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In *Jars, Vases, Boxes, and Baskets*, you'll find nineteen step-by-step projects that demonstrate the wide range of possibilities open to artists interested in exploring these forms using both handbuilding and wheel-throwing techniques. You'll learn how to dart and divide thrown forms to make vases, baskets, and jars alike. Plus, artists share invaluable tips like making both round and non-round canisters and boxes with lids that fit perfectly. Between the tips and inspiration, this book will help you increase your productivity and creativity in the studio.
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Making handbuilt porcelain vases comes naturally to me as a ceramic artist, lover of nature, and avid gardener. I love the minute formal challenges these porcelain vases bring within the parameters of function. My inspiration comes from sewing, nature, the basic structure or architecture of plants, Art Nouveau architecture, traditions in ceramics, and the art of function. All these are referenced in my work, from the moment I start layering patterns throughout the piece, to the point when I fill the vase with water and flowers and make sure all my seams are leak proof!

Varied Vases
I make many variations of vases—wide, squat, fat, tall, slender, and dainty. I love to play with textures and patterns that work together within the forms and I normally make several versions of the pots and then tweak the rims and the feet to change them up a bit. Flipping a pot over to create a whole new form was an idea gleaned in graduate school from one of my instructors, Anne Currier. I begin working on my vase forms, as with every form, considering the function of the pot. Will this vase be for a large centerpiece with a grouping of tall flowers, or will it hold just a wispy wildflower bouquet that I might put in a small niche of a room to cheer it up? When making anything with clay, even an open flower pot, the right proportions and weight are important. Height, balance, and shrinkage are all taken into consideration when designing vases. These thoughts are all in my head while cutting the clay away from the block and preparing my slab.
Spatial Illusions
I am interested not only in formal elements of the vase but also in creating illusions of space through a combination of layering patterns onto the wet clay surface, then using glazes that pool and flow to both accentuate and soften or distort the pattern and create a sense of depth to the surface of the pot. Most of my attention in the process is in the wet state when the surface design is being manipulated and stretched. My glazing is straightforward and entails hitting the texture with different accent glazes, then dunking the piece to cover it completely with a final glaze.

Layered Interests
By layering all of my interests together through structure, texture, pattern, and functionality, I am never bored with a form. I cut, alter, and tailor all of my vessels from a slab, sometimes using a hump or slump mold, or soft-filled pillow molds to create the form; however, the forms that are the most intriguing to me are ones that start as a straightforward, slab-built cylinder. I build the body of the pot free-hand and then integrate a foot to lift it off the table. The final step brings the form to life with a rim to tie the vessel to the foot and emphasize the volume in the form.

Texture, Shape, and Volume
My Concord Flower Vase has a full-bodied form with its scalloped edges and rounded feet. Like all of my pieces, this vase starts with a slab that I toss out onto my canvas-covered table. I don't
5. Create scallops: press out with one hand, while pressing in with your fingers on either side of the bulge.

6. Use a 2½-inch dowel rod to support the outside and define the scallops without disrupting the textures.

7. Throw out another slab for the base of the form, add texture to both sides.

8. Place the bottom slab on the cylinder and fold the extra clay over to make a bellied foot for each scallop.

use a slab roller; it’s quicker for me to stretch and flip the clay by hand, and I have more control of the thickness and width by tapping the ends and the top and bottom of the slab. I leave the slab a little thicker than the finished slab will be since it’s stretched out later to give the piece more volume after texturing.

I have a tool box full of treasured textures, found objects, and sewing notions in my studio that I have found all over for my surface textures. I imprint the slab with a texture I took from the sole of a shoe and made into a bisque stamp (1), then layer another pattern over it using a button that was glued to the end of a short dowel. After I make the textured slab foreground, I stretch out the slab a little more to distort the impressions by throwing it back out onto the canvas.

I set up a cardboard cylinder on a banding wheel as a support, and then stand the wet slab up against it. Depending on the height and wetness of the slab, I use this cylinder to help keep the clay upright (2) at the beginning of the process.

To form vases, I always work on a bat on my banding wheel so that transferring the pot later is more manageable. I don’t use the cardboard cylinder to shape the vase, just to brace and support it until I finish joining seams. Overlap the slab according to the desired diameter, then use a sharp knife to cut through both layers at a 45° angle at the same time to create the seam (3). This type of cut maintains an exact seam that matches up perfectly. I need the seam to be strong because it will be stressed when I alter the form later.
I score both edges, and use a deflocculated slip to adhere the seam. The deflocculated slip requires less water to stay fluid. It’s made from bone dry clay slaked in a bucket with enough water to create a thick slurry then deflocculant is added before mixing to a honey consistency with a drill mixer. This deflocculated slip is helpful because its water content is closer to the water content of the slab, so the slip shrinks less as it dries and there’s less stress overall on the seam. I join the ends together, pushing with my palms and thumbs carefully so as to not disturb the texture. Pressing the clay against the cardboard cylinder on the inside gives the stability needed to apply some force on the outside without breaking open the seam on the inside.

Once the cylinder is complete, I start to define the scalloped shape. After removing the cardboard tube, I use my hands on the inside and outside at the same time to push out and up in a straight vertical line while using the fingers of my outside hand to press in on either side of the bulge. It’s important to press lightly so as not to disturb the texture while still accentuating the bulge in the form. To further define the scallop of the form without disrupting the textures, I use a 2½-inch-diameter dowel rod to provide support on the outside while I use my fingers to push out from the inside.

Once the form is ready, I make a second slab for the base. I place it on a large, 3-inch-thick plaster texture mold that I made using the cover.
of a fluorescent light fixture. Then I texture the top of the slab with the same pattern that’s on the body of the pot (7) so the texture at the bottom mirrors what’s on the outside.

I attach the slab to the cylinder, taking care not to disturb the texture. I’m working upside down, so what shows here as the top of the piece (see 8) will become the bottom of the finished piece. To make a foot, I cut around the edge leaving a wide margin. I fold the extra clay over and make a bellied foot for each scallop (8). As I work the clay from the inside, I am also pillowing the foot out to create more volume.

After all the feet are finished, I cover two-thirds of the vessel with plastic so I can finish the rim and top of the pot once stiffened. I place another bat on top of the piece and use a small level to make slight adjustments to the alignment of the feet (9). This ensures the vessel sits level.

When the foot can support its own weight, I flip the piece over and work on the top. I sandwich the leather-hard vase between two bats and flip the form over (10), so I don’t press on the sides of the pot and distort the form.

At this point, the top rim is cut with an X-Acto knife into seven or eight scalloped shapes, according to the overall form of the piece (11). Then I slightly thin and push out the scallops to open the top of the pot to receive flowers. I roll a small, moon-shaped coil for each scallop, with the ends tapering and the center swelling (12) and roll them onto the same textured slab used for the base.

Each coil gets carefully formed and tapered around each scallop of the rim (13). The coil is then neatly attached by scoring the bottom of the coil and the edge of the rim, applying deflocculated slip, squeezing the rim up toward the base of the coil, and cleaning up any visible slip (14). Final adjustments are made to accentuate the scallops and the overall shape (15).
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