

7 great pottery projects

| Second Edition |



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pottery forms using basic
throwing and handbuilding skills

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Tips on Making Complex Pottery Forms

Using Basic Throwing and Handbuilding Skills

There's nothing more fun than putting your hands in clay, but when you get into the studio do you know what you want to make? With clay, there are so many projects to do, it's hard to focus on which ones to do first. So, for those who may want some step-by-step direction, here are 7 great pottery projects you can take on.

The projects selected here are easy even though some may look complicated. But with our easy-to-follow format, you'll be able to duplicate what some of these talented potters have described. These projects can be made with almost any type of ceramic clay and fired at the recommended temperature for that clay.

You can also decorate the surfaces of these projects in any style you choose—just be sure to use food-safe glazes for any pots that will be used for food. Need some variation? Just combine different ideas with those of your own and create all-new projects. With the pottery techniques in this book, there are enough possibilities to last a lifetime!

The Stilted Bucket

by Jake Allee

As a college ceramics instructor, Jake enjoys a good time just like anybody else and it shows with this bucket project. Easy to carry and set down on a party table, this snack bowl is a comfortable one-handed fit while you're holding a six-pack in the other hand.

Got Juice?

By Dannon Rhudy

Dannon has been a potter for many years and enjoys her fresh-squeezed juice when she wakes up. Her juicer is easy to make and is a great gift idea for family and friends.

Pinched Teapots

by Ron Korczynski

Teapots are one of the greatest challenges for any potter, but Ron took the challenge and developed this great project for his high school students. The construction is basic utilizing two pinched pots, the fun begins with your own variations!

Lana Wilson's Textured Platters

by Annie Chrietberg

Lana has a knack for creating wonderful loose forms that brings out a bit of envy in all of us. But, like all the projects in this book, her seemingly difficult platters are constructed and decorated one step at a time.

Covered Jar Set

by Steve Davis-Rosenbaum

The next time you make jars, why not make two and connect them. Steve figured out a process for his double jar set through a series of creative accidents and brilliant insights and he shows you how to do it yourself.

Making a Tall Vase

by Andrea Perisho

Veteran potter Mark Issenberg from Georgia creates his beautiful signature vases in three parts. When breaking down a big project into smaller pieces, the impossible becomes possible. Astonish your friends and loved ones with an impressive large piece.

Nesting Bowls

by Annie Chrietberg

Annie shows you how to create great looking nesting bowls beginning with a set of tart pans from a kitchen store. To add even more variety, she adds texture to both sides of the slabs opening up the project to endless combinations.

Stilted Bucket

by Jake Allee



Stilted Bucket, 9 in. (23 cm) in height, thrown and altered composite form, oxidation fired to cone 9.

Presentation is everything! Imagine yourself arriving at a party with a six pack of your favorite Mexican beverage hanging from one hand and the belly of a stilted bucket loaded with limes in the palm of the other. Grasping the ceramic piece on the underside enables you to give your host a hearty hug with hands full!

The Stilted Bucket is a product of several elements within my creative process. One of the primary elements is historical inspiration, and, after looking at many examples of Chinese Chou period bronzes, I began to think about how I could change the orientation of my forms to construct new work. Many bronze pieces have a combination of geometric and organic elements with an angular quality that creates interest within the form, and I wanted to inject this into my repertoire.

Deconstructing Chinese forms in my sketch book,

I realized that many of these pieces stand on tripods that lift the forms in a manner that makes me want to put my hand under them and lift them up. I also realized that most of the textures created from altering clay appear on the sides of my pieces, and the light bulb in my head turned on. How could I create a form that would make the viewer want to interact with it in the same way that I wanted to handle an ancient Chinese bronze on a tripod?

The Stilted Bucket is composed of three basic thrown forms. The first is a bulbous cylinder that is marked, altered, and sprigged. The second is a thick disk stretched into an oval. The last is a bottomless, wide cylinder with a clean lip and attention given to the base. After creating these pieces, they're cut apart and reassembled. Do all the throwing at the same time to ensure even moisture content in the components.



1 Throw a basic cylinder without a bottom.



2 Mark an evenly spaced grid around the exterior.



3 Press out the form with your finger.



4 Press in balls of clay at the intersections of the grid.



5 Throw a disk and compress it.



6 Stretch the disk into an oval.

Process

Throw a basic cylinder without a bottom (*figure 1*). Pay extra attention to centering because any flaw is reflected in the final form. After creating the profile, carefully mark an evenly spaced grid around the exterior (*figure 2*). The next step exaggerates the form and the end result is larger in volume.

Starting from the bottom and working to the top, press out the form with your finger using the marks as a guideline (*figure 3*). Make small balls of clay and press them into the clay at the intersections of the grid (*figure 4*). This pushes back in and emphasizes the alteration. Trim excess clay from the bottom. Set aside and allow it to become leather hard.

Throw a 1-inch-thick disk and compress it, but end the compression about $\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the edge (*figure 5*). This creates a line that later relates to the pot's design elements. Keep the outer edge profile smooth then under-cut the disk (inset).

Immediately remove the disk from the wheel and

stretch it into an oval by throwing it onto a canvas surface (*figure 6*). Make sure the piece hits the table at an angle so the disk stretches. The clay should make a “wisp” sound instead of a “WHAM!” when it hits the table. Repeat until you reach a desired shape.

After stretching the disk, roll the edges over to eliminate any sharpness (*figure 7*). This also creates a relationship between the curled area and the handles that will be attached later.

Throw a wide bottomless cylinder (*figure 8*). Mimic the curve created by the side of the bulbous altered cylinder. Shape and compress the lip. Finish the base with an old credit card with a curved notch cut into it. This creates a line that relates to the profile of the other edges. Set the piece aside to stiffen up.

Trim excess clay from the bottom of the bulbous form (*figure 9*). The piece should be symmetrical top to bottom and left to right. Cut the leather-hard bulbous form and stretched disk in half (*figure 10*). These become the belly and the stilts respectively. Prepare for assembly by scoring the pieces.



7

Roll the edges over and curve the ends in to eliminate any sharpness.



8

Throw a wide bottomless cylinder.



9

Trim excess clay from the bottom of the bulbous form.



10

Cut the bulbous form and stretched disk in half.



11

While resting on foam, attach the bulbous underbelly to the stilts.



12

Cut away a section of the wide cylinder, and attach it.



13

Blend in small coils to reinforce all joints.



14

Cut a curve in the base of each stilt.



15

Attach handles to the top of the stilts.

Place the bulbous underbelly on a piece of foam and attach it to the stilts (figure 11). Reinforce the connection on the interior with a small coil that is blended in. Attach the other stilt. Cut away a section of the wide cylinder, and attach it to the rim of the bowl (figure 12). Remember to always leave more clay than you think you will need when cutting this piece.

Blend in small coils to reinforce all joints on both the inside and outside of the piece (figure 13). Continue to

rest the piece on a block of foam to protect the stilts and bowl. Cut a curve in the base of each stilt (figure 14), but pay attention to the relationship of these curves to the established composite form.

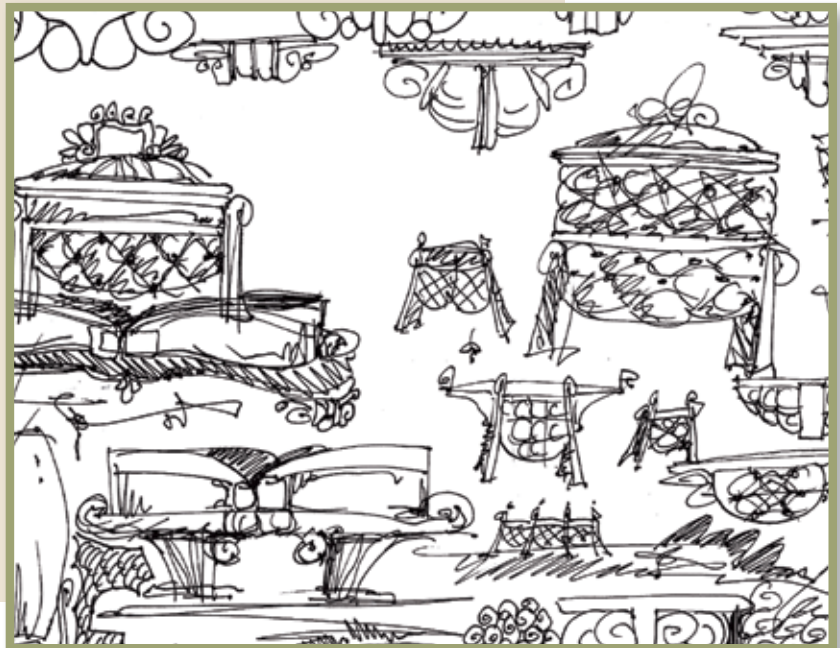
After addressing the details on the underside, pull two short handles and attach them to the top of the stilts (figure 15). Curl the handles to mimic the top of the stilt. Dry the piece under plastic for several days before bisque firing.



Triple Stilted Bucket, 6½ in. (17 cm) in height, thrown and altered composite form, soda fired to cone 10. An architectural piece designed to elevate food in the extravagance of the standard smorgasbord spread. This piece operates under the assumption that not everyone likes chocolate pudding mixed in with their creamed corn.

Sketching it out

I always begin a new piece by sketching because it allows me to change and rearrange proportions within the form before I produce the actual clay piece. This is an important step because time making clay objects is very valuable to me and I want to be as efficient as possible with this time. A composite form relies on all the parts fitting correctly, and, although clay can be quite forgiving at times, too many components in the final piece can open up the possibility of a piece looking over worked. After several sketches, I'm mentally clear on how to approach the piece and I can then take to the clay.



Citrus Juicer

by Dannon Rhudy



Juicer, 6 in. (15 cm) in diameter, fired to cone 6 with iron red glaze.

Citrus juicers are quick and simple items to make. They're constructed like double-walled bowls, and are both easy and fun to make.

To make a finished juicer approximately 6 inches in diameter, start with about 1½ pounds of clay, or a bit more. Center the clay and flatten to approximately a 7- to 8-inch circle on a bat (*figure 1*). Next, open the center to the bat, making the opening 2–2½ inches wide at the bottom (*figure 2*). Raise the wall of the opening slightly (an inch or two) and use your needle tool to trim the inside of the opening (*figure 3*). Bevel the opening about 45°, leaving the trimmed part in place. (It will pop off later when the piece is removed from the bat.) Finish pulling up the center wall (*figure 4*) and completely close it. Leave a barely blunted point on the tip of the closed part (*figure 5*). The walls of this closed form will be slightly thick; but you will need this thickness later.

Move to the outside edge of the piece. Pull up the outside wall to a height of about 3 inches (*figure 6*). Keep the space between the inner closed portion and the outer wall flat and smooth. Using a 45° stick or metal tool, trim the outer bottom edge of the form (*figure 7*). Trimming the inside of the closed form and the outside of the piece while it is still on the wheel prevents having to invert the form later for trimming—a great time savings—plus, it's also much easier to trim this way.



1 Throw a 7-inch disk of clay.



2 Open center of clay to wheel head.



3 Trim inside opening with a needle tool.



4 Pull up wall of center opening.



5 Close opening completely, leaving a slightly blunted point.



6 Throw outside wall, leaving a flat inside bottom.

Next, set the rim of the outer wall. I often indent this edge because it makes a great place for glazes to pool, which can give a more interesting finished surface (*figure 8*). However, a simple curved edge also works well. Be sure to make a good thick rim, no matter the shape. Thin rims chip, and items such as juicers get a lot of use and are prone to getting banged around in the kitchen. Once your rim is set, pull a nice spout, just as you might pull a spout on a pitcher (*figure 9*). It can be simple or elaborate. Whatever spout type you like is the one that will work on your piece, but keep in mind the end use of the juicer.

Now you need to flute the closed form in the center of your juicer. The rounded end of a small loop tool is ideal. Start at the bottom of the closed center form and pull up steadily (*figure 10*). Go all the way around the form, spacing the grooves evenly. When you reach the top of each groove, the loop tool will naturally end the groove. Practice a couple of times. It is not difficult.



7 Trim outer bottom edge with a stick or metal tool.



8 Finish rim of piece with an indent or curve.



9 Form a simple or complex spout.



10 Flute center with small loop tool.



11 Attach desired handle, let dry, and sand lightly if needed.

When you have fluted the entire closed portion, pull a wire under the whole piece. Lift the bat off the wheel. Set aside to reach a soft-leather-hard stage. When the piece is stiff enough, attach any handle you like, opposite the spout (*figure 11*). If the handle is made of thin clay, you might want to brush it with wax to keep it from drying faster than the body of the piece.

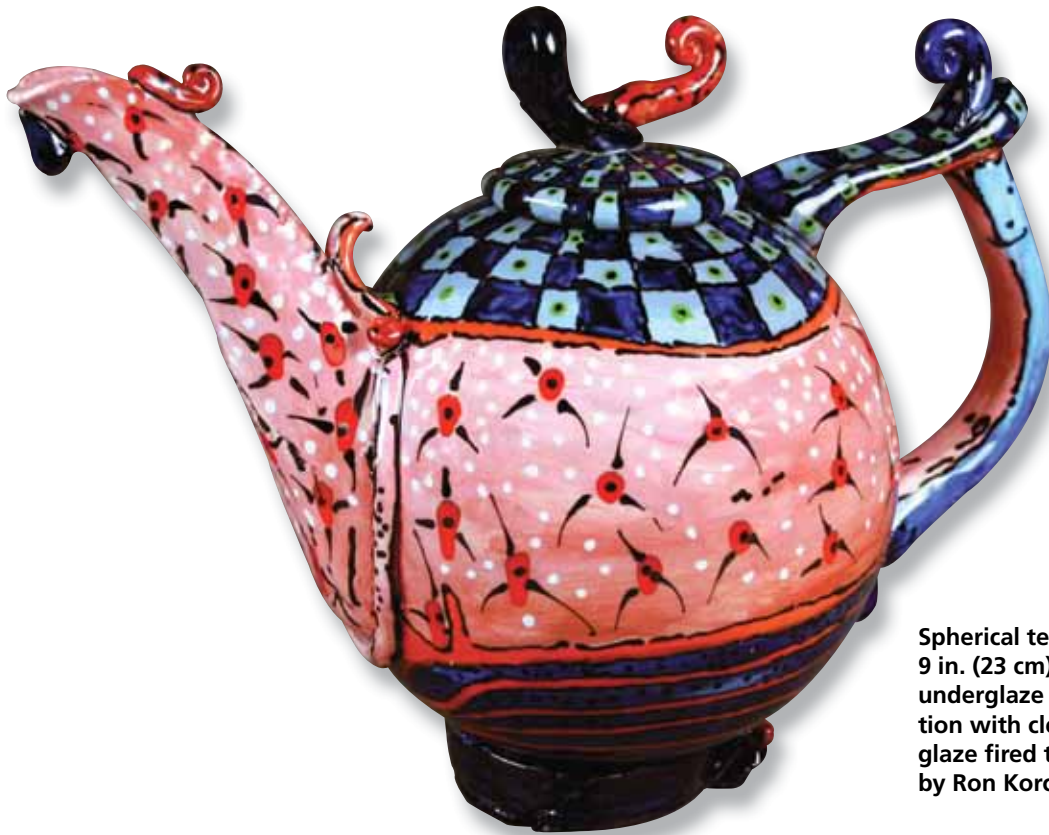
After the whole piece has dried enough to handle without distorting, remove it from the bat. Extract any bits of clay remaining on the inside bottom edge and on the outer edge. Smooth with a damp sponge. Use a plastic kitchen scrubber to remove any bits stuck to the fluted part of the piece. Do not round the edges of the fluting because those edges are what make the juicer work.

Choose glazes that break well over edges, and avoid thick glazes that might dull the edges of the fluting and the tip too much.

Keep in mind that juicers are mainly used for juicing citrus and other acidic foods. Choose stable glazes for this project, and your juicer will both work well and look good for a long time to come.

Handbuilt Spherical Teapots

by Ron Korczynski



Spherical teapot, 9 in. (23 cm) in height, underglaze decoration with clear overglaze fired to cone 04, by Ron Korczynski.

Teachers are one of the greatest challenges for any studio potter. Many elements go into their production and all the parts—the body, lid, handle, and spout—need to fit together into a cohesive whole. For centuries, teapots have been produced in myriad ways and forms, and like many potters, I initially began making teapots on the wheel. But throwing and putting the parts together was a challenge for me because the forms were too mechanical so I began to experiment with handbuilding. Since I've done a lot of handbuilding using hump molds, this seemed the logical path to take. While the process here uses a spherical form, you'll soon recognize the endless possibilities with other shapes. The teapot form easily lends itself to a wide range of creative expression, and handbuilding a round teapot frees you from the symmetrical mechanized look of the wheel.

Getting Started

Each teapot begins with a slab draped over a plaster hump mold. I make these round plaster hump molds by taking a Styrofoam ball and cutting it in half. Styrofoam spheres are available in a variety of sizes from craft supply stores, and you'll need a 6-inch ball for a modest-sized teapot. Other forms can also work and I use the blue extruded Styrofoam board found at home centers to build up and carve molds. Once the shape is finalized, I glue it to a piece of wood or tempered hardboard that's been cut to shape (*figure 1*). Tip: You can finish the mold by propping it up and pouring plaster over the top. This gives you a thin, durable, absorbent layer that can be smoothed out when dry and makes a great lightweight mold.



The Sphere

Roll out a slab that's about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{5}{16}$ inches thick. Apply toilet paper to the mold as a release and place the slab over the mold.

Trim the bottom, remove and repeat for the second hemisphere (*figure 2*). Set the hemispheres aside and allow them to dry to the leather-hard stage.

Roll out a coil and attach it to the edge of one hemisphere (*figure 3*), then attach the other hemisphere using your finger or tool to work the seam (*figure 4*).

Use a Surform tool to refine the shape (*figure 5*). Since I do a lot of painting on my surfaces, I use a metal rib to smooth the sphere (*figure 6*), but you can add different textures at this stage.

Base and Lid

To create a base, one method I like is to use a triangular trimming tool to cut a strip from a block of clay (*figure 7*). With the sphere resting on an empty plastic container, attach the base and add decorative elements according to your style (*figure 8*). Of course, design opportunities abound here but bear in mind that all parts on a teapot work to form the whole work.



For the lid, cut a round opening in the top of the sphere. In order to have the lid fit only one way, make a small notch in the opening (*figure 9*). Place toilet paper around the edge of the opening as a separator. To construct the lid, first place a small ball of clay in the notch (*figure 10*), then add a coil of soft clay to fit into the lid opening (*figure 11*) so it slightly overlaps the opening. Take the clay piece you removed to make the opening and attach it to the coil (*figure 12*). Flip the lid over and add a ball of clay to the underside of the lid (*figure 13*). This will add some weight and balance to the lid to help hold it in place when pouring tea.

Spout and Handle

To form the spout, flatten a cone of clay (*figure 14*) and form a spout around a brush handle (*figure 15*). Trim the spout and attach it along with decorative elements to the teapot. To create the handle, I create two “dog bone” shapes and flatten them, leaving some thickness at each end (*figure 17*). Assemble the handle and add a decorative element if desired. Add a handle to the lid following the same style (*figure 18*).



Many teapots can be made using this technique, and the handbuilt sphere can form the basis for a variety of vessels or sculptures. The possibilities are endless.

Lana Wilson's Textured Platter

by Annie Chrietberg



Detail of one of Lana Wilson's richly textured platters.

Lana Wilson's career spans more than 40 years and includes a vast repertoire of pieces and surface considerations, which she regularly shares with students. She teaches, on average, a workshop a month, and loves to do so. "It's so easy, really. The people are always interesting; you are instantly submerged in a milieu of like-minded people. I love the humor, and people are so kind."

What Lana really appreciates about teaching workshops is how much diverse experience there is in the audience. "At any given time, your audience might include a nurse, a kiln builder or a cook, and when people open up about those things, I learn so much," she said. "And, if I come across something in ceramics that I don't know about, I'll ask the audience, and more times than not, I'll learn the answer."

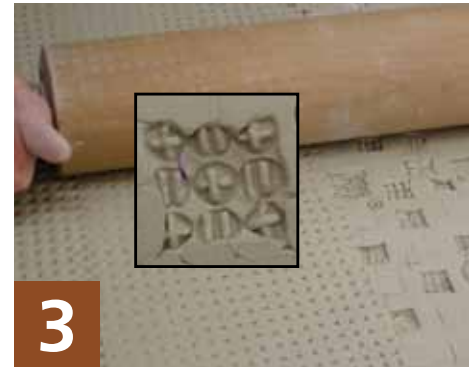
Lana worked with functional stoneware for the first seventeen years of her life in ceramics. And then, a job at a community college caught her eye, so, at age 43, she went back to school to get her master's degree. For Lana, graduate school completely changed the course of her work. "Number one, it opened up the way to lots of exploring and experimenting, which has never ended," she said. "Number two, I started making non-functional work and using the electric kiln exclusively, neither of which I'd ever done before." Now, Lana's focus has returned to functional pieces. She told me one reason: "I want my grandchildren to eat off of things that I have made."



1 Smooth out a slab, layer, and press in objects then texture the surface.



2 Use hand tools, stamps, and found objects to embellish the slab.



3 Roll over the texture with a rolling pin, to soften and tuck in the marks.



4 Use a handmade viewfinder to select an interesting area.



5 Cut out a dart then use it as a pattern to cut the remaining darts.



6 Lift and connect the edges where the darts have been removed.

Texture Throughout

Lana applies texture in layers, and does so throughout her making process. During my visit, she made a serving platter to demonstrate how she works.

After using a slab roller to make a large slab, she lays out some fruit netting on the table, and sets the slab on top of it. This netting forms the basis of the texture composition on the back of the piece, though Lana will embellish it more at later stages. After smoothing the front of the slab with a small squeegee, Lana uses a wooden rolling pin from a pastry store to lay down some waffle texture, which created impressed squares, then in an adjacent area, she lay down and rolled over plastic sink mats that left larger, high-relief squares (*figure 1*). I watched her then target and go after some of the high relief squares with her small hand-held stamps, and some found objects, inverting them with embellishment (*figure 2*).

I was surprised when she picked up her rolling pin and rolled over the work she had just done (*figure 3*), but she explained to me, “You see, this softens it and makes it more interesting. I don’t want it to look like plastic surgery. I don’t like the whole Southern California glitzy sequin scene, I like old, worn friends. I like layers; I walk regularly in the Torrey Pines State Reserve when I’m home in San Diego. I love those layers of information around me.”

I looked, and the effect she had created by rolling over existing texture was to ‘tuck in’ all the little marks she had made, like treasures in lockets. After tucking in her preliminary and secondary texture with a rolling pin, Lana embellished further with one of her new favorite items, the red scrubby applicator from a Shout bottle, and an old favorite, a seamstress’ marking tool.



7 Prop the piece up, level the sides, and adjust as needed.



8 For handles, shape cones from large triangles cut from a textured slab.



9 Lift and drop the cone two or three times to get an organic shape.



10 Slip and score the handle in place, then support it with foam.



11 Turn piece over on foam supports, fill seams and adorn the repair.



12 Make a foot from a long, thin piece cut from a textured slab.

Forming the Platter

Lana had created a slab much larger than what she actually needed for the piece she had in mind. She cut a framing device out of a piece of paper roughly the proportions of her intended serving dish (*figure 4*). She used this viewfinder to locate the best part of her texture drawing, marked the boundaries by laying down a straight edge then, using the straight edge again, cut out the shape.

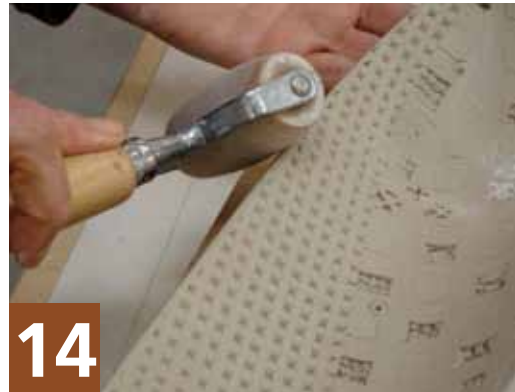
Lana needed to take two darts out of each end to have the flat shape rise up into the form she wanted. “Oh, I suppose I should use a template, but I never do,” she quipped, knowing that I am a template fiend. “I can never find the one I need when I need it, besides, I know what shape I need to cut out, and after I cut the first one, I’ll use it to cut the other three,” she explained, as she cut out and removed the first dart.

She took the triangular piece of clay she removed, turned it over, and set it gently down to trace it where she wanted the second dart. She then took those two cut-out and placed them on the other end, and traced and cut out the remaining two darts (*figure 5*). The size of the dart determines the shape of the final form. After slipping and scoring, she simply lifted and butted the joining edges together (*figure 6*), and then used small pieces of foam to prop up the ends of the serving dish which allows them to firm up while supported. She fills in gaps in the texture where the darts were removed with paper clay to prevent cracks from forming along the seam.

To address the sides, Lana grabbed a couple of paint stirring sticks, which she used to lift the sides and then shoved pieces of foam beneath to hold them in place. She filled in gaps that had been made by cutting through existing texture on the edges, and then compressed and beveled those edges with a pony roller. Then, she used a spirit level to make sure the edges, were, um, level (*figure 7*). “I don’t know a gallery who would take a piece that’s not level,” she murmured as she made slight adjustments. “There we go!”

**13**

Smooth the foot with a roller and cut decorative arches through it.

**14**

Use a pony roller to bevel and finish both sides of the platter's edge.

Making Handles

The next task was to make the handles. First, she textures a slab and cuts out large triangles, then she rolls them into a cone (*figure 8*), seals them using a pony roller, and drops them on her workbench (*figure 9*). They magically gain character with each whump. Once she is satisfied with the result, she cuts away excess clay with a fettling knife, scores and slips the end of the serving dish, as well as the inside of a handle, and then attaches it, stacking foam beneath it for support (*figure 10*).

Lana constantly manipulates the surface of her pieces as she is making, adding texture as she goes. After attaching the handles, she grabbed a wooden dowel with sharpened ends (a pencil would work, too) to both re-draw and enhance existing lines. After the piece had dried to leather hard, she removed the bolsters and turned it over on a large piece of foam to access the bottom. She filled the gaps in the seams with paper clay, again to strengthen them and prevent cracking (*figure 11*). When she makes a repair like this, she adorns it. “I could teach a whole course on cheating,” she joked, while rolling a seamstress’ marking tool over the filled-in seam.

Adding a Foot

The last part of the serving dish project was to make and attach a foot. Before she had turned the piece over, she had taken an approximate measurement with a seamstress’ measuring tape, and had created a long slab to texture. She played around a bit with some scrap clay to determine the appropriate height, textured the slab, and used a straight edge to cut a long strip of clay for the foot. She picked up the long strip in loose folds and dropped it a few times on the table. “This makes an undulating line I just love,” she told me as she worked.

She placed the foot on the bottom of the pot, shaped it how she wanted it, and cut the excess away, then joined the foot into a ring. After scoring and slipping the areas that need to be joined, she attached the foot ring to the bottom of the serving dish and used a dry soft brush to remove excess slip and blend the seam (*figure 12*). She then used a common loop tool to create a little looped arch on each side of the foot (*figure 13*). She rolled the edge with a pony roller, used a ware board to flip the piece right side up, and used the spirit level again to make adjustments (*figure 14*).

Lana has a delightfully free, direct, and easy way of making, but don’t let that fool you into thinking she doesn’t take her time in the studio seriously. “I’ve changed my style of work about six times through out my career., and each time it takes me about six months to a year to figure it out,” she told me. “People don’t realize that being an artist is really about daily discipline; when I’m working, I want my time to work. I’m not one of those ladies who does lunch. Ceramics is far too expansive for that.”

Finishing

CAUTION

You must wear a dust mask during these last steps. To finish the piece, she dips it in a clear glaze, and then fires to cone 6. Through lots of experimenting, Lana has found that ending with a dark color on top works best for her.

Lana Wilson's work is mostly black and white with bits of vibrant color splashed about. She says, "I have a background in painting, and this technique really appeals to the painter in me." She gleaned this current surface treatment from two artists, Denise Smith of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Claudia Reese, a potter from Texas.

Simple Slip

To prepare the slip, Lana takes 100 grams of small pieces of bone dry clay and adds 10–50 grams of a stain. The percentages of stains varies according to the intensity of color she is trying to achieve.

The clay Lana uses is Half & Half from Laguna, formulated for firing at cone 5, though she fires it to cone 6. This clay body is half porcelain and half white stoneware. It's not as white as porcelain, but it does fire white rather than yellow in oxidation, isn't as finicky as porcelain, and works well with Lana's making methods. If you're buying clay from the East Coast, she suggests a clay body called Little Loafers from Highwater Clays.



NOTE

Stain-bearing slips applied to surfaces that come into contact with food need to be covered with a food-safe, properly fired, clear glaze.



Easy Application

The technique is simple. On a piece of bisqueware, first brush on black slip or one of the base colors (*figure 1*) then sponge it off, leaving slip in the crevices (*figure 2*). Then, using colored slips dab on bits of color here and there (*figure 3*). Remove some of that with steel wool (*figure 4*). “I can’t use water for this step or it will muddy the colors,” Lana explains.

Recipes

There are two groups of colored slips. The first group Lana uses for the base coat that she washes off, leaving color in all the recesses. The accent slips are more intense and removed with steel wool. All stains are Mason stains except for 27496 Persimmon Red, which is from Cerdec. Add the stains and bone dry clay to water and allow to sit for 30–60 minutes so it will mix easier.



Texture and isolated areas of bright color make Lana Wilson’s work really pop.

Recipes

Base Coat or Wash Colors

6600 Best Black	10 %
6339 Royal Blue	5–10 %
6069 Dark Coral	35 %

Accent Slips

6129 Golden Ambrosia	30 %
6485 Titanium Yellow	20 %
6024 Orange	30 %
6236 Chartreuse	50 %
6027 Tangerine	15 %
6211 Pea Green	50 %
6288 Turquoise	50 %
6242 Bermuda	10 %
6069 Dark Coral	35 %
6122 Cedar	25 %
6304 Violet	60 %
K5997 Cherry Red*	30 %
27496 Persimmon Red (Cerdec)*	30 %

* inclusion pigments

Kate the Younger Clear Glaze

Cone 6

Ferro Frit 3195	70 %
Wollastonite	10
EPK Kaolin	8
Silica	12
	<hr/>
	100 %

Add: Bentonite 2 %

From Richard Burkett. Use over colored slips. Shiny, resistant to crazing, cool slowly.

Covered Jar Set

by Steve Davis-Rosenbaum



PHOTO BY JOE MOLINARO

This covered jar set illustrates the fluid lines obtained by joining two forms. The form is enhanced by the shape of the handle, the lugs on the sides and the surface decoration.

While working as a resident potter at Berea College, in 1998, I produced utilitarian pottery for the college's retail and wholesale outlets. My throwing list included small covered jars, usually for creamer and sugar sets, which were thrown in series of fifteen to twenty. As my second ware board of covered jars was filling up, I glanced over at a grouping of previously thrown jars. From the vantage point of sitting on my treadle wheel, two of the jars were "visually" connected. My eyes kept returning to this view on the ware board and my thoughts turned to questions:

- "Why not connect these jars together?"
- "What will happen to the form and function?"
- "What will I do about the lids and knobs?"

These questions lead me to actually connect the jars and to continue developing the form.

This moment of listening to my "inner potter" brought an opportunity for change. Moments like these are when ideas are filtered from the subconscious. They're always with us but all too often we choose to not listen. However, this time, I took the opportunity to leave my scheduled work and developed what I saw while working at my wheel. After completing a series of ten double-jar sets, I began to reflect on the resulting series:

"Where did this idea come from?"

"Where else had I seen combined vessels?"

The Search Begins

In my search for images of combined vessels through some of my favorite books, I found a little black and white photograph of a double jam jar with horizontal straps around the belly made by Michael Cardew. The



1 Throw two identical jars. It is easier to match jars when you make a lot.



2 Create a gallery for the lid to sit in.



3 Make lids with a slight inward bevel on the rim.



4 After trimming, attach the forms by adding a coil between them.



5 Push the two forms together and smooth the seam.



6 Turn the joined forms over and finish working the seam.

caption read “modeled after Jam-Jar Set by Hamada.” Though I was unable to find an example of Hamada’s combined vessels, I discovered a wealth of historical examples from around the world.

Through the years, I’ve continued to study combined vessel forms and their function. What I’ve observed is the overwhelming number of examples found in all cultures and continents where potters found the need, or impulse, to place two or more vessels together creating a new form. These types of pots occur very early in ceramics history and reoccur throughout time. One unifying element found in these combined vessels is the desire of the potter to retain the essence of the individual vessel within the new form.

Creative Accidents

I realized something about the creative process and how subconscious influences impact my work. Previous to making my first combined vessel, I believe that through reading and studying images, I had stored information in my mind and allowed it to “incubate” over time. These subconscious influences filter into my work when I least expect it, and when I am least conscious of “the act of making”—the act of being in the here and now. Some refer to this as “creative accidents” that happen just by being in the studio.



7 Pull a handle or roll out a coil for the handle and allow to set up.



8 Fit the handle across the lids and secure with slip.



9 Work the handle until the desired shape is achieved.



10 Add small coils to complete the join between lid and handle.



11 Add lugs then cover lightly so the moisture can even out.



12 Stretch the handle over the next few days to avoid cracking.

Making the Connection

Typically, my work is first inspired by a utilitarian need followed by the development of the form—but the double jars sets were different. The jam jar sets became sugar and Cremora® sets. One of my interests in this form was the problem of how to unite the lids to parallel the joining of the form. The idea of connecting the lids with one handle allows the user to remove both lids with one hand, using the other hand to serve condiments on their plate.

As I developed the covered jar sets, the functional aspects of the pots became secondary to form due to increase in scale or an increase in the number of vessels combined. As the jar sets became larger in scale they became less functional and their intimacy decreased. Not being able to easily handle or pass them around a table resulted in a distance between the pot and the user. My interest in making pottery is its use in the kitchen or at the table. Visualizing the table as my pedestal (rather than the mantel), I returned to making intimate combined vessels.

In many ways, building multiple pots is like a puzzle. When you begin, there's a variety of individual pieces. When assembled, the resulting form connects in a way that preserves form and maximizes function.



This covered jar set fired in a salt kiln reveals some of the variation possible with just two forms attached.

Beyond the Double Jar

In addition to the double jar sets, I developed other combined condiment servers, usually combining two or three vessels. The idea of placing and connecting pots in relation to the shapes being created or eliminated, presents the potter with limitless alternatives.

Working within the boundaries of utilitarian pottery and being open to what I see and what unexpectedly happens in the studio allows openness to experimenting with form. The ability to say “what if” while throwing, finishing or decorating is where many ideas are discovered and developed. Thinking about function in my daily life has guided my desire to create new forms.

My guiding creative boundary is function. Having function as a central focus requires an understanding of how food, kitchen objects and other items relate visually and functionally to the ritual of eating. This knowledge informs my understanding of how to develop forms to accommodate complex utilitarian needs. The desire to put individual forms together to create combination vessels is to move my work beyond basic forms created on the wheel. This broadening perspective on my work constantly challenges my views on form and function.

Mark Issenberg's Three Piece Vase

by Andrea Perisho

While attending a workshop at the Art League of Marco Island in Florida, I watched Mark Issenberg create his signature piece: a vase, thrown in three pieces, embellished with decorative handles and ash fired. The making of the vase is described in the following process.

Throwing the Parts

First, throw four pounds of clay into a bulbous shape about 9 inches tall with a bowl-shaped bottom (*figure 1*). Leave enough room to comfortably get your hand inside the pot. Measure the opening of the top (*figure 2*). Leave the piece attached to the bat and set aside to stiffen to soft leather hard. The piece should be dry enough to support the top section, but still soft enough to manipulate. Monitor the drying carefully (avoid areas with drafts to prevent uneven drying).

When the body section of the vase is appropriately stiff, open a 1½-pound ball of clay all the way down to the surface of the bat (*figure 3*), moving outward to form a solid ring. This piece will form the top of the vase and is thrown upside down. Use a rib to scrape away any excess clay that remains on the bat inside the ring. Bring up the wall, but leave the base (which becomes the top) fairly thick to strengthen and emphasize the top rim. Use calipers to measure the top of this piece, which will be turned upside down over the body of the vase. This measurement should be slightly larger than the opening in the top of the vase body previously thrown (*figure 4*). Cut off the piece with a braided cut-off wire, but leave on the bat (*figure 5*).



TIP

Mark works with two buckets of throwing water, one bucket for each hand on either side of the wheel head. This prevents bumping the thrown form.



1 Throw the main body.



2 Measure the opening.



3 Throw the top upside down.



4 The top should be slightly wider than the opening of the body.



5 Carefully move the top to the body.



6 Secure the top to the body.

Place the body of the vase and its still attached bat onto the wheel head. Adjust if the piece has moved off center. Score and moisten the rim using slip. Turn the second bat, with the top section on it, upside down, and very carefully (since it has already been cut loose from the bat) place onto the top of the body. Remove the bat from the top section. Adjust the alignment between the two sections, carefully moving the top piece as close to center as possible.

Use your fingers both inside and outside the vase and, with the wheel turning very slowly, pull the top section downward onto the rim of the body, smoothing the joint between the two pieces both inside and outside the piece (*figure 6*). Be careful not to touch the top rim, so there is no damage to the design from the braided cutting wire. The body and top section are now joined together. Cut the piece off the bat, cover in plastic and set aside to dry to medium leather hard—generally overnight. The piece should be dry enough to be turned upside down without damaging the design on the top rim, but moist enough to trim the bottom of the vase.



7 Trim the bottom to match the curve.



8 Place a slug of clay on the bottom.



9 Throw the foot.



10 Use a drill to apply texture.



11 Apply the handles.



12 Enhance the handles with stamps.

Center, fasten securely, and trim the bottom of the pot to match the bowl-shaped interior (*figure 7*). Score a 2–3-inch circle at the center of the bottom of the piece and wet with slip. Place a $\frac{3}{4}$ -pound ball of clay onto the center of the bottom of the piece and carefully press into place (*figure 8*). With the wheel turning very slowly, center the clay using as little water as possible so you do not soften the pot's base. This step takes concentration, skill and practice.

After centering, open the clay in the same manner as if you are throwing a new pot. Pull up a wall and shape into the foot (*figure 9*). Again, don't use a lot of water or the surface of the pot will be damaged from the excess moisture. Set aside and allow this area to become leather hard. After the foot has stiffened, turn the piece right side up.

Handles

You can now add the decorative handles. One way to do this is to roll out a 3×4-inch slab of clay. Roll a drill bit over the clay to create texture (*figure 10*). Then roll the clay around a pencil or small dowel rod with the texture on the outside. Slide the clay off the pencil and attach the handle to the vase by scoring and using slip (*figure 11*). You also can add more texture around the shoulder of the vase, using stamps and/or a sewing tracing wheel (*figure 12*). Clean up any unwanted marks or bits of clay with a sponge.

Wrap each vase in several layers of plastic and set aside for several days to allow the moisture content of each section to equalize. Then remove the plastic and allow the piece to dry completely.

Recipes

Marco Island Floating Blue

Cone 5–6 Oxidation

Gerstley Borate	27 %
Nepheline Syenite	48
EPK Kaolin	5
Silica	<u>20</u>
	100 %

Add:

Red Iron Oxide (don't use dark red)	2 %
Cobalt Carbonate	1 %
Rutile	4 %

When this floating blue is fired in an electric kiln to cone 5 with a fast cool down (12–15 hours), a blue color is the result. Firing to cone 6 with a slow cool down (over 24 hours) yields a sage green with dark flecks.

Issenberg's Ash Glaze

Cone 10 Reduction

Wood Ash	50 %
Cedar Heights Redart Clay	<u>50</u>
	100 %

Issenberg's Blue Ash Glaze

Cone 10 Reduction

Wood Ash	50 %
Plastic Vitrox Clay	<u>50</u>
	100 %

Add: Cobalt Carbonate 2 %

Nesting Bowls

by Annie Chrietberg



I know I'm not the only overly-involved-with-clay-person out there who brings more things home from a kitchen store for the studio than for the kitchen. So, as I was browsing through a kitchen store, I came across tart tins with scalloped edges and removable bottoms (figure 1), and knew I'd found something that would be fun and easy to use. I bought four of them in graduated sizes thinking: nesting bowls!

To get a square-ish form from a round slab requires removing darts of clay. After experimenting with different dart ratios, I settled on somewhere between a third and a half of the radius. To make the darts template, I traced around the scallops on the cutting edge of the tart tin (figure 2). Ignoring the low points of the scallops, I cut out a circle and folded it along two perpendicular diameters, so that the folds made a perfect cross. I then found a point somewhere between third and a half way along the radius to cut the darts to. I folded the template in half and cut out a wedge, then used that wedge to cut identical darts all the way around (figure 3). Explore the possibilities of different sized darts different numbers of darts, and different placement of darts. As long as you keep ratios similar from one template to the next, the bowls should nest.

Clean texture tools (figure 4) before using to avoid crumbs of clay that can mar the texture, then dust clean texture tools with cornstarch so that they'll release. Smooth the slab with a soft rib. Leave an inch or so leeway to maneuver if there are flaws in the texture (figure 5).

Place the slab onto the first texture tool (figure 6), gently roll from the center towards the edge in a radial pattern, pushing down just



1

Tart tins with removable bottoms.



2

Create a darts template by tracing around the edge. Ignore the scallops when cutting the circle.



3

To make sure your bowls nest, use the same dart proportions on each template.



4

Clean tools before using to avoid crumbs of clay that can mar the texture, then dust with cornstarch.



5

Smooth the slab with a soft rib. Leave an inch or so to maneuver if there are flaws in the texture.



6

Press the clay into the texture, but not so hard that you move the clay and thin the slab.

enough to press the clay into the texture, but not so hard that you move the clay and thin the slab.

Flatten the surface with a big rolling pin (figure 7) then carefully place a prepared texture tool on top of the slab and roll using just enough pressure to transfer the texture, but not so much that you thin or move the slab. Move to a wareboard and remove the texture tools, then flip the slab so the interior face of the bowl is facing up. Use the tart tin to cut through the slab (figure 8).

Slip your hand underneath the rim and place your fingertips at the edge of the slab, gently press the slab free of the cutter. Align the darts and then cut the darts with the tip of the knife angled toward the center of the dart on both sides (figure 9).

Bevel the darts by pointing the knife point towards the center on each side so you'll be switching the angle of the knife for each side of the dart. As always with slab work, score, then slip, then score again to create an interface so the seam stays together (figure 10). You may also want to add a small coil along the seams (figure 11), since you're changing the orientation of the slab. Use sponges or small pieces of



7

Place a prepared texture tool on the slab and roll using just enough pressure to transfer the texture.



8

With the interior face of the bowl facing up, use the tart tin to cut through the slab.



9

Cut the darts with the tip of the knife angled toward the center of the dart on both sides.



10

Score and slip the cut edges of darts. Carefully lift slab to join both sides of the dart cuts.



11

Remove the rough edges with a damp sponge, then lay a small coil in the corner.



12

Place a piece of foam on the rim of the bowl and flip it over. Work the seams on the bottom down with a damp sponge.



13

Adjust shape and then let dry!



Nesting bowls provide an opportunity for using a variety of textures and glazes.

foam to keep the sides of the bowl just where you want them while you work on the join.

After all four corners are well joined, turn the piece over. Anytime you need to turn a piece over, find foam if needed, and wareboards or bats, and find a way to flip the piece without touching it. Run a finger or a well-wrung-out sponge over the backside of the seam (figure 12), eliminating any sharpness and sealing it. Repeat these directions with every size tart tin and template that you have, and you will have a lovely little set of nesting bowls.

With four nesting bowls, you'll want to explore the potential using eight different textures—match textures from the top of one bowl to the bottom of the next, let the textures cycle through the set—there are so many possibilities!

The ABC's of Double-sided Slabs

I've been working with textured slabs for a while now, but only recently got around to eliminating the back, or blank side of the slab. I don't know why it took me so long—but I do find working with slabs with textures on both sides to be very exciting! Here's how you make and use double-sided slabs, along with a few tips to help get you started.

If you have two flexible texture tools, like plastic or rubber mats, pick one and lay it down, texture side up. Dust it with cornstarch (figure A), carefully set your nicely rolled blank slab on top, then roll with the curved end of a pony roller, which seems to push the clay down into the texture rather than enlarging the slab. Then flatten the top with a nice big rolling pin. Dust your second texture mat with cornstarch, lay it on top (texture side down) and carefully roll the back of it (figure B). If you're using a corduroy texture, roll with the lines, not across them. The trick is to apply just enough even pressure to get the texture to print. Rolling carelessly enlarges the slab and leaves

'tracers' of the texture as the slab moves out across it.

When using a brittle texture tool—like a piece of old rusty tin, a bisque or plaster plate, or even a piece of old French patterned glass, you'll need to take more care. I only use those on the bottom, as I don't want to apply my rolling pin to the back of one, because that could mar the surface of my rolling pin or break the tool.

Place a towel beneath the hard texture tool to absorb some of the pressure from rolling so as to keep it from breaking (figure C). If you're using something nonabsorbent, like old patterned French glass, dust it with cornstarch, then lay down your prepared slab, roll, then apply your flexible mat on top of the clay, and roll again.

To remove your slab, peel away the top mat, carefully set a clean wareboard on the slab and flip (figure D). Remove the other texture tool. If your slab is bottom-side up, use another wareboard to flip it again.



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