

DRY GLAZES. These glazes are high in clay, and very 'dry' rather than glossy in appearance. They are generally used only on sculptural work because as a surface they do not wear well or clean easily i.e. in tableware applications. Dry glazes are not far removed from the decorative product, slip, which is entirely made up of clay with a little water. Dry glazes are best applied very thinly, and often give differing results depending on the thickness of the glaze and the colourant used in the glaze. A dry glazed surface is traditionally very rough and abrasive.

PIERCING. This technique is very old, and very easy to achieve if done at the correct stage in the drying process. The leather-hard stage is the best time to pierce – the clay is firm enough to hold its shape, and soft enough to puncture without cracking. A variety of tools can be used to pierce – hole cutters, needle tools, wire drills, scalpel knives etc. Piercing is most effective when used on very fine clay, rather than coarse clay. Always sponge the form after piercing to remove any 'dags' of clay that remain after the process.

RESIST AND MASKING. A variety of resist or masking products can be used in ceramics in order to create designs. One of the most common products is latex resist – a removable liquid resist material which can be applied when underglazing, oxidizing or glazing to create blank areas of no colour (masked areas). Hot wax is another material which can be used for the same purpose, but unfortunately, it is not easily removed. It must be burnt out in the kiln. Textural resisting/masking can be done on raw clay with a liquid shellac mixture. Once this is dry, a moist sponge can be used to slowly wash away the unfired clay around the shellac so that a relief area (shellacked) remains. The shellac is then burnt out in the kiln.

SLIP TRAILING. A thick coloured decorating slip is prepared (not a casting slip) which is applied to a raw, moist pottery body. It is critically important that slip trailing is done onto a moist body because the pot and the decoration must shrink together at the same rate. A special slip trailer (a rubber ball with a nib) is used to apply the decorating slip. A coat of clear gloss glaze covers most slip decoration. *See Tip Sheet #4*

IMPRESSING can be achieved on moist clay with a wide variety of 'tools' from natural objects (leaves, seed pods etc), made objects (toys, rubber stamps, kitchen utensils etc) and purpose-designed stamps in plaster and bisque fired clay. Purpose designed stamps can be made by creating 'fingers' of clay, allowing them to firm up to leather-hard stage, and then carving impressions in them. These are then fired to bisque temperature to make them permanent. *See Tip Sheet #23*

INCISING AND CARVING are best done at the leather hard stage with appropriate tools such as lino carving tools, wire loop tools, needle tools, sgraffito tools etc. Fine clay will give better effects and finer details than could be achieved with coarse clays. *See Tip Sheet #23*

MODELLING. Building up a relief surface in pottery is called modelling. This is best done when clay is moist rather than leather hard. Ideally, the base clay form and the modelled addition should be of the same moisture content to ensure a good bond. A thick joining slip and scoring will help join the two together.

PRINTING. The process of screenprinting on clay is the same as for other surfaces except for the type of ink used. Ceramic screen printing inks can be made by mixing underglazes / stains / oxides with medium for application to raw or bisqued surfaces prior to glazing. Onglazes can be mixed with medium to print onto glossy glazed and fired surfaces. A flocked lino block can also be printed using a stain / underglaze / oxide ink onto raw/bisqued clay provided the image is covered with clear glaze. *See Tip Sheet #16*

SPRIGGING involves using a small relief plaster or bisque fired clay mould into which moist clay is pressed or cast. The resulting relief 'slab' is removed and attached to a clay object (with a flat surface) with joining slip. It is critically important that the clay for the sprigg is the same as that used to make the supporting item of pottery. This will ensure even shrinkage, and no cracking or separating. The ultimate example of this technique is Wedgwood pottery where the company uses spriggs of one colour and applies them to vessels/plates of another colour clay.

SPRAYING/AIRBRUSHING is a technique which involves using a spray gun, atomizer or airbrush to apply a thin mixture of oxide/underglaze/stain to raw, bisqued or glazed surfaces to very even or graduated colour effects. Spraying is also ideally used with resist materials such as latex, paper stencils or wax.

TEXTURING is without doubt the simplest decorating technique. All manner of tools or found objects can be used to scratch, gouge, scour, pick, score etc into moist to leather-hard to dry clay surfaces. Texturing then provides an ideal surface for breaking glazes, oxide staining and sprayed colorants because of its strong texture.

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