

**NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #28**

PIERCING

- A variety of tools such as hole cutters, scalpels, drills and needle tools can be used to pierce clay which is leather hard. It is best to use these tools on leather hard clay forms as they won't deform during piercing. Always allow pierced work to dry slowly and evenly after alteration or it will crack, distort or deform. The 'burrs' left during the process can be removed with a moist sponge while leather hard or sandpaper and steel wool once the clay is fully dry. Beware of the dust created by dry sanding.
- Very fine piercing is often done to bisque fired clay forms with a small electric drill or hand drill fitted with a masonry or diamond tip. Bisque ware will not distort, and hence provides a more solid form for detailed piercing.
- Traditional Chinese tableware uses an interesting technique to create a pierced appearance in rice bowls. Grains of rice are pressed into the thin wall of a soft to leather hard bowl in decorative patterns. During bisque firing, the rice burns away and the 'pierced' holes are revealed. Once glazed, the small holes fill with glaze and create a translucent contrast to the more opaque porcelain clay body.
- Piercing glaze fired ware is not easy and often results in breakage. Most pottery becomes partially or fully vitrified in glaze firing and therefore requires piercing with a very fine diamond drill. Wear protective goggles and gloves during drilling.
- Piercing and shellac resist (see Technical Tips Sheet #21 'Resist & Masking') are complimentary techniques when used on translucent porcelain clays where they can enhance the fragile and delicate qualities of the clay.
- Suggestions for activities using piercing: a thrown ceramic colander for rice/pasta, decorative lighting (translucent porcelain wall lighting, Moroccan candle holders), tall narrow cone forms with pierced repeat patterns in bands, functional teapot with tea strainer in the spout, ornate hand-held tea strainer and matching cup and saucer, etc.

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