjustments.

6

4 *MTL13*, 13½ in. (34 cm) in height, red stoneware, white porcelain slip, bisque fired, additional colors of porcelain slip, Amaco Potter's Choice Saturation Gold glaze, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln. One of a 15-piece series of handmade pieces based on drawings made while sitting in Mark Twain's Hartford, Connecticut, library during a special opportunity for writers and artists. **5** *To The Milky Way*, 5¾ in. (15 cm) in height, raku clay, pit fired. **6** *Shadows Over Stone*, 6½ in. (17 cm) in height, white stoneware, lined with Amaco Satin Matte Black, Mason stain-tinted porcelain slips, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln.

7 *How To Breath*, 13 in. (33 cm) in height, handbuilt white stoneware, black slip, burnished, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln.

Abstract, nonrepresentational art provides me an opportunity to create forms that speak to someone in ways I can't predict. That, to me, is everything.

Eds: What is the most valuable advice you've received as an artist?
LC: Show up every day! When I finally had my own studio space that I could walk into and shut the door, I wasn't prepared for the seemingly endless excuses I could come up with for not going in there and working: the kitchen needed to be cleaned up, the laundry needed to be done, I had to go to the grocery store, and on and on. My daughter is the one who finally said to me, "Mom, you just have to go in there every day whether you make something or not. You must claim the space and dwell in it for it to become the safe place to expose your inner soul as an artist and make the work that you know is in you."

Once I did that, I found that I could create the work I had always wanted to do. Then, I started listening to other voices and immersing myself in other clay artists' works that I studied, paid attention to, and gathered as a resource. I have an extensive Pinterest library of images that inspire me and inform me of my own process. I intentionally study the images away from my studio so that when I enter my space, the work is my own and not a copy. I've also had great teachers along the way whom I've been able to ask questions of and a clay community that I spend time with making work and sharing ideas, getting feedback on the process as we work together.

Studio Setup

My studio is the room above our garage, so it provides a nice amount of space and good light from large windows on the south and west walls. I have a sink and cabinets in one corner and a large storage area that is adjacent. I created a mosaic above the sink with stones, broken clay pieces, and glass. In it, I included magnetic stones, mug handles, and a vase to allow me to hang up a towel or snap a tool to a prominent location.

My main worktable is a 9×5-foot wooden table that I got from the Volunteer State Community College science department. It's really great—it has a pull-out surface and a full shelf under the main surface. The studio has two more tables; one was my old dining table and the other is an antique drafting table. These provide plenty of surface area to work on many things at the different stages of the clay process. The space also has shelves to dry and store work on. I recycle clay in 5-gallon buckets, and the newest additions to my studio are airtight containers to keep moist clay in. If I were to add anything at this point, it would be a wedging table. When I first started setting up the space as a studio, I painted one wall with chalkboard paint so I could test out ideas. But I soon wrote a quote from Leonard Cohen on it that I haven't wanted to erase.

"Ring the Bells that still can ring,
Forget your perfect offering,
There's a crack in everything,
That's how the light gets in."

To learn more, visit www.crowsthreestudio.com.

EXPLORATION LEADS TO EVOLUTION

By Timothy Sullivan

1 Lidded jar, 13 in. (33 cm) in height, 50/50 blend of Laguna Clay's B-Mix Cone 10 and Highwater Clays' Helios Porcelain, multiple trailed, brushed, and sprayed glazes, fired in reduction to cone 10, 2023. **2** Timothy Sullivan's kiln shed in his backyard. **3** Timothy Sullivan throwing in his studio. **4** Bottle, 14 in. (36 cm) in height, 50/50 blend of Laguna Clay's B-Mix Cone 10 and Highwater Clays' Helios Porcelain, fired in reduction to cone 10, 2019.

Editors: What is the most challenging aspect of working in clay (either technically or in terms of building a career)?

Timothy Sullivan: In late 1999, I returned to ceramics as a full-time potter after a 20-year hiatus working in a variety of corporate jobs. I hadn't touched clay in any serious way since graduate school, and the challenges were nearly overwhelming. Choosing a kiln, a clay body, a firing temperature and atmosphere, and building a library of glaze formulas was daunting. The more challenging aspect, for me, was to develop an approach to the materials to support the development of a personal aesthetic. I simply had no idea what I wanted my work to look like and what I wanted to explore. At the same time, I had to build an understanding of the materials and processes involved in making pottery. For the first two years, I worked tirelessly, and yet I ended up throwing away most of the finished pieces. I remember a specific aha moment when I unloaded a bowl from a firing and could see the beginnings of a path forward.

How to explore and enhance my personal aesthetic is a continuing challenge and one that I think we all face. Particular to ceramics, and certainly within my approach, is the bifurcated nature of the process. I fire an 18-cubic-foot Bailey natural-gas kiln. Generally, I fire once a month and split my time relatively equally between making and glazing. When I make pots, I make multiples of each form, which can take several to many days to complete depending upon complexity. When I glaze and stack pieces for the cone-10 reduction firing, I select pieces to support my work's evolution, my inventory requirements, and to optimize kiln space. That means I'm not necessarily firing the work I just made. For me, the treatment of form and surface are separated, and the results are not revealed until I open the kiln. I believe that it's important to continue to take risks with the work, but I can't risk everything, every time.

So, for me, the greatest challenges are how to think holistically about the work, and how to continue to evolve. How to extend my visual vocabulary and incorporate meaningful risk.

3

4

> **“Understand your tolerance for risk. Growth comes through risk. That doesn’t mean go all risky all the time, but thoughtful risk that can move the work into new areas.”**

Eds: How do you come up with the forms and surfaces that are prevalent in your work and what techniques do you use to make your vessels?

TS: When I returned to clay, I threw pots on the wheel. It had been decades since I had thrown, but it came back to me relatively quickly. I chose B-Mix as my clay body and cone-10 reduction for my firing process. I had never had any real knowledge of glazes, and I had overly relied on the process benefits from salt firings to finish my work. Now, without salt, I knew that I had to learn a lot more about glazes.

I began with Greg Daly’s excellent introduction to glazes in his book *Glazes and Glazing Techniques*. I picked some of his glaze recipes to begin with, and I was almost certainly influenced by the imagery of his pots in the book as well. I also wanted to learn about the chemistry of glazes and turned to Digital Fire’s Insight to help me understand the chemistry inside the materials. Over time I added additional reference books to my library and immersed myself in recipes and theories. I wanted to build a broad palette of glazes that could work together.

As I began finishing my pottery, I tried dozens and dozens of glazes. I had no real experience with glaze application either and began pouring, dipping, and brushing. As I experimented, I felt I needed more control and built a spray booth. My aha moment with the work was a bowl that came out of the kiln with lovely overlapping

glazes and some linear elements where some glazes had been trailed. Ultimately, I incorporated glaze trailing as a key component in my surfaces. I also discovered that layering glazes above the trailing, in combination with a reduction atmosphere and my kiln's own process vagaries, could allow me to achieve rich and complex surfaces. Trailing can allow for a complex patterning sustainable even with the glaze variegation above it. Over time, and through experimentation, I began to re-fire some pieces in an electric kiln at lower temperatures. I found that my two iron glazes would have dramatic color changes at temperatures as low as about 1700°F (927°C). Within the last few years, I've also added brushed glazes to the mix and can use as many as 10 to 12 different glazes on a piece.

As my surfaces became increasingly complex, I began to simplify my forms. Most of my work now is wheel thrown, some altered with handbuilt additions.

Eds: What strategies have you developed to handle challenges you face, including setbacks in the studio, or difficulties along the path to becoming an artist?

TS: This is a complicated question with both technical and business challenges. The biggest business challenge is how to sell the work, and I decided early on to sell at art fairs around the country. The obvious issues are: acceptance; weather at the time of the show; travel; and accommodations. Another big challenge is

5 Bottle, 13 in. (33 cm) in height, 50/50 blend of Laguna Clay's B-Mix Cone 10 and Highwater Clays' Helios Porcelain, trailed and sprayed glazes, fired in reduction to cone 10, and electric refired to 1750°F (399°C) for color development, 2022. **6** Additional in-process pot storage and a Bailey slab roller. **7** Primary work space for throwing, assembling, and initial glaze application, and a Peter Pugger pugmill.

8 A Bailey 18-cubic-foot gas kiln with forced-air blowers. **9** Storage for clay and pots in process. **10** Timothy Sullivan throwing a pot on the wheel. **11** Vessel, 17 in. (43 cm) in height, 50/50 blend of Laguna Clay's B-Mix Cone 10 and Highwater Clays' Helios Porcelain, trailed and sprayed glazes, fired in reduction to cone 10, 2021.

determining if the show organizer has done a good job promoting the show and will buyers show up. There is now a great deal of information about the big shows, and they have generally turned out as advertised.

The biggest problem I've encountered is that they are rarely transparent in regards to the jury process. You are accepted, wait-listed, or denied, with no information about your ranking among the applicants. It can be difficult to build a clientele in a particular market if your participation in the local art fair is sporadic. Over time, I've figured out how to build a workable schedule by applying to multiple shows for the same weekend and building my schedule around specific shows.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I've cut back on my show schedule and am attempting to build an online presence. I rebuilt my website to better showcase my work and allow for real-time online sales. I've also tried to be more active on social media.

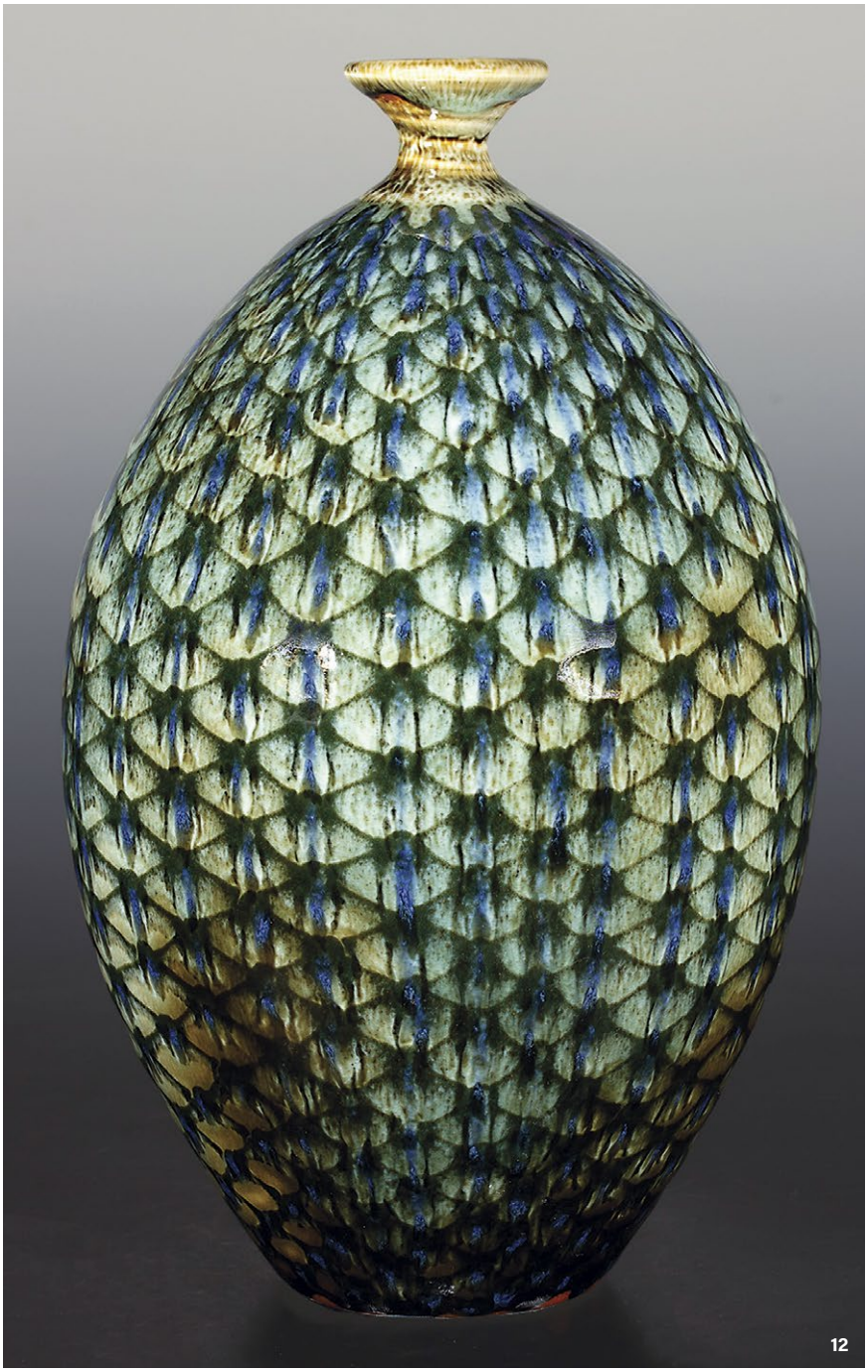
Obviously, making pottery has numerous technical challenges. Although many resources are available, I think many of us work in relative isolation, and with our own particular set of technical issues. Literally thousands of glaze recipes are available that can

be tested and incorporated. I currently use about 15 on a regular basis: a few as published, many of my own design, and some highly modified. While other potters use similar glazes, my combinations are unique. When I have technical issues, it can be very difficult to get help. I have learned just not to give up on a problem. Digital Fire's Insight has been a great help to me in understanding how to build an approach to solving particular glaze problems by being able to see the chemistry beneath the raw materials.

Eds: What is the most valuable advice you've received as an artist?
TS: First, just do the work; go to the studio and don't wait for inspiration or the right mood. This is pretty self-explanatory, but when you work by and for yourself, I've found it helpful to have a regular work routine and not be easily diverted from it.

Second, really look at the finished work. For me, the art school critiques (as painful as they were) established the criticality of really looking at a finished piece. Early on, I measured success in terms of how a piece met my intentions. Ultimately, I came to believe that my intentions could blind me to possibilities I had never considered. While a piece may not have fired the way I hoped, something may have happened that could become the basis for a new direction. This doesn't mean that I abandon my original intentions, but it allows for additional exploration. I believe this approach supports evolution along multiple pathways at the same time.

Third, understand your tolerance for risk. Growth comes through risk. That doesn't mean go all risky all the time, but thoughtful risk that can move the work into new areas. Thomas Edison framed failures as necessary steps toward success, and I believe that to be true. One of the beauties of making pottery is that a body of work can be both diverse and singularly representative of the maker at the same time.



12 Vessel, 11 in. (28 cm) in height, 50/50 blend of Laguna Clay's B-Mix Cone 10 and Highwater Clays' Helios Porcelain, trailed and sprayed glazes, fired in reduction to cone 10, 2023.

Studio Setup

I maintain a home studio. The basement is divided into three sections of which the smallest one is storage for clay and pots in process; the largest is for pottery storage racks and a slab roller; and the one I'm in the most has a couple of shelves and worktables along with a wheel, a sink, and a Peter Pugger pugmill. I have one of the bedrooms set up with lights and a booth with a graduated background for photography and another as an office.

I have two Skutt electric kilns in the garage and a homemade ball mill. I also keep storage tubs in the garage to hold finished work with location IDs associated with my website inventory. I have a kiln shed in the backyard with a Bailey 18-cubic-foot forced-air gas kiln, a spray booth, and glaze material storage.

The studio basics have remained fairly constant over the years, and I'm not anticipating, or desiring, any significant changes. I'm very happy with my initial decision to have a studio in my home rather than leasing a commercial space. For me, the economics are just so compelling. I really prefer to work alone, and a commercial studio would have driven my costs up so much that I would have been required to seek some combination of production pottery, studio mates, students, or a gallery to help offset the costs. While the multi-level challenges can be tiring, I have complete freedom in the use of both the equipment and the space.

To learn more, visit https://creeksidepottery.com, Instagram @creekside.pottery, and Facebook @CreeksidePottery.

EMERGING SKILLS, EMERGING PATTERNS

By Shinro Yamamoto

Editors: What techniques do you use to make your work and why?
Shinro Yamamoto: The technique I'm currently working on is marbling. It is also called nerikomi or neriage. There are two main types of this technique. One is a handbuilt method that combines many small parts into a pattern to make a large block, which is then sliced into plates. Another way is to use a potter's wheel. My work is based on the latter technique using the potter's wheel.

First, multiple clays of different colors are kneaded together and then thrown on a potter's wheel. Through this process, the mixed clay creates intricate and fluid patterns.

When the wheel throwing is finished, the resulting surface of the work is covered with a clay slurry, which muddles the surface and disguises what kind of pattern has been created. After a while, when the surface of the work has dried moderately, it is then scraped, and the pattern appears for the first time. The entire piece, including the interior and the foot, is carefully trimmed to create the vessel's shape. The unpredictable patterns that emerge through trimming always give me a fresh impression.

It's like the beauty you see in nature—flowing clouds, flickering flames, and swaying water. I'm always excited when I'm trimming a form because I see new patterns emerge and change moment by moment.

The appeal of this technique is that it is not an artificial decoration in a calculated way. However, if it had been 100% luck, I wouldn't have been so fascinated by this technique. As I continued to explore this technique, I realized that it was possible to interweave my own intentions, albeit slightly, into the patterns. There are several factors that shape the pattern, such as the ratio of

1

colored clay, the method and degree of kneading the clay, and the amount of force applied when pulling up the walls on the potter's wheel. By repeated trial and error with each piece, I deepen my understanding of this technique and continue to challenge myself to create new works. The expression of nerikomi is still unexplored, and that is my motivation to work on this technique.

Eds: What role does color play in your work?
SY: Nerikomi works are made with different colors of clay, and this color combination is very important. The hue, brightness, and saturation of the pigments used to color the clay greatly affect the atmosphere of the work.

In my work, I often use black-and-white monotones. This simple combination is chic and understated, yet the contrast is strong. In addition, monotone works are easy to harmonize with any situation and feel like they have a strong presence.

In addition to the black-and-white combination, I sometimes add shades of gray. A gradation is created by inserting neutral colors into the strong black-and-white contrast, and the atmosphere changes to a calm and smooth feeling. The overall impression of the work is much milder. When I want my work to have a glamorous or seasonal feel, I use a slightly contrasting color, or I can insert a bright color into this monotone. A touch of pale pink between the black and white makes the work much livelier.

Another important point is the ratio of colors. For example, in the case of a black-and-white work, it is sometimes more interesting to change the balance of the two colors than to use equal amounts of both. A pattern in which white flows into a black

"Every time I take on the challenge of creating a new work, I feel that my skills are deepening. And when a unique idea is realized as a harmonious and beautiful work, I feel the ultimate joy and sense of accomplishment."

1 Black-and-white nerikomi vase, 9½ in. (24 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 7, 2022. **2** Shinro Yamamoto's studio, located in the mountains. **3** Exhibition room.

4

background, or vice versa, creates blank spaces in the marble pattern, making each pattern more impressive.

If you try to express the color of pottery by mixing pigment into clay, it tends to be flat and dull compared to using glaze. Glaze melts and flows, creating shades and crystals on the surface. When using a single color of stained clay, the results tend to be flat. However, by increasing the colors of the clay and kneading them properly (like the nerikomi technique), complex patterns and interest can be can be made. And it is certain that the artist's sensibility is strongly reflected in the use of colors in their works.

Eds: What excites you about the field of ceramics?
SY: Until now, I've been doing this because I want to expand the expression and techniques of traditional pottery. At the same time, there is a growing desire to establish a modern, novel, and unique way of making ceramics.


5


6


7

4 Electric wheels in the workroom. **5** Workroom (about 215 square feet (20 square meters)) with two electric wheels, one table, and one shelf. **6** Kick wheel, used for working in clays other than porcelain. **7** Displayed works in exhibition room. **8** Black-and-white nerikomi vase, 9½ in. (24 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 7, 2022.

In this era, all kinds of works from all over the world come in as visual information, so maybe I'm inspired by that kind of thing. In the desire to create my own original work, I sometimes come up with ideas for new works. I'm excited at the thought that I might be able to create original works that I have never seen before. However, even if I have a clear image of an original work in my mind, it is often the case that I am just one step away from finding a way to make it a reality due to a lack of experience or knowledge.

The knowledge required for working in clay covers a wide range of skills and materials, such as clay, glaze, firing, decoration, etc. And when I try to learn each in detail, the depth is endless. However, if I want to complete my original work, I have to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge through trial and error and proceed step by step. Every time I take on the challenge of creating a new work, I feel that my skills are deepening. And when a unique idea is realized as a harmonious and beautiful work, I feel the ultimate joy and sense of accomplishment.

Studio Setup

My small workshop consists of two rooms of about 215 square feet (20 square meters). One room is for making work and the other is mainly for exhibitions. There are two electric potter's wheels in the workroom, one spare electric potter's wheel, and one kick wheel in the exhibition room. There is a table of about 4×4 feet (120×120 cm) in each room, for wedging clay and other work.

I have access to several kilns. There is a small electric kiln in the studio, a small anagama kiln and a raku kiln outside, and a gas kiln a short distance away.

Due to the location of the studio in the mountains, there is no running water in the space. It's very troublesome, but I fill a plastic tank with water and transfer it from my home to the studio every day.

What I like most about the workspace is its location in the mountains away from the city. The surroundings are very quiet and I can concentrate on my work without distraction. Although it will be a bit of a chal lenge, I hope to be able to move to a larger location in the future.

To learn more, visit www.pot-shinro.com.

9

10

11

9 Shinro Yamamoto trimming a nerikomi chawan (Japanese tea bowl). **10–13** The leather-hard work is trimmed alternately on the front and back. After bisque firing, burnish the whole surface and fire to temperature. **15, 16** Yamamoto's small anagama kiln. **17, 18** Nerikomi chawan (alternate views), 5⅛ in. (13 cm) in diameter, porcelain, fired to cone 7, 2023.


12


13


14


15


16


17


18

ASYMMETRY AND BALANCE

Bekah Bliss

> “I’m always considering how to bring together a combination of asymmetry and balance that I observe in our natural and human-built surroundings.”

Editors: Who is your ideal audience?
Bekah Bliss: I think my audience is often attracted to my work for the same reasons I make it. They relish in the beauty of textures, the interaction of color, and the relationship between line and form. There’s also the unique experience of using handmade art to drink your morning coffee or share a meal with friends, which makes people interested in collecting work and being connected to the artist.

Eds: How do you come up with the forms and surfaces that are prevalent in your work?
BB: I have slowly developed a structure of rules related to form and surface. These rules keep me grounded in my intention to make meaningful work.

I’m always considering how to bring together a combination of asymmetry and balance that I observe in our natural and human-built surroundings. In college, I became very interested in architecture and furniture design. Looking at magazines, creating Pinterest boards, even finding items at flea markets bring inspiration. At one point I found the Mid-Century Modern furniture line known as Broyhill Brasilia. Its pieces have incredible arched curves that really speak to me. It’s really satisfying when designers use asymmetry in a way that is well balanced yet creates a slight visual tension. When I begin incising lines on a new pot, I am constantly asking myself about the interplay of form and surface and how I can draw attention to particular areas to avoid feeling static.

In relation to the surface, textures are really big for me—gnarled, weathered, cracked, even soft and smooth—I feel very connected to textures and have a specific interest to evoke nature in my work. Since I was very young, being in nature and really absorbing its beauty gave me a deep sense of peace and wonder. Those moments where you are totally immersed and captivated in the smallest details found on rocks and trees—that’s the good stuff of life, really. Being so present in a moment to absorb the beauty of what nature has to offer us.

Opposite: Bud vases, various sizes from 4–7 in. (10–18 cm) in height, 2023. **Top:** Divided circle bud vase, 5½ in. (14 cm) in height, 2023. **Above:** Layered arch bud vase, 4 in. (10 cm) in height, 2022. **All Photos:** Standard 266 clay, terra sigillata, liner glaze, underglaze wash.

Thinking About Vases

I became more observant of vases after working as a floral designer for a few years. It can be intimidating to arrange flowers in larger vases intended for big spaces and big occasions. I cared about making floral and greenery arrangements more approachable. This prompted me to design and create more bud vases. I like the idea of someone going on a walk, picking a flower or two, and easily adding them to a bud vase to appreciate in their home.

Eds: What is the most valuable advice you've received as an artist?
BB: I've been very fortunate to be involved in multiple community studios where the opportunity to learn from others has been abundant. I've gathered a collection of advice from many peers and mentors over the years—as to form, design, and technique. Three pieces of advice echoed: Be a sponge. Embrace failures. Seek wisdom from your surroundings.

Left: Textured bottom of a mug, 2022. **Above:** *Twins but Different*, 5 in. (13 cm) height, 2023. **Below:** Two sides of the same mug, 3½ in. (9 cm) in height, 2023. **All photos:** Standard 266 clay, terra sigillata, liner glaze, underglaze wash.

Making an Oval Bud Vase

First, create a textured slab for the base to reference cracked earth. I tear fresh clay into smaller chunks, observing the texture that is created and squishing the pieces back together (1). Place the textured side down on a smooth and slightly absorbent surface and roll the clay into a ¼–⅜-inch-thick slab. Flip the slab over to the textured side (2), and cut out the oval base using a prepared template. Transfer the oval slab to a ware board with the textured side down.

Next, using a banding wheel to freely spin the piece, score the outer edge of the slab (3). Then, prepare a coil by squeezing the clay until it is a mostly even thickness. Attach the coil to the scored edge by pushing the clay down with a thumb and compressing it into the slab. After blending the coil into the slab on the interior and exterior, pinch the attached coil to grow the height and thin the walls (4). When I want a vessel with walls that move inward, I move my hands toward each other with every pinching action.

1 Tear clay into smaller pieces and compress it back together to create texture. **2** Roll the textured clay into a slab and flip it over to cut out a base for the bud vase. **3** Score the oval slab base to attach a coil. **4** Pinch the coil wall up and inward with both hands. **5** Attach another coil to the interior wall using your thumb. **6** Blend the coil into the outer wall with your index finger.

Once the clay wall is about ¼ inch thick, I prepare a new coil, then begin attaching it to the top edge while my thumb pushes the coil into the wall below (5). Tear off the excess coil once the new layer reaches the starting point, then press the outer coil into the wall using an index finger (6). Once the coil is fully blended into the wall, return to pinching for thinning and height. Continue this process of adding coils and pinching inward to achieve a mostly straight wall (7, 8).

After a few rounds of adding coils, start evaluating the profile of the form to decide if you want to dart the walls and move the profile of the pot inward. To dart, determine where the form needs to move in, then cut out and remove a small triangle of the wall (9). Overlap and compress the cut wall sides down in opposite directions to close (10). Alternating between adding coils and darting, refine the shape of the vase until it is complete (11, 12).

Using a sharp knife, cut the top of the vase level and clean up the lip of the vase (13). Next, angle the bottom foot to give a nice lift to the form by using a Surform rasp to grate down the edge (14). Smooth the beveled edge with a soft red rib. Finally, apply a design to divide the surface using an X-Acto blade (15).

To learn more, visit www.bekahblisspottery.com.


7


8


9


10

7 Continuing to add coils to grow the wall height. **8** Observe the profile to decide where and when to move the form inward. **9** Cut a small dart into the narrow side of the oval wall. **10** Fold the wall together and blend in opposite directions to connect.


11


12


13


14


15


16

11 Observe the change in the profile of the vase after the dart. **12** Narrow the neck of the vase with a few rounds of adding coils and darting. **13** Level the top of the vase with a knife. **14** Use a Surform tool to grate the bottom edge for a lifted foot. **15** Incise lines with an X-Acto blade to divide the surface. **16** To finish, the work is painted with terra sigillata when bone dry, bisque fired, lined with glaze, and fired to cone 4.

APPLYING TECHNOLOGY

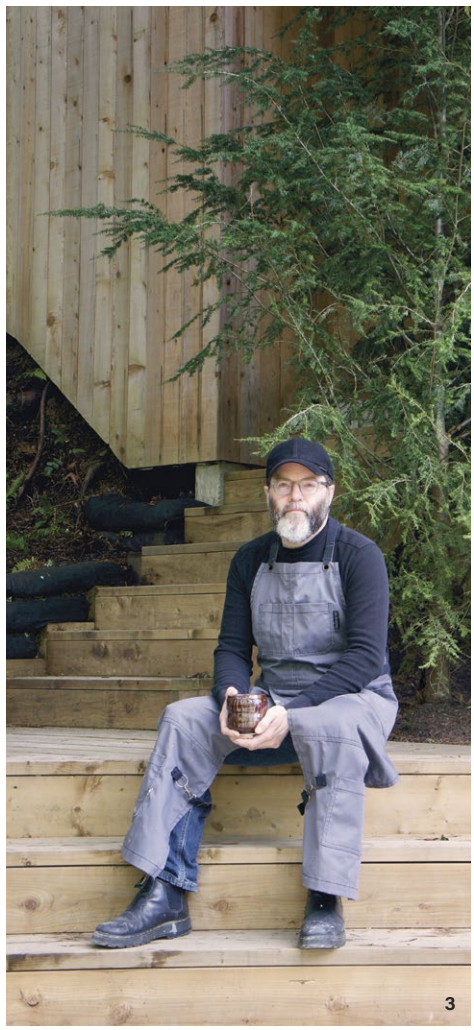
By Jason Vantomme

1

Editors: What excites you about the field of ceramics?

Jason Vantomme: I have always been captivated by the fact that clay as a medium is perhaps one of the most fundamental in that it begins with such basic, essential materials. We start with minerals and move those materials through transformations that create art, function, or both. Within those transformations, glaze development is one area of focus that I find particularly exciting.

Though a somewhat recent obsession, I have invested considerable time studying and experimenting with glaze chemistry over the last three years. And I credit Rose and Matt Katz' Ceramics Materials Workshop for sparking this obsession—their teaching opened a significant exploration area for me. As a technologist whose day job is focused on data science and machine learning, I quickly saw an opportunity to combine my profession with my glaze passion. Exploring how technology can be a valuable tool for glaze development,



> **“I see myself as someone aspiring to gain mastery in the craft of creating practical work and connecting with methods that have been around for thousands of years, if only to remind oneself of the importance of creation through your hands.”**

1 Heavily slipped vase, 10 in. (25 cm) in height, Plainsman Clays’ M370 clay, Arbutus glaze, fired in oxidation to cone 6, 2023. **2** Exterior of Jason and Aileen Vantomme’s studio. *Photo: Chris Guy Photo.* **3** Jason Vantomme sitting outside his studio. **4** *Textured Cup 2*, 4 in. (10 cm) in height, Plainsman Clays’ M370 clay, layered glazes, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2022.

5 View into Jason and Aileen Vantomme's studio from the exterior. *Photo: Chris Guy Photo*. **6** Cleaning the bottom of glazed pots.

both as a problem-solving tool and a device to generate inspiration, led me to the research work I presented at the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) in 2022.

Makers working in clay have an exciting opportunity to use technology to connect the past and future in exciting and unexpected ways. We only need to look to the evolution of social media and video-conferencing technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic to observe how technology can connect makers worldwide. Or how digitized public and private collections deliver education to a worldwide audience. We are even starting to see that the same technologies that provide us with music and movie recommendations or that create the behaviors of a video-game character can also offer value in ceramics. We have so many opportunities to apply leading-edge technology as an enabling tool—it's really an exciting time!

Eds: What role(s) do you think makers play within our current culture? How do you think you contribute to it?
JV: Despite technology's potential in our clay practices, the fundamental activities of our medium provide a sense of grounding and balance in a world where digital devices are always around and always on. It certainly gives me that counterbalance, and I imagine it does for many other makers. I see myself as someone aspiring to gain mastery in the craft of creating practical work and connecting with methods that have been around for thousands of years if only to remind oneself of the importance of creation through your hands. And that is easy to forget for someone like me who has been a desk-bound technologist for almost 30 years.

7 Faceted vase, 7½ in. (19 cm) in height, Plainsman Clays' M370 clay, Arbutus glaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2023.

As a part-time maker, searching for an answer to "What is my artistic voice?" is challenging. I rarely have long stretches of recurring time to dive into ideas to find that voice—the time I do have is spent keeping up fundamental skills, perhaps testing new glazes, and sometimes practicing new forms. I am encouraged to see programs like Clay Cohorts that, enabled by technology, provide an opportunity to have meaningful exposure to and critique from well-respected professionals without uprooting and enrolling in a full-time university fine arts program.

I do not come from a background with a ceramic tradition in my family's history. So, this pursuit is not about preserving a familial heritage or a cultural practice, but I am pleased that by being around both my wife and I, who are passionate artists and makers, my daughters can observe how being self-sufficient in creating functional and beautiful objects counterbalances the mass-produced goods that are so prominent in our lives. It's also a way of showing their generation how basic skills can provide basic needs, which they might have to rely on in the future.

Eds: What techniques do you use to make your work and why?
JV: My focus has always been on wheel-thrown functional ware. I have had the chance to explore handbuilt work and tile making in the past, which I have enjoyed, but I know that I am not skilled as an illustrator, painter, or sculptor. I enjoy acquiring a skill through repetition—perhaps this comes from hours of practicing while studying music at university—and repeating wheel-thrown forms provides that opportunity.

8 Cup, 4 in. (25 cm) in height, Plainsman Clays' M370 clay, Arbutus glaze over Poplar Rust glaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2023. **9** Fluted cup, 3½ in. (9 cm) in height, Plainsman Clays' M370 clay, green oribe-style glaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2022.

My wife and I fire in oxidation to cone 6 in an electric kiln in our studio, and while I appreciate the convenience of that choice, I do miss the serendipitous outcomes that a reduction atmosphere provides. But viewed as an opportunity, firing in oxidation certainly has informed how I explore forms, surfaces, and glaze formulations as I look for ways to produce somewhat stochastic outcomes that can still provide surprise even in a stable firing environment such as electric oxidation. Recently I have started using thick slips to build up ridges or wire faceting to create textured ridges while the piece is still on the wheel. I then utilize glaze choices that amplify that varied surface through pooling and breaking.

Studio Setup

I began my ceramics journey almost 30 years ago in Evanston, Illinois, where I took classes with Dominic Mosca at The Pot Shop. After relocating from Evanston to the Boston area, I took courses with David Orser (Cedar Mountain Potters) at Mudflat Studios in Somerville, Massachusetts. These were both very social environments, and my time at Mudflat was significant. Exposure to Mudflat's resident artists and a considerable population of students at varying skill levels and artistic development provided a rich learning environment.

While I have enjoyed those communal environments, my wife Aileen and I have been very fortunate to build our own studio in Lions Bay, British Columbia, Canada, approximately 25 miles north of Vancouver, up the Howe Sound. When we bought our 1970s house six years ago, access to the house was via a small trail followed by 68 stairs up to the front door. We knew we wanted to build a studio, but the location presented some unique and daunting challenges! With an architect and a brave contractor, we figured out how to carve a driveway into the slope that ends at a second building below the house, which is now our studio.

The studio is an airy 750 square feet, a space that suits our needs, location, and the climate of our region. We have two main work areas, one with two wheels, a slab roller, storage and shelving for small wares, and an ever-growing test-tile library; the other with two large steel worktables, shelving for both works in progress and finished pieces, glaze and materials storage, and a sink. We also have a small office space for administrative tasks and a kiln room.

One of the things I love most about our studio is the abundance of natural light. Our village is perched on the west side of a mountain, so in the winter, the sun crests over the mountain ridge at around noon. This means we don't get much direct sunlight for 4–5 months of the year, so the design included large floor-to-ceiling windows on all sides of the studio. Working in that space any time of the year is a joy.

To learn more, visit www.thetreehousestudio.ca.


10


11


12


13

10 Throw a cup off the hump on the wheel. **11, 12** Apply thick slip to the just-thrown vessel on while it is still attached to the wheel. **13** Preparing large amounts of glaze for dipping.

COLLECTING INSPIRATION

Julie Pennington

1

Editors: How do you come up with forms and surfaces that are prevalent in your work and what techniques do you use to make your sculptures?

Julie Pennington: I create vessel forms to explore the subtleties and complexities of pattern and texture. Many are cylindrical in form and take inspiration from tree trunks, which I regularly observe and admire for their simplicity of shape and variety of textural characteristics. Other forms come about intuitively and evolve as I am making. The type of clay body as well as the particular technique I am using influence the shape of the vessel. I am interested in textural details and repetitive patterns I find in nature, basketry and woven textiles are also an important influence on my work.

My making process is based on the enduring technique of coil building. Rather than smoothing out the coils, I hand roll very fine coils onto textured surfaces, in this way, the interior and the exterior are revealed simultaneously, as seen in many woven objects. I collect an assortment of items that create textures that are evocative

> **“This type of making with no pressure attached can lead to new ideas and provides something to have around me to look at and consider.”**

1 Julie Pennington handbuilding with coils. **2** Ceramic studios at Canberra Potters Society, Canberra ACT. **3** Studio shelf with ceramic tests and nature collection. *Photos: Andrew Sikorsky.*

4 Pennington working in the studio. **5** Adding textured coils to a handbuilt form. **6** View of the studio. **7** Display cabinet. *Photos: Andrew Sikorsky.*

of nature and can bring a feeling of softness to the clay not dissimilar to cloth or yarn. More recently I have used flattened and cut coils, which bring a different rhythm and textural quality to the work. I use a range of mid-fire clays including porcelain and fire in an electric kiln to cone 6. The clays are chosen for particular qualities and color that enhance the tactile characteristics of the form. No glaze is applied.

Eds: What do you see as the current trends in ceramics and where do you see yourself in that field?

JP: In recent years I think exploration of the vessel is one area that has held a lot of interest for ceramic artists, with an emphasis on the vessel as an object, not a vase, as a vehicle to express ideas and emotions. Classical forms are often given a contemporary twist, playing with scale and proportion. Many works have small additions applied to the surface en masse or playful protrusions with colorful glazes. At the other end of the scale, there is interest in striving for a pared-back simplicity of the vessel form. Unglazed surfaces are often chosen to expose the clay body and the use of matte glazes projects a more earthy and quiet aesthetic. It is in this space that I think my work currently sits.


7

Studio

My studio is one of five purpose-built studios within the Canberra Potters Society complex, a vibrant community of artists, teachers, and students passionate about clay in Canberra, Australia. The facility encompasses teaching studios, a member's workshop, a gallery, a retail shop, a glaze and kiln room, also an apartment and studio for one artist in residence. I have sole use of one of the five studios. My space is 301 square feet (28 square meters) with glass double doors at both ends of the room. This is great for light and airflow and allows for easy access to get work and materials in and out. A concrete floor and clay trap make for easy cleaning. The sun warms the room in winter, reducing the need for heating. The studios open onto a large courtyard and garden with trees, providing an inviting and peaceful place to spend time in and engage with other artists.

I love the built-in benches and shelving in my studio. There is plenty of space to separate activities and room to store work in progress. I am a keen collector of natural objects and am able to have much of it housed on these shelves. This is an important way for me to bring some of the things I love about the outdoors into my studio for inspiration.

Electric kilns are available on the premises for artists to book firings. However, I actually fire my work in my electric kiln located at home. This does mean transporting my work from the studio, which is risky at times! This approach gives me complete flexibility when I fire.

The lease of the studio is acquired through an application process outlining one's commitment to an ongoing arts practice and intention of frequent and active use. Generally, there is a wait list to become a studio holder, and there is a set time frame of 3 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years. I would certainly try to replicate many of the features from my current studio in a new space.

Paying Dues

I completed my diploma in ceramics at Moss Vale Technical and Further Education NSW (TAFE) in 2010. Since then, I have been building my practice as well as teaching part time. For the last 5 years, I have focused exclusively on making. I typically go to the studio 5 days per week, for long or short days depending on demands and deadlines. My time in the studio tends to be very hands on, leaving paperwork and research to be done at home. I like to start my day with a walk—there are many opportunities

8 Vessels, various dimensions (to 8¼ in. (21 cm) in height), porcelain, handbuilt, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln. **9** Detail of various porcelain vessels. **10** Trunks, to 9½ in. (24 cm) in height, mid-fire porcelain, handbuilt textured coils, fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln. *Photos: Andrew Sikorsky.*

to access the bush and the lake nearby. This is a nice way to collect my thoughts before driving to the studio.

Mind

I like to allocate some days in the studio to just playing and experimenting. I tend to make small bits and pieces as sketches rather than drawing. This gives me a sense of whether I want to pursue what is in my head. This type of making with no pressure attached can lead to new ideas and provides something to have around me to look at and consider.

Walking in nature is important to me. This might be a stroll around my local area or having a few days away to immerse myself in another environment. Just a few hours away and I can be in the Snowy Mountains for walking, or the South Coast for beachcombing. I like to collect natural objects and photograph details and textures to use for future reference in my work. I have recently become interested in ikebana and am taking some classes. I enjoy collecting material that can be used in these floral arrangements and have also started to think about making ceramic containers suitable for ikebana.

Visiting exhibitions of ceramics and other art forms is also something I like to do. It keeps me up to date with what is going on in the arts community and is often a good way to be inspired and increase motivation. I enjoy listening to interviews and podcasts about makers. "Material Matters" and "Tales of a Red Clay Rambler" are favorites. I am currently reading a new book about Japanese potters, *Listening to Clay* by Alice North, Halsey North, and Louise Allison Cort.

10

Marketing

My method of working is quite a slow process, I do not produce large volumes of work. I mostly focus on one-off pieces for group exhibitions. I also sell some small works through boutique retail stores. This exposes my work to exhibition visitors as well as those visiting the store with the intention to purchase. A lower price bracket works best in these settings, as works are typically on consignment with 30–50% commission. Exhibitions attract collectors and buyers looking for a unique piece for their home. I have recently acquired gallery representation with Gallery Jennings Kerr, in Robertson, NSW, that will impact the way I work going forward. I will be working toward regular solo shows, as well as inclusion in the gallery's group shows each year. This means my work will be marketed through the gallery and will provide exposure to a much wider audience. Going forward I will likely reduce the number of stocklists and focus on producing larger bodies of work. It will be interesting to see how this approach to making and selling evolves.

Open studios are another avenue for selling my work, which give me direct access to the public, enabling me to talk about my work and demonstrate my making techniques.

I use Instagram to post about new stock availability and upcoming exhibitions. I hire a professional photographer to provide quality images to post, and my feed also has snapshots of work in progress and photos of things that inspire me. I have been approached directly on Instagram for commissions and sales, but I do not have an online shop. Instagram has also been a good avenue for stores to request stock and invitations to exhibit with galleries.

Entering national ceramic competitions and being selected as a finalist has also been another avenue for gaining exposure to a wider audience.

To learn more, visit www.juliepenningtonceramics.com.

Become a Member

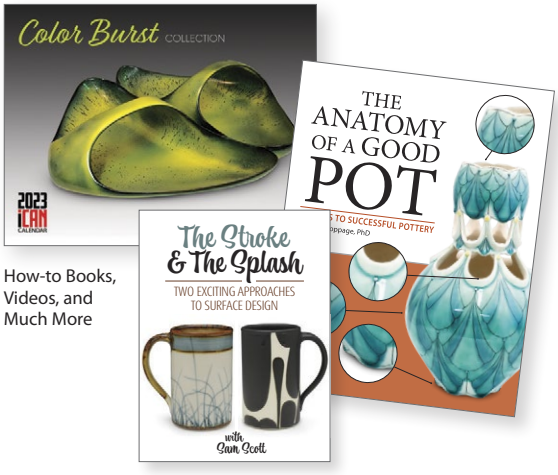
JOIN ICAN

Get Everything You Need to be a Better Ceramic Artist

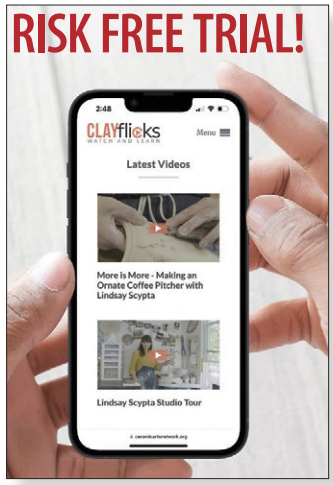
Included With Your Membership, You Get:

- ✓ CLAYflicks Watch and Learn
- ✓ Subscriptions to Ceramics Monthly and Pottery Making Illustrated
- ✓ Archives: Access to Every Article We've Ever Published
- ✓ 20% Shop Discount
- ✓ UPS Shipping Discounts
- ✓ Ceramic Recipes Database
- ✓ Artist Portfolios
- ✓ Workshops and Cultural Tours
- ✓ Members-Only Exhibitions

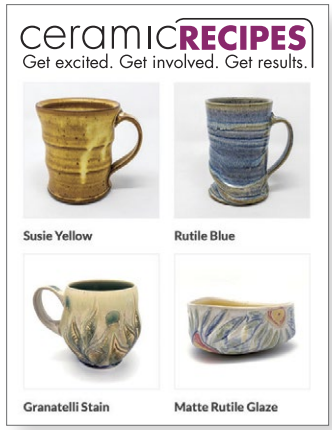
Magazine Subscriptions



How-to Books, Videos, and Much More



CLAYflicks



Ceramic Recipes Database

iCAN International CERAMIC ARTISTS NETWORK

SCAN TO JOIN TODAY!

Learn more at **ceramicartsnetwork.org/ican**

ceramics MONTHLY

The leading publication for ceramic artists, since 1953

Stay connected to the world of ceramics in the studio and beyond!

- Expert Techniques
- Studio Visits
- Artist Profiles and Interviews
- Recipes in Every Issue
- Helpful Studio Tips
- Inspiring Images
- Science for Potters

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

To find out more, visit
mycan.ceramicartsnetwork.org/s/subscriptions

PotteryMaking Illustrated

The only how-to publication for ceramic artists, since 1997

Have more fun making pottery!

- Start-to-Finish Projects for All Skill Levels
- Easy to Follow Step-by-Step Images
- Tips for the Studio, the Glaze Room, and Your Toolbox
- Loads of Surface Decorating Ideas and Firing Tips

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

To find out more, visit
mycan.ceramicartsnetwork.org/s/subscriptions

RECIPES

Artists Timothy Sullivan, Bekah Bliss, and Brandon Christy share their go-to surface-decoration recipes.

By Timothy Sullivan

PEACH BLACK TENMOKU
Cone 10 Reduction

Whiting	17.20 %
G200 Feldspar	36.00
Minspar 200 Feldspar	14.75
EPK Kaolin	9.60
Silica	22.45
	100.00 %
Add: Tin	1.00 %
Black Iron Oxide	2.80 %
Red Iron Oxide	6.80 %
Macaloid	1.00 %

Original recipe from Craig Martell in a 2002 *Ceramics Monthly* article. I use this glaze in most of my work. I frequently refire pieces with the tenmoku glaze in an electric kiln to about 1750°F (954°C), where it will re-oxidize to a yellow where thick.

CR CLEAR
Cone 10 Reduction

Strontium Carbonate	7.54 %
Talc	2.66
Wollastonite	11.00
Ferro Frit 3124	8.87
G200 HP Feldspar	22.54
Minspar 200 Feldspar	9.23
EPK Kaolin	7.10
Silica	31.06
	100.00 %

I ball mill this glaze for best results. I also use it as a base for my copper red glaze with the addition of 0.5% copper carbonate and 2% tin oxide.

Find Timothy Sullivan's article on page 18.

By Bekah Bliss

WHITE BASE TERRA SIGILLATA
Cone 06–11 Oxidation/Reduction

Water (in pounds)	28
XX Saggar (in pounds)	14
Sodium Silicate (in tablespoons)	2

Color Variations (amounts in teaspoons per 1 cup prepared terra sigillata)

For White:	
Add: Zircopax	1.00
For Green:	
Add: Chrome Oxide	1.00
For Mint:	
Add: Mason Stain 6201	0.50
For Blue:	
Add: Cobalt Oxide	0.25
Chrome Oxide	0.50

Mix the base ingredients in a 5-gallon bucket and allow to settle for 12–48 hours. It is helpful if you have a clear bucket to see the heavier particles fall to the bottom. Siphon the top layer into another bucket without disturbing the bottom sludge layer. Throw away the sludge; do not reclaim. Terra sigillata works best when the specific gravity is between 1.1–1.2. If too thin, evaporate more water from the mix. If too thick, allow it to settle longer. Apply 2–3 thin coats of sigillata to bone-dry greenware and buff. I use thin plastic produce bags to buff my work.

For color variations, take 1 cup of terra sigillata and test different stain/oxide additions. Based on Pete Pinnell's recipe.

Find Bekah Bliss' article on page 30.

By Brandon Christy

VC 71 BASE
Cone 6–7 Oxidation

Talc	9 %
Whiting	16
Ferro Frit 3124	9
Custer Feldspar	40
EPK Kaolin	10
Silica	16
	100 %

This glaze recipe is usually used for a great tenmoku glaze with an addition of iron oxide. I use the base recipe without any colorants or oxides to get a great satin matte white glaze on the red stoneware that I use. I use this glaze primarily to create bright white puffy clouds in my landscape scene decorations. I mix the glaze thick to a yogurt consistency and apply it with a bulb slip applicator. This allows me to get a surface texture and colors change that I am looking for. When the glaze is thin it will show the clay body, but can be applied thick to get a bright white. I fire this glaze to cone 6, oxidation, but have taken it to cone 7 with no visible difference in movement or stability.

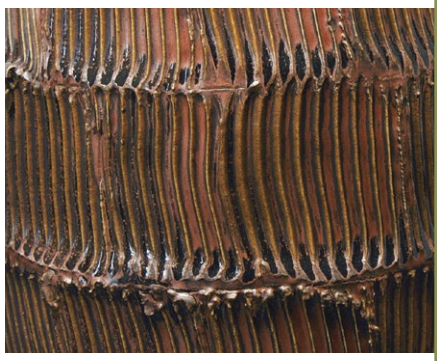
Originally from John Britt's book *The Complete Guide to Mid-Range Glazes*.

Find Brandon Christy's article on page 6.

RECIPES

Artists Jason Vantomme and Shinro Yamamoto share their go-to surface-decoration and clay-coloring recipes.

By Jason Vantomme



POPULAR RUST

Cone 5–7 Oxidation

Lithium Carbonate	3.5 %
Talc	7.0
Ferro Frit 3110	23.0
Barnard Slip	18.5
Ravenscrag Slip	48.0
	100.0 %
Add: Red Iron Oxide	8.5 %

A variant of a tea-dust glaze, this version was created with the goal of reducing the number of materials used and lowering lithium carbonate levels from common recipes, as well as to leverage regional material (i.e., Ravenscrag slip). Requires no special cooling. Does not run even when quite thick, and a good thickness appears to yield more reliable and dense crystalline formation. This glaze requires no special cooling to achieve the tea dust effect, though a slow cool will increase the density of the iron crystals significantly.

ARBUTUS

Cone 5–7 Oxidation

Talc	22.26
Ferro Frit 3124	23.92
Nepheline Syenite	21.59
EPK Kaolin	32.23
	100.00 %
Add:	
Bone Ash	12.00 %
Lithium Carbonate	5.00
Custer Feldspar	20.00
Red Iron Oxide	12.00%

Arbutus was developed with the goal of producing an iron red on top of the base of another glaze, which explains why materials that normally wouldn't be an "add" are listed as such. (The base is called White Pine and is a variant of the Katz-Burke Matte.) Where there are surfaces that encourage pooling, the matte surface will turn glossy. When layered over Poplar Rust, it can produce aventurine-like effects.

Find Jason Vantomme's article on page 36.

By Shinro Yamamoto

STAINED CLAY

Cone 7 Reduction

For Black Clay 7%:	
Porcelain Clay	93 %
Black Pigment	7
	100 %
For Gradient Black Clay:	
Porcelain Clay	99
Black Pigment	1
	100 %
For Pink Clay:	
Porcelain Clay	97
Pink Pigment	3
	100 %

To mix stained clay, blend the pigment into a slurry, then wedge it into soft clay. By making a slurry first, dots and unevenness are less likely to appear.

The pigment that I use is called nerikomi ganryou kuro. In Japanese, *Ganryou* means pigment and *kuro* means black. Pink is a pigment called *toshiko*. They are common pigments that are sold at any pottery material store in Japan (I purchase pigments from this shop: kajita-enogu.com).

Find Shinro Yamamoto's article on page 24.

ADVERTISER INDEX

ceramics MONTHLY

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Ceramic Arts Network, 550 Polaris Parkway, Suite 510, Westerville, Ohio 43082

To subscribe to *Ceramics Monthly* magazine, please complete this form. Mail the completed form to us with check payment (DO NOT send cash). If paying by credit card (see below), you can mail or fax this form to us. Thank you!

Step 1:

Please provide your email* address: _____

*Required: We cannot process your subscription without a contact email

Step 2:

If you already have a subscription and want to renew, please write your Subscriber ID number in the boxes below. Your Subscriber ID is the 7-digit number that appears above your name on the magazine mailing label (see below). *If you don't already have a subscription, you can skip this step.*

Your magazine mailing label

2703068 ← Your subscriber ID
Your Name
123 Main Street
Anytown, NY 00000
PKD96708
PO338
341-CERA1
001448183

Step 3:

Please fill in your name and address below. This is where we will mail your magazines.

Please print clearly:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____ Country: _____

☑ **1-year print subscription to *Ceramics Monthly* | Rates are based on your location.**

USA: US$39.99 | Canada: US$62.00 | Rest of World: US$72.00

Tax: Ohio residents add 7.5% sales tax; Canadian residents add 5.0% GST

Step 4:

Send this form to us by mail or fax.

If paying by check, please mail your check in US dollars to the address below:

The Ceramic Arts Network
L-4163
Columbus, OH 43260-4163
USA

If paying by credit card, please complete the section below and mail or fax us this completed form.

We accept the following credit cards: VISA MasterCard AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER

Name On Card: _____

Credit Card Number: _____

Expires (MM/YY): _____ 3-Digit CVV Code: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Paying by Credit Card? You can mail this form to us at the address above. Or simply fax it to: **+1-614-899-6109** (secure fax).
For security purposes, DO NOT email us your credit card information.

Questions? Please email us at: customerservice@ceramicartsnetwork.org

Thank you for your support of *Ceramics Monthly* magazine!

▶ Please cut along the line to remove this form. ▶

"To say I am happy with my VPM20 would be an understatement. These are sweet machines, very easy to use and clean, I only wish I'd had one earlier in my career" — Mary Fox Pottery

For more on Mary Fox, The Legacy Project and her upcoming book, *My Life as a Potter: Stories and Techniques,* visit www.maryfoxpottery.ca


SKUTT®
SKUTT
OUR WHEELS
HAVE A WHOLE
NEW LOOK AND FEEL
10 YEAR
WARRANTY
SKUTT.COM