

NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #23

IMPRESSING & INCISING

- Impressing is best done into soft, fresh clay which can then be left to dry or stretched/manipulated further. A wide variety of objects/tools can be used to create impressions, as well as 'found' natural objects etc. Experimentation is the best way to source innovative impressions. Just knead the clay up once you've tried each object out, or cut a sample tile of the impression, bisque fire it and glue it to the impressing object for future reference.
- Slabs of raw clay (later bisqued to 1000°C - 1100°C) or plaster can be carved with patterns/images which can be used as textural surfaces for rolling or slamming clay onto. Rolling a repeat texture around a coil of clay is a great way to create innovative additions to forms (handles, loops, lugs etc).
- Embossed and flocked wallpaper makes an ideal impression when rolled over a slab of moist, fine clay.
- Making your own bisque fired clay stamps is as simple as making multiple finger shaped pieces of clay which, when leather hard, can be carved to create RAISED/RELIEF designs when stamped into soft clay. Alternately, once your fresh clay finger is made, add on a relief decorative addition which will create a RECESSED/INTAGLIO design when stamped.
- Lino blocks, Chinese sweet moulds, shortbread moulds, wood blocks, Indonesian batik blocks, wooden carvings etc. can be relied upon to create interesting patterned impressions.
- Incising in ceramics can encompass carving, inlay, sgraffito and combing.
- Carving is best done with a lino tool, wire loop or strap tool, needle tool or wooden modelling tool. The clay should always be at the leather hard stage before carving to ensure a clean (burr-free) carving action.
- Inlay involves painting excess thick coloured slip into carved areas and allowing the slip to stiffen to leather hard. A metal scraper is then used to remove the excess slip and clarify the design detail so that the finished surface is totally smooth.

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