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Process and Perspectives in Clay

talk



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Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the very first issue of *Studio Talk*! This brand-new 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 10 artists who open up to readers about their inspiration, thoughts on ceramic trends, and their role 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.


Jessica Knapp
Ceramics Monthly
Editor


Holly Goring
Pottery Making Illustrated
Editor



MATHEMATICAL PATTERNS IN CLAY

Guy Van Leemput



Above: *A Bigger Mind* (in the snow), 11 in. (28 cm) in diameter, wood-fired porcelain, 2020. **Opposite top:** *A Bigger Mind* (alternate view), 11 in. (28 cm) in diameter, wood-fired porcelain, 2020. **Opposite bottom:** *Big Mind Circles*, 10¼ in. (26 cm) in diameter, wood-fired porcelain, 2020. *Photos: Dirk Theys.*

Editors: How do you come up with the surface patterns that are prevalent in your work?

Guy Van Leemput: I have been fascinated by patterns since I was a child, especially patterns in nature, such as the arrangement of seeds on a sunflower, the scales on a large pine cone, or the arrangement of spines on a cactus. They are the result of nature's solutions to complicated problems. Later, I understood that you can use mathematics to investigate how these patterns come about. I learned how the eye sees two sets of opposing spirals in each sunflower; if you count the number of spirals in a set, these numbers always turn out to be two consecutive numbers in the Fibonacci sequence. Later, I discovered that the golden ratio is the basis for the Fibonacci numbers and all those beautiful patterns. And that our brains (and certainly mine) want to order, structure, and catalog everything. The eye always wants to see patterns.

When at school, I was introduced to the graphic work of M.C. Escher, which I found intriguing. He copied the Moorish patterns from the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, and used them as a basis for his graphics. I was actually more interested in the origin of those original patterns. How did people in history manage to find them? I studied historical examples, did extensive research into tiles, and wrote a treatise on tiling the plane to get my master's degree in mathematics.

I don't want to imitate nature, but to understand it, to recognize patterns and vary them. You can discover these variations through mathematics.

Eds: How did you decide to switch from a career as a mathematician to one as a ceramic artist?

GVL: For me, working in ceramics is much more than a choice, rather it was more something I could not avoid. The summer before I started studying mathematics at university, I asked a local ceramic artist if I could come and work with him, not for payment but to learn. And I continued to do so throughout my studies and the years that followed. My work as a math teacher as well as having a young family pushed my own ceramics work into the background, but after the death of my best friend, I realized I wanted to take it



“ I don’t want to imitate nature, but to understand it, to recognize patterns and vary them.”





You Are My Cathedral, 10¼ in. (26 cm) in diameter, wood-fired porcelain, gold, 2019. Photo: Dirk Theys.

more seriously. For eight years, I attended ceramics classes at the Academy of Fine Arts in Herentals and I followed several master classes. About ten years ago I founded my studio, which specializes in delicate translucent porcelain.

For me, working with clay is yoga of the mind. In my studio, I can forget the daily sorrows. There I find my peace. When I am working on a new bowl (formed over an inflated balloon for support), it is very clear to me what has to be done, and all of my attention focuses on the work. I have to monitor the moisture content of the porcelain; in order for my process to be successful, it must not be too wet or too dry. I also have to be careful because the balloon support can break down quickly. So there is no time to worry or think about other things. Being fully present with the bowl that I am forming is a wonderful gift.

Eds: In what ways has your former career and related research influenced your work?

GVL: When I taught mathematics full time, it was part of my routine that on my days off I would make ceramics. The patterns I made on my bowls then were spontaneous and intuitive. Then, after 25 years in the classroom, I had the opportunity to take up an artist residency in Jingdezhen. So, I took time off from school and enjoyed my time in China to the fullest. Back home, I noticed that mathematics showed up in my ceramic work. It was nice to see that

the two parts of myself (the ceramic artist and the mathematician) had finally found each other again.

I started to draw more in my sketchbook. Often, I start from regular patterns like hexagons that tile the surface. I then investigate how I can transfer such a two-dimensional grid to a sphere. Mathematics gives me many possibilities to work with this. For example, I can add pentagons so that the tiles remain the same size everywhere, or I can make the shapes gradually smaller toward the bottom. I can also use non-Euclidean geometry to make it look like there are an infinite number of tiles on the bowl. I like the pattern to continue to amaze, day after day. That is why I look for small variations that break the known sequence and size of shapes.

At one time, I had filled a sketchbook with drawings of overlapping circles and I went back to work on that too. One day I saw the pattern of the piece titled *Circles of Mind* emerging there in my sketchbook. I was euphoric because it had exactly what I was looking for: it gave a three-dimensional effect, as if a number of scales were woven together. I made a small version, then a larger piece, *Big Mind Circles*, on which I spent more than 30 hours modeling. Later I explored how to enlarge and reduce this underlying regular grid in certain places, which resulted in the pattern on the piece titled *A Bigger Mind*.

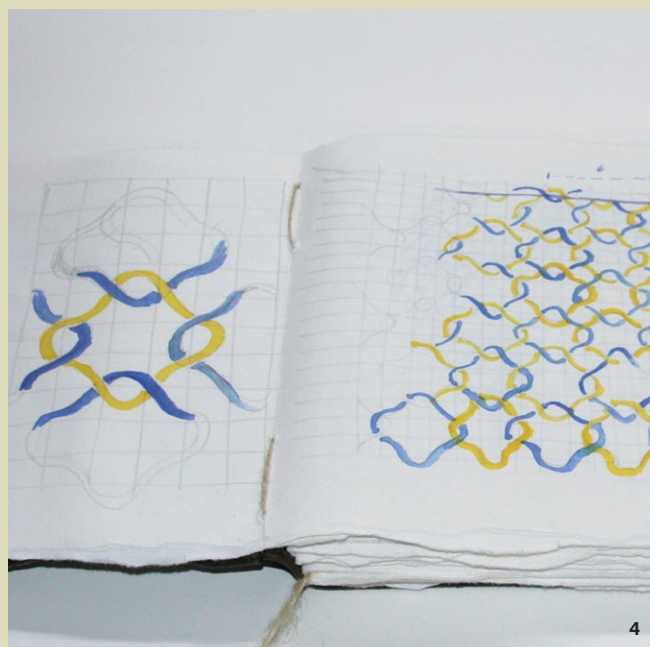
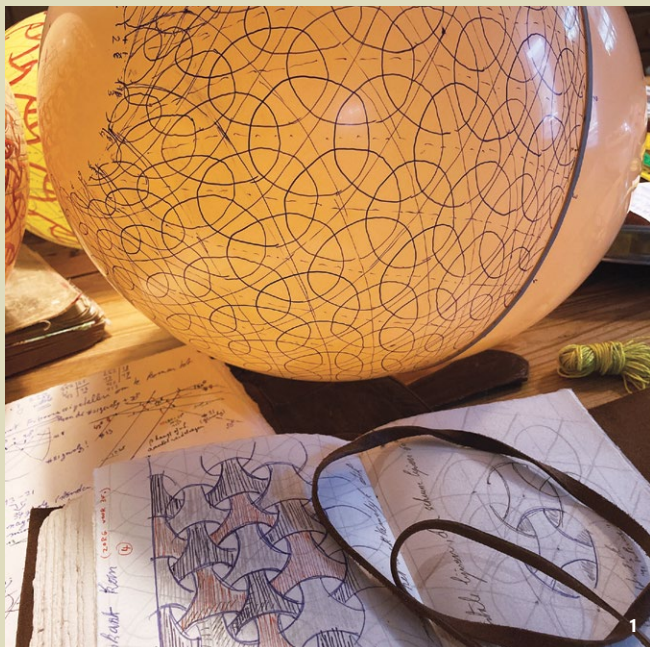
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Building a Translucent Vessel

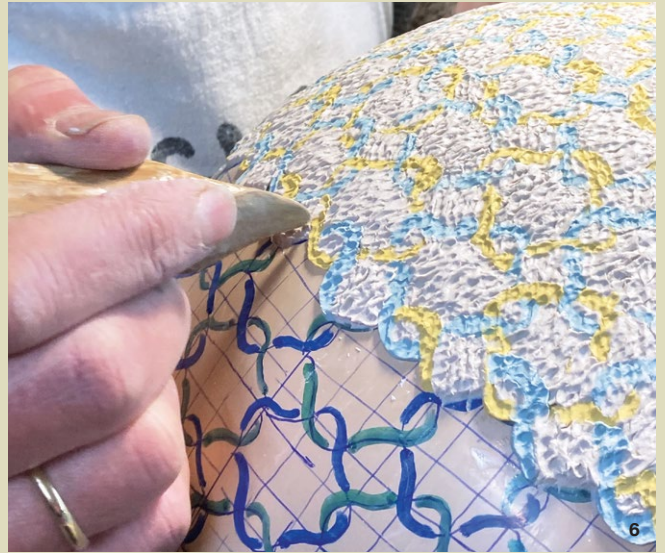
I start by blowing up a balloon, then drawing a pattern on the surface (1). I place thin slabs and coils of porcelain reinforced with flax fibers directly onto the balloon, starting at the top of the balloon, which will be the bottom of the future bowl. First I place a small piece of porcelain with my stamp on it (2), then add little cells one by one by manipulating the porcelain with small wooden tools, trying to not touch it too much with my hands (3, 4). I place thin coils of porcelain onto the balloon, following the drawn pattern as a guide. Using a wooden tool, I blend the left and right sides of the coil into the clay below, leaving the center of the coil raised

to delineate the pattern. I can only complete small sections each day (5, 6). After quite a while (a week, sometimes a month), when the piece is finished, it has to dry evenly. Then, I deflate the balloon and coat the inside with a layer of porcelain slip.

As my bowls are fired upside down to counteract the effects of gravity and the melting process at high temperatures, I have to make a support for each piece (7, 8). Then the piece is once fired in a wood kiln to 2336°F (1280°C). This high temperature is needed for strength and translucency. The wood firing gives the bowl a beautiful white color and a sprinkling blossom of glaze from ash deposits.



1 After finding a pattern that works, I make some preliminary drawings in a sketchbook. This helps to find out the best way to draw the pattern on a balloon. 2 *You Are My Puzzle*, in progress. I model the porcelain clay with a wooden tool on a balloon. I start working from the bottom of the bowl adding my artist's stamp, the year, and the name of the work. 3 Guy Van Leemput working on two different bowls with puzzle designs; one is almost finished (foreground), while the other (*You Are My Puzzle*) is at the beginning stage. 2, 3 Photos: Dirk Theys. 4 In my sketchbook, I make some drawings to determine a color scheme that will work.



5, 6 *HardWired*, in progress, adding colored porcelain and using a handmade wooden tool to model the clay straight on the balloon following the lines drawn on the surface. Photos: Katrien Hautekiet. 7 Support for each piece made from porcelain, stoneware clay, and bricks, so that the bowl can be fired upside down. 8 With a small pencil, add porcelain to fix any small holes. 9 Bricking up the kiln door after all the pieces are loaded in the kiln upside down on their firing supports. 10 The door is bricked up, and the firing begins by adding wood to the firebox. 7-10 Photos: Stef Van Leemput.

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LIFETIME

A STUDIO IN TWO LOCATIONS

Amy Song



“**Basement studios get a bad rap, which I acknowledge every time I have to move 500 pounds of clay downstairs or yearn for more natural light.**”

Editors: How is your studio designed and laid out? What are your favorite and least favorite aspects?

Amy Song: My work is created in two different places. I make work in my basement in Plainfield, Illinois, and fire it in my train kiln located on a property we own that is a picturesque 30-minute drive away. Basement studios get a bad rap, which I acknowledge every time I have to move 500 pounds of clay downstairs or yearn for more natural light. Yet they are a convenience and a blessing beyond words for parents who are juggling kids' odd school schedules and for keeping costs down. They really shine during a pandemic.

The flooring in my studio is martial-arts foam tile, which is straightforward to mop and easy on my feet—I'm a big fan. The wheel hides in a nook off to the side with the wedging table just a few steps away. This helps keep messes contained and protects my photography set up, which is located away from the wet clay working area. I regularly use my photo setup for adding new items to my online shop or applying to juried shows. The photo table is built tall to reflect light from the ceiling. The backdrop is clipped to slats of wood to easily adjust the gradient. My electric kiln is nearby, in a long, narrow storage area filled with pots.

Bisque-fired pots are transported to and fired at the barn. (We plan to build





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1 Amy Song in her happy place—firing the kiln with Shino the cat. *Photo: Alex Olson Arts.* 2 Bowl from the inaugural firing of the new kiln. Song sees her crew in the flashing pattern—group hug, pandemic style. 3 Thanksgiving served up on handmade dishes. 4 Crew picture from September, 2019. Left to right: Benjamin Buchanot, Jeff Williams, John Lo, Tom Miller, Amy Song, Andrew Linderman, Rekha Srinivasan.



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our home on this property when our kids graduate.) The kiln lives in a room off to the side of the main barn with lots of added ventilation and ceiling height for safety. Ask me about chimney baffles anytime—I will chat your ear off. The barn is where glazes get mixed and applied. The space has plenty of electricity, but we make do for the rest of the comforts. Rain barrels supply water, and there is a composting toilet for my usual firings and a port-a-potty for firing workshops. There is ample space for camping.

Studio Schedule

Eds: How much time do you spend in the studio per week? Do you follow a specific routine?

AS: My schedule for making ebbs and flows with the rhythm of firing. It starts out quite optimistic and efficient, making from 8am to 1pm, Monday through Saturday. Wednesdays are set aside for working on my website, workshops, or other projects. Emails, social media, and shipping fill the rest of my afternoons—it gives my body a rest. I prioritize exercise with scheduled walks with friends at 2pm and I take a break halfway through my making hours to loosen up with Pilates. Splitting and stacking wood at the barn are free workouts.

As a firing approaches, Wednesdays become dedicated to making, then afternoons, and subsequently Sundays.

I am still optimistic (perhaps deluded) that I will someday create work more efficiently.

Hosting Workshops

Eds: When did you begin hosting workshops at River Song Pottery? How do firing workshops typically run in your space?

AS: In the fall of 2019, we hosted our first firing workshop. I plan to host three to four workshops per year: a firing workshop led by myself, one by a visiting artist (Lindsay Oesterritter in 2021 and Simon Levin in 2022), and various workshops for potters to improve their craft. In May of this year, Troy Bungart is teaching brush and tool making. Photography is another focus. I partner with a local photographer to help 3D makers improve their online presence.

During firing workshops, work from participants fills the 67-cubic-foot train kiln. Participants learn every step of firing, from wadding and loading to body reduction and surface finishing. A lot of information is imparted in a short period of time. I enjoy this part of the process, returning to my roots as a teacher.

Marketing

Eds: How do you advertise your pottery and workshops? How do you make use of online platforms and social media in your practice?

AS: I have a few creatives with whom I brainstorm marketing ideas. A photographer friend pulled up my Instagram, pointed to a picture that I had posted of a Korean feast served up on my handmade bowls and declared, "That's your brand." Acknowledging



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5 A the end of the kiln rebuild, Amy Song took a moment to anticipate stoking the hot kiln during future firings! 6 Andrew Linderman using a lift to take care of the chimney for the kiln rebuild. 7 Ted Neal teaching his son Gavin how to set his first arch. Tom Miller oversees, and is also a tremendous help throughout the project.



8 After a firing, Amy Song posts a series of pots at a time to her website and to Etsy. She sets aside pots for juried shows—and has to keep a few herself. **9** The wheel is situated as close to the basement window as possible. Here Song works on a large serving bowl. **10** Much of Song's work is created in a series. It helps to have a bunch of spouts, lids, and handles to mix and match.

this connection between my love of food and the dishes used to present the meal clarifies my focus. That realization has launched food-related blog posts—finding ways to support restaurants during the pandemic, sending recipe cards with cup sales to help support the kiln rebuild, and providing cooking tips.

To market my work, I post to Instagram, share to Facebook, regularly contact my email list, and find galleries to connect me with new audiences. It is satisfying to find new customers, and sweet to get to know repeat customers.

Photography classes have been the best investment in my marketing skills. I took a few non-credit photography classes at a local community college and continue to reach out to photographer friends (some who barter!) with questions to keep improving my skills.

Momentum in my business is a beautiful thing. Word-of-mouth communication has filled firing workshops practically before I manage to market them, which is very much appreciated. I am also super excited to be planning a pottery tour with other artists in the area.

Most Important Lesson

Eds: What is the most important lesson you've learned as a working artist?

AS: I was so excited to fire my train kiln for the first time, but distressed when the firing revealed a major contamination issue in the bricks. Long story short, I had to rebuild my kiln. Following the firing, I was bolstered by my clay community: Simon Levin invited me to cut new posts at his studio. Christa Assad fought

to have new bricks shipped as compensation to all affected by the contaminated bricks. Ted Neal provided a ton of support and we worked together to carefully keep the costs down for the rebuild. My crew helped pick up the pieces, move tons of brick, take down and rebuild the chimney—this is not a one-woman business!

I highly recommend testing new bricks before you build with them. Find the hottest soda kiln you can, and test for shrinkage and warping, even if the bricks are from a reputable source.

Continuing Education

Eds: What do you think the role of a maker is within our current culture and how do you think you contribute to it?

AS: It is our responsibility to make and present the very best objects possible. The world is too full of carelessly produced stuff. Although handmade pottery is not exactly indispensable, if you came into my home and started to take away my collection, you would be picking a serious fight.

I am a constant student. I seek out people to learn from and opportunities to continually improve—following threads of inspiration for my work to evolve. I am currently part of Simon Levin's Clay Cohorts, a mentoring group established for the 2021 calendar year. I love the structure of having a group of five ceramic artists who are focused on developing their work. We are excited to culminate the year in a communal firing at Simon's pottery.

I am starting to receive feedback from people that I fire with, which is reassuring and humbling. The firings have created a

11 Spray guns and slip at the start of the firing workshop led by Jonathan Pacheco in 2019. *Photo: Alex Olson Arts.*
12 Photography workshop planning in 2020—Jason Arthur taking pictures of Cory McCrory's flask on the Fox River at the pottery.



community for experimentation and growth in the area, and I'm so excited to be the host.

A Community Adapts

Eds: How has the pandemic impacted the communal elements of wood firing and hosting workshops?

AS: The pandemic has been a setback, certainly. We unloaded the kiln March 16, 2020, which was the last day my kids were in school. It was a day of checking the news frequently, packing things up, and taking leave of the barn. I hope we never have to relive that kind of uncertainty and fear again. Workshops planned were canceled. The kiln rebuild was done with a skeleton crew—a very different experience than the week-long communal event in 2018.

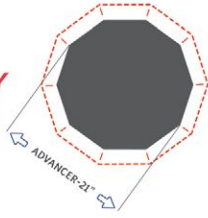
At a certain point, as we began to understand how the virus spreads, I started to look at it as a puzzle to solve versus an obstacle impossible to tackle. So as Illinois started to reopen in the spring, we had people drop off work ahead of time, and I loaded the kiln over several days with one helper at a time. With the barn doors flung open, the site is practically outdoors. Many of my crew brought family members to help cover shifts safely, instead of firing with someone outside their pod. I offered a socially distant workshop for people to ship pots to my kiln, and we did Zoom calls during the loading, body reduction, and toward the end of the firing. I really enjoyed meeting and getting to know potters from around the country, and I'm tempted to offer this again as an approachable way to try out wood firing.

We have fired two more times since then, following guidelines for small groups and the phased openings. Most of my crew is now vaccinated. Firing workshops are sold out for this spring. I am very grateful for vaccines—and hope!

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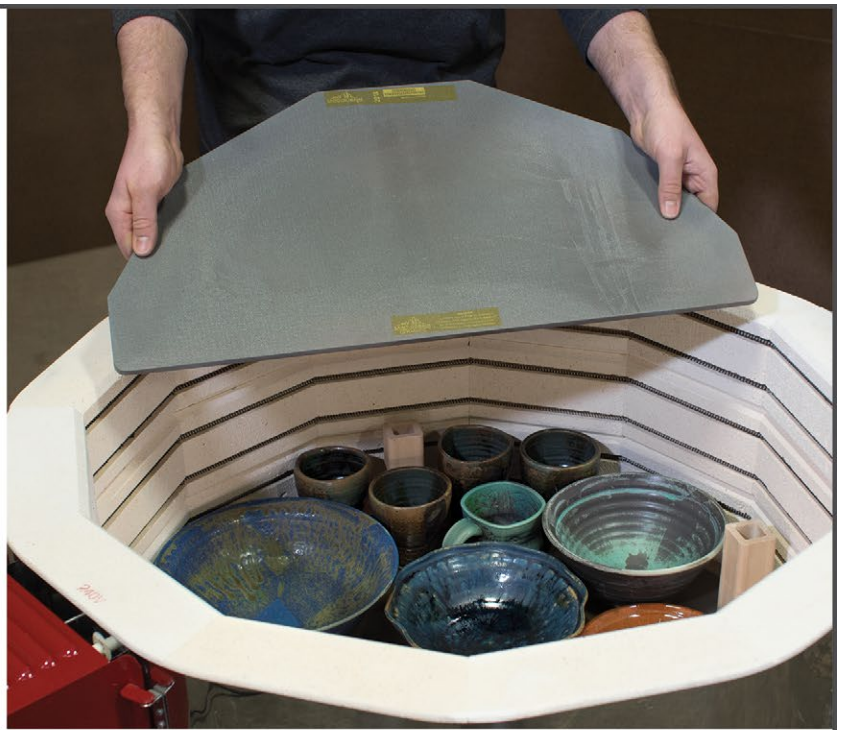


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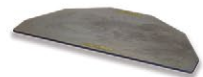
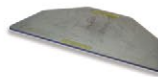
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Vase by Jennifer Mecca

A STUDIO PRACTICE CENTERED ON BEAUTY

Lotte Westphael

I am a Danish ceramic artist and my medium is porcelain. My work is based on a personal immersion in a technique that unfolds in a graphic universe. I am inspired by textiles and work with proportionality in lines and color fields, deriving inspiration from Anni Albers and Agnes Martin, as well as my Nordic heritage.

I call my vessels *Syncopes*, a musical expression referring to a disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm. This concept of syncopation gives me artistic freedom for the irregularity that comes from the technique and the material.

The Studio

I moved into my studio four years ago. Before that, I made ceramics in my large living room and had a kiln in a small outbuilding,

but this setup was far from ideal. When I was planning my first solo exhibition, I needed more space. Now I rent a workspace in a converted farm building within walking distance of my home. There are two other artists at the same location working in clay and bronze. Occasionally, we give each other professional feedback.

I have my own heated room (323 square feet (30 m²)) with work tables, storage for clay, and a corner with shelves for finished pieces. Furthermore, I have an adjacent, unheated room (161 square feet (15 m²)) with water and my three kilns. I recently bought two new kilns, since leading up to exhibition deadlines I needed to be able to fire all of the kilns simultaneously. This is primarily because I have changed my firing ramp for the large, thin porcelain cylinders, which require a much slower firing and cooling.



“ I consider every new vessel as an answer to a question the previous piece has raised.”



1 Planning for new works in the studio, sketching, and using books as inspiration. Photo: Erik Balle. 2 Left to right: *Yellow Grid Gradient*, *Yellow Syncope Gradient*, *Little Yellow Syncope*, *Polyrhythm*, *Yellow Polyrhythm Gradient*, to 10½ in. (27 cm) in diameter, unglazed colored porcelain, slab built, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. Photo: Sylvain Deleu.

Since my ceramics are unglazed and I work with slab-building techniques, I do not need a lot of equipment. The most important tools I use are a knife, a ruler, and a rolling pin. To prepare the initial clay slab, I have a North Star slab roller. This rolls out the porcelain to slightly less than ¼ inch (5–6 mm) thick. I then roll it again manually with the rolling pin and use Plexiglas sheets to precisely determine the thickness of the slabs (3 mm).

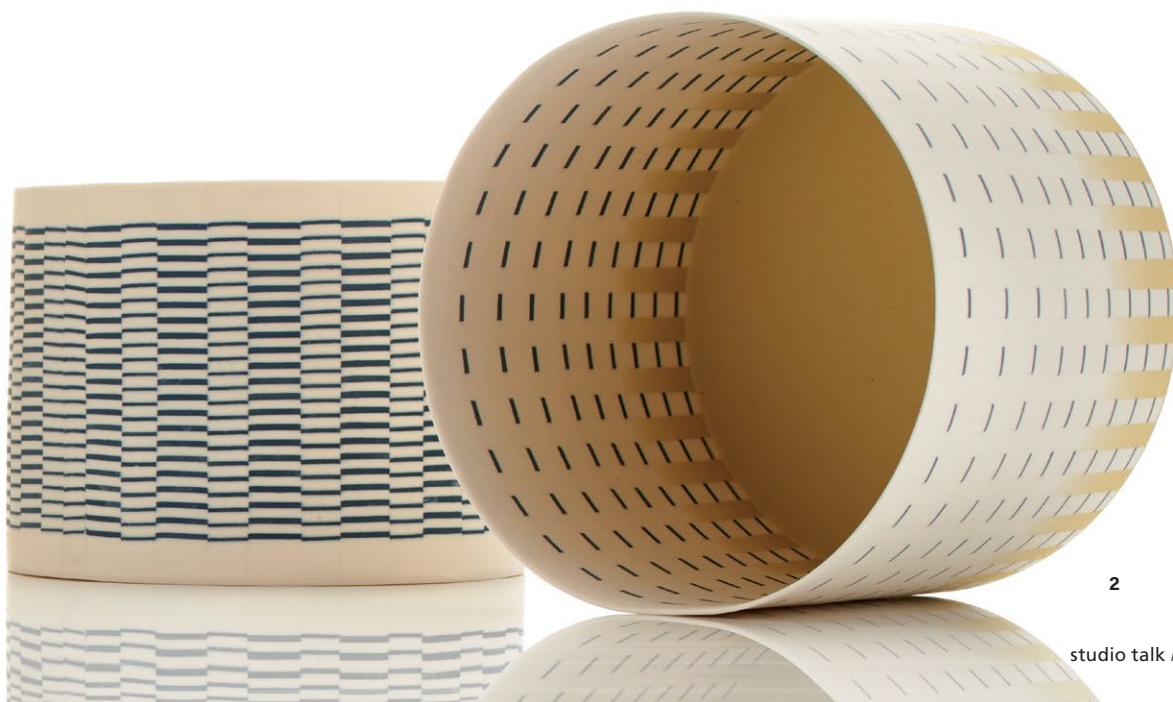
I have an electric height-adjustable work table. It is an advantage to be able to vary the height of the table during different stages of my process. This is especially the case when I form the slab into a cylinder as I need to see the vessel from different angles.

I keep my studio clean and tidy, and always end my day by cleaning up, then the studio is nice to come to the next day.

Background

I was educated at Design School Kolding in Kolding, Denmark. This was a five-year education in ceramics and glass with a master's degree in applied arts. During my education, I encountered a lot of guest teachers. Their approaches to their own practices and to a variety of materials was very inspiring on both a professional and personal level. One of the artists was Takeshi Yasuda and his words, “You don't fail enough, I want you to fail more. . .” are still in my mind more than 25 years later. For me, it is important to follow an artistic idea and make something new.

Before I began taking classes in ceramics, I traveled to Asia and ended up staying in Japan for half a year. I subsequently returned for another half year during my studies. I consider this





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3 Color samples and a pattern designed for a vessel. 4 Use a rolling pin and Plexiglas boards to make the thickness of the slabs very precise. 5 Unloading a kiln (there are three kilns total). 3–5 Photos: Erik Balle. 6 *Bluestriped Gradient Syncope I + II*, 5 in. (13 cm) in height, slab-built unglazed colored porcelain, glaze, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. 7 *Polyrhythm Gradient-Rouge*, 10½ in. (27 cm) in diameter, slab-built unglazed colored porcelain, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. 6, 7 Photos: Sylvain Deleu.

time in Japan as a formative journey. I was a studio apprentice at Kazu Nagayoshi’s pottery in Kyushu. Every morning, he had a fixed routine in the studio: lighting the stove, putting the kettle on for tea, sweeping the floor, etc. Now, I have similar routines in the morning in my studio. I often walk through the forest to get to my studio, after going for a morning swim in a nearby lake (even in the winter). On this walk, my workday actually begins. Here I prepare myself for the day’s tasks, and I often get new ideas while walking.

Inspiration

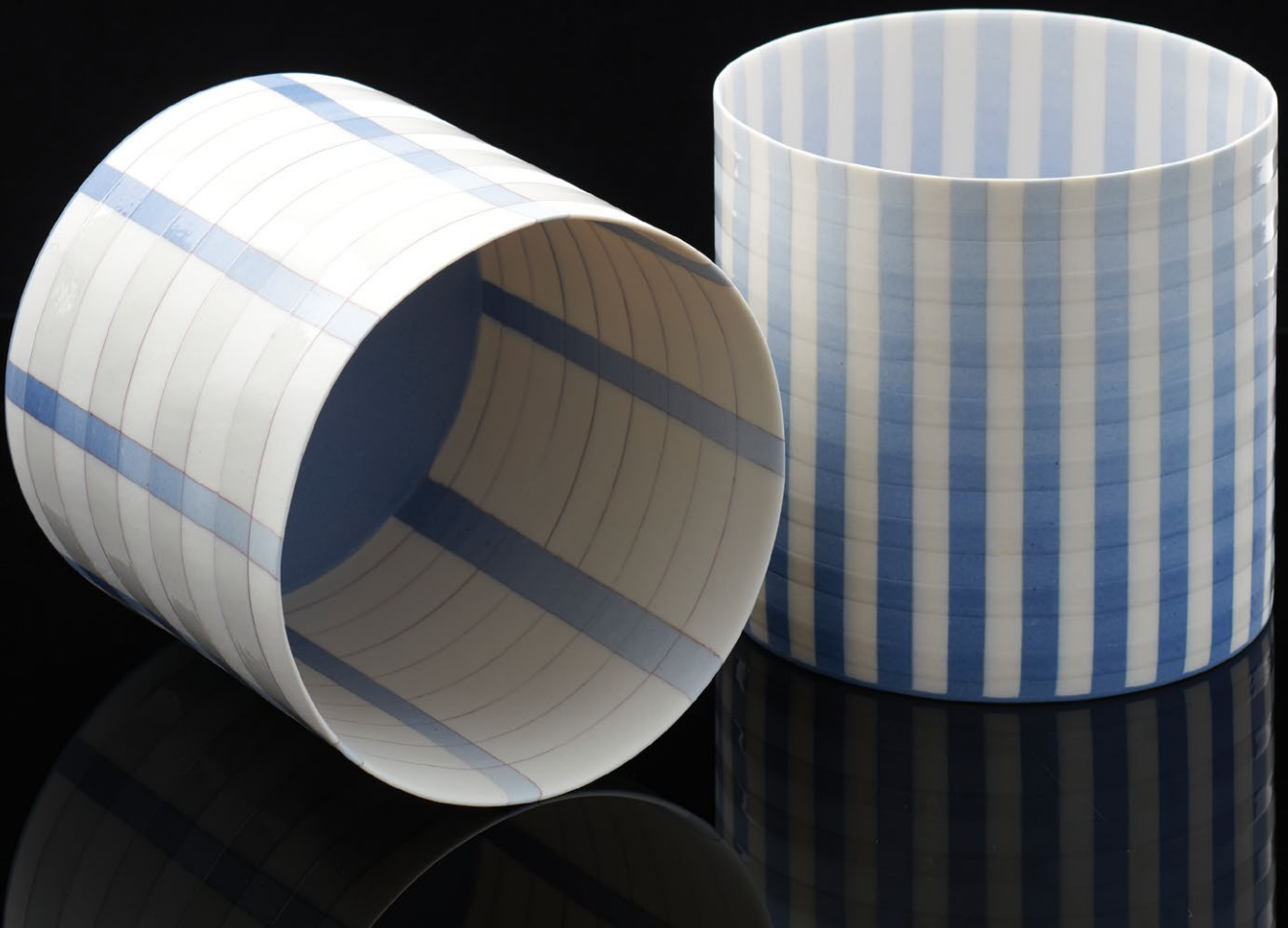
My work is interdisciplinary, in the intersection between textiles and ceramics, and my main interests are patterns, colors, and structures. I start working flat with slabs and then I transform the final pattern into a volumetric form. In my practice, I am primarily inspired by a textile universe. The Bauhaus-weavers Anni Albers and Gunta Stölzl, Japanese ikat, and my grandmother’s weaving book are my inspiration.

My artistic expression is new, while at the same time being part of a Danish studio pottery tradition. My first aesthetic experience of ceramics was with Alev Siesbye’s bowls, which I saw in an exhibition when I was 16 or 17 years old. There was a simple white room where her ceramics were displayed. It looked as if all the bowls were floating on their tiny, tiny feet. I remember the feeling of my mind opening for this beauty, and I remember the simplicity. It was magical.

Beauty is absolutely essential for me in my life and in my works, and I have a constant awareness of patterns, contrasts, lines, and colors. With respect to beauty, I would like to quote Agnes Martin, who’s a great inspiration for me: “Beauty is the mystery of life. It is not in my eyes, it is in my mind.”

A Question-and-Answer Approach

There is an element of excitement about making ceramics. That appeals to me, because I am challenged by the notion of how things might turn out and about how the finished piece will look.

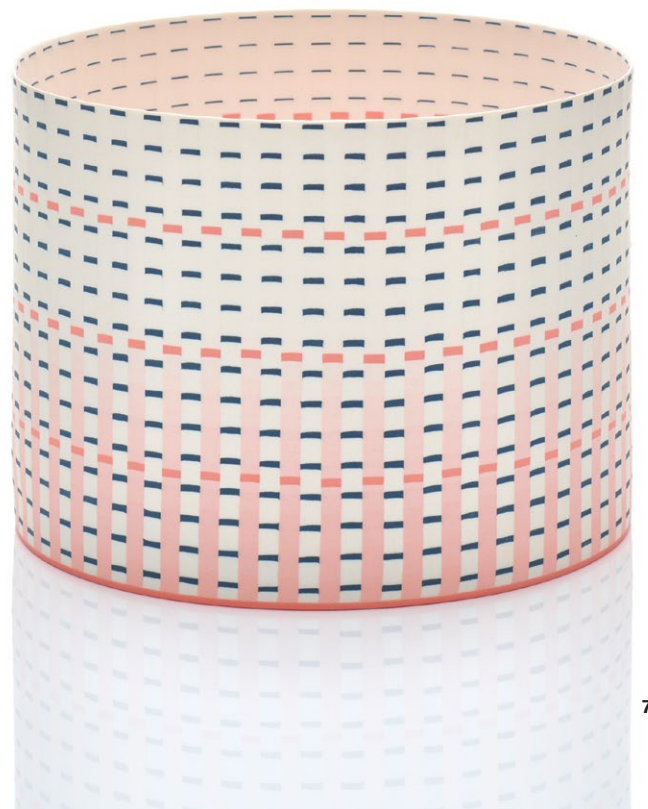


You have to work through all the processes and stages in ceramics before the final result reveals itself after the firing.

It is in my DNA to systematize and try different variations within the same theme. Therefore, I consider every new vessel as an answer to a question the previous piece has raised. If all my works were placed chronologically in a row, there would be a clear reference to this approach. I make sketches, but when transferring them into a vessel, I always make slight changes (for example, in the rhythm of how the templates are assembled). Making a vessel involves a lot of advance planning. The colors in the unfired porcelain are very different from the finished colors. It is especially difficult to see the difference in the pastels, and it is important to have a kind of master plan. I have small paper tags with the numbers of the colors written on them and keep them lying on the clay through the whole process, otherwise I lose track.

One can say that my vessels are a result of detailed planning and subsequent improvisation. When I am in the middle of working with the porcelain, I get inspired and encouraged by the process to make something other than what I had planned.

Inspiration comes from a variety of inputs. When I saw my vessels in sunlight, I saw that the quality of color completely changed. From this, I carried out a lot of tests of very soft colors that had almost no pigment. I thought it was interesting to make vessels where the color appears almost white until a light was shining through, revealing the hues and vibrancy of the colors.





The sunlight activated my vessels and I seized on this discovery to develop the pieces further.

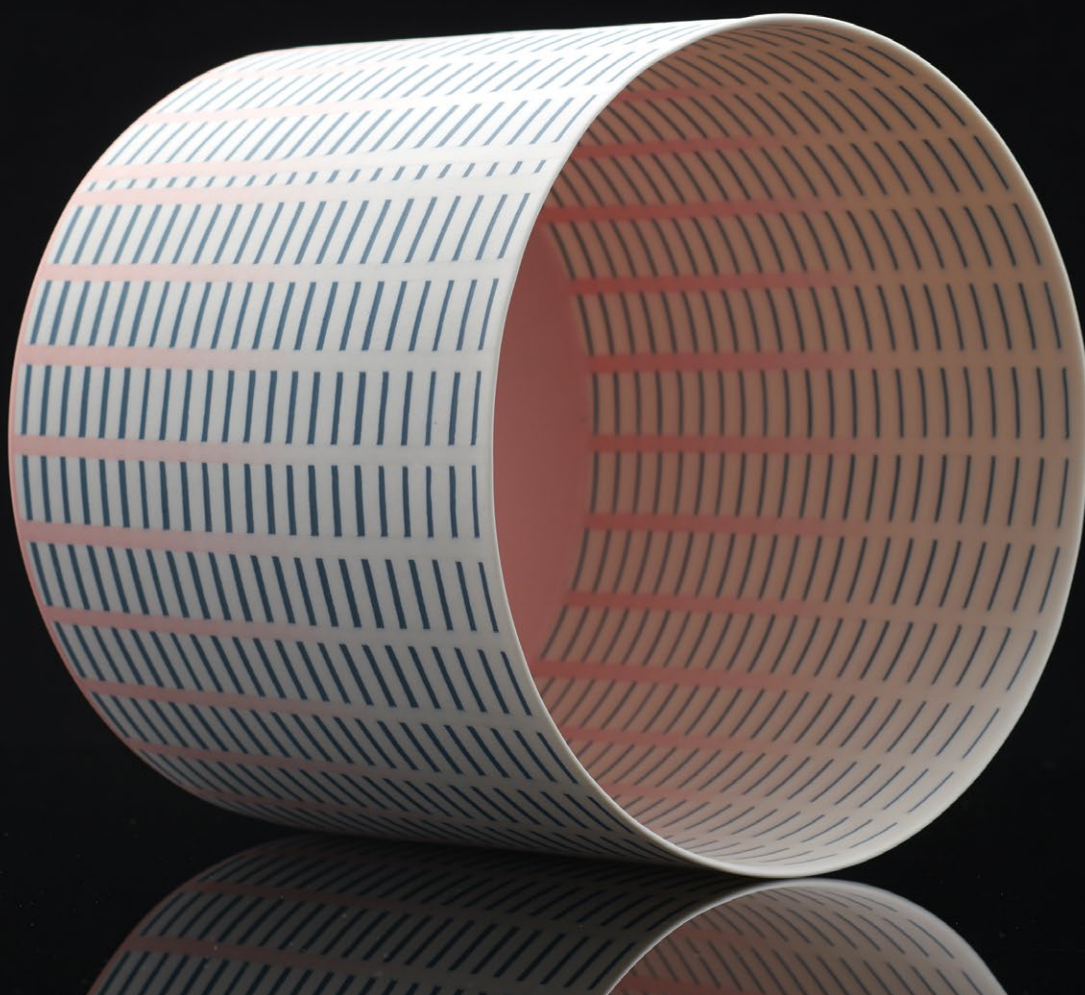
I use the cylindrical form as a three-dimensional canvas for my patterns. Working with these patterns and the color combinations captivates me so much so that I don't feel the urge to explore other shapes. Technically, I go right to the limit—and fail! I work with different techniques: slab building, the Japanese mishima technique, and cutting and rejoining porcelain strips. My technique is like patchwork. The work with the *Syncopes* is very demanding. It takes a month to make 1–2 pieces, and the drying period is another month. Due to the thinness and all of the joints, approximately 25–30% of the pieces crack in the process.

I have been close to giving up making the *Syncopes* several times because of this demanding and time-consuming process. But when I open the kiln and have a successful firing that sometimes exceeds my expectations, I am encouraged to continue.

Marketing

Earlier in my career as a ceramic artist, I used to make utilitarian items and porcelain jewelry, which I sold at craft fairs and in museum shops. As my artistic expression has become clearer and the

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8 *Blue Grid Gradient I*, 9 in. (23 cm) in diameter, slab-built unglazed colored porcelain, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. **9** *Blushing Polyrythm*, 7 in. (18 cm) in diameter, slab-built unglazed colored porcelain, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. **10** The plastic containers on the shelves in her studio keep all the different colors of porcelain separated. **11** Lotte Westphael at the door to her studio in a converted farm building. **10, 11** Photos: Erik Balle. **12** Lotte Westphael with *Polyrythm Gradient-Bluegrey*, 10½ in. (27 cm) in diameter, slab-built unglazed colored porcelain, fired to 2264°F (1240°C) in oxidation. **8, 9, 12** Photos: Sylvain Deleu.



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technique I use to create the vessels has improved, my *Synscopes* have also become better. Now, I exclusively make unique pieces for exhibitions and sell my work through galleries.

I have a calendar with deadlines for applications and am systematic about this. My collaboration with a professional photographer has also been a good investment to present my work in the best way possible. I like my visual communication to match the level of the galleries I work with. My own communication about my work is conducted on Instagram. I consider this platform both as an invitation for interested parties to follow my practice in my studio and as a showcase for finished *Synscopes*.

In the last several years, I have applied to biennales, and in the US I have exhibited in *Fahrenheit 2018* at the American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA) in California. I am represented by Plinth Gallery in Denver, Colorado, and Galerie Maria Wettergren in Paris, France. With the latter, I have exhibited at Design Miami-Basel in Switzerland, among other places. This autumn I am very excited to have been accepted for KICB 2021, the Korean International Ceramic Biennale, which will take place October 1–November 28, 2021, at the Gyeonggi Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art in Gyeonggi, South Korea.

To learn more, follow Lotte Westphael on Instagram @lottewestphael.



EXPANDING MATERIALITY AND UTILITY

Hayun Surl

Editors: What is the most challenging aspect of working in clay?

Hayun Surl: I believe the most challenging aspect of working in clay is the process of understanding its materiality. Making, drying, glazing, and firing—clay is a very time-sensitive medium. More than administrating the process, I am listening and reacting to what clay needs. This reciprocal process is what leads to good work. Perhaps this is what keeps me humble and constantly motivated to do further research with ceramics.

I am trying to observe the relationship between individuals and the built environment and how individuals affect environments. Regardless of how we think about society, it is apparent that while we constructed it, we are also constantly influenced by it.

I practiced pottery as an apprentice in Korea and am currently a graduate student in ceramics at Ohio University (OU) in Athens, Ohio. Living in Korea and now in the US, I have grown to appreciate the differences in perspectives between these two cultures along with the many individual attitudes and outlooks that exist. Under such circumstances, I always challenge myself to communicate with the public outside of the boundaries of art. Some people say that art is the process of representing one's ego, but I think art should also resonate with the viewers. I think making something that could build common ground among segregated populations is one of the most challenging aspects artists face, and it is also the most important.

Eds: What role does color play in your work?

HS: Color is like clothing. I often think about what color would be good for each form even while working with wet clay. Sometimes color accentuates the contour of the piece or the texture on the surface. It can add weight or sometimes make it visually lighter. Moreover, I am fascinated with glaze because the color palette cannot be simplified into one color. If I investigate a yellow glazed surface, I see many yellows. That is true for all colors. Color also plays a role in creating balance with the form. For instance, I enjoy firing pots with large surface areas in wood or salt kilns. Simple and voluminous surfaces serve as nice canvases that accentuate and counterbalance the variety of color created by nature.

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

HS: When it comes to developing new forms, I usually think about the basic property of clay as a material. Then, I try to find connectivity between tradition and contemporary methods.

One of the important properties of clay is its plasticity, which enables us to record traces of techniques and touch. One of my approaches is using indigenous clay. Although producing work with local clay is not typical, especially for sculpture, I believe that clay's dialect (vernacular quality) needs to be explored in order to find new possibilities.



Opposite: Octagonal jar, 10¼ in. (26 cm) in height, iron-rich clay, wood and salt fired to cone 9–10, reduction cooled, 2018. **Above:** Reduction cooling gas kiln building in progress at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, 2021. **Below:** Hayun Surl with *Monument*, 5 ft. 6 in. (1.7 m) in height, iron-rich clay, salt fired to cone 7, 2020.

“ I believe the most challenging aspect of working in clay is the process of understanding its materiality.”





Flow, to 26½ in. (67 cm) in length, iron-rich clay, wood and salt fired to cone 9–10, reduction cooled, 2018.

Materiality holds a transcendent property that is effective in creating a common ground with viewers. As a result, I decided to continue to apply local clay to my sculpture to see what kind of narrative it would embrace and how it would resonate with viewers.

My current work involves using three-dimensional design software, which I am comfortable with because of my background as an interior designer. Historically, clay has been the material that shows instant reaction to human touch. This modern approach could be another way to achieve this effect beyond the relationship between the human hand and clay. I use three-dimensional design software to create something in the digital world that surpasses the limitations of time and space in terms of modeling. After I finish the object in the digital world, I generate the prototype using a three-dimensional printer and convert it into clay. This transition from bits to atoms and applying decoration using indigenous clay is a very exciting and fresh approach for me.

Eds: Could you talk about your recent grant award to build a wood kiln on the OU campus?

HS: I am currently building a hybrid gas kiln for reduction cooling. I was fortunate to have many reduction-cooled firing experiences during my apprenticeship in Korea and decided to reinterpret this ancient technique with a contemporary approach.

This reduction-cooled technique originated in the 4th and 5th centuries of the Gaya period (prior to the Silla period) in Korea. It was only performed with a wood kiln, which requires a high temperature (2200–2350°F (1204–1288°C)) and pressure along with introducing carbon while the kiln cools to sintering temperatures. I wanted to ease the difficulty of the traditionally arduous firing process by increasing its efficiency and accessibility to ceramic artists.

I decided to conduct this project because the US ceramics field embraces diversity and an experimental spirit. OU is recognized

for experimenting with different types of kiln designs in a contemporary way and studying their structural advantages.

Once the kiln is built (May 2021), it will remain alongside other types of kilns at OU. It will expand opportunities for research for future students and become a tool that will hopefully trigger different ideas for the next innovators.

Eds: What is the most valuable advice you’ve received so far as a ceramic artist?

HS: I have been very lucky to meet several great mentors on my way as a ceramic artist. Particularly, I remember one comment from my OU professor Brad Schwieger, “I know you are a potter. What else?” It was very confusing at the time, and I remember thinking to myself, “I thought I was admitted to this school as a potter?”

Schwieger’s artwork bridges the pottery and sculpture world. Additionally, he studied pottery in Japan, so he has a better understanding of the different perspectives between Eastern and Western art. He has been consistently pushing students out of their comfort zones, perhaps to find other parts of themselves.

Korea and the US have different perspectives in terms of seeing the object. In Korea a person is more likely to perceive the form as an object itself. It often does not require further explanation from the artist. However, in the Western contemporary art world, artists’ ideas and narratives are as significant as the object itself. This allows many potters to embed their messages in the surfaces and forms of their work. However, I felt limited expressing myself using vessel forms because of my cultural heritage and my perception of pottery as utilitarian. This is when I started to explore my next steps by making sculpture, and I have now found an inner balance that allows me to appreciate both function and the art of ceramics.

Onggi Making Process

First, take three pounds of clay and tap on the center of the bat (1). Slam the clay toward yourself while rotating it to make a round slab for the bottom part of the Onggi (2).

Now, even out the thickness by first using the tool called *Bang-Mang-Yi* (3). After, smooth the surface using water and a rib. Remove the excess clay (4) and be sure that the size is what you want for the bottom of your Onggi.

Next, make the slab for the wall part of the Onggi. Take about five pounds of clay and make a cube shape by tapping it on the floor or table. Then, stretch it by slamming it down toward yourself until it is about the length of your hand. Once you get the proper length, hold the slab by each end. Begin to stretch the clay horizontally by slamming it to the side, switching between left and right.

It is important to have the clay slab contact the ground or table gradually from one side to the other in order to have an even thickness. After you have achieved the length of the slab you want, make sure to smooth the stretch marks on the surface using your knuckle or a rib to avoid cracks.

Once you get the right length and width for the wall slab, attach it to the bottom slab. After setting the wall slab on the bottom slab, seal them properly using your finger and rib (5). With the slab attached properly, secure the bond between the

bottom and wall slab by adding a 1-inch-thick coil. Grab the coil with little bit of water on your index finger and use your knuckle to fill in the seam between the bottom and wall slab as you are rotating the wheel (6). After you have successfully applied the coil, use the rib to smooth the surface.

For the next step, clap the clay between your hands, one hand outside and one inside the pot—this helps even out the clay thickness. It also helps center the clay while it is rotating on the wheel. Traditionally, Onggi makers use tools called *Surae* and *Dogae* for the same purpose, but I found it to be more comfortable to use my hand when I am making a smaller sized Onggi.

Next, thicken the rim. This will ensure there is enough width for the next slab to sit on. Now is the time to start forming the curved shape of the Onggi. Hold one rib against the inside and one rib opposite it against the outside of the clay wall (7). It is pretty much the same technique as when you are shaping the pot using your fingers, but you can limit the amount of water by using ribs instead.

Now that you have established the lower part of the Onggi, repeat the same stacking process two or three more times, adding wall slabs (8) until you reach the height you desire. After establishing the height, even the thickness of the rim using Onggi tools (*Surae* is the outside padding tool in image 10, *Dogae* is the inside padding tool in image 10) (9–11).



1 Position clay on the bat. 2 Make the bottom of Onggi by using the paddling tool (*Bang-Mang-Yi*). 3 Even out the base by using the paddling tool. 4 Cut off the extra clay to adjust the diameter of the bottom. 5 Attach the first slab to the bottom, forming the wall. 6 Add a coil to join the wall and bottom.

Thickening the rim is important because it will support the pot's body while shaping its form using rib tools on the inside and outside. Next, go back to the rim and finish any detail work using water and a leather strap to smooth and compress the clay.

Lastly, make sure you remove all the water that dripped inside the pot and any on the outside. As you may know, too much water can lead to cracks forming in a vessel.

The advantage of this slab building (*Taryum*) technique is that it needs very little water to efficiently form a vessel's shape.¹ This technique can be used to prevent collapsing and shorten drying times, which benefits the forming process. Additionally, it does not need any bottom trimming since the form is completed on a bat.

Reduction Cooling in a Wood Kiln

I was introduced to reduction cooling techniques during my two-year apprenticeship under the pottery master, In-Sung Hwang (Studio Daebuyo), in Goesan, Korea. One of the important parts about this technique is that it ensures constant interior gas/fuel/ atmosphere pressure with its completely sealed exterior. This pressure and lack of oxygen triggers a strong chemical reaction between the glaze and clay body.

The process starts once the kiln has reached the maximum desired temperature. Once this has been achieved (typically about cone 11–12 in the front, cone 8–9 in the back for my firings), place

a bag of wet pine-tree branches with salt into the firebox—approximately enough to fill a 15-gallon bag.

Then, to keep oxygen from infiltrating the kiln, immediately close the chimney damper and seal the surface of the kiln using wet clay—especially the seams along the door brick. After the kiln is sealed, the carbon and metal oxides in this high-pressure kiln atmosphere will go through a chemical reaction. Substances in the clay body such as silica and iron oxides react with carbon from the wood, creating soot on the surface.

Wood kilns usually enabled this reduction-cooling technique due to the structural property of having an interior firebox. Burning wood inside of the kiln means that the carbon emissions are created internally. Wood-fired reduction-cooled pottery has a distinguishable beauty created by wood ash, the flow of the heat, and the clay reaction with carbon. Each vessel's appearance is unique due to these factors.

This process can yield significantly different textures not just by changing the surface like glazes, but changing the whole clay body's color, creating a depth in its black colors (see 12).

¹ Reference Videos for Making Onggi using Taryum Technique:

- www.instagram.com/p/BwO3vybg9K5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
- www.instagram.com/p/BwO5Y3TAKj3/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

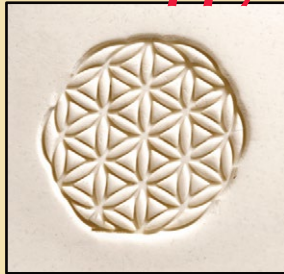
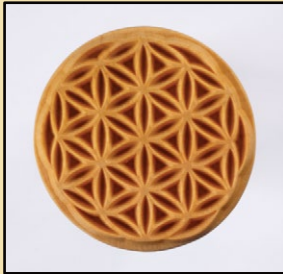
To learn more, visit www.yoonspottery.com and follow [@yoonspottery](https://www.instagram.com/yoonspottery) on Instagram.



7 Center and smooth the surface using wooden ribs. 8 Attach the next slab and repeat the process. 9 Center and adjust using wooden rib tools. 10 Even the thickness of the wall by using paddling Onggi tools (Surae, outside padding tool, and Dogae, inside padding tool, shown here). 11 Form the Onggi shape by stretching the wall using wooden rib tools. 12 Water storage Onggi, 13 in. (33 cm) in diameter, iron-rich clay, wood and salt fired to cone 9–10, reduction cooled, 2018. All process photos: *Rachelle Le Roy*.

MKM POTTERY TOOLS

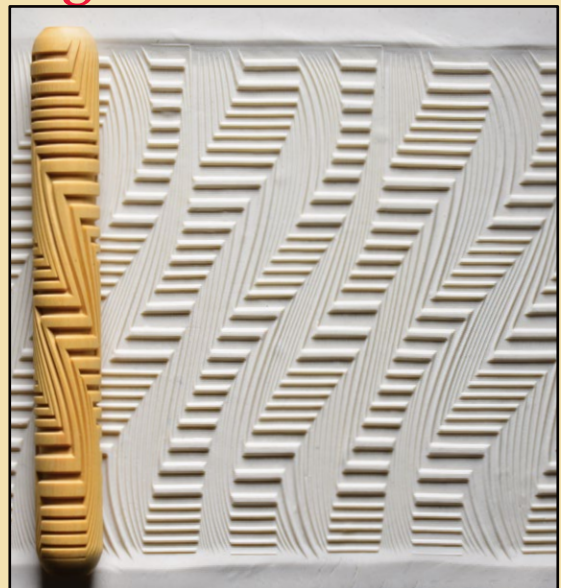
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A MULTIMEDIA HOME STUDIO

Joann Quiñones



Editors: What techniques do you use to make your work and why?

Joann Quiñones: I love slip casting and mold making. It is poetic and labor intensive. Conceptually, both techniques are still relevant to me as I think about the dehumanization of individuals in terms of both race and labor. The circumstances of the past year, however, have really impacted what kind of work I can make. Between transitioning into a home studio setup and a pandemic, it felt like so many avenues were closed—from the businesses where I could purchase supplies to facilities where I could have pieces fired. And yet, because artists are generous with their time, knowledge, and resources, I found I was really able to branch out and try new things.

I have taken a wide range of workshops and classes online this past year during quarantine, from glaze chemistry to sculpting on a wheel. Through this process, I discovered that I have seriously underestimated things like press molds, the sculptural possibility of thrown objects, the value of making smaller work (especially when you only have a tiny kiln), and making larger works constructed



1 View of Joann Quiñones' home studio. 2 Molds and raw materials in Quiñones' studio. 3 Quiñones' Cress E911t kiln. 4 Joann Quiñones with her work. Photo: Destini Ross. 5 Work in progress, 2021.



“ Anyone who is willing to question the narratives of history, who can ask, ‘Who is present, who is missing, and what is their story?’ —that’s my ideal audience.”

of parts. And the slower pace has meant I have been able to give attention to things like making tiles and stamps. I am practicing surface design on both clay and fiber, and I am enjoying researching historical patterns. Even if these choices are happening because of circumstances outside my control, I am able to make work I care about. I still find myself lifecasting and making molds of body parts. I don't think that will ever change, but I'm looking forward to seeing how this incubation period will impact how I approach the body.

Eds: What materials do you use in your work and what role do they play in the narrative?

JQ: I have transitioned to only using terra cotta in my work. Narratively, the material helps me connect to places as diverse as West Africa and Spain, and temporally to the Pre-Columbian era. It has been used to make functional ware, sculpture, and architectural elements, from the roof to the floor. I think of



it as a material that is the foundation of the work. And because in my work I try to convey what it is like to live in the crossroads in terms of gender, race, and cultures, I love how it helps me remember we are all connected in some way through our traditions with the same material. I also have switched to using only terra-cotta casting slip. There is a fantastic recipe in Andrew Martin's book *Essential Guide to Mold Making and Slip Casting*. In the past year, I have fallen madly in love with terra sigillata, and because of how it mimics some qualities of skin for me, it has started appearing on my forms more often.

I have noticed I am developing a larger mixed-media sculpture practice. I am gravitating toward fibers and wood for the same reason I love clay. Objects and materials have history. The way I choose to assemble them helps me enter that conversation. This is what makes art so powerful to me.

Eds: Who is your ideal audience? How do you hope to engage that audience?

JQ: In general, I want my ideal audience to be everyone, but as I have taken on more specific projects, I'm realizing imagining that audience is an important first step. For example, I worked on a

project called *Seeing Lizzie* as part of "Call and Response: Creative Interpretations of Wylie House." The Wylie House is a historic house museum administered by Indiana University Libraries, under the direction of Carey Champion. It was the home of Indiana University's first president, Andrew Wylie. Elizabeth Breckenridge was an African American domestic servant who lived in the Wylie House for 54 years. When I visited the house, there was nothing physically I could see to mark her presence, even though her labor and her care for the family was vital.

I created artworks for almost every room in the house, so that visitors would have the opportunity to imagine and wonder what Lizzie's life was like. I made a series of topsy-turvy dolls to place in the girls' bedroom to highlight even though Elizabeth came to the Wylie House at 14 years old, her life was much different than the girls of the home. I made tiles and tiled a broom that was placed in the corner of the master bedroom. In order to engage the audience, next to each artwork were NFC tags. Visitors could use their smartphones and be directed to websites, photographs, and articles about Elizabeth and Black life in the 19th century. With this project, it became really clear that I wanted people who may have never seen



6 *These Hands Do Not Work Here*, 10 ft. 4 in. (3.2 m) in length, terra-cotta casting slip, wood, paint, ribbon, whitewash, 2020. Photo: Destini Ross. **7** *American Ibeyi*, 16 in. (41cm) in height, terra cotta, acrylic, cotton, 2020. **8** *Topsy*, 10 in. (25 cm) in height, terra cotta, cotton, lace, music box that plays "Jesus Loves Me," 2020. **9** *Jump: Swept*, 4 ft. 6 in. (1.4 m) in height, white earthenware, floral decals, grout, broom, 2020. **7-9** Courtesy of the Wylie House Museum.



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10 *Vejigante: Mama*, 17 in. (44 cm) in height, terra cotta, terra sigillata, wood, paint, gilding, 2020. **11** *Vejigante: Papa*, 17 in. (44 cm) in height, terra cotta, terra sigillata, wood, paint, gilding, 2020. **10, 11** Photos: Destini Ross.

themselves in museums, historic homes, or artworks to see themselves, their ancestors, their history, and know that they, we, have always mattered. Anyone who is willing to question the narratives of history, who can ask, “Who is present, who is missing, and what is their story?”—that’s my ideal audience.

Studio Space

After having what seemed to be unlimited space and resources at Indiana University, Bloomington, the transition from graduate student to artist working from home was a shock! I think it didn’t really dawn on me that I would have to figure out how to develop a new art practice in a new space so soon after just figuring out what sort of art practice I wanted in the first place. And truthfully, the first few months after graduating were pretty difficult emotionally. How would I continue to make large-scale figurative work? How could I make work without equipment? How long was it going to take me to get up and running? And how was I going to maintain my studio practice and work a full-time job?

I quickly realized I would have to make fundamental shifts in my thinking. If I didn’t have access to a studio, wood shop, metal shop, and glaze room, what could I have access to? My partner and I decided our house really needed to become a studio first, then a home. I took over the dining room and added work tables. This is where I tend to sculpt, roll out slabs, and handbuild. It turns out I really enjoy the space. There is a lot of sunlight, and I can watch birds as I work. I like being able to be home and spend time with my dogs and partner. For assembling larger projects, I spread out into the living room. Sawhorses and tabletops are great for setting up impromptu work spaces that can be put away when not in use. An upstairs guest room is where I do small-scale metal and fiber work. I set up a plaster and mold-making area in the basement and that is working well. The basement has concrete floors and floor

drains, so I can easily clean up spills and control dust by mopping. I always use a respirator downstairs, but it helps that there are windows to help with circulation. And I make sure there is little chance of contaminating the clay with plaster because I keep the areas very separate. As a woman, it has felt particularly empowering to take up space and make my home meet my needs first.

Studio Equipment

Another shift in thinking had to occur around equipment. I had to ask myself what I really needed, what I would need eventually, and what things were just nice to have. I joined a bunch of Facebook groups for folks selling used pottery supplies and the best score of the year was a Brent C wheel! I agonized for a while about kilns, and my friend Jonathan Christensen Caballero convinced me that the kiln I could afford at the moment was the best kiln to have! I purchased a Cress E911t. Designed for doll parts and jewelry, I was surprised at how much I really could fire in the kiln, especially if I thought about my work as made up of multiple parts. For larger projects, I was able to ask my local paint-your-own pottery studio to fire in their kilns for a set price per load.

Having this first taste of a functioning home studio makes me think down the road I would love to build a studio from the ground up. The only challenge of setting up our house this way is that messes are harder to contain and I find myself continuously working on just one little thing more. Having a live/work space where there is some sort of separation might make our visiting friends more comfortable, too, since we do not currently have a sofa!

While I have enjoyed setting up my studio, I am gladly packing it all up soon. I recently accepted a position teaching sculpture and mixed media at Alfred University and will be moving this summer.

To learn more, visit www.joannquinones.com.

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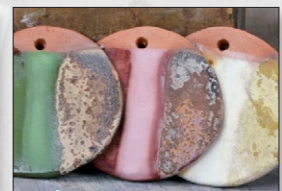
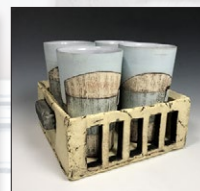
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AN ENGINEERED APPROACH

Douglas McDowell

Editors: What is your usual routine for a day in the studio or throughout a making cycle?

Douglas McDowell: I do most of my work at the College of Lake County ceramics studio, in Grayslake, Illinois. First, I see what pieces have been bisque fired. I try to have work in all stages of completion (leather hard, bisque, and fired). This gives me flexibility and allows me to schedule priorities. My goal is to have some pottery in every firing done at the studio. When I am throwing, I usually make 4–6 pieces at a time. I also make some one-of-a-kind pieces to see if I like a certain form. Most of my prep work for glazing is done at home.

Eds: What role do color and pattern play in your work?

DM: My goal is to have a pot be colorful, distinctive, and rich looking (as in luxurious, gorgeous, and exceptional). Since I want the design/pattern to pop, my goal is color separation. I also like to use the raw clay to accent the piece. Most of my work has a pattern, but sometimes I make pieces that are not geometric, just to have a change of pace. Although the patterns are two dimensional, they sometimes appear to be three dimensional.

Eds: What is the most challenging aspect of working in clay?

DM: My biggest challenge is to make a pattern or new design work with the piece. I make test tiles for each clay body and test new glazes at cone-6 oxidation and cone-9 reduction to see what the color looks like and to see if it runs.

I participate in the Empty Bowls program at the studio and usually make about 30+ bowls per semester to donate and try out new glazes and designs on them. The best results graduate to larger pieces (it is better to make a small error than a large one). Usually a design or glaze pattern will transfer well, but sometimes it doesn't fit the piece as I had envisioned. The result might be a nice surprise; I am always optimistic!

Eds: What research and sources do you reference prior to and when creating your work and why?

DM: We are all products of our experiences, environments, and genes. I was born with geometry in my head/body (in my first-grade picture, my shirt had a geometric pattern!). I am an engineer by training and have always used math and precision in my work. I am also a hiker (Appalachian Trail, 2010–2018, and Camino de Santiago, 2019) in the summer, and I do find some designs and patterns when I am on the road. I watch YouTube a lot to virtually



Above: *Sunflower Yellow Planter*, 11 in. (28 cm) in height, red stoneware, glaze, underglaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, 2020. **Opposite top:** *Piano Plate No. 12*, 11 in. (28 cm) in diameter, porcelain, glaze, underglaze, fired to cone 9 in reduction, 2016. **Opposite bottom left:** *Four Color Fan Vase*, 10 in. (25 cm) in height, stoneware, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 9 in reduction, 2010. **Opposite bottom right:** *Boomerangs and Kites Lidded Orb No. 11*, 15 in. (38 cm) in height, stoneware, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 9 in reduction, 2016.

visit art galleries, art auctions, and museums to see ceramics shows, as well to see process-oriented videos on throwing and decorating pottery. My fellow students and potters also send me patterns to look at. I am particularly influenced by the Art Deco and Art Nouveau art periods and Native American and Islamic artwork and aesthetics. I am always looking for new patterns or decorating ideas and some have come from other sources like quilting and antiques, for example. The key is to take an idea or pattern and make it your own.



“ The key is to take an idea or pattern and make it your own.”

Eds: What tools and techniques are integral to your work and why?

DM: I use 1/8-inch-wide masking tape, blue painter's tape, latex, a construction laser, a ruler, a large decorating disk, stamps, and math skills to make and adjust my designs to each form. My goal is to make the design fit the pot precisely and make it aesthetically pleasing to the eye using underglazes and glazes. I always feel that if I like the finished piece, most people will feel the same way.

All photos: David Bolton.

To learn more, visit <https://ceramicartsnet.org/ican/portfolio/mcdowell-douglas>.



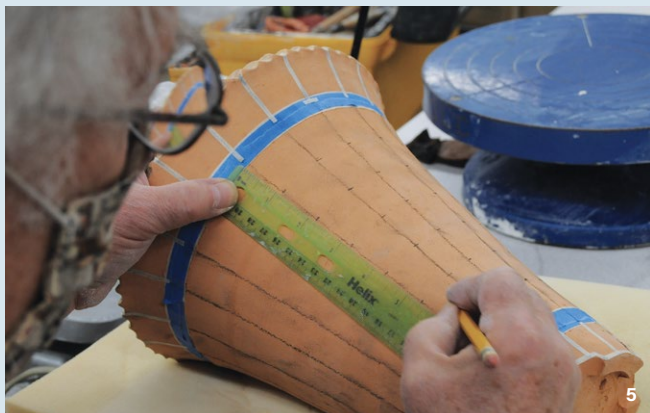
Decorating the Planter

My typical planter form is a flared cylinder wheel thrown from 10 pounds of clay. The planter measures at least 12 inches in height and 10 inches in diameter in the wet state. After the form is partially dry, I use wooden stamps to create bands of repeating shapes slightly below the top rim and slightly above the bottom edge. For this vase I have used an MKM leaf stamp and the handle of a tool to create the repeating band patterns and the ruffled rim texture. I also trim the bottom of the pot and drill 5 holes in the base for drainage.

Once the planter is out of the bisque firing, begin by painting green underglaze on the stamped leaves. After drying, cover the

painted leaves with 1/8-inch masking tape first, then with painter's tape for total coverage. Apply latex on the rim to act as a resist for the next steps (2).

Use a decorating disk to segment the bottom of the planter diameter into 20 sections. Use a laser level to make straight-line drawing easier; line up the segment markings with the center of the planter base (3). Place 1/8-inch masking tape covering the segment lines vertically from the ruffled rim down to the top stamped band and from the bottom of the pot to the bottom stamped band (4). Tape around the bottom perimeter, outlining the side walls of the planter. Divide each of the 20 segment lines into inches using a

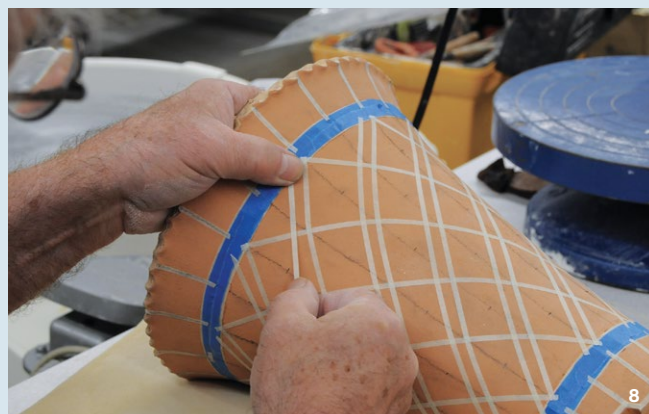


1 Tape the leaf rim with 1/8-inch masking tape. **2** Apply latex to the ruffled top edge. **3** Trace the segment lines following a laser level. **4** Put 1/8-inch masking tape on the segment line from the bottom to the stamped bottom ring. **5** Divide the segment line by inches. **6** Put 1/8-inch masking tape on alternating segment lines to the right and connect to the other segment lines.

ruler (5). These initial taped segments serve as the foundation for the next step of marking diagonals.

There are 20 segments, but you will be taping only 10 segments (using every other segment line). All of the lines and segment lines will be used in plotting the design. Place tape on the middle segment line and extend it diagonally to the next line to the right from the top and so on, until you reach the bottom. Do this 10 times, skipping every other line at the top (6). Then, place tape on the same middle segment line and extend it diagonally in the opposite direction to the next segment line to the left from the top to the bottom. Do this 10 times as you did before (7). You should now have a diamond pattern.

To make this more complex, create a secondary diamond pattern. Start at one line and place tape halfway between the top of the diamond and the start of the next segment line to the right. Apply tape parallel to the side of the diamond and continue to the bottom (8). Repeat this 10 times. Next, do the same to the lines extending horizontally in the opposite direction. Place tape halfway between the top of the diamond and the start of the next segment line to the left. Make a diagonal line of tape parallel to the side of the diamond and continue to the bottom. Repeat this 10 times. Making the doubled diamond pattern in narrow tape should result in a little diamond in each corner. I cover each of these with tape (9).



7 Put 1/8-inch masking tape on alternating segment lines to the left, then connect to the other segment lines. **8** Start the parallel tape line to the left halfway between two top segment points. **9** Put the parallel tape line to the right halfway between two top segment points. Cover the small diamonds in each corner with tape. **10** Cover the four bottom exit holes with masking tape. **11** Dip the bottom and top sections in glaze. **12** Put latex over the bottom glazed section.

Finally, apply painter's tape over the five drainage holes in the inside bottom of the planter, then tape over the four legs (which act as water exit holes) on the side of the planter base (see 10). (This tape prevents wax and the bottom glaze from getting on the pot exterior.) Put wet clay plugs in the five planter bottom drainage holes, and apply wax to the bottom legs. Glaze the bottom of the pot and apply latex over the glaze when dry. Remove the tape from the bottom drainage holes (10).

After the exterior is masked and the bottom is glazed, the next step is to glaze the inside of the pot by pouring and putting latex on the top 2 inches of the interior glaze to prevent glaze contamination. Dip glaze on the top and bottom segments of the pot (11). Next,

apply latex resist on top of the glaze (12). Now, glaze the middle section of the planter with a spray gun (13).

Once dry (after about an hour) take off the tape covering the inside drainage holes and glaze with a brush. Remove the tape from the small diamonds and paint underglaze into those areas (14). Turn the planter upside down and remove the bottom latex and clay plugs. Remove the latex and tape that covered the bottom segment. Stand the planter upright and remove the inside latex. Next, remove the top segment latex and tape followed by the middle segment tape. (Do this in reverse order of being placed on the planter to reduce glaze flaking.)

Inspect the planter for glaze flaking and damage (15), and touch up as necessary. Fire the decorated planter to cone 6 (16).



13



14



15



16

13 Spray glaze on the center section. **14** Paint underglaze on the small corner diamonds. **15** The unfired glazed pot after stripping and touch up. **16** The finished pot fired to cone 6 in oxidation. *Photos: David Bolton.*

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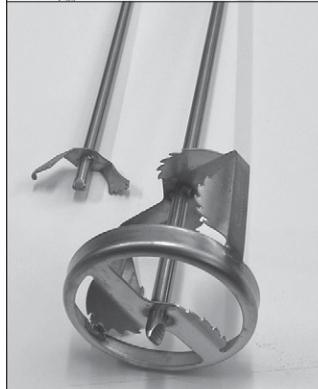
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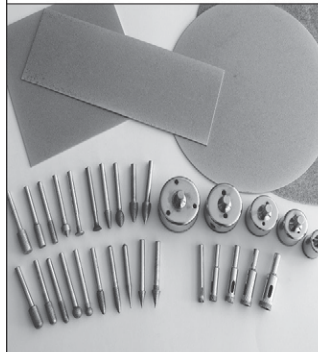
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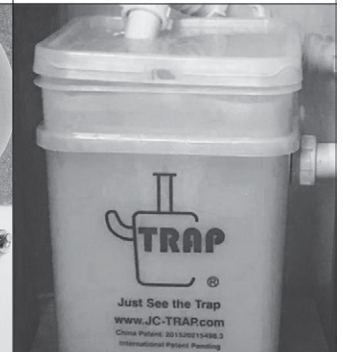
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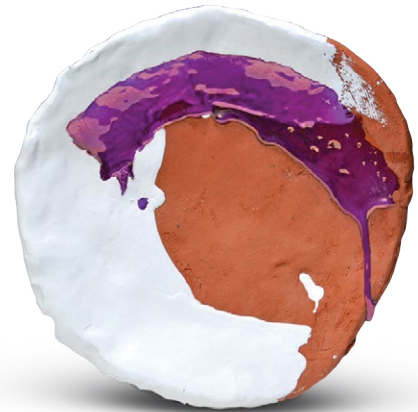


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(Im)Balance

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M O N T H L Y

FOSTERING CREATIVITY THROUGH STUDIO PRACTICE

Jared Peterson

Editors: What techniques do you use to make your work and why?

Jared Peterson: I use a variety of handbuilding techniques to make my work, but my construction process typically centers around slab building. I'm impatient with clay. I dislike the feeling and mess of wet clay, so I generally work with firm clay to make my slabs. In my most recent work, these firm slabs are cut to a specific thickness by running a cutting wire across appropriate-sized shims that straddle a block of solid clay. From there, I cut the slabs into approximately 2-inch-wide strips, and treat these strips as coils to construct my forms. Since these coils are a uniform thickness, they dry evenly and quickly, allowing me to paddle forms into their final shape soon after attaching them. Finally, I hand roll small coils that are then scored and attached onto the surface of the finished form. These coils function like a line drawing, creating the appearance of texture as well as contrast from glazed areas.

Eds: How do you come up with the forms and surfaces that are prevalent in your work?

JP: My most recent body of work is inspired by Mexican *alebrijes*—colorfully painted, carved wooden fantasy creatures. Instead of creating fantasy creatures, however, my work reintroduces the wonder of commonplace animals.

Birds, a current focus in my work, help explain the history of art making. Birds became so good at surviving that many species sexually select based on purely aesthetic principles. Birds





1



2

1 Jared Peterson applying terra sigillata to a bone-dry sculpture in his private studio. 2 *Electric Coyote*, 27 in. (69 cm) in height, slab/coil-built terra-cotta clay, Egyptian paste, terra sigillata, underglaze, glaze, nichrome wire, fired to cone 04 in oxidation. 3 The short-term resident space at Red Lodge Clay Center's studio.



3

“ Growing up in a household of craftspeople, I relate to the act of making out of necessity.”

with the best song, colors, dance, or a combination of the three are chosen as mates. In a sense, these birds evolve based on the strength of their artistic practices and have no choice but to make art. Historically, humans draw some of their principles of beauty from these creatures. For thousands of years, we have found obsessive appeal in these animals, using their feathers for adornment, spiritual practices, or even fly tying.

My surfaces, by extension, amplify the existing beauty of animals common to my life. In my studio, I'm experimenting with Egyptian paste—a kind of low-tech, ancient material—to create an extremely bright, crystallly, melted-candy type surface. Applying multicolored Egyptian paste on my animal forms, I make fantasy what is commonplace. Further, applying the paste with a palette knife mimics the marks of carved wood, tying my sculptures to the alebrije forms that inspire me.

Studio

My current studio at Red Lodge Clay Center in Red Lodge, Montana, is a 120-square-foot private space within a large residency complex. In the building where I work, there are five other private studios of the same size for staff and other long-term residents. Long-term residents and staff also share three communal 5×10-foot tables. In addition, the building boasts a massive communal space for short-term residents, comfortably situating 5 or 6 artists.



4 A selection of Peterson's most commonly used tools in his private studio. **5** Peterson's studio at Red Lodge Clay Center. **6** The material lab, adjacent to the long-term resident studios at Red Lodge Clay Center. **7** Jared Peterson with two of Red Lodge Clay Center's outdoor kilns: Lil Ted (a small downdraft gas kiln) and a wood/salt catenary-arch kiln. **8** *Black Dog*, 17 in. (43 cm) in length, slab/coil-built terra-cotta clay, Egyptian paste, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 04 in oxidation, 2020. **9** *Yellow Dog*, 21 in. (53 cm) in length, slab/coil-built terra-cotta clay, Egyptian paste, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 04 in oxidation, 2020.



7



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All residents and staff have access to six electric kilns, a large Bailey gas kiln, a soda/salt kiln, a wood-fired train kiln, catenary arch wood kiln, and a small reduction gas kiln. In addition to kilns, we all have access to an expansive materials lab, Soldner clay mixer, and a small wood shop.

While my studio affords plenty of space to work, I still have to be economical with my use of the space—especially when working on multiple large-scale projects at once. For this reason, I utilize carts, vertical storage, and tables that I can move myself. I've also allocated a specific place on the wall for all of my tools. Using finishing nails and 2×1-inch boards, my tools are hung so they can all be seen at once. My mind works erratically in the studio, and I hate wasting time looking for the right tool. In short, precise organization keeps me in an uninterrupted workflow.

Paying Dues and Bills

I hold a BFA in ceramics from West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia, and have been a resident artist at various art centers over the last several years. Now as a resident at Red Lodge Clay Center in Red Lodge, Montana, I tend to front load the majority of my working hours in the long winter months, typically working anywhere from 35 to 50 hours per week in the studio. If I'm working toward a deadline, that number flutters closer to 50 hours or slightly above. As a result of these longer winter hours, I can work 20–30 hours per week in the short summer months and spend the majority of my time outside. As part of my residency, I also work a maximum of 20 hours per week for Red Lodge Clay Center.

Mind

I draw inspiration from reading, travel, and spending time outside. Currently, I'm working through several books: Terrance Hayes' *Lighthouse*, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sewer*, and Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*. I enjoy many genres of literature, but I especially appreciate poetry and short stories for their ability to take small moments, images, or objects and use them to explain a greater human experience. That philosophy directly translates to my practice of creating narrative sculptures. In terms of visual art, I take reference from a lot of folk art and outsider art. Growing up in a household of craftspeople, I relate to the act of making out of necessity. Over the last year, I've pored over the American Folk Art Museum's online database for references.

When I am excited about an idea, I work tirelessly to flesh it out. After these creative spurts or when I find myself in creative lulls, I play outside to recharge. In Montana, that usually means taking a long hike, camping for multiple days, or, most prominently, fly fishing. All of these activities take me away from my phone and all other external stimuli, allowing me to be present with myself and the natural world. Aside from the act of making art, no other activity brings me as much peace. Sometimes, however, taking a



Candy Snake, 10 in. (25 cm) in length, slab/coil-built terra-cotta clay, Egyptian paste.

break doesn't end a creative slump. Fear often limits my creative output, and working through fear remains the only way I know to overcome it. Put simply, sometimes art is work.

There is a balance. For me, my work feels stale without time away from the studio. Injury, time between residencies, and a Fulbright grant have periodically taken me away from my studio practice in the last few years. I embrace these hiatuses, though, because when I do return to the studio, my work tends to progress dramatically.

Marketing

I market my work through galleries and Instagram, and these two platforms work in tandem. Since being at Red Lodge Clay Center, I have gained a much larger following on Instagram. Red Lodge Clay Center's gallery has a massive online following, and I've sold a number of small works during my time here. That said, as I have moved away from making pots, I've experienced mixed success selling sculpture. While a resident at Sonoma Ceramics and now at Red Lodge Clay Center, I sold a handful of very large-scale works locally. However, selling these larger works online can be difficult due to their higher cost and transportation requirements.

To be frank, I don't like using Instagram and wish it wasn't the primary way I market my work. My distaste shows, as I don't post frequently, but do try to update my page with both finished work and in-progress work. I try to be aware of and avoid subconsciously catering my work to an online audience, instead seeing my work as independent self-expression. A lot of great work doesn't necessarily look good on Instagram, or receive hundreds of likes. Additionally, experiments and failures necessary for progress aren't always photo worthy. As an artist, the journey through my creative process requires some privacy, but I am very thankful for the many people that follow and support me on the platform.

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A STUDIO ANYWHERE AND EVERYWHERE

Casey Whittier

Editors: What is the most challenging aspect of working in clay?

Casey Whittier: Clay connects us to place, embraces archaeological potential, serves as a physical record, and proves that transformation is possible. We build with it, have created mythologies around it, and become philosophical when confronting it. It breaks, cracks, warps, and defies us. I keep working in clay because of the deep humility and lessons about patience, persistence, connection, and limits that it teaches.

My practice gives me a format for asking questions that I have no other way to ask. The biggest challenge in my studio is negotiating the space between the initial vision and what it takes to bring it to fruition and share it. Artwork in the middle

of becoming is treacherous. Working as I do requires me to be steadfast through a laborious series of steps over a long period of time. There are times where my work looks like nothing, but I have to invest in it anyway. This challenge of working through the ugly stages or having faith in the unknown probably resonates with many ceramic artists. Most of what I do is simple, but taking the simple to the extreme and bringing the personal to the public is not simple.

I expect my work to mirror me and help me communicate my values and viewpoints. This is my way of advocating for knowledge that comes through direct, tactile, intentional interactions in the world. My objects and installations stand as metaphors, not





1 *Anything But Forever (Mead's Milkweed)*, 6 ft. (1.8 m) in height, handbuilt terra cotta, earthenware, glaze, once-fired to cone 1 in oxidation. Photo: Brandon Forrest Frederick. 2 Arrow the dog in front of the newly expanded patio and new native perennial beds. Access to the studio is through the red door. 3 This building will be turned into a full studio in the future. 4 Casey Whittier's wet-clay studio and installation space with a stationary wall and a rolling storage wall.

just as technical or devotional demonstrations. Negotiating these philosophical studio ambitions with a need to eat lunch is quite a feat for me.

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

CW: My hope is that my generation and future generations continue to value and promote collaboration and an expanded sense of community. Whether that means partnering with designers or architects, entrepreneurs or community art centers, scientists or farmers, school districts or wellness centers, or teaming up with other artists—I'm interested in what exists during these intersections.

What ceramic artists (who often are designers and fabricators) can bring to a local community or to a global challenge should not be underestimated. The scale at which we collaborate or the size of our community does not need to be based on a unit of measurement to determine its value; start anywhere with this ethos. Small change is important change. We each have a sphere of influence. We are experts in our experiences. By bringing our perspectives and skills to the table and inviting others to do the same, we expand ourselves and the scope of our work.

Being part of The Land Institute's Ecosphere Studies Program and having a civic science plot at home where I monitor and grow *Silphium integrifolium* plants has been an inspiration.

I have learned so much about agriculture and sustainability. This has influenced my studio toward greener practices. Talking to soil scientists about dirt isn't that different than talking to my fellow ceramic nerds about clay-body compositions.

Working for Artaxis is also enriching. Collaboration is everywhere in this organization: raising money for local charities during conferences organized by the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA); starting a new curatorial fellowship with The Color Network; and building new search features on the website so artists can connect. Recognizing the power of community and having a willingness to work not only for yourself but also for an expanded future is a critical perspective to nurture.

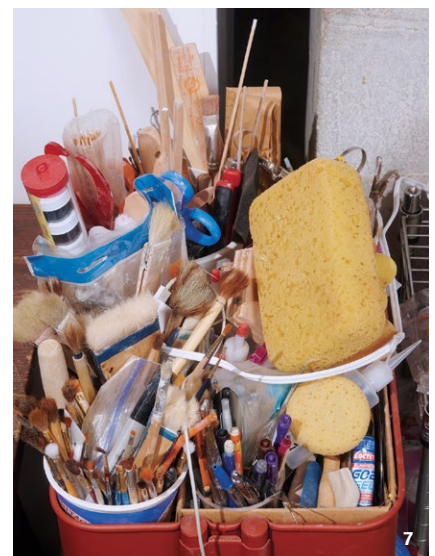
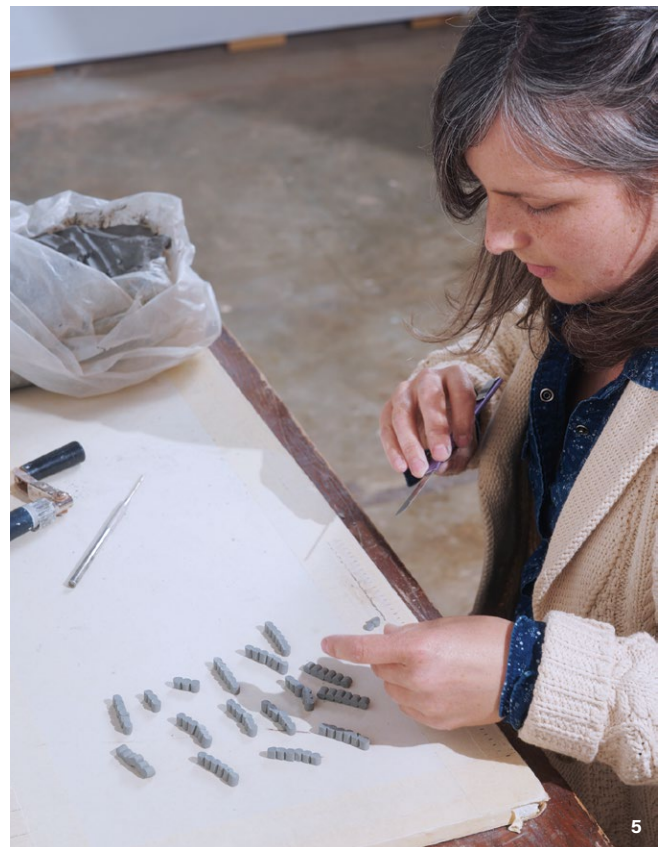
Studio

My studio is at home. That being said, I have taken a studio anywhere/studio everywhere approach over the last decade. I've moved a lot. After graduate school, I invested in a small 110V test kiln with the intention of traveling, working in more interdisciplinary spaces, and lowering my firing time, energy use, and cost. I have worked out of my car at National Parks, from a table in a studio apartment, out of a backpack, and in other shared studios intermittently. I will continue to work this way when I can travel again.

My home studio is split between the basement and a bedroom. The basement is wet-clay ready. I plumbed a simple sink off the washing machine hook-ups and made a cheap clay trap. New lighting works wonders. A pantry holds finished work and materials. I added walls for installation and presentation. One of these walls is on wheels and can be repositioned to create corner spaces (it has interior storage). This is a tremendous help because my work is just parts and pieces until installed. The test kiln and another small electric kiln have dedicated outlets.

I do most of my beading work upstairs where I have natural light, controlled temperatures, and more plants! I am inspired by domestic spaces, so creating in my home makes sense. Working upstairs at night is a joy—I can watch the colors change through the windows, see the shadows dance on the walls, and hear the

“ My practice gives me a format for asking questions that I have no other way to ask.”



5 Casey Whittier making beads. Each one has to be extruded, cut, and pierced twice. 6 The work table in the wet-clay studio downstairs. 7 This is where all the clay tools live, sometimes in order and sometimes . . . well, you be the judge.



8 Testing components for *Epitaph*, an installation piece. 9 This is just before hanging the final element for *Epitaph*. 10 *If We Die*, 4 ft. (1.2 m) in height, handbuilt earthenware, steel, fired in oxidation to cone 1. Photo: Brandon Forrest Frederick.

neighborhood owls. Below ground in my basement studio space, I have no sense of time.

My hope is that I will restore or rebuild the detached garage at my house as a dedicated studio space. This would require significant investment (the structure doesn't currently have electric or plumbing). It would give me the opportunity to have everything that I love (including the houseplants) in one space. I've never had that.

Paying Dues

My BFA is from the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI) in Kansas City, Missouri, (with short but meaningful stints at Maine College of Art (MECA) and Bennington College). I earned my MFA at the University of Colorado, Boulder. For about 5 years post-MFA, I taught adjunct/visiting positions in ceramics and foundations at multiple schools while nannying and working retail. I started at KCAI as an adjunct instructor; I proposed a ceramics and social practice course on the topic of "Place" to both departments. From then on, I just kept applying for every position that came up. I never thought I would get to stay and am very grateful to still be part of the KCAI and the greater Kansas City arts community.

I don't have a set number of studio hours per week or a consistent schedule. I teach full time at KCAI and serve on the Artaxis board of directors. Since my schedule changes constantly, I commit to going to the studio and/or doing something studio-related daily.

Casually considering the work between studio sessions helps me make decisions and generate ideas. The home studio lets me live with my work and process in a fluid way. I jot down ideas in my planner and on sticky notes.

Evenings are my most consistent studio times, but I fit studio work in whenever I can. I use the studio as a way to decompress from teaching. Working is how I process ideas and experiences. Much of my work is repetitive; I can participate intellectually and verbally and still be working with my hands. The silver lining of Zoom life has been that I can sometimes bead during virtual (non-teaching) meetings.

Mind

I'm reading *The Shape of Craft* by Ezra Shales and *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety* by Sarah Jaquette Ray. The stack of books-in-waiting never seems to shrink! I listen to audiobooks and podcasts while I work in the studio. I recently finished *We Are the Weather* by Jonathan Safran Foer and Michael Pollan's *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. Rebecca Solnit's *Recollections of My Non-Existence* is next.

I can't remember the last time I wanted to take a break from the studio—I'm always scheming for more! Balancing making with other needs is a constant push/pull. I have to stay active (running, yoga, biking, hiking, walking fast, etc.) to stay sane. Getting out of town and into a landscape (the Flint Hills are a favorite) is also generative for me. I collect vintage handmade textiles as research—bonus points



for unfinished or otherwise bizarre pieces. I am passionate about native plants and ecology, and have been turning my lawn into native gardens little by little. Tending to plants and moving dirt around is a good counterpoint to my meticulous, stationary studio work.

My practice has taught me a lot, but nothing more important than to keep making. I've had years where none of my applications were accepted and no one was showing my work. If I hadn't made it anyway, I wouldn't be making what I make now. This article would not be. I've always done the work because I believe in it. I want to live my life this way, committing to taking risks even if no one notices and delighting in my own amateurism. We're all beginners at some point.

Marketing

I sell my work through gallery exhibitions or direct sales (via social media). Sales have not been a focus lately; I've been working on bodies of work for exhibitions, which has meant holding on to my works. I enjoy making smaller, mail-friendly pieces a few times a year.

Social media is not my forte. I am not very strategic—it has to be fun or I won't do it. Instagram account takeovers and events have introduced me to new people and ways of promoting my work. Most of my connections lately have come through the teaching and service I do in the field.



11 Whittier working on a large piece started this past summer. It is currently almost 22,000 handmade beads. 12 Whittier's beading/post-firing home studio space.

Connections made through NCECA, work for Artaxis, and curation for exhibitions have helped my practice (and my imagination about what I can do) grow. I am always looking for opportunities to talk, participate, or critique. I love visiting-artist gigs and studio visits. Those are my favorite ways to engage with other artists and stay active in the community. Sometimes little things turn into big opportunities—I just never know so I give it my best.

To learn more, visit artaxis.org/casey-whittier.

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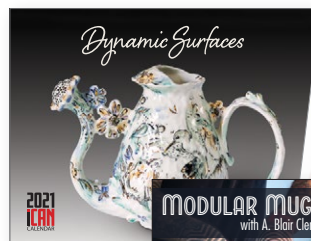
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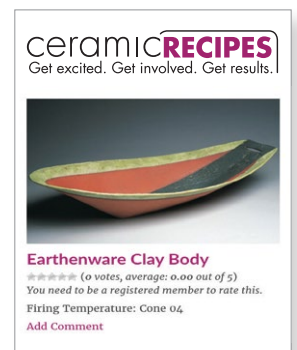
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STUDIO MOTIVATION: TRAVEL, PEERS, AND INSTAGRAM

Tony Young



I went to Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, and received my BFA in art education in 2005. I'm currently in my 15th year teaching art a high school located a little north of Columbus, Ohio. As part of my undergraduate degree, I focused in ceramics. I spend about 20 hours a week in my studio these days, maybe more. I try to work almost every evening doing something. I'll help with dinner, make my kids snacks, then go down to the studio while my wife gives the kiddos a bath. My favorite thing about having an in-home studio is that I can sneak some time in here and there as it's just a trip down the steps. I think I would really struggle if my studio was anywhere but home at this point in my life.

Studio Space

My studio is a 25×30-foot unfinished basement in my house. I have everything I need in this space to go from a ball of clay to a finished piece. Being a full-time high school teacher, I was just making a few cups here and there 4 years ago. I was actually slip casting most of my early pieces. As I became addicted to throwing, I purchased a VL-Whisper wheel from my local clay supplier. I found a Skutt 1027 Kiln on eBay for a good price, and I've recently installed a sink. I have a few tables/workstations in my studio and one desk that is used for all my surface work. I store stencils in the drawers, as well as underglaze transfers, and other general supplies that are used all the time. To the left of the desk is a shelving unit that gets loaded up with bisqueware, so I can easily grab the next piece as needed while working. Another large table is my handle-attaching and handbuilding area. I also use it when I'm lining a batch of cups with glaze, and it turns into my shipping and packing area after each sale. Slip casting happens on a makeshift table consisting of a piece of drywall on top of some sawhorses. Ideally, I'd like to clean up a couple other areas, buy some more shelving, and get to a point where I have a dedicated packing and shipping area. The space is great for what I do, but can always be more efficient!

I use a variety of techniques to achieve my surfaces, including stenciling, screen printing, sponging, painting, taping, spraying,

“ I think first and foremost you need to make something unique and of quality. Then, once you’re doing that, the rest will fall into place with a lot of hustle and some luck.”



1 Creating layered surface decoration using a variety of underglaze techniques. 2 Tony Young throwing at the wheel in his studio. 3 *Green RIOT*, 4 in. (10 cm) in width, wheel-thrown B-Mix, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 5 in an electric kiln.



3

applying underglaze transfers, and more. My main inspiration is graffiti that I saw during a 2017 trip to Europe. At first, I was trying to replicate that feel—the layers of imagery, text, and the grittiness of the walls. It has since evolved into what you see today. I like the opportunity for exploration and all those happy accidents that occur during the process.

The Community and Inspiration

So much excites me about ceramics. I think one of my favorite things is the community. I have such a strong circle of clay friends. I’ve met most of my clay friends at NCECA (National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts) conferences and many through Instagram. I enjoy being a clay nerd and having other clay-nerd friends! As far as the actual field of ceramics, the never-ending possibilities can be very exciting. There are different kilns, techniques, finishes, forms, textures—it never ends. I get bored easily, and I love



4 Glaze table converted to packing area. 5 *RIOT Flask*, 5 in. (13 cm) in height, wheel-thrown and altered B-Mix, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 5 in an electric kiln. 6 View of Young's studio with a freshly thrown mug on the VL Whisper wheel in the foreground. 7 *Beauty Within*, 14 in. (36 cm) in height, wheel-thrown B-Mix, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 5 in an electric kiln. 8 The desk that serves as a glazing table in Young's studio.

that there's always something new to try. I'm also amazed by all my friends and what they're creating. I admire and respect the craft in work made by numerous artists that is completely unlike my own.

I'm inspired by others and, of course, Instagram. I love to travel and see new places, but those opportunities don't happen as often as I'd like with a full-time job, family responsibilities, etc. I absorb what everyone else is doing all the time and it motivates me to see other people hustling. I talk with my high school students about having an "Art Diet." You need to consume art in order to push your own. No one is truly original—we're all inspired by something or someone else, whether it's known or subconscious.

Making is my getaway from everything else. It actually stresses me out to not make. I don't hit too many mental roadblocks, but if there is one roadblock I face, it would be when collaborating with other artists. I've collaborated with a lot of artists over the past few years and want each collaboration to be special. The resulting pieces have pushed my personal work to new levels. Collaboration enables me to think outside of the box while dealing with new forms and challenges. There's been a little carry over from each collaboration that seeps into my work. The possibilities for growth and the new friendships are why I do so many. I honestly have so many irons in the fire and ideas to try, that there's not enough time in the day.

Marketing and Selling Work

I know some people don't like marketing, but I kind of love it. I think first and foremost you need to make something unique and of quality. Then, once you're doing that, the rest will fall into place with a lot of hustle and some luck. I sell through Etsy, but direct most of my traffic (I'd say 90%) to my store from Instagram. My main buyers are my followers. Some people get annoyed with posting daily and using features on the platform like stories, reels, etc., but I enjoy the process. Being consistent is part of the game if you're going to sell mostly online. I have sold in person, but truly like the cycle of making, posting, promoting a sale, selling, shipping off work, and starting over. I enjoy interacting with my followers, documenting my work, and being able to look back. Instagram and social media can be powerful tools if you figure out what works for you.

I've come to realize you have to be aware of viewing habits in order to expose people to your work. There are people who are only on Instagram or any social media at certain times of day. There's East Coast to West Coast time zones to consider, and the times people are active online in different countries as well, so, posting time is important. I think being everywhere is also very important. I'd say Instagram is my biggest tool, but I also use Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, and a mailing list.

My actual marketing strategy is based on the cycle of making a batch of work. A batch used to be 15–20 pieces, but now my production process yields 50–60 new pieces in 5 weeks. I promote through Instagram using progress shots, videos, etc., until it's all ready for a sale. I usually have new collaborative work for sale as well with each cycle. I don't totally plan it that way, it just happens that each sale event includes those special items. I advertise hard for about 4–5 days before the sale and send a special sneak preview out to my mailing list a couple days before the sale. On the day



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7



8



9 View of the glaze table, bisqueware shelves, and supplies in Young's studio. **10** Making marks on a *RIOT Mug*. **11** Dining room table converted to a photo-shoot area for documenting finished pieces. **12** *RIOT Mug Ant Bubble Glaze*, 4 in. (10 cm) in width, wheel-thrown B-Mix, underglaze, glaze, fired to cone 5 in an electric kiln.

before a sale, each piece is numbered and shown in my Instagram stories. This takes a lot of time, but is worth it. I've sold out my last five sales and I credit much of it to showing off every single piece that is going to be available. I set a clickable reminder alert in my stories and remind people to set an alarm on their phone manually. These things always sound dumb to me until I realize how forgetful I am myself. I get so many messages of people saying, "I forgot about the sale." We all need reminders! Then, once it's time, the sale goes live.

On Instagram I document my work and processes, and I always want to be as genuine as possible. I love interacting with

people, showing off finished pieces of course, but also posting what my kids are doing, what my cat Marshy is up to, and just showing when I royally screw something up, too! Some people have the most curated pages, and they look gorgeous! I just can't. I'm all over the place, posting what I want, when I want. If it's not pretty enough, I'm okay with that. For me, selling my work has always been a way of getting it out of my house! I'm fortunate I have a good job that I love, so everything else is just gravy. If my work makes someone else feel special, then I'm happy.

To learn more, follow Tony Young on Instagram @youngy_03.

BETWEEN SCULPTING AND DRAWING

Kimberly LaVonne Luther

Editors: Why do you work with the figure, in two dimensions, and on clay?

Kim LaVonne: I remember seeing the statue of *Laocoön and His Sons* projected larger than life in an undergraduate art-history course. The drama, motion, and fleshiness of the marble was overwhelming and exciting. At this time, I was also taking very thorough figure drawing courses and was pretty determined that working with the figure, in some capacity, was the direction that I wanted to go. I developed a practice of working back and forth

between sculpting and drawing media. Whatever I couldn't understand with a pencil, I would try to work out in clay and vice versa. This method has allowed for me to investigate the weight, flesh, and viscera of the figure. For the past five years, I've focused on utilizing slabs as canvas through wall-hanging platters and vessel forms. It's the best of both worlds, from prepping the slab and cleaning the edges (because yes, even the edges have a supple fleshiness to them when smoothed just so) to sorting through drawings to pick which ones to carve on that particular form.



Gaze, 9½ in. (24 cm) in length, stoneware, slip, glaze, fired to cone 6, luster, fired to cone 018, 2019.

“ Continuing to make is also a means of connection— sharing techniques, ideas, and small accomplishments within a community.”

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

KL: While at university, I made strictly sculptural work, such as figures and large intestinal wall hangings. Working with vessels or platters, though I've been developing them for years now, still feels new. I'm always trying to figure out my forms and don't plan exactly what they will be; I just keep building until it feels right. Perhaps not knowing how it will end is what keeps me engaged. I keep all of my drawings and reuse them when appropriate; there is a visual language that has developed and a power or strength that comes with repeated use of this imagery. Once I have an understanding of an image, such as tigers or papayas, I feel ready to add another element to the mix. Recently, that has been an exploration of the elaborate surfaces of the Diablo Rojo buses of Panama as well as the Diablicos Sucios masks.





Opposite: *Hope Selloum*, 9 in. (23 cm) in height, stoneware, slip, glaze, fired to cone 6, luster, fired to cone 018, 2019. **Above:** *Reach*, 8 in. (20 cm) in width, ceramic, glaze, enamel, 2021.

Eds: How do you decide on the crop and focus of your compositions? Do the compositions influence the form or vice versa?

KL: The form determines the composition. It is helpful for me to have multiple drawings of, for example, hands and feet posed differently and ready to go. Having several options allows me to see how the imagery plays against the form. With that as the focus, I see the addition of textured marks, fruit, teeth, leaves, etc., as amplifying this central image. As long as the focal point doesn't get lost, I let myself adorn as much as possible while following the form as a guide.

Eds: What do you think the role of a maker is within our current culture and how do you think you contribute to it?

KL: This past year has been overwhelming on just about all fronts for everyone, so through it all, why or how do we keep making? Perhaps we seek our studio practices as a centering point, for a sense of control when the click of an app on our phone tells us that the contrary is the case. For me, everything slowed down this past year, and the work I made reflects an embrace of this new ambiguity of time and acts as a record of anxiety-riddled mark making. Continuing to make despite challenges is also a means of connection—sharing techniques, ideas, and small accomplishments within a community.

To learn more, visit <https://artaxis.org/artist/kimberly-lavonne> or follow LaVonne Luther on Instagram @kimberly_lavonne.

Making an Illustrated Platter

First, I roll out a slab of cone-6 B-mix clay, aiming for an even thickness of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. A rubber-tipped tool (see 1) is then used to lightly draw the shape of the platter onto the slab. This is done very intuitively, keeping in mind how big I want the platter to be. I am also thinking about old illustrations and wax models of intestines as a source of inspiration for the border of the platter. The slab is cut after it has firmed up a little bit, in order to avoid causing distortion or stress to the more precarious areas of the perimeter shape, such as any bulges or protruding edges.

With a sharp knife (2), I slowly make multiple passes before pulling the excess clay away to ensure a cleaner cut that follows the mark made with the rubber-tipped tool. Next, I layer a piece of foam between a plate bisque mold and the platter (3, 4). This helps me to make a slightly concave shape by pressing down lightly with a rubber rib onto the form (5). I want the edges to be soft and rounded, so I use a loop tool to lightly graze over the flat edges (6), which are smoothed even further with a damp sponge (7).

For the foot, I roll a small coil, slipping and scoring it into place (8). Typically, I flip the plate back over and continue refining the surface so the slip and coil have time to set up. Then, I clean up



1 Tools used the most: soft rubber rib, stylus, sponge, various brushes, knives, and a bisque mold. **2** Cut away following the outline that was loosely drawn with a rubber-tipped tool beforehand. **3** Place the slab on a piece of foam, then set both on a bisque-mold plate form. **4** Lightly press the slab into the foam to bring the edges up slightly.

the foot with a wooden tool and sponge (9). I add holes for hanging later, once I've established the composition. An even layer of black slip is brushed onto the plate to the edge of the platter (10) so that I can use the sgraffito technique to carve the imagery from the surface.

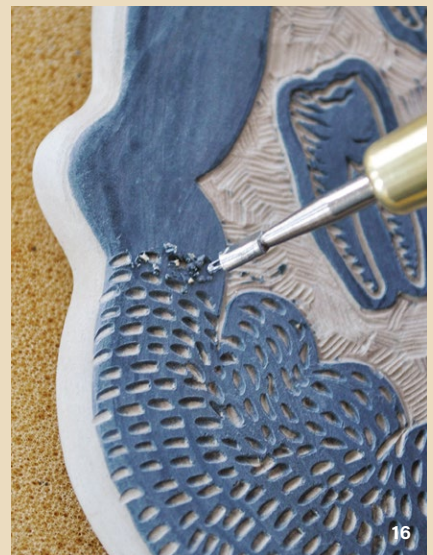
For this piece, I am using a drawing from my sketchbook that I made of my own hand (11). I trace that drawing and then play with how it best fits the form. I like the way the fingers follow the direction of the little bulges (12) and use this to help guide how the rest of the composition will be laid out. The slip should be matte in appearance and about leather hard before transferring the design or doing any carving. I trace the drawing onto the form

using a stylus tool that leaves a very faint impression of the hand on the slip (13). The rest of the design is lightly drawn with the stylus directly on the black slip. The image is then carved using a very small, thin loop tool (14, 15). I keep a large brush with firm but slightly soft bristles nearby to brush off the carved bits.

The decisions I'm making at this point are mostly about mark making, texture, line weight, and where to carve away larger areas of slip (16). Keeping in mind which direction is up on the platter (17), I mark and burrow two holes into the foot ring (18) for inserting wire after the piece is fired, finished, and ready for hanging.



5 Use a soft rubber rib to press down and smooth the slab. **6** A loop tool is used to soften the edges of the plate. **7** Smooth the edges using a damp sponge. **8** Add a coil by slipping and scoring onto the back of the plate to create a foot ring. **9** Blend the coil into the back of the plate and smooth the seam with a sponge. **10** Paint two even coats of black slip onto the front of the plate.



11 The original sketch and tracing used for the plate design. **12** Place the selected traced image on the plate and use a stylus to lightly retrace that onto the slipped surface. **13** Shown here is how the light tracing is visible once the paper is removed. **14** Begin the carving process of the hand. Light impressions of the rest of the composition are visible surrounding the focal image. **15** Kimberly LaVonne Luther uses a Kemper WS wire stylus to carve imagery. **16** Carve texture onto the intestinal border. **17** Front of the finished plate before firing. **18** Back of the plate with signature and burrowed holes for hanging.

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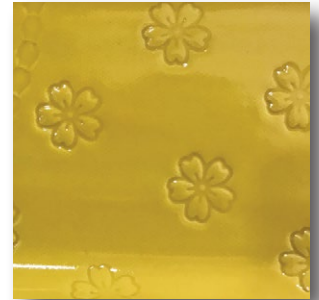


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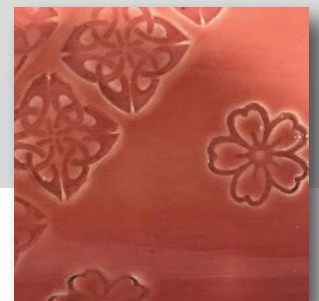
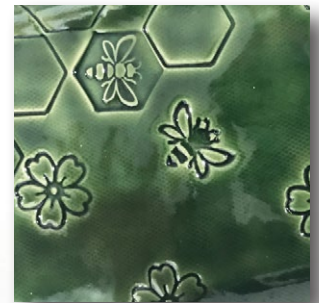
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