In this Issue...

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Janet's got a brand-new disposition

When last you saw Northwest studio potter Janet Buskirk, she seemed a little...stern. Demand for her work was keeping her too busy. Then her friend Jim Koudelka, who swears by his Skutt Electronic Kiln Controllers, convinced her to use one. She programs her new kiln and it fires automatically, just the way she wants. Now Janet saves so much time that she has time for the finer things in life—candlelight dinners, champagne and Jim.
Editor's Corner
The Washington Potters' Association (WPA)

We’ve been receiving the WPA Newsletter (edited by Elinor Maroney) for quite awhile, and have been impressed by the level of activity that the members of this organization achieve both as individuals and as a group.

Wondering if members of this organization would be interested in sharing some of their techniques, we made an offer to then president Maria Spies exploring the possibility of an issue showcasing member talents. The offer was well received and here is the result—seven articles covering a variety of techniques from the potters of Washington.

If you’re not familiar with the WPA, read the brief description and history on page 12. Like many organizations of its kind, the WPA began as a small group of potters recognizing that they could accomplish more as a group than they could individually. The rest, as they say, is history.

Opportunity

Due to the success of this issue and the very positive response from the WPA, we’d like to continue this concept in the future. We’re in the process of working with the BC Potters Guild for an issue in 2005 in recognition of their 50th anniversary. Within the next month or so, we'll have guidelines up on our web site to provide guidance to interested organizations.

A word of appreciation

We’d like to thank the WPA members who participated in this issue: Elinor Maroney, Steve Dalton, Maria Spies, Donna Sparks, Paul Lewing, Yonnah Ben Levy, and Judy Harper.

Enjoy this contribution from the great Northwest!

Bill Jones
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Pottery Making ILLUSTRATED

May/June 2003
Washington Potters and Ceramists

Washington State is home to many potters and other practitioners of the ceramic arts. Scattered like snow in the mountains or clustered in its cities, these Northwest ceramic artists produce some of the most admirable work in the U.S.A.

Although some may work in extreme isolation, there is always an impulse to gregariousness, and to sharing, amongst those who work in clay. Over the years, many have organized themselves into guilds and associations, started schools and studios, set up galleries, or have participated in shows and festivals.

One such organization, the Washington Potters’ Association, is perhaps central to all this activity. It is the focus of PMIs first feature section dedicated to a potters guild or association.

Here I’ve drawn attention to the web sites of a few of these organizations; however, I suggest that you check for links in these sites to some of the many fine individual artists working in the state of Washington. There’s no space to mention them all, but a number of these artists have links to their own web sites from the sites of one or another of the groups and organizations mentioned below. Ginny Conrow, Dave and Boni Deal, Nana Kuo, María Spies, Mark Horiiuchi, Tip Toland, Pat Colyar, Liz Garrett, and Mike Rafferty (who designed several of these sites as well as the one featured below for Seward Park) come especially to mind. Their work runs the gamut from functional pottery to challenging sculptural concepts.

The Washington Potters Association
http://www.washingtonpotters.org/

Started nearly twenty years ago by a dozen individuals, the WPA has grown to more than 250 members today. Chosen as the first guild to be featured in *Pottery Making Illustrated*, its newly revamped web site has an excellent members’ gallery that loads quickly, and good members’ information, including a calendar of upcoming events on the site’s Home Page. Be sure to click on “Membership Information,” then “Links” for links to members’ home pages and more.

Kobo (Seattle, Wa)
http://www.koboseattle.com/

This online gallery represents several American potters working in the Japanese aesthetic. It has a sophisticated web site with oriental musical effects such as deep-toned bamboo windchimes, gongs and more. It requires Shockwave™ “Flash” software that can easily be downloaded and installed on most reasonably modern systems. When you’re ready, Click on “Kobo” then use the animated central menu to open a new window. Note that in some browsers, the new window may in some cases “hide” behind the first one. For the potters’ pages, click on “Earth” and proceed; a second new window will open. The images of the pieces are “zoomable”; some open in yet another window, which should be closed before you continue.

Pottery Northwest (Seattle, WA)
http://www.potterynorthwest.org/

Pottery Northwest is a non-profit clay studio providing a permanent workshop for potters in the area. Plans are in place for the organization to expand to a second location at the former Sand Point Naval Station on Lake Washington, where there will be ample room to accommodate the increasing demand for classes and for long-term workshops by visiting artists. In the web site’s “Gallery” page there is one piece each by about 30 potters. To enlarge them, click on the image thumbnails. A nice touch is the “Studio” page with its floor plan of the facility.

The Pottery School (Seattle, WA)
http://www.potteryschool.com/

Located in the lower level of the historic Grand Central building, downtown Seattle, this studio offers classes and an “Open Studio” membership. The web site, mainly text-based, has an application form for its classes, downloadable in either MS Word or PDF format. Regrettably, the “Virtual Tour” & “Resources” sections are “under construction” at the time of writing this article, but may well be completed by publishing time.

Helen Bates lives in Ontario, Canada. A connoisseur of the ceramic arts and an amateur potter, one of her greatest pleasures is surfing the Web to check out the work of fine clay artists. Please send suggestions for new and interesting clay-related Web sites to her at nelbanell@yahoo.ca.
Seward Park Art Studio  
(Seattle, WA)  
http://www.sewardparkart.org/  

Also based in Seattle, Seward Park Art Studio is a non-profit co-operative teaching and artists’ ceramic arts facility. It has an extensive outreach program for young people, working with the public school system, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization, the Seattle Museum, and other groups. Its mainly text-based web site has a well-organized and extensive page of pottery and ceramic arts links. On the “Workshops and Master Classes” page you may click on links to photos of work by many of the presenters. The latest online feature is a link for downloading the most recent version of the Seward Park Art Studio Quarterly brochure, in PDF format. Take some time to download and familiarize yourself with the Adobe Acrobat Reader; it has numerous functions. Some of these are: search for text (binoculars); resizing document (plus or minus sign); move document on screen (hand); copying (icon containing dashed line square followed by icon with two sheets of paper); and of course, printing and saving to disk.

Edmonds Arts Festival  
(Edmonds, WA)  
http://www.edmondsartsfestival.com  

Fifteen miles north of Seattle on Puget Sound, the Edmonds Arts Festival holds its annual show on Father’s Day week-end. The event includes a juried art show, artists’ booths, and many other art-related events. Like the “Kobo” site above, this one uses Shockwave™ “Flash” to jazz up its opening page. However, you may elect to click "Skip Intro" and enter the site using an ordinary "html" link. By the time you read this article, it will be too late to enter the 2003 festival, but keep the idea in mind for next year. I am sure that later this year, the excellent application forms provided by the Festival Committee for booths or the juried show will again be available online, this time for 2004.

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Creating Large Plates and Platters

PART TWO

by Samuel L. Hoffman

While some problems inherent with making plates and platters are eliminated in the throwing stage (“Creating Large Plates and Platters: Part I,” PMI Mar./Apr. 2003) other problems are mitigated during trimming stage. Due to the large size of platters, they undergo a significant amount of stress during the firing process. Although it is possible to make a successful platter that is not trimmed, the strongest way to finish a piece involves creating a foot ring. Trimming compresses the underside of a platter making it less susceptible to cracking. Additionally, foot rings allow you to glaze both sides of the platter, creating a very strong glaze /clay /glaze finish. However, when dealing with platters of large scale, it becomes increasingly difficult to flip and trim the piece without distorting it.

Note: Before trimming, it is important to slowly dry the platter under plastic to avoid uneven stiffness.

Left Porcelain plate, 16 inches in diameter, reduction fired in a gas kiln, carbon-trap Shino glaze with wax resist brushwork.

Right Stoneware plate with altered rim, 15 inches in diameter, wood fired in the Kent State University anagama, Grolleg flashing slip.
trimming a large platter

**Step 1**
When the clay is leather hard, and leaving the platter on the bat, place a sponge, towel, or other soft object in the center to prevent the center from slumping during trimming.

**Step 2**
Carefully place a large bat on top of the rim of the platter.

**Step 3**
Support the platter with one hand underneath the bottom bat and one hand on top.

**Step 4**
In one smooth motion, flip the platter while sandwiching it between both hands.

**Step 5**
Place the bottom bat onto the wheelhead and remove the top bat to expose the underside of the platter.

**Step 6**
Use three soft balls of clay to hold the platter down on the large bat, taking care not to deform the rim.

**Note**
Platters are often so wide the center sags during the firing and sticks to a kiln shelf. To prevent this, trim a small inner foot ring.

**Step 7**
Using a sharp trimming tool, begin removing clay from the outside edge of the platter.

**Step 8**
Finish trimming the outer edge of the foot, establishing the diameter of the foot ring.

**Steps 9 & 10**
Establish the inside edge of the large foot ring, then begin trimming the small foot in the center of the platter, tapping the clay to listen for the thickness of the base. Finish the inside foot and continue removing clay until the desired thickness is achieved. Finish trimming the outside foot and clear away loose clay.

**Step 12**
Smooth both foot rings with a damp sponge, taking care not to wet the clay too much.
trimming a plate with an altered rim

Step 1
If the rim of a plate is cut or manipulated into an asymmetrical shape, or is delicate, the piece cannot simply be inverted onto another bat for trimming. Instead, the piece must be placed on a clay chuck that supports the plate in the center. To create this chuck, form a large coil from the same clay body that the plate was made from.

Step 2
Attach the coil to the wheel head in the shape of a donut, making sure that enough height is established to hold the plate above the wheel head.

Step 3
Flatten and smooth the coil using as little water as possible, creating a rounded cushion on which to rest the plate. It is important to let the plate stiffen up a little bit more than usual before trimming to avoid flexing or chipping the altered lip when the piece is inverted.

Step 4
Leaving the plate on the bat it was thrown on, carefully flip the plate onto the palm of one hand or a small bat the fits the center of the plate.

Step 5
Place the upside-down plate onto the coil and make sure that it is centered.

Step 6
Gently press down on the middle of the plate to create a vacuum that will hold the piece in place. Start trimming by removing excess clay from the outside of the plate.

Step 7
Trim the plate using the same techniques described before, taking care to avoid the delicate lip that hangs over the wheel head. When the foot rings are trimmed, smooth the bottom of the plate and carefully remove it from the coil. If the inside surface of the plate has been marred from resting on the coil, use a sponge to clean it up.

hanging a platter

Step 1
Although plates and platters are traditionally used in a horizontal orientation for serving on a table, they can be prepared for hanging vertically on a wall. One technique is to punch holes into the outer foot ring that can later be used for hanging with wire or string. Use one hole if you want to determine the orientation of the platter. Pierce several holes to allow the owner of the piece to determine the best way to hang it.

Step 2
Another method of preparing a platter for hanging is to attach a simple coil of clay as a loop at the top of the piece, taking care that it does not protrude below the foot ring when the piece is sitting flat. This clay loop can be hung directly on a nail or can be used to attach a wire or string to the platter for mounting. It is possible to purchase prefabricated plate hangers, but most of these protrude over the edge of the piece, creating a visual distraction that takes away from the integrity of the rim.
The Washington Potters’ Association boasts 280 members in 2003, 21 years after its auspicious beginning at a craft fair in Anacortes. The group of potters showing at the craft fair met at a local “watering hole” to relax and socialize after the show had been taken down. Among the group was Ellen Currans, a member of the Oregon Potters’ Cooperative. When Ellen described the fairly new organization in Oregon, the group began to realize the advantages of doing the same in Washington.

The Beginning

The group assembled in the studio of Yogi Kan in the Fremont area of Seattle to begin putting together an organization. Within 2 months Comador Stewart had been drafted as president, Paddy McNeely accepted the treasurer’s job, John Harris and Loren Lukens were designated ‘buyers,’ and Ginny Conrow took on the job of social director. In 20-year-old notes, Susan Lockner was described as ‘typist,’ but when she became the second president of the group it might be assumed that she was vice-president!

A Mission

The purpose of the group was to promote better communication, cooperation and professional improvement for potters across the state. One of the original reasons for forming the organization was to do group buys of materials and supplies since suppliers were not so common in the 1980’s. Jean Griffith invited the group to hold its first meeting at Pottery Northwest in February of 1983. The new membership chairman, Yogi Kan, had done a good job, and the new officers were pleased with the turnout of nearly 50 potters. Within 6 months the group had grown to around 80 members.

Newsletter

Soon after the WPA Newsletter was started and edited by Caralyn Kieckhaefer, with help for mailing from other potters on the Kitsap Peninsula. The Newsletter announced meetings and events of interest to potters and carried a regular column on health hazards written by Cheryl Harrison. The Newsletter has become an important means of communicating in the Washington pottery community. For the past 9 years, Elinor Maroney has been the editor with input from members around the state.

Meetings

Each year, the WPA holds 3 membership meetings and 2 socials (a summer party and a January opportunity to let our hair down after a busy holiday season). The membership meetings are held in March, May and October with programs of interest to potters. We have had programs on taxes for the studio potter with a CPA; how to avoid back problems with a physical therapist; photographing your own work with a college professor; and information on presenting slides from three local craft show organizers. We try to schedule a meeting once a year to look at and enjoy our own personal work through slides to allow all members a chance to know each other better.

Shows

Annual shows of members’ work have been held at the Northwest Crafts Center in Seattle for 18 years. Another exhibit is held annually at a gallery in Everett with occasional shows in Ellensburg, Issaquah, Bainbridge Island, Olympia, Tacoma and Richland. The group is open to invitation for shows in galleries across the state. Exchange exhibits have been held over the years with potter groups from Maryland, New Mexico, Alaska and British Columbia. Some shows are juried while others are open to all WPA members who wish to participate.

Workshops

The WPA branched out to sponsor a workshop last summer at Seabeck on the Hood Canal with five well-known potters and teachers who did a wood firing in the Three Dragons Anagama Kiln. They did demonstrations for three days with participants from the Northwest and across the country. The workshop concluded with the unloading of the kiln filled with work by the five artists: Dean Adams, Frank Boyden, Catherine Hiersoux, Chuck Hindes and Don Reitz. Another major workshop sponsored by WPA is in the works for 2004. Invited guests will be Japanese potters including a “living national treasure.”

On the Web

With the encouragement of WPA president Maria Spies, a web site was set up by Les Norton in 1999. Our current web master is Lee Daniels who is expanding the site with a larger gallery of artists’ work, pages from the Newsletter and link connections to suppliers, schools with pottery classes and interested potters. We get “hits” from across the country and it has turned out to be a valuable resource for potters interested in what is happening in the Washington state pottery community.

Future Focus

The focus and goals of the group have changed in recent years with inspiration from Tim Malm who was president in 1996. In addition to statewide gallery shows, meetings are now held in a wider area outside Seattle from Bellingham to Everett and Tacoma. The group received its 501 (c)3 designation in November of 2000 and is looking into ways to fund educational opportunities for potters and expand its influence in the statewide community. New officers were elected in January of 2003. Steve Dalton from Snohomish is the new president. We look forward to continuing the direction started in 1996 with more educational and community functions and exhibits around the state.

Contact Information

WPA, PO Box 84255, Seattle, WA 98124, web site: http://www.washingtonpotters.org or call Steve Dalton at 360-563-0804, sdpotter@gte.net. Get a sample copy of the WPA Newsletter by contacting Elinor Maroney at (253) 630-7726, empots@worldnet.att.net.

This brief history was compiled by Elinor Maroney; current WPA Newsletter editor; and Maria Spies, recent past president. Our thanks go to Comador Stewart for researching the early history with interviews and memories. Also thanks to John Harris, Linda Johnson, Susan Lochner, Paul Lewing, Loren Lukens, and Paddy McNeely for long phone calls and e-mails supplying necessary information.
I became intrigued with the idea of making a clay basket with “twined” weaving—the sort associated with willow baskets and wicker furniture—but found no helpful documentation for constructing this type of pot. During a moment of inspiration, I discovered an approach that required letting go of some of what I knew about twined baskets made of traditional materials, and relying instead on what I knew about the properties of clay.

In a willow-twined basket, most of the structural support comes from the stakes fanning out from the bottom. If you try to build such a structure in clay, it quickly becomes very fragile. Even if you can get through the whole process of assembly, weaving and firing, clay stakes provide no great structural integrity to the final piece. I needed something to weave the clay around that would withstand the friction of the weaving process and absorb the clay shrinkage, as well as something that wouldn’t be an eyesore in the final piece or might not even be there at all. So here is my solution, and it is great fun.

Cookie Jar, with exterior weaving, 8 inches in diameter, stoneware, cone 10 reduction fired.

Twined clay basket, 6 inches in diameter, fired to cone 10 reduction in a soda kiln. See step-by-step following page.

Thrown vase with woven clay applique, 9 inches high, stoneware, cone 10 reduction fired, Shino glaze.
Step 1
Extrude about 30 feet of ⅛-inch coils in pieces 18 to 36 inches long. Lay them on plastic wrap on a board and cover them. It will be okay if you have to go back and make more.

Step 2
Throw a round base or make a square, oval or irregular shaped base from a slab. Make the outer edge thick enough to insert the straws, ⅛ to ⅜-inch will do. Cut the plastic or paper straws to approximately 4-inch lengths and insert an odd number (to get the usual over/under weave) evenly spaced (about ½ inch apart) around the edge of the base.

Tip: You can use taller straws for taller baskets, but practice on a shorter version first.

Step 3
Apply slip with the narrow brush between the straws.

Step 4
Begin weaving by laying a coil between two straws with an end sticking out as a marker for the beginning. Then weave back and forth between straws letting it lie in the slip on the base.

Step 5
You may have to help it down gently with a Popsicle stick.

Note: If this doesn’t go smoothly, you probably need more space between the straws.

Step 6
If the coil breaks, or when you come to the end, lay the next piece along side the original and continue. No need to secure them in any special way. Make two full rounds of weaving, lay whatever remaining coil you have down for the moment and use the Popsicle stick to gently compress these two rows together in the spaces between the straws to adhere them to the base.
Step 7
Finish the coil and insert the next and go round and round until you reach the top of the stakes. No more compression is necessary. Let the basket air dry until it isn’t sticky or wobbly, but not yet leather hard. Prepare a few straight coils and let them stiffen (but keep them less than leather hard).

Step 8
Drop a little slip into the bottom of each straw with a syringe.

Step 9
Take the stiffened coils and poke them down the straws and into the slip at the bottom. If it will stick into the base, all the better, but if the base hardens to where this doesn’t work well, it’s not critical.

Step 10
When all the straws have been filled, trim the coils. If you want to experiment with shaping the basket in or out a bit, now’s the time.

Step 11
When you get comfortable with how much to let the woven structure dry, and how stiff the “uprights” should be, you can remove the straws, rather than fill them, and insert leather-hard uprights in the vacated space. I remove every other one, fill those spaces, then remove the rest and fill. You now have more flexibility for doing additional shaping of the basket, and more options for a decorative rim.

Step 12
Cover the basket with a plastic grocery bag and let it dry fairly slowly. It will become increasingly fragile until bisqued and should be moved around only on its bat and handled only by the base. Note: The straws burn off in the bisque firing, though you may have to blow away some ash. Even after bisque firing, the basket is a loose structure, the woven rows not attached to each other or to the uprights. And the coils will break with just a little pressure. It will likely rattle. Keep it upright and handle by the base.
Many variations on this technique are possible...

- Experiment with both smaller and larger coils, clusters of straws as stakes, hand rolling coils, etc.
- Line a basket with a pot thrown a little narrower and a little taller than the basket and with a thin base. Center the basket, on its bat, on the wheel. Put the liner pot inside, and working from the inside, gently push the liner out to join the basket, and fold the top of the liner out over the top of the weaving.
- Throw the liner pot first, omitting its final shaping. Then lay a coil of clay on the wheel around the pot. Insert the straws, weave, remove the straws, insert clay stakes, then do the final shaping of the pot, working as much as possible from the inside. Then cut the coil loose from the bottom of the weaving and remove it, making sure the bottom of the weaving has adhered to the side of the liner pot (slip helps). This is a better technique for larger vessel, to avoid too much weight in the bottom.

Basket with clay lining, 7 inches in diameter, stoneware, cone 10 reduction fired in soda kiln, interior glaze.

Basket with clay lining and coiled wax linen lid, 5 inches in diameter, stoneware, cone 10, reduction fired, interior glaze only.

Oval Basket: 4 inches long, stoneware, cone 6, electric fired with commercial glaze.

Donna Sparks (www.almost-art.info) is a Washington Potters Association member and a studio potter at Pottery Northwest. Pottery Northwest is a 37-year-old non-profit education institution on the grounds of the Seattle Center, www.potterynorthwest.org.
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Creating Colanders

by Steve Dalton

When I heard that PMI was featuring the Washington Potter’s Association in this issue, I decided to share the technique to make one of my most popular items, the colander. I’ve been a member of the WPA since 1996 and most recently, elected as their president. Over the years, I have met some of the most wonderful people from whom I have learned a lot. I’ve received tips and advice on making my pottery even better and now it’s time for me to repay the favor.

I’ve been asked so many times how I make my colanders, and even overheard some of my customers try to figure it out on their own—drill through the bisque or after the glaze fire; poke holes with a pencil; and many more. Sometimes if their idea is way out there, I might chuckle to myself. In the end, I always explain how I make them.

I got the idea from another member of the Washington Potter’s Association many years ago. He shared with me all of his steps and what stage to do them at. After I got back to my studio, I sat down and thought of ways to make a colander easier. I didn’t want to eliminate any of the steps, but only improve on what I learned. So far, this is what I have come up with.

**Tips**
- Make sure the colander is not too dry when drilling or the inside edge will pop out.
- Make sure your drill bit and countersinker are sharp, they will cut easier and quicker.
- When chamfering with the countersinker, wear a suitable dust mask.
- Follow all the usual instructions with your driver.

**Note:** I made all of my guidelines deeper to be easily seen in the photos.

---

**Step 1.** An 8 to 10 inch bowl works the best, especially when first starting out. You’ll have enough room to create a pattern and not be cramped for space with a smaller bowl, or try to make a pattern too big with a larger bowl. After you trim the bowl, divide the foot ring into equal parts, corresponding to the number of sections you want. Four equal sections are easier than three. I always sight across by eye and make my marks with a needle tool.

**Step 2.** Measure out on both sides from the original mark for the feet. I just use the width of my index finger and make a second set of marks to the left and right of the first. Next, I’ll use a cutoff wire and cut into and remove the portions of the foot ring in between the second set of marks. I just use a lightly dampened finger and smooth out the rough clay from where I just cut. Now you’ll have ample drainage if you or your customers set the colander down into the sink.

**Step 3.** With the wheel on, mark your concentric guidelines using the needle tool three quarters of the way down the bowl. The best spacing is from a little over ½ inch to ¾ inch. Next, continue your four original guidelines down the side of the bowl and into the center. If needed, use a ruler to aid you. Lastly, make a small mark in between the longer guidelines.

---

Tools you’ll need: a variable speed driver, wooden rib, drill bit (I prefer a 9/32-inch), wood screw countersinker, needle, cutoff wire (not shown) and ruler (optional).
Mark concentric guidelines for the pattern. Continue marking the original guidelines.

**Step 4.** For the pattern, use the wooden rib. Line the rib up with the smaller line and the top of the guideline (toward the rim of the bowl) and trace around it with the needle tool.

**Step 5.** Drilling is the critical step in creating your colander. Make sure the clay is not too hard or soft. If the clay is too hard, the bowl can either crack, or the backside of the hole will pop out as you drill through; too soft and you can run the risk of crushing your bowl. Follow the pattern lines and then go up the center along the guidelines. If your drill bit is sharp, you won’t need to push very hard.

**Step 6.** As you’re filling in, center your holes and give them enough spacing while following the concentric lines. Every so often the drill bit clogs with clay, but you can use a needle tool to clean it out. Make sure you remember to drill a hole within ½ inch of the rim if you want to hang your colander by either a hook or a leather thong. When you’re done, set the colander aside to continue drying.

**Steps 7 & 8.** After the colander has dried sufficiently, use the wood screw countersinker to ream the edges of the holes, both inside and out. When cleaning the holes, do not push too hard, let the countersinker do the work for you. If the tip is sharp, it’ll only take a couple of rotations to have a nice chamfered edge. Here again, if the clay is too soft, the edges of the holes will be very rough, it’s better to ream the holes when the clay starts to change color. When working on the inside, support the outside with your hand and ream holes starting at the bottom and move up. When finished, smooth off the foot rim.

Here are examples of what you can make. I’ve been working on varying the pattern to come up with different options, as seen with the blue colander. You can also use the same technique as with the garlic storage jar (except on the inside) and just about anything else in clay that might need a hole. Both colanders are 10 inches in diameter. All pieces are made of stoneware and reduction fired to cone 12 in a gas kiln.
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Angela Fina
Mark Shapiro
by Maria Spies

“How could these mugs hold liquid if they have holes in them?”

I was inspired by rattle mugs beginning in 1989 on a trip with my husband to the Four Corners area in Southwestern U.S. to enjoy the vistas, geology and pottery of the area. While visiting one museum I inquired about the interesting Southwest Indian artifacts labeled “rattle mugs.” What rattles and what was the purpose of these mugs?

Rattle mugs are ceremonial vessels and, according to Anasazi Pottery (by Robert H. Lister and Florence C. Lister, published by Maxwell Museum of Anthropology and University of New Mexico Press) these mugs are associated with the Mesa Verde Pueblo III period (1100-1300 AD). They were often found with the dead, as were other mortuary offerings, in the San Juan area. Mug size varied from 2 inches to nearly 5 inches in height.

On the same trip we visited a very small city museum, and had the opportunity to hold and examine several of these rattle mugs. Wow! The energy and history they radiated! As a result of our investigation, we decided that the mugs must have been used in happier times as well as funereal.

Sharing our trip experience with one of my pottery classes, I discussed the rattle mugs and how clever they were. Asked if I could demonstrate how to make them, I agreed to do so, but chose not to copy the Anasazi shapes or designs—applying just the concept to a stoneware mug. The following process describes how to add a rattle to your mugs.

Note: When making a rattle mug, be sure to consider the additional height needed for the false bottom.

Step 1
Throw a basic mug with a little wider base than usual (I use 12 oz of clay). Let dry to medium leather hard. The rim needs to be strong and dry enough to support the mug and the base needs to be moist enough to accept a coil of clay.

Step 2
Roll a 6 to 8 oz coil of clay a little longer than needed to go around the base of the mug. Set the coil aside.

Step 3
Once the mug is sufficiently dry, center and secure it upside down on a bat.

Step 4
Score the top outer edge of the mug base preparatory to attaching the coil.

Step 5
Apply slip if desired before adding the coil.

Step 6
Start with one end of the coil. Place it on the base of the mug where scoring and slip are applied, but don’t attach it yet.

Step 7
Place the other end of the coil on top of the first end.
Step 8
With a cutting tool, cut through the overlapped coil ends. Be careful to not cut the mug base. Remove cut scraps.

Step 9
Align the coil ends and gently compress them together.

Step 10
Carefully attach the coil to the base by pressing down and smoothing the coil on the outside and the inside. The smoother the coil attachment, the easier it will be to center and throw the piece.

Step 11
Using as little water and pressure as possible (or you will collapse the mug), begin to center and throw the coil on the mug’s base into a cylinder.

Step 12
Pull the coil to a cylinder tall enough to make a closed form that will hold the rattles. Don’t close the form completely yet.

Step 13
Next, roll 5 or 6 various size balls of clay (pea sized) that will fit in the closed form but still have room to rattle.

Step 14
Wrap each ball in small pieces of paper. This is to keep them from sticking to one another or to the base of the mug.

Step 15
Drop the wrapped clay ball into the almost-closed base cylinder.

Step 16
Throw the cylinder closed.

Since 1973 Maria has been an active studio potter. She teaches classes and workshops in a variety of areas including throwing, glazes, and saggar and Raku firing. Her work is shown in galleries throughout the Northwest and is collected widely. She recently served 3 years as president of the Washington Potters’ Association. View her work at www.maria-pots.com or contact Maria at maria.spies@mindspring.com.
Recipes

**Maria’s Blue**  
Cone 6 oxidation (glossy)

- Nepheline syenite ....................... 43%
- Gerstley borate or frit 3134 ........... 24
- Flint .............................................. 19
- Zinc oxide....................................... 9
- Kaolin............................................. 5
- Total 100%
- Add: Rutile...................................... 5%
- Cobalt carbonate................................ 1%

**Frosty Black**  
Cone 6 oxidation (satin)

- Nepheline syenite ....................... 32%
- Whiting......................................... 23
- Flint .............................................. 23
- Kaolin........................................... 13
- Zinc oxide....................................... 9
- Total 100%
- Add: Black iron oxide...................... 5%
- Cobalt oxide................................. 3%
- Black copper oxide ....................... 2%
- Manganese dioxide . . . .1%
- CAUTION: Frosty Black glaze contains a high amount of oxides. Use only on the outside of food containers.

**Finishing Touches**

After the mug is bone dry, I use terra sigillata (optional) on the false base. Terra sigillata gives the surface a softer look and sets it off from the glazed mug body. If you use glaze, do not let it enter any hole, decoration or puncture vent that would cause the clay balls to fuse inside the mug base.

When the rattle mug is dry, it’s bisque fired to cone 06 and glaze fired to cone 5 or 6 in an electric kiln. Note that wood firing or salt glazing might cause the rattles to fuse.

**Conversation Starter**

After a few years of displaying rattle mugs with regular mugs at art shows, it became frustrating that patrons didn’t discover the rattle feature without literature, discussion or a shake of the mug. That’s when I gave them a visual hint by adding decorative holes in the sides of the false bottom. Now, “How could this mug hold liquid if it has holes in it?” often began the discussion and smiles would appear on faces when the mug started to rattle. Then I would share the rattle mug origin and construction details.
Old Meets New:
Combining Traditional and Original Motifs and Techniques in Painted Porcelain Vessels

by Yonnah Ben Levy

I began studying pottery with the Japanese potter, Hara, at the Corcoran Art Gallery back in the mid-sixties, and my style was the essence of simplicity. As a production potter, he taught us to throw the same form over and over every day from 9 a.m. until noon for an entire semester.

Throwing is still the foundation of most of my work, but it was living in the Middle East for seventeen years that influenced my style. During many of those years in Israel, I worked in various factories in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, painting on pottery or painting “megillot,” illuminated manuscripts on parchment scrolls of the Book of Esther.

Much of the ornamental work seen on Judaica is in the Persian or Arabic style, but having come from the Pacific Northwest, I approached borders with some originality. I created many new border elements from things around me (oriental rugs, tile floors, etc.) and representational and abstract symbols, both universal and culturally specific. The pot demonstrated here is a porcelain ginger jar made for an exhibition that ran in our gallery.

Step 1
I begin ginger jars by throwing a cylinder and then shaping. After the form is leather hard I trim the shape further while it is still on the bat.

Step 2
The lid is thrown and fitted to the jar with calipers, then trimmed when leather hard. A small ball is attached to the lid for a handle, though sometimes the handle could be more elaborate.

Step 3
The next step is decorating. You can paint underglazes either on greenware or bisqueware. I usually like the decoration to set before glazing so I start painting on greenware, and begin banding using Duncan EZ Strokes underglazes.

Step 4
After bisque firing, I adjust the design as needed, then glaze the ginger jar with a transparent glaze and fire it to cone 6.

Step 5
After glaze firing, I use Duncan Concepts overglazes to intensify the design and fire it again to cone 04. The final stage is applying gold luster; that I then fire to cone 019.

Decorated porcelain vessels by Yonnah Ben Levy.

Yonnah Ben Levy has been a professional artist since 1916. She has exhibited in galleries and museums, such as the Museum of Native American Art in Spokane. Since 1989, she has collaborated with her husband, Chaim Bezalel, on their own original mixed media paintings and prints. They own and operate the Stanwood House Gallery & Art Center and can be reached at www.stanwoodhouse.com.
Choosing and Using Brushes

by Paul Lewing

My brother the musician always says there’s nothing to playing the piano—you just hit the right key at the right time. I reply there’s nothing to drawing—you just make the right mark in the right place. And, very often in art, the “right mark” is best made with a brush.

Artist’s brushes are designated as watercolor or oil painting brushes, softer ones generally being for watercolor and stiffer ones for oil. So ceramic substances like oxide washes and majolica colors are best applied with watercolor brushes, while oil painting brushes are more appropriate for glazes and slips. Size, shape, and hair type are the variables that affect the cost and function of a brush.

Shape

The shape of a brush is determined by its end profile and the shape of its ferrule (the metal piece holding bristles to the handle). Some common round-ferruled shapes are rounds, liners, riggers, scripts, and stencils. Mops are also round, but often have no ferrule. They hold large quantities of liquid and dispense it a little at a time.

The common flat-ferruled shapes are brights, flats, filberts, fitches, and angled. Fans also have a flat ferrule, but the bristles are splayed into a wide rounded end.

Flats and rounds are the most versatile shapes. A selection of these and a good liner or rigger will cover most painting situations. Fans and stencils are commonly used to blend or blot color already laid down with another brush.

Price

This is a tricky issue for ceramists because bisque-ware and raw glaze abrade brushes quickly. A fine brush that would last a watercolorist a lifetime may lose its point with a year or two of oxide decoration. For banding or lying on flat areas of glaze, an expensive brush may be wasted. But, sometimes, only a very good brush will make the mark you need consistently and repeatedly. About twenty years ago, I was given a long-handled wolf-hair sume brush that cost $75 then; its point was ruined in about three years, but I have never done such good brushwork so easily.

Bristle

The best watercolor brushes are Kolinsky sable, renowned for strength, springiness, and fine point. Next best are red sable, not as springy as Kolinsky, but about half the price. Sableline is a fine ox hair dyed to resemble sable, and is cheaper but not as good. The cheapest watercolor brushes are sheep, goat, or squirrel hair.

The best oil painting brushes are hog bristle and very stiff. A softer oil brush might be mongoose, and an ox hairbrush will be softer yet. “Camel hair” is a trade name applied to any number of hairs, none of which come from camels.

The wide variety of synthetic bristles has an enormous range of stiffness, price, and holding capacity.

Oriental Brushes

Hake brushes are sheep or goat with a handle of flat wood or multiple bamboo stems. They are wonderful for applying slips or oxide washes. Sume brushes are built differently from Western brushes, often of different hairs, and even gripped differently. They are a separate study in themselves.

Testings Brushes

Evaluating brushes is very difficult, but some art supply stores will provide plain water and paper. Sharp-pointed brushes usually have a stiff sizing in them to protect the point. Soak this out in water before testing.
them. Drop a dry unsized brush on its tip to assess springiness. Wet it and see if it comes to a point naturally. Make strokes up, down and sideways to see the difference in the mark. Push lightly, then harder, then lightly again, to see if the point returns. Keep doing this until the brush is dry to test its capacity. Push straight down to see what mark it makes.

When choosing brushes, remember the only thing that matters is the finished art. Your hand and eye determine where the “right place” is, but the brush makes the “right mark.”

**CARE**

Brushes should be rinsed after use, as dried glaze and clay will abrade the bristles. Soap or solvent is not necessary with homemade slips and glazes, but might be with gum-filled commercial products. Never rest a brush on its bristles. A brush left to dry that way is then useless. Brushes on which the bristles are glued into the handle, like sume brushes, should not be left to dry with the tips up.
"Two Jugs" is a sample of working with clay and tar paper.

"Tar Paper? You use it to hold up the clay?" This question is not surprising when I show a complicated form to other potters. When I grew up on a farm in Oregon, "tar paper" (also called "roofing felt") was used under the shingles on a roof. It never occurred to me that one day tar paper would find a totally different use and become a valuable tool in my pottery career.

My first exposure to tar paper connected to pottery was when I visited a friend’s high school classroom in Maple Valley, Washington. She had her students make a construction out of paper, tape it together, then dismantle it and cut the same pattern from tar paper. By dampening the back of the tar paper with a sponge and rolling it directly into a slab of clay, the tar paper can become a support for a final production. The project can involve curves, angles, tall protrusions—almost any form that you can make from paper can be made in clay without having to prop it up with bricks or stuff it with newspaper.

After trying this at home, I have discovered tar paper can become a valuable tool for working in clay. You can leave the tar paper on the clay until it becomes nearly leather hard, peel it off, and still be able to make changes and additions to the form. All joint sealing can be nearly complete before the tar paper is removed, though some outside touch-up on seams may be necessary. You can use thinner pieces of clay (being careful when you remove the tar paper), because you have this attached support. Curves leading up to angles on the same piece were never as possible. Paper clay is particularly wonderful because it is so flexible anyway, but this technique works very well with any clay.

After discovering how valuable tar paper was for making my own forms, I found that it could be used as a pattern material for working with the disabled. A shaky hand can cut around a tar paper template without disturbing the pattern. In the Martha’s Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp in Massachusetts, where I have worked for over 20 years, I have found tar paper almost invaluable. My campers make dancing girls, candle glasses, fish soap dishes, and wind chimes—all with the help of tar paper. I have found no other material works as well for this. It is very visible on the clay; it does not get wet and disintegrate like a paper pattern; it is sturdy, and can be used over and over; it is easy to cut with kitchen shears into any shape you wish (I don’t use the good sewing scissors or the camp seamstresses and costume makers would get upset!).

Tar paper is also inexpensive. You can buy a 3x50-foot roll for about $15 from any home center, lumberyard, or hardware store, and it’ll last a long time. The lighter grade (15 lb.) is adequate, though you could use the stiff and heavy 30-lb-grade to experiment. Be sure you ask for roofing felt. We can call it “tar paper” among potter friends!

Elinor Maroney started with clay in the late 50s when she and her two sons then 4 and 5 years old, took a class from Betty Woodman at a local community center in Boulder, Colorado. She finished a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the District of Columbia in 1972. She received a Master of Fine Arts from Antioch University in 1980 at the Columbia (Maryland) Visual Arts Center when she was 48 years old. When her husband retired, they moved back to the Northwest where she maintains a private studio in her home. Elinor has been editor of the Washington Potters’ Association bimonthly newsletter for nearly 10 years. She teaches occasionally at local community centers and colleges. Her career as a potter has spanned more than half of her life! She is still delighted when she tries something new in clay and can share it with others.

My thanks to Suzanne Conine, a pottery teacher now in Utah, for putting me in touch with new uses for tar paper. For comments, you can email Elinor at empots@worldnet.att.net
working with **clay** and **tar paper**

**Step 1**  
To create a “landscape box,” cut and tear construction paper then tape it together with masking tape.

**Step 2**  
After disassembling the paper model, use the patterns to cut pieces from tar paper with kitchen shears (or old scissors).

**Step 3**  
Dampen the back of the tar paper with a sponge and roll it into a slab of clay until it stays. Continue marking the original guidelines.

**Step 4**  
Cut the clay with a sharp tool. (For the landscapes, I tear the clay to get the “mountain top” effect.)

**Step 5**  
Bevel edges with a wire tool where they join together.

**Step 6**  
Score and slip the edges and seal joints. Press a small coil into the joint as you add the tar-paper-backed pieces. Continue marking the original guidelines.

Landscape form with joints sealed. Some texturing has been started as the walls begin to dry.

**Step 7**  
After an hour or two, carefully peel away the tar paper from the stiffening clay. Smooth corners with fingers and a wooden tool.

Bisqued and ready for glazing. Texturing was done with a fettling knife shortly after the tar paper was removed while the corners were damp and the top edges beginning to harden.
working with clay and tar paper

Finished raku landscape with copper luster glaze.

“Two Cats” made from a tar paper pattern with alterations and additions after tar paper was removed.

“Paper Doll” dancing girls is a bisqued form made from a tar paper pattern.

“Two Jugs” is a bisqued form made from a tar paper pattern with alterations and additions after tar paper was removed.
A Sense of Harmony

by Judy Harper

I love throwing porcelain clay because of its satiny feel. I throw while listening to jazz music. Burnishing the pots is like preparing a canvas. Gathering flowers, weeds, grasses and seaweed fills me with the smells, rhythms and textures of nature. As I work, I feel an intense connection to my family and friends, to teachers who have touched my life, and to the sweet neighbor who tumbled the agates that became my burnishing stones. All this has a very meditative quality, which brings me great joy.

Unglazed forms, burnished, and fired in a sagger with organic materials to cone 012 in an electric kiln, by Judy Harper.
Step 1
Thrown forms waiting to be burnished. The tallest form is 4½ inches.

Step 2
Polished agates used to burnish the pots. The various shapes and sizes are chosen to fit the contours of the pots.

Step 3
Burnishing a pot with a polished agate, which compresses the clay particles and provides a stronger surface. All pots are bisque fired to cone 06.

Step 4
Bisqueed pot wrapped in fine copper wire being filled with a small amount of sawdust and salt.

Step 5
Copper-wire wrapped bisque form being enveloped in steel wool and plant material.

Step 6
Materials held in place on the pot with sisal fibers.
Step 7
Wrapped pot being placed in nest of natural materials (moss, leaves, seed pods, seaweed, etc.) inside a sagger, which is an unglazed clay box or form with a lid.

Step 8
The sagger opened after firing to cone 012 in a well-ventilated kiln. The natural materials have burned out, leaving only some ashy debris surrounding the pots.

Step 9
Finished pot being removed from the sagger.

Step 10
After cleaning with a soft cloth, the pot is waxed with several coats of acrylic wax to highlight the burnished shine and provide a harder surface not affected by handling.

CAUTION
These unglazed pieces are not suitable for food or liquid.

Judy Harper is a member of WPA and lives in Seattle. Elinor Maroney helped in the preparation of this article.
Surviving Tough Times
by Chris Campbell

As I write this is the spring of 2003, we are in the midst of uncertain economic and political times, and our priorities have shifted. You need to have a plan to help you get through this downturn and stay focused on long-term goals.

1. Don’t leave your full-time job just yet!
   This is not the time to be risking it all. Many experienced potters have had to curb production and return to a steady income-producing job. This is not to say they have quit potting, they just need a reliable second income.

2. Remain visible
   Keep spending in areas of advertising. Don’t let your customers wonder if you are still in business. More than ever you have to let them know you are available for sales. Some companies spend more than usual during recessions. Look at Dell Computers. They are more visible than ever right now and their competition isn’t. No wonder they are outselling everyone.
   Apply to local shows where your expenses will be moderate. Money spent on advertising keeps your work and your name in the public eye.

3. Keep potting
   If nothing else, you will have a terrific inventory for the future. You have to stay in form and keep improving your skills. Try new techniques and combinations of glazes. You could surface from this downtime with an exciting, expanded body of work.

4. Stay in touch
   Even if nothing is selling, visit your galleries in person or by telephone. Spend some time building your relationship with them. Offer to trade out work that isn’t moving for new items. Give them framed bios to place near your pottery or bring in new hang tags. Ask them if there is something you could be doing to help with sales.

5. Join or create a group
   I don’t mean a group to sit around and complain with. I mean a supportive group to plan shows together; exchange and develop ideas with; share costs on a group ad; share expenses on a new piece of equipment or develop ideas for a group exhibit or collaboration.

6. Learn a new skill
   Now is the time to improve your skills. Take a workshop, rent a video or buy a book to help you learn a new technique or to refine your present skills. Work on developing a palette of safe, non-leaching glazes. Throw your clay forms, slice them in half, examine them for uniformity, then recycle the clay until you can see real improvement.

7. Get photos of your work
   If you use this sluggish time to your advantage, you could emerge with a wonderful set of slides. It takes a long time to get from a bag...
Debbi Van Ordstrand knows that taking the time to make a personal visit to a gallery strengthens her relationship.

**8. Keep accounts current**

It is tempting to be the “good guy” and let your galleries have a bit of slack in paying since they are in a crunch too, but don’t be the artist who never gets paid. Be the squeaky wheel that gets the oil. They are paying those who ask, so join that group and keep yourself solvent.

**9. Be careful!**

Consignment is an excellent option right now. It helps the galleries keep their shelves full without great cash commitment. It helps the artist keep their work in front of the public, but be careful! Consign with galleries you know and trust. Keep your consignment local so you can monitor sales. Have a written, signed agreement in hand before you leave any of your pottery in the gallery. Even the most posh galleries can be deadbeats; so do not be fooled by a lavish exterior. Stick with people you trust.

**10. Be good to yourself**

Fight the voice in your head that tells you it’s just your work people don’t want to buy. Believe me, everyone is feeling the crunch! To greater and lesser extents most artists in every field are in the same doldrums. So stay focused on your career. Your work is just as lovely as it was two years ago when times were better.

The bottom line is keep working, keep learning, and keep improving. Take that leap of faith. Stay in the game.

Chris Campbell lives in Raleigh, NC. E-mail comments to her at ccpottery@bellsouth.net.
Candleholders have a timeless appeal. Here are some ways to make elegant yet practical candleholders on the wheel that also invite variations. The basic candleholder secures the candle and catches most drips that may occur.

**Note:** To ensure a correct fit for candles, you will need to know the shrinkage rate of your clay (see step 5), so some experimentation is necessary before you make this project.

**Step 1**
After centering, push down with one finger toward the outer edge to create a “hat” shape.

**Step 2**
Finish the outer edge of the drip-pan (a small tray also called a “bobeche”) by stretching the clay outward, then compressing and smoothing the lip with a chamois.

**Step 3**
To form the socket (also known as a “candle-nozzle”), use one finger to open a hole in the middle, stopping short of the bottom.

**Step 4**
Pull the socket up taller and thinner.

**Step 5**
To ensure a good fit for a candle, make a sizing tool by smoothly wrapping masking tape several times around the stub of a candle. This increases the diameter of the candle to allow for clay shrinkage. When the wheel is stopped, put the end of the candle in the holder to assess the size, and adjust the socket as needed.

**Step 6**
After the proper size is achieved, collar in about 1 inch below the rim to form the bottom of the socket. That’s the basic candle holder.
Candle ring with crystalline glaze. A candle ring can have multiple candle sockets. I've made them with four for Advent candle rings, and even with a dozen holders for the 12 days of Christmas.

**Step 1**
Center about 2 pounds of clay, poke a hole in the middle to the bottom, and pull out a ring. Tip: It helps to press downward on the ring as you pull out, or the clay may detach from the bat.

**Step 2**
When the ring is about 8-10 inches in diameter, push down to form a trough with one finger. Set the ring aside while making the candle sockets.

**Step 3**
The easiest way to throw sockets is off the hump. Form as shown and cut off with a needle tool, leaving a flared flange on the bottom for attaching to the ring. Repeat for as many as you'd like on the ring.

**Step 4**
Score and attach sockets to the ring.

Brad Sondahl has been a studio potter since 1973, and operates out of his studio in Spirit Lake, Idaho. For more information, tips and techniques, visit his web site at www.sondahl.com.

**Step 5 & 6**
Cut the ring in half. I use a spackling knife to make a straight cut, but any knife will work. To attach the arch to the candleholders, score and slip them well and attach them with firm pressure. Some clay may be added at the junctions to strengthen the bond. These will be extremely fragile when dry, but will become more durable after the bisque firing then forms a tight bond when glazed.

Candle arch. The variations with candleholders are endless, so create your own versions.

**Step 1**
Center 2 lb of clay, poke a hole in the middle to the bottom, and pull out a ring. Instead of pushing down to make a U-shaped trough, push in from the outside to make a C-shaped form.

**Step 2**
Trim the bottom of the ring so that it is symmetrical to the top. Some of this can be done while still freshly thrown on the wheel. Throw some candle sockets.

**Step 3**
When the arch form is leather hard, turn it over and finish trimming it to make it symmetrical.

**Step 4**
Since trimmed areas may have open pores, seal the form with throwing slurry.
Polar Palooza

by Craig Hinshaw

Polar Palooza was a joint effort between the city of Royal Oak, Michigan, and the Detroit Zoo. Artists designed life-size, 500-pound fiberglass bear forms, which were displayed at the zoo. The project promoted the city and the zoo while raising money for both.

Fourth-grade teacher, Patience Wright, thought it would be exciting for her students to participate in this project (the zoo is only a few miles from the school). Since it wouldn’t be practical for the students to design a life-size bear, we decided to have our own Palooza on a smaller scale.

I prepared (see page 44) small leather-hard clay bears for the students, who worked in pairs. They conceived an idea or theme for their bear and sketched it out on paper. To help generate ideas, we looked at the web site, www.cowsparade.net. Their ideas included patriotic bears, sports bears, an angel bear, even a baby bear with a blue diaper and pink pacifier.

Next the students rendered their ideas on the leather-hard clay bears. Additions such as hats, glasses, flags, etc., were attached by scoring and brushing on clay slip. After bisque firing, the students brushed on low-fire underglazes with a clear cover coat, and the bears were refired.

More Than a Project

Student-made posters publicized our Palooza auction within the school and throughout the district via the school web site. With a minimum bid of $5, the bears sold quickly, and we raised $143 for the zoo, which exceeded our expectations.

Students (and staff) are highly motivated because real-world projects like this are an excellent way to engage student learning. The students had a purpose for the research, reading, and math skills needed to ‘make it happen,’ and the excitement spread beyond the classroom. We were featured in two newspaper articles and received a certificate from the Chamber of Commerce. What a great sense of pride this instills in the students while reflecting favorably on how important a role the arts play when incorporated in the school curriculum.

Finished Polar Bears

Finished bears were auctioned to raise money for the local zoo.

Craig Hinshaw is an elementary school art specialist in the Lamphere School district in Madison Heights, Michigan. E-mail comments to Craig at craighinshaw@hotmail.com.

Continued on page 44.
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Decorating with slip is a technique as old as time and was thoroughly developed by mid-17th-century English potters. The preparation is very simple—sieved clay mixed with water creates slip. Slipware may be simple or elaborate, but the outcome retains a pleasantly naive aspect.

Thomas Tofts “Slip-decorated Dish” (ca. 1700) on display at the Mint Museum, is a wonderful example of elaborate slip decoration. Toft charger, ca. 1700, earthenware with slip decoration and clear overglaze.

On this dish, Toft employs three different slips (white, brown and red) and several slipware techniques. To hide a red clay body, the potter coated the interior with a runny, white slip. When this layer was still moist, but no longer tacky to the touch, the decorator was able to draw or “trail” the outline of the birds, the three motifs and also the two-colored “fence-and-shadow” border on the wide rim. Later, tiny white dots of a stiff white slip were dropped onto the trailed dark out-

clay slip the body, legs and tail-feathers of the bird, the baby birds, and the three motifs. At every step of the decoration, the presence of moisture helped the slips adhere. Covered with a transparent lead glaze in the form of powdered gale-
na, the fired object has a yellow cast, making the ware rich and sparkling.

Toft was not only a craftsman, he was also a crafter of iconography. Since it was believed that pelicans would pierce their breast to feed their young with their own blood,
The bird was often depicted in heraldry and symbolic art “in her piety.” The piercing came to symbolize Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross or the Eucharist. In actuality, what was interpreted as piercing her breast was the pelican pressing against her chest the large bag attached to her under-bill to disgorge macerated fish to feed her young.

The fleur-de-lis, symbolizing purity, was another popular motif. It showed up on the English coat of arms in the days of Henry V, who acquired for his son the right to the French crown. It also is an emblem of the Catholic French monarchy, the supporter of English royalists. The heart motif is a common symbol of love in both sacred and secular contexts, but its shape is also close to the Greek letter for omega, which is often depicted on the book held by God the Father in Renaissance and later art. The three-ball motif could represent the Trinity, as well as the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Does this plate carry a seventeenth century political message or is it merely an assemblage of decorative motifs popular at that time? During the late seventeenth century, Catholic and Jacobite tendencies had to be hidden. However, with a little imagination, this plate could be interpreted as a celebration of Royalists and the Roman Catholic Church at a time when it was not prudent for an Englishman to be overt about Catholic sympathies or about belief in the divine right of kings.

Mary Zimmermann is an editor for the American Ceramic Circle Journal and has taught the history of ceramics for the Mint Museum of Art’s Delhom Service League orientation classes since 1986.

Mary Wondrausch on Slipware
by Mary Wondrausch
Co-Published by The American Ceramic Society, and A&C Black Publishers, Ltd.

Mary Wondrausch examines the history of slipware, narrating its development in many countries and discussing the techniques and practicalities involved. As one of the leading practitioners in the field, she writes with great enthusiasm and knowledge about this most joyous and colorful of ceramic styles. Slipware has a long tradition of being used for commemorative wares. It has played an important part in making historical events both for individuals and nations. This extra role makes this book essential reading for potters as well as for ceramic collectors and historians.

©2001 • Hardcover • 144 pages
ISBN 1-57498-149-8 • Order code: G073
Price: $40

Irmá Starr Demonstrates the Lost Art of 17th Century English Slipware

The Burnap collection of 17th century English slipware pottery at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City is one of the finest in North America. Irmá Starr chose four objects to demonstrate four slip techniques: trailing, combing, feathering and marbling. Starr demonstrates a technique taught to her by potter Warren Mackenzie, who was taught the skill from Leach at Cornwall, England. She has taught workshops at more than 30 universities and art centers around the country and has been commissioned to produce impressive works.

Order code: D064
Price: $30
To begin our Polar Palooza project, I visited the zoo’s gift shop and purchased two small soft plastic polar bears, and made two-part plaster press molds from them.

Figure 1
Close inspection of the soft plastic toy polar bear showed it was formed from a 3-part mold, but I decided to make only a 2-part mold.

Figure 2
Imbed the bear in clay up to the seam line exposing one side. The 3 nubs aid in keeping the molds aligned. Add a clay retaining wall.

Figure 3
Pour plaster over the bear.

Figure 4
After the plaster has set, turn the mold over. Add clay between the legs to prevent undercuts.

Figure 5
Add a clay retaining wall, then brush slip on the exposed plaster to prevent the molds from sticking to each other. Cast the second half.

Figure 6
After the plaster set, separate the molds. Remove the model and trim any rough edges. Wash the molds and allow to dry. Discard any clay with plaster in it.

Figure 7
Press soft clay in each section. Trim the edges level with the mold. Score and slip the surfaces that will come in contact with each other.

Figure 8
After pressing the two halves together, soft clay was forced into the seams from underneath (between the legs), further connecting the parts.

Figure 9
After allowing to dry 15 to 20 minutes the mold was pried open and the bear gently removed. Some mending was usually needed.
Moving Soon?
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www.potterymaking.org
Tile making may seem like the simplest of projects, but you’re likely to run into two problems. The first is coming up with ideas for decorating tiles, especially if you’ve concentrated on throwing pots and haven’t spent a lot of time thinking about decorating. The second problem is simply one of understanding and controlling the clay: how do you make tiles the right size and get them to stay flat? So, before you dive into an ambitious project, you’ll find a tile-making book helpful to tell you what the pitfalls may be and how to avoid them. Here are four books that take very different approaches to describing the subject, and between them offer a wealth of advice and ideas.

Sumi von Dassow teaches pottery at the Washington Heights Center for the Traditional Arts in Lakewood, Colorado. You can send comments to her through her website at http://www.well.com/~sumi. Check out all her previous recommendations at www.potterymaking.org.

**The Tile: Making, Designing and Using**
Kenneth Clark MBE
Trafalgar Square, N. Pomfret, VT, 2002

This book is intended for experienced potters interested in exploring tile making. It’s comprehensive in terms of the variety of techniques covered, and profusely illustrated with examples of finished work, but it lacks basic information a less-experienced clay-worker might need. Clark begins with a lengthy exploration of tile history, brought into the present with a chapter on “Designing and Designers” covering the conception and execution of several tile projects. A basic explanation of glazing and glaze chemistry follows, but the bulk of the text covers making and decorating techniques. Though some processes and tools are illustrated, most techniques are described in text without process photos. For experienced potters this isn’t a drawback, since the photos of finished work will be inspiration enough. Final chapters deal with using and installing tiles, as well as problems with maintenance, vandalism and negotiating contracts.

**Handcrafted Ceramic Tiles**
Janis Fanning and Mike Jones

This project book is intended for hobbyists and do-it-yourself home decorators. Each project contains fully-illustrated step-by-step instructions and includes a list of materials and tools. It’s written for non-potters, so tools, clay, kilns, firing and glazing are described in some detail. There is a variety of projects, and you can decide whether to follow each project to the letter or take some of the most interesting ideas and design your own project. The first few projects involve decorating commercial glazed tiles with paint and decoupage, but the bulk of the projects include making tiles, decorating bisque tiles, and decorating glazed tiles with enamels, and require a kiln. Some of the projects are rather complicated, including making plaster molds and wooden stamps, and silk-screening onto glazed tiles. The final chapter offers suggestions on planning and laying out a tile design, and instructions on cutting, fixing and grouting tiles.

**Handmade Tiles – Designing, Making, Decorating**
Frank Giorgini
Lark Books, New York, NY, 1994

This book covers the basics well enough to be useful for beginners, but it’s also comprehensive enough to appeal to advanced potters. Giorgini begins with a brief history of tile, then explains the nature of clay and firing, and offers a list of equipment and suggestions for arranging a workspace. He then methodically walks you through making a flat tile, making a relief model for a press mold, making the press mold, and so on. He covers surface decoration on unfired, bisqued, and glazed tiles, and gives instructions and schedules for bisque and glaze firing. The book is illustrated with plenty of process photos where necessary as well as with many color photos of finished work. The final chapters cover mosaics, tile design (including computer-aided design), installation, making tools, and health and safety. Appendices include a few sample glaze recipes and a cone 10 reduction-firing schedule.

**The Art of Handmade Tile: Complete Instructions for Carving, Casting and Glazing**
Kristin Peck
Krause Publications, Iola, WI 2002

Though this book will be most useful for beginners, it does offer some interesting insights into the challenges of making and decorating with tiles as a profession. The tile-making instructions focus primarily on making a plaster mold from a relief tile. There is little information here about decorating at any stage, though the use of glazes, underglazes, and engobes is covered briefly. The book is intended for beginners, and describes the different types of clay in some detail, as well as describing and illustrating tools and equipment. Different types of kilns and firing processes are touched upon, but the author basically assumes you will be using an electric kiln. The most interesting chapter is “Advice from the Experts,” consisting of essays on subjects including “Shrinkage,” “Participating in Shows,” and “Public Art.”
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