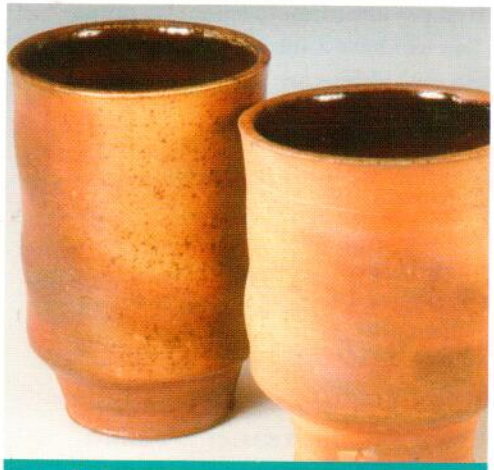
4 Thrown Forms

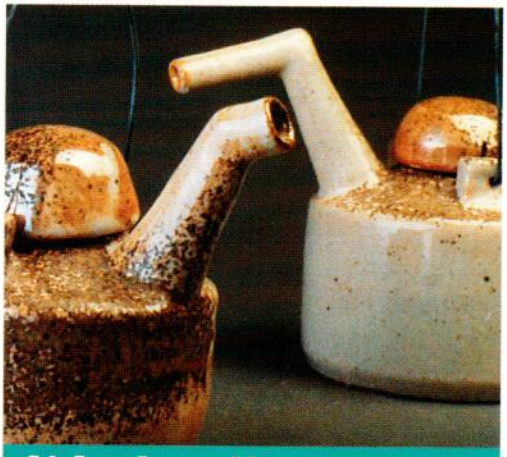
The practice of shaping clay on a fast-turning wheel is known as throwing. Throwing has an almost magical quality, whether you are watching the action or performing it yourself. In the potter's hands, a lump of clay is transformed into a cone shape, then opened and shaped into a vessel—almost like a flower unfolding.

The wheel exerts centrifugal force on the clay, so you can mold a pot with your hands fairly quickly. Ultimately you'll become comfortable with the steps as you center your clay on the wheel. Through practice and concentration, you will learn to master all the factors that affect throwing: placing the clay, positioning your body, applying the right amount of pressure, and controlling the speed of the wheel.

the wheel



tableware



lids, handles, spouts

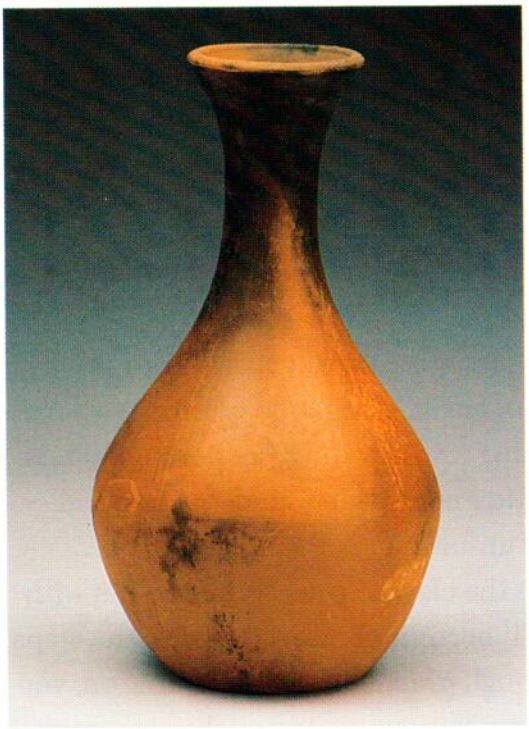


Fig. 4–2. To begin throwing pots on the wheel, first pay attention to basic clay preparation. You will have a successful experience only when air bubbles are properly removed from the clay.
Mike Flinn, *Thrown bottle.*
Pit fired, 9" (22.8 cm) high. Blue Valley High School, Stilwell, KS. Photo by Janet Ryan.

The Wheel

Potters have historically used a round, spinning surface to throw pots. Early potters found it was much easier to build a pot if the piece was turned while being formed, rather than maneuvering around a stationary piece. The first turntables or pottery wheels were flat stones with curved bottoms that the potter slowly spun by hand. Often, potters used the neck and shoulders of a broken jar as a turning device.

Various types of wheels eventually developed from these simple turning systems. As the demand for pots grew, the use of wheels changed gradually to those powered by foot or by a turning stick. As potters continued using the wheel, they increased production of storage jars, dishes, bowls, mugs, and pitchers.

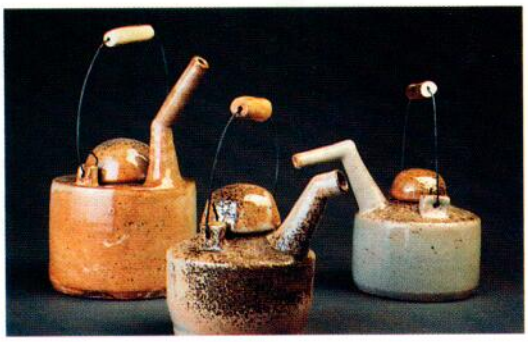


Fig. 4–3. The speed at which the wheel revolves and the moisture content of the clay are the most important variables in throwing.
Ryan Thomas, *Tin Men.*
Stoneware, wood fired, each 4½" (11.4 cm) diameter and 4" (10.2 cm) high. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH.

Studios typically are equipped with either electric wheels or kick wheels, both of which offer good speed control. Each step in the sequence of throwing a pot requires a different speed. First, you center the clay on the wheel, which is best done at a fairly high speed. Opening up the form and pulling up the walls can be done at a medium speed. The final shaping and trimming should be done at a low speed.

With an electric wheel, you control the speed by changing the amount of pressure on the foot pedal. Sit at the wheel and practice controlling the speed of the wheel head with the foot pedal. Get used to how much pressure your foot exerts for slow, medium, and fast speeds.

With a *kick wheel*, you "kick" the base to set the wheel turning and change the speed by kicking more or less often. Using a kick wheel requires rhythm and timing. Start with your foot near the inside of the wheel, near the shaft, and push diagonally outward toward the edge. Try to maintain an even pace and keep the intervals between kicks evenly spaced.

Be careful not to let the wheel slow down too much as you center and form your piece. When you kick, take your hands off the clay. The kicking motion

Fig. 4–4. What other type of forming technique do the lines circling the surface of these thrown objects bring to mind? What do you think the sculpture's title, *Shades of Evolution*, could be referring to?
Stuart Walker, *Shades of Evolution*.
Earthenware, wheel thrown, underglaze cone 04, to 11" (27.9 cm) high. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayon, OH. Photo by Kim Megginson.

produces vibrations within your whole body. If your arms quiver, the clay can move off-center. So as you get a sequence of movements going, concentrate on your rhythm.

Most wheels have a shelf for equipment. Keep the following tools within reach when throwing:

- small bucket of water
- sponges
- needle tool
- rib tool, preferably rubber
- pointed stick
- wire tool

Fig. 4–5. Throwing tools.

Be sure to use clay that has been well prepared (see "Preparing the Clay" on page 28). Wedge or knead it to remove air bubbles.

Note It The clay's consistency is important. Clay that is overly stiff will be difficult to center, while the walls of too-soft clay can easily collapse as they are thinned out.

After you've prepared the clay, cut it, and form five or six balls, each about the size of a large grapefruit. Take four thumb-sized wads of clay and place them at equal distances apart on the surface of the wheel head near the edge. These wads will keep the bat fastened securely to the wheel. Seal the bat to the wheel head by pressing it down onto the clay wads. Next, dry your hands and place one ball of clay in the center of the dry bat, pressing firmly down without distorting its shape.

Placing bat on wheel.

Fig. 4–6. World-renowned potter Bernard Leach studied ceramic arts in Japan and worked closely with Shoja Hamada (page 130) to bring Japanese design and firing methods to England.
Bernard Leach, *Jar*, c. 1920–48.
Glazed earthenware, 8¾ x 5" (22.4 x 13 cm)
The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, England.

Note It A *bat* is a disc or slab, made of plaster, plastic, plywood, or masonite, that supports the clay form and keeps it from sagging. It is usually attached to the wheel head. The bat and the completed pot are removed from the wheel together; once the pot has stiffened, it is cut from the bat.

Centering and Coning

Learning to center the clay on its surface is the first step in throwing pots. Centrifugal force is a good aid, but unless your clay is centered, you might not succeed. It's worth spending some time getting to know the wheel and regularly practicing **centering** your clay. Try out all the different speeds.

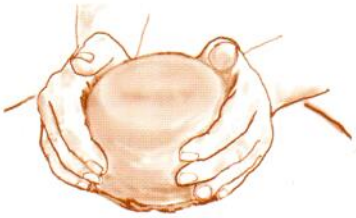
The following directions are for right-handed throwers. The wheel should turn counterclockwise. (Left-handed throwers may be more comfortable reversing hands and wheel direction.)

- Imagine the wheel head as a clock face. Train yourself to focus on the 3:00 position to help increase your concentration.
- Center yourself at the wheel. You will find that throwing can be physically demanding. Use your body weight, not

Fig. 4–7. To center more effectively, keep your hands from touching the bat or wheel head.
Sarah Thomas centering clay. Photo by Ann Perry.

just your arm strength, as you work. Brace your arms firmly against your body. Lock your left elbow against your left hip and think of your left hip as the fulcrum, with your arm as a lever.

- Wet your hands before you begin centering. If you loosely place your hands on the clay, they will vibrate because of the clay's uneven surface. Instead, keep your left arm stiff and practice leaning forward and back again from the hips. The heel of the left hand exerts the necessary pressure to force the clay upward—a process known as **coning**. Leaning forward increases the pressure; moving back decreases it.



Press clay using your body weight.

Note It Coning facilitates the centering process by causing particles of clay to slide together and "line up" in the same direction.

- Don't let the clay push you around! If your arms are bouncing, slowly release your grip. Lock your arms against your hips again, and push the clay away from you with the heel of your left hand. Lean into the push with slow, steady pressure to gain control. Your right hand works opposite the left, guiding the clay into a cone.

Using heel of left hand to raise a cone.

- Think "slow motion." The wheel may be turning fast, but throwing movements are slow. This is important for control, especially when you put your hands on the clay or remove them. Quick motions can knock the clay off-center. Practice touching and releasing the clay with your hands "in slow motion."
- Touch the clay only when the wheel is spinning. The wheel should be rotating relatively fast. Trying to center clay when the wheel is turning slowly or has stopped will only move it more off-center.
- Keep the clay lubricated. When you feel suction building between your hands and the surface of the clay, slowly release your grip and squeeze water over the clay with a sponge.
- Undercut at the base. Hold a sponge with your right hand and move it from the outside edge of the bat to the base of the cone. Clear away excess clay from the bat's surface.

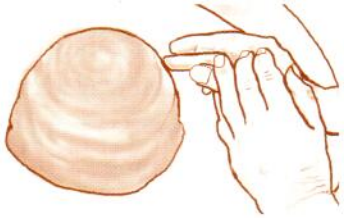
Undercut with sponge to remove excess clay.

- Bring the cone down. With your left thumb resting on top of the cone (at 6:00), encircle the cone with your left hand. Press on top of the cone with the edge of your right fist at 4:00. Push the clay down with your right hand while using your left hand to control the expanding clay from the side. Your final product is called a **dome**.

Bring cone down.

- Is the dome centered? Place your right hand on the wheel splash pan and stretch out your right index finger until it touches

the clay. Turn the wheel slowly. The clay is centered if your fingertip moves evenly on the surface. If your fingertip skips on the surface, the clay is not centered. Repeat the sequence until the clay is centered.



Is the dome centered?

Opening the Dome

When you feel comfortable with the centering process, create an opening in your clay. This is called *opening the dome*, and is part of making thrown vessels, pots, and plates. Your hands work in unison for these throwing movements. As you work, moisten the clay with your sponge when you feel any suction, but be careful not to form a pool of water.

Fig. 4–8. Throwing lines on this platter suggest energy radiating from the center of the abstract figure. Do you think the artist intended this result?
Maureen Mackey, *Platter*.
Stoneware, red shino glaze with brushed abstract figure design in black glaze. 14" dia. (35.5 cm), fired at cone 10. Courtesy of the artist.

- Position your hands. Imagine them as a single implement. When you brace the thumbs or fingers of one hand against parts of the other, they work as one unit. Practice "hand-touching-hand" as you shape the clay.

Brace thumbs together.

- Hold your hands palms down and make a "**W**" by bracing your thumbs against each other. Drop your hands slowly onto the clay dome. Center your thumbs atop the clay while gently encircling the sides with your fingers. Focus on the center of the mound. With thumbs braced together, push straight downward and outward to open the dome.

Press down and out from center.

- Test the thickness of the pot's base. A 3/8" (.7 cm) thick base will provide enough clay to trim a foot when the pot is leather-hard. If the bottom is too thick (more than 3/8"), push down again to open the base more. If the bottom is too thin, use your index and third finger to press clay from the edges of the opening and direct it toward the center.
- Finish the bottom. Press your left palm on top of your right hand between the wrist and knuckles. With the wheel spinning

Make a smooth base.

moderately fast, use the fingers on your right hand to smooth and flatten the bottom. Your left hand provides balance and support.

Try It To finish the bottom, first place your right hand in the middle of the opening. Hold the fingers together as a unit. Beginning at the center, move your fingers across the base to the edge of the wall. Use slow, steady pressure to make a smooth base.

- True the rim. Even the lip of the pot by squeezing the rim gently between the thumb and index fingers of your left hand (thumb on the outside, index finger on the inside). Lay your right hand over the left between the knuckles and wrist, resting the edge of the right palm on top of the rim. Using your hands as a single unit, press down. The pressure from the edge of your hand compresses the top of your pot and helps it stay centered.

Squeeze and compress the rim.

Note It Practice the centering and opening actions until they happen automatically. Gradually, you will depend less on what your eyes tell you and more on what your hands tell you. If you close your eyes when throwing, you will notice that your concentration increases along with your sense of touch.

Fig. 4–10. This beautiful pot is basically a flared-out cylinder. Notice how the mouth and the foot are the same size.
Teressa Riney, *Untitled*.
Thrown pot, copper matte with luster glaze, raku, 6½ x 8" (16.5 x 20 cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Maureen Mackey.

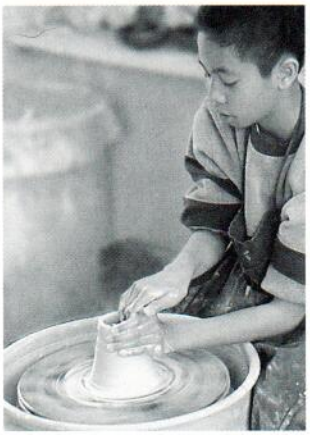


Fig. 4–9. AJ Santos applies pressure to even the rim of his cylinder.
Photo by Diane Levinson.

Safety Note Some production potters throw standing up. This position relieves pressure on their back muscles. Most wheels in classroom studios are set up to be used in a seated position. To lessen strain on your body as you throw:

- Fix the seat.
- Pat the clay into center before you start the wheel.
- Keep your back straight.

To minimize the amount of clay dust in the studio, after you finish your work at the wheel:

- Put all the clay slip from the splash pan into a recycling bucket.
- Clean the wheel and splash pan with a wet sponge and remove all traces of clay.

Fig. 4–11. You can easily see how this work is based upon a cylindrical form. How can you tell that it is handmade rather than mass-produced?
Janet Leach, *Untitled.*
14⅜" (36.3 cm) high. Photo by Graham Allen.

Throwing the Cylinder

The cylinder form is the foundation for a host of useful pieces—mugs, pitchers, jugs, vases, jars, and teapots, for example. By learning to throw cylinders, your potential repertoire of clay work increases tremendously.

- Wedge 3–4 pounds of clay and shape it into a ball.
- Center and open the clay.
- Undercut at the base.
- Raise the wall. Form a fist with your right hand, with the knuckle of your index finger slightly extended. Imagine the clay as a clock's face. Place the fingers of your left hand inside the pot at 4:00. Rest your fingers against the inside wall and hang your left thumb over the rim. Brace your left thumb on top of your right hand. Only the clay separates the fingers of your left hand from the knuckle of your right hand. Use your outside hand to press into the base while you squeeze the clay evenly with inside fingers. Pull up slowly, toward your left shoulder, releasing pressure as you reach the top. (Pulling up at an angle helps to keep the top of your cylinder from flaring out.) Undercut the base and repeat the pulling movement a few times until your cylinder is the desired height.

Press clay from both sides.

- Collar the walls. If the walls of the cylinder tend to flare out between each pull, narrow the shape using a process called **collaring**. Form a ring with your thumbs and the tips of your index fingers encircling the pot. Gently push them together to narrow the cylinder. Repeat as needed.

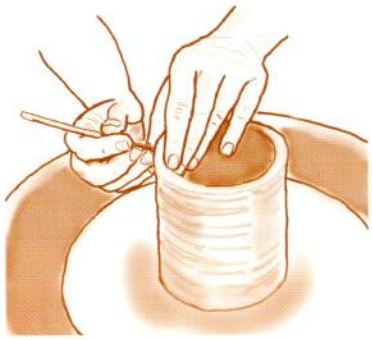
Raise walls to final height.

Collaring.

Fig. 4–12. What features do the pieces in this series of altered cylinders have in common, other than shape and surface quality?
Canaan Good, *Hip Hop Jesters*.
Stoneware, thrown and altered, cone 10 reduction, 5½" (13.9 cm) high. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH.

Fig. 4–13. The cylinder is such an important form to master that some beginning potters throw only cylinders for many weeks.
Teressa Riney, *Thrown vessel*.
Raku copper sand glaze, 13" (33 cm) high. Courtesy of the artist.

- Even the top edge. If the top rim is uneven, trim it with a needle tool. Use your fingers as a guide for making the cut. With the wheel turning slowly, gently grasp the wall just beneath the rim between your index finger on the inside and thumb on the outside. In your other hand, press a needle tool through the clay just above your thumb. Resting the tool on your thumb will steady it as you press the needle through the clay. As the wheel turns, the needle tool will slice through the pot. Lift the excess ribbon of clay cleanly with a single motion.



Cut rim to straighten.

- Finish the pot. The flexible rib tool can be used to further define a pot's shape and even out throwing marks. A small piece of wet plastic or *chamois* (leather) bent over the rim will compress the clay and create a smoothly finished edge.
- Cut the pot off the wheel. Let the wheel stop and hold the wire tool taut between your two hands, beginning at the far edge of the bat. Press the wire down against the bat and draw it steadily toward you, through the base of the pot. Let the pot firm up for about ten to fifteen minutes and lift it off the bat by grasping it at the base where the clay is thickest. Place it on a board to let it stiffen to the leather-hard stage for trimming. Cover it with plastic if you want to complete the trimming later.

Separate clay from bat with wire.

Fig. 4–14. When this casserole was leather-hard, a soft slab was draped over it and shaped with a moist sponge to form the lid. The leather-hard lid was trimmed to size and a strip of clay was added underneath for a flange.
Maureen Mackey, *Thrown casserole*, 1996.
Stoneware, cone 10, 14" (35.5 cm) long x 4" (10.2 cm) high. Courtesy of the artist.

How to Make an Oval Casserole

A casserole is one of the many functional items that can be thrown on a wheel. To make an oval casserole:

- Throw a wide cylinder without a bottom, then wait for it to firm up (just enough to hold its shape) while preparing a slab for its base.
- Remove the cylinder from the bat and squeeze its sides together to achieve the desired oval shape.
- Brush slip onto the slab in a band approximately the shape of the oval. Lower the walls onto the slab, gently pressing into place.
- Seal the join on the inside with a coil and trim excess slab from the outside, smoothing edges with a metal rib.

Principles of Design

Balance

In a sense, throwing on the wheel is all about balance. The physical balance achieved when you create a tall cylinder is akin to the balance you feel when standing, walking, or skateboarding. Artists consider the design principle of visual balance when composing a painting, photograph, or other two-dimensional art as well as when forming a three-dimensional sculpture or functional ware. Balance may be symmetrical (two sides mirror each other, like butterfly wings) asymmetrical, or show approximate symmetry. Art that is symmetrically balanced tends to appear stable, dignified, and calm. Look at Fig. 4–15. How did the artist achieve balance? Is the work symmetrically balanced? Why or why not?

Fig. 4–15. The handles on this casserole are clay loops.
Canaan Good, *Oval reduction*.
Stoneware, wheel thrown and altered, cone 10 reduction, 15½ x 7 x 4½" (39 x 17.8 x 11.4 cm). Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH.

Rookwood Pottery

The Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries greatly impacted crafts and design. Prior to this time, an individual skilled craftsman or artisan worked on a single object from beginning to end. With the advent of machines, however, assembly lines replaced the artisan and the creation of an object was divided into separate tasks. This division of labor saved time and money, but many saw it as a loss of craftsmanship and quality.

In particular, English poet and architect William Morris (1834–96) set out to renew handcrafted designs. Morris advocated for the Arts and Crafts movement, which proposed that an object's aesthetic qualities have greater value than its function. These ideas soon reached America, where the craze to collect the porcelains of such countries as China and Japan fueled a growing interest in ceramics. It was within this context that the American Art Pottery movement began to take shape.

The Rookwood Pottery Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, became the most successful American Art Pottery manufacturer. The pottery was founded in 1880 by Maria Longworth Nichols (1849–1932), who assembled many of the country's best art potters, including A. R. Valentien, Matthew Daly, and Kataro Shirayamadani. Women played an important role in the Art Pottery movement—for example, painters Sarah Sax and Laura Fry were among Rookwood's top decorators.

The Rookwood Pottery became known for its fine craftsmanship and attention to detail as well as for its highly decorative surfaces and experimental use of glazes. Rookwood artists were inspired by such ethnically diverse influences as Japanese porcelain and Greek vase-painting motifs. They created unique works of art through the use of innovative painting techniques, namely an airbrushlike method of applying glaze with a mouth-blown atomizer. This early glaze became known as the Standard glaze, a deep yellow, orange, or red decoration over a dark brown background, finished with a high gloss. Other glazes included Vellum, which produced a soft, fuzzy finish; Sea Green, often used with fish or floral scenes; and Ombroso, a matte glaze used on incised pieces. Rookwood wares feature both highly realistic and simplified, abstracted decorations that range from landscape, flower, and animal scenes to those portraying portraits or human figures.

Over the course of its long history, Rookwood produced all kinds of utilitarian wares, including vases, tea services, pitchers, jugs, plaques, bookends, and bowls and dishes. But in later years, the company focused increasingly on commercial success rather than artistic expression. The quality of its wares declined, and the pottery closed in 1967.

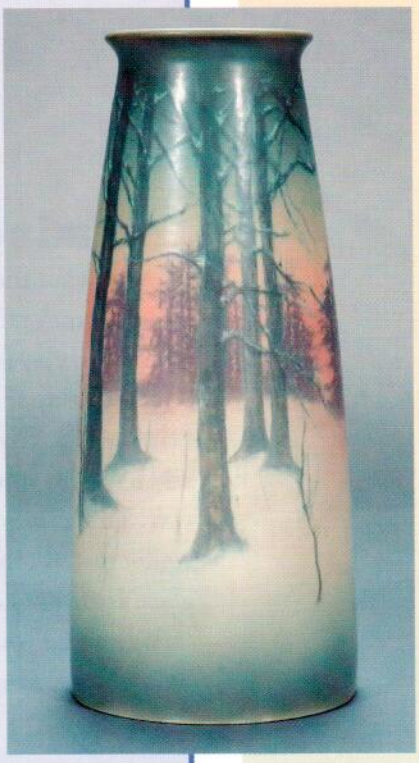


Fig. 4–16. The Rookwood Pottery Company survived two world wars, spanned the Arts and Crafts movement, and continually exhibited fresh lines, glaze techniques, and artistic excellence.
E.T. Hurley, *Vase*, 1915. Vellum glaze, 16½" (41.9 cm) high. Courtesy of Cincinnati Art Galleries. Photo by Riley Humler.

Fig. 4–17. If you could choose one of these tumblers for your own, which would you pick? Why? What specific qualities helped you make your choice?
Lindsay Reckson,
Tumblers.
Soda fired, cone 10. Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL.
Photo by Timothy Ludwig.

Trimming

After you cut the pot off the wheel, your cylinder may still have a few rough spots where the clay is of uneven thickness. Refine the appearance of your pot by **trimming**. While trimming, you can also add a foot to your pot by cutting away extra clay. This raises your pot, gives it a more well-crafted look, and helps to keep extra glaze from sticking to the pot's base.

Wait until your pot is leather-hard before trimming. If the pot is too wet, it can easily become distorted. Stand your pot upside down and allow the base to dry to leather-hard. If your pot is too dry, you can rehydrate it by immersing it in a bucket of water for a few seconds. Wrap it in plastic for several hours or more to allow the water to absorb evenly before attempting to trim it again.

Fig. 4–18. Trimming tools.

Note It Your pot is too dry if the walls are hard. The friction on a dry pot dulls your trimming tool and produces clay dust rather than smooth, damp shavings.

- Examine the pot. Feel the walls of your pot with one hand inside and one hand outside. Do you feel a place where the wall begins to thicken? Mark it with your thumbnail on the outside.

Mark thickest area of wall with thumbnail.

- Mark the base. The width of the base will determine how much you can trim as you shape the foot. Measure the inside

diameter by placing one fingertip at the edge of the base *inside* the pot. Now place a finger *outside* on the pot base that matches up to where your inside finger is, and make a mark. This is where the foot will begin.

Mark base for foot.

- Center the pot on the wheel. Place the pot upside down on the wheelhead as close to center as possible. Anchor your hand on the wheel splash pan and extend your right finger out to the pot. Turn the wheel slowly to test for center. Stop the wheel and move the pot as necessary. Keep adjusting until the pot touches your finger evenly as it revolves.

Fig. 4–19. The decorative feet on this thrown vessel were made from slabs embellished with coils.
Maureen Mackey, *Raku-fired vessel with copper luster glaze*, 2001.
Raku fired, 9" (22.9 cm) diameter, 11" (27.9 cm) high. Courtesy of the artist.

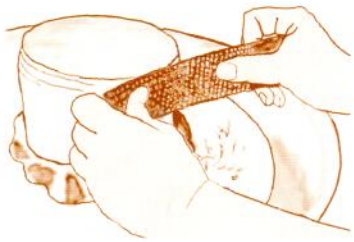
Check for center.

Note It Remember, the sense of touch increases when you close your eyes and concentrate. Close your eyes and focus on feeling.

- Anchor your pot. Secure it in place by pressing some clay coils around your pot's rim. Press coils down onto the wheelhead so that your pot won't travel off center when you start turning the wheel.

Stabilize the centered pot.

- Trim your pot. Spin the wheel at medium speed. Using a trimming tool, trim away the excess clay between the two marks on the outside of the pot. Trim starting at the mark on the outside wall and work toward the mark on the base.



Remove clay between mark on wall and mark on base.

For Your Sketchbook

Consider the many functions served by bowls. When are bowls nonfunctional? In your sketchbook, sketch designs for both functional and nonfunctional bowls.

Try It When you first start trimming, use this trick to keep from removing too much clay: Before you turn your pot over on the wheelhead, press a thumbtack into the middle of your pot's base. You will know you've trimmed far enough when your tool scrapes the tack point. When finished, remove the tack and smooth over the tack hole. After a few tries you'll sense the depth and thickness without needing a tack.

- Create the foot. The thickness of your pot's base will determine the height of the foot. (If you trim too deeply, you can make a hole in your pot!) Outline the foot by trimming around the mark you made to indicate the diameter of the base. With your trimming tool, trim the side walls inward to where you want the foot ring to begin.

Create the foot (outside).

- Clean the inside of the foot. Decide upon a width for the foot and begin trimming away clay in the middle. Trim downward, moving toward the center as you go. Make several passes. Your finished foot should look like a flat donut on the base of your pot.

Clean the foot (inside).

- Burnish the foot. Use a wooden tool, dry sponge, or leather to smooth the foot's surface.

Burnish the foot.

Fig. 4–20. Cups, tumblers, and mugs are tableware forms based on the cylinder.
Gabe Apraiz, *Untitled*.
Thrown tumblers, soda fired, 3" (7.6 cm) diameter, 3" (7.6 cm) high. Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL. Photo by Timothy Ludwig.

Thrown Tableware

Using the same basic technique you learned in throwing a cylinder with a few variations, you can create a bowl and a plate.

Throwing the Bowl

Throwing the bowl is only slightly different from throwing a cylinder. A cylinder's walls are pulled straight up, while the bowl's walls are eased outward as you raise them. The bowl also requires a wider base to support its walls.

A bowl can be functional or nonfunctional (decorative). Think of some different bowl forms. How does the bowl's function influence its shape? How can a

bowl be used in a nonfunctional way? Sketch some different bowl shapes in your sketchbook and name their functions.

Fig. 4–21. By glazing only the insides of these bowls, how has the artist affected our sense of how they might be used?
John Silva, *Bowls*.
Bellarmine College Preparatory, San Jose, CA. Photo by Diane Levinson.

Imagine your inside hand determining the bowl's shape. Your outside hand will support the wall and follow the force of the inside hand. You will save making the rim for last, after you are satisfied with the bowl's basic shape. Think about the rim treatment. Does it relate to the bowl's function? Where is the bowl's focal point—inside or outside? Think about how the interior of a bowl should contrast with its exterior.

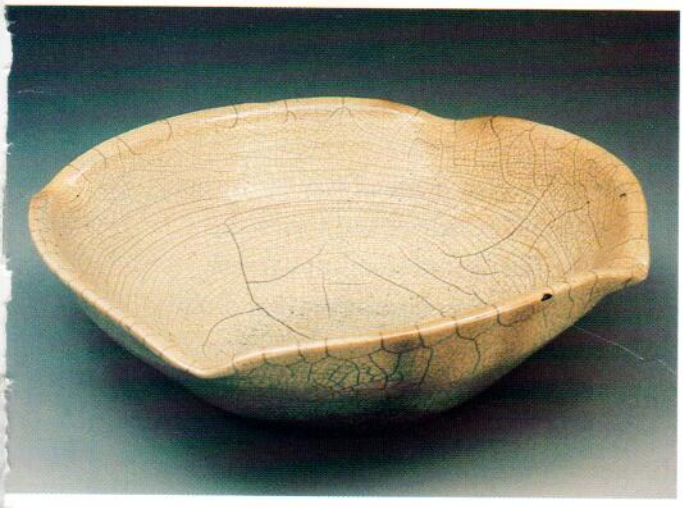


Fig. 4–22. Would you say this bowl is strictly decorative, or does it seem functional as well?
Jessica Schell, *Thrown and altered bowl*.
Raku fired, 11½" (29.2 cm) diameter. Blue Valley High School, Stillwater, KS. Photo by Janet Ryan.

- Center 3–5 pounds of clay on a bat attached to the wheel head.
- Widen the centered clay. Press the clay down and outward to expand the diameter of the base.
- Slow the wheel and open the dome. Keep the opening wide on top and leave a ⅜" (.7 cm) base. Push the clay outward from the center of the hole, forming a curve at the base.

Shaping the bowl.

- Strengthen the bottom by compressing it. Brace your arms against your sides and use your inside fingers to press against the bottom from the edge to the center. Repeat until the curve is even and the bottom is compressed. You can use a rib tool for this operation as well. Undercut slightly at the base.

Compress the base.

- Raise and flare the wall. Keep the wheel turning at a slow speed for more control. The walls of the bowl should be slightly thicker than those of the cylinder. Give more attention to the inside of the bowl than the outside as you move the clay. Try two or three gentle pulls with your fingers or a rib tool to finish the bowl. Take care not to expand the walls too far over the base.

For Your Sketchbook

Think about occasions when plates serve a prominent function. When are they nonfunctional? In your sketchbook, practice designing both functional and nonfunctional plates.

Fig. 4–23. Although this wheel-thrown plate is a functional piece, the artist has given much attention to visual effects and decoration.
John Parker Glick, *Plate*, 2001.
Stoneware with multiple glazes and glaze painting techniques, 22½" (57 cm) diameter, 4½" (11.4 cm) deep. Courtesy of the artist.

Throwing the Plate

The plate—a flat, low functional form—has provided unique surfaces for decorative treatments throughout history. The process of throwing this wide-open form is similar to that used for the bowl—in fact, the plate really is a low bowl. Plates can be functional as well as nonfunctional.

Discuss It What are some specific occasions when plates serve a prominent functional purpose? Name some ways plates perform a nonfunctional purpose.

- Center a 6-pound ball of clay on the bat.
- Slow the wheel speed and widen the clay. Place the heel of your left hand at 9:00 on the outside base of the clay dome. Pressure at the heel will help keep the clay centered while your right hand presses the clay down to expand the diameter for the base.

Keep clay centered while pressing down to expand.

- Finish the rim using the method described on page 93. Even it with a needle tool if necessary, then finish with a chamois. Cut through the bottom with a wire tool. Remove the bat from the wheel and allow the bowl to stiffen to leather-hard before trimming the foot.

Raise and flare the wall.

- Trim a foot. Examine the contour of the inside walls and bottom of your bowl. Follow the curve as you trim and add the foot rim. The foot's diameter should match the bottom of the bowl and is usually smaller than the curve where the walls begin to flare out. Try to achieve a flowing unbroken line from the foot to the body of your bowl.

Trim a foot.

Fig. 4–24. This artist uses the elements of line and shape to decorate her platter's surface. How would you describe its formal qualities—unity, rhythm, balance, proportion, and emphasis?
Ann Perry, *Untitled*.
Carved platter, midrange clay body with cone 6 glaze. Courtesy of the artist.

• Open the plate. Keeping the hole wide on top and leaving a thicker base than for the cylinder, use the inside hand to push the clay horizontally outward from the center. Gradually curve it toward the edges to form a shallow bowl shape.

Open from center into shallow bowl shape.

Check the thickness of the center with a needle tool.

• Compress the bottom. Press outward from the center to the far edge and back several times with your fingers or the flat edge of a rib tool. This will strengthen the bottom, and the pressure helps to minimize warping and cracking when the plates dries.

Compress the base.

• Undercut at the base. Clear away excess clay from the edge of the bat to the outside base of the plate.

Fig. 4–25. What words describe the tension created by the flowing glaze color's hue and intensity on the surface of this piece?
Laura Kennicutt, *Untitled*.
Thrown bowl, poured glazes, cone 10 reduction, 9½" (24.1 cm) diameter. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Maureen Mackey.

- Raise the wall. Complete all hand movements in slow motion, avoiding any uneven pressure. The wheel should be turning at slow speed. Release pressure slowly as your pull nears the rim area. Pay more attention to the inside than the outside as you move the clay. Apply pressure with the inside fingers and compress the rim after the final pull, to help keep a rounded shape.
- Finish the bottom. Use the fingers to smooth the inside of the bottom and shape a curved transition from the bottom to the wall.
- Finish the rim. With the wheel turning very slowly, hold the wall between the thumb and fingers of one hand (fingers inside, thumb on outside). Use your other hand to support the wall and absorb pressure from the inside hand. Keep the hands connected. Gently and slowly push the rim downward with your index finger. (The thumb supports the rim underneath while your opposite-hand index finger compresses the edge and controls the flare.) You can also flare the rim by using a smooth stick or rib tool instead of fingers to press downward on the clay. (The outside hand is only supporting the walls, not pressing.)

Shape the rim.

- Cut through the bottom. First, use the needle tool to cut between the bat and the base of your plate, making just enough of a groove to get the wire tool under the edge of the plate. Then insert the wire and pull downward on the grippers, taking care to keep the wire taut. Remove the bat from the wheel and allow the plate to stiffen before removing it from the bat.
- Trim the plate. Feel the thickness of the bottom and edges to determine how much to trim. Feel where the edge of the bottom curves into the wall and mark that place on the base. This is where the foot should be located. Turn the plate over. Attach it to the wheel head with clay anchors, and trim the outline of the foot. Trim the outside curve from the foot to the walls. Wide flat pieces sometimes have a second foot ring about 2" (5 cm) in diameter in the center the base. This adds support and prevents sagging. Finish trimming by removing excess clay from the base between the foot rings.

Fig. 4–26. When do you think the appliqué design was added to this plate? How does the glaze application add an extra dimension of interest?
Mike Flinn, *Untitled*.
Stoneware, cone 6 electric, thrown and altered plate, 16" (40.6 cm) diameter. Blue Valley High School, Stilwell, KS. Photo by Janet Ryan.

Fig. 4–27. Michelle Fransway pulls a wire through the base of her plate to release it from the bat.
Photo by Maureen Mackey.

- Flatten the bulge. The pressure from trimming such a wide surface can make the inside of the plate bulge slightly. After trimming, set the plate upright on a board or table and gently push down on the inside surface with the palm of your hand to flatten it again.

Fig. 4–28. A lid is simple to make, but fitting it to its pot takes some practice. How would the character of this jar be different without its lid?
Lindsay Reckson, *Lidded Jar.*
Soda fired-Barium matte, cone 10, 8" (20.3 cm) high. Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL.

Lids and Spouts

Whether intended for a jar, pot, or dish, the lid's function is to shield the opening and protect the contents of its "partner" pot. Making a lid requires thinking ahead—you'll want to make the lid from the same type of clay and at the same time as its pot. This ensures that both pieces will shrink at the same rate and create an even fit.

Top, left to right: **Flat lid with raised lip, flat lid with flange, simple lid on jar flange.**
Bottom, left to right: **teapot lid with deep flange, cover lid, dome lid.**

Note It The lid should not only fit the opening securely but it should also complete the shape of the pot. Consider it an extension of the main body of the pot as you choose a type and design.

Think about the focus area of your lid. For a pot with a strong form, perhaps your lid should be recessed and nonintrusive. However, you could also create a strong, visible lid that complements the pot to strengthen and unify the form. By contrast, if you wish to draw attention away from the pot form, your lid could be the main focal point, especially if supplied with a distinctive knob.

Another important feature of a lid—the *flange*—is a little ridge that is either part of the pot's rim or part of the lid. When it is part of the rim, it acts as a shelf or seat where the lid rests. When it is part of the lid, the flange fits inside the rim of the pot to provide balance and stability. A lid for a pouring vessel, such as a teapot, should be designed with a deep flange that will anchor the lid when the pot is tipped for pouring.

Lids can be thrown right-side up (flat lid) or upside down (domed lid). Their purpose can be functional or nonfunctional.

Throwing a Flat Lid with a Knob

A knob can be thrown by itself and attached to the lid with slip, thrown on a trimmed lid, or hand fashioned and attached with slip. Follow these steps for throwing a flat lid that sits inside the neck of a pot:

Flat lid resting on angled rim.

- Wedge, cone, center, and throw a simple pot.
- Flare the rim at a 45° angle. The angled rim will act as a subtle flange where the lid rests.

Measure with calipers.

- Use *calipers* to measure the diameter of the rim. The inside diameter of the rim equals the outside diameter of the lid. Place the calipers against a ruler to record the diameter.
- Center the clay for the lid. About 1 lb. of clay is sufficient for an average-sized lid. Throw the lid and pot at the same sitting in order to maintain similar moisture content.
- Flatten the centered mound until it is at least 1" (2.5 cm) thick, and 1" less than the diameter of the rim in width.
- Beginning about an inch from the center of the mound, use the fingers of your right hand, braced by your left hand, to push the clay down.

Shape the lid.

- Spread the clay out from the center to the desired width, taking care not to let the outside edges of the clay get too thin. You're going to use a wire tool to cut it from the bat, so make the lid thicker than it will be when finished—at least ¼" to ⅜" (.7 to .6 cm) extra is good.
- Smooth the edge with a damp sponge or leather.

Smooth with a sponge or leather.

- While the lid is still on the wheel, drop a hole in the clay that remains in the center of the mound. Leave a fairly thick bottom and pull up a small cylinder.
- Raise the cylinder by squeezing it near the base. Slightly flare and shape the top into a knob that will be easy to grasp.

Shaping a knob.

- Trim the top edge with a needle tool and smooth it with a sponge. No further trimming is necessary.
- Hold a wooden tool against the outside edge of the lid and trim at a 45° angle. The lid will match the angle of the rim for a secure fit. Check the final measurements against the inside diameter of the pot.

Angle the edge of the lid.

- Use a wire to cut the lid from the bat.
- Dry the pot and lid together. When they are bone dry you may want to do a final fitting, or fine-tuning, to make sure the pieces are right.

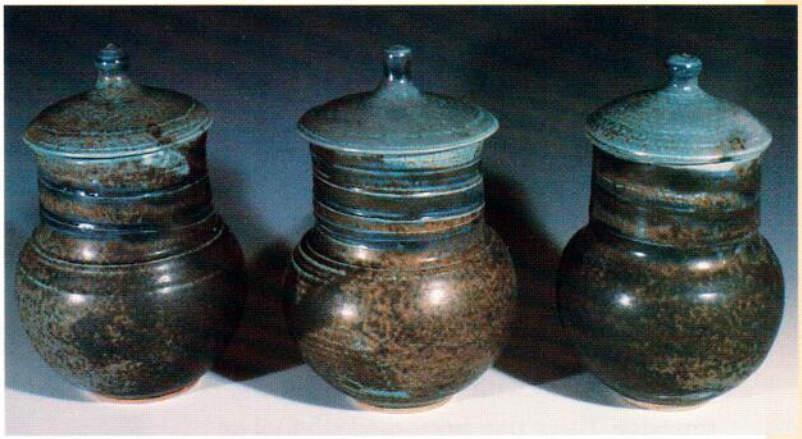


Fig. 4–29. How would you describe the lids of these pots? Discuss the sensory, formal, technical, and expressive qualities of the series.
Emily Collins, *Blue Black Series*.
Stoneware, cone 10 reduction, each 5¼" (13.3 cm) dia. x 8" (22.9 cm) high. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH.

Note It Achieve a good fit. Tip your leather-hard work sideways and hold it with the lid in place. Gently rotate the lid back and forth against the pot several times as though unscrewing the lid from a jar. Remove the lid, make a quarter turn, position it in the seat and rotate it gently again. Repeat, making a quarter turn each time. The friction helps to adjust both pieces and completes the fit.

Throwing a Flat Lid with a Flange

To make a flat lid with a flange, you need a pot with a shoulder for the lid to sit on.

- Wedge, cone, center, and throw a simple pot with a substantial shoulder.
- Measure the diameter of the rim with calipers (see page 104).
- Center a dome of clay for the lid (1–1½ lbs). The diameter of the lid should be slightly less than the diameter of the inside edge of the pot.
- Measure the base of the lid with calipers. This stem will fit inside the opening of the pot.
- Midway between the center and the edge of the dome, press down and spread the clay outward leaving the clay in the center for the knob.

Flat lid with flange resting on pot shoulder.

- Make a horizontal shelf to complete the rim.
- Finish the edges of the lid with a soft sponge or leather.

Shape the lid.

- Fashion a knob from the remaining clay in the center, as for the flat lid (described on page 104).

Smooth flange with a sponge or leather.

Throwing a Dome Lid

A dome lid does not have a flange, so the pot must be designed with a special rim for the lid to sit on. The dome lid is thrown upside down in the shape of a bowl. You can leave a thick bottom (about 1½–2", or 3.8–5 cm) for trimming a knob, or you can attach a knob later when the piece is leather-hard.

Dome lid resting on flanged rim.

- Throw a pot, keeping the top edge thick to allow enough clay for a flange—about 3/8" (.7 cm).

Make a pot with a wide rim.

- Make a seat for the lid by holding the top wall of the pot base steady with one hand. Split the top edge. Use a flat-bottomed rib tool or wooden stick to position it in the middle of the rim. Press straight down about 3/8" (.7 cm) on the inside.

"Split" the rim.

- Measure its inside rim with calipers.
- Throw a smaller bowl (the lid). The diameter of the outside wall should match the diameter of the inside edge of the pot just above the flange (seat). Flatten the lid's top edge to make a lip that will rest on the shelflike edge of the pot's flange.
- Cut the lid off the bat with a wire tool.
- When the lid has stiffened, turn it over. Center it on the wheel and trim a knob on the top.

Remember to dry the pot and lid together. When the pieces have stiffened, they should be fitted (see page 104) and dried as one piece.

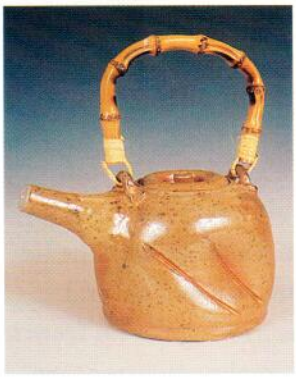


Fig. 4–30. What type of lid completes the opening for this teapot? Explain how it could have been made.
Gabe Apraiz, *Untitled*.
Thrown teapot, soda fired, 8 x 6" (20.3 x 15.2 cm). Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL. Photo by Timothy Ludwig.

Pouring Lips and Spouts

A pouring lip is at the top of the vessel, and is made seamlessly from the clay that is thrown. Pouring lips are typically found on pitchers. A spout is an attached piece, made separately. Spouts are found on teapots, for example.

Fig. 4–31. Can you name some vessels that have spouts but are not teapots?
Emily Collins, *Cruets*.
Stoneware, cone 10 reduction, each 7½ x 3 x 5" (19 x 7.5 x 12.7 cm). Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH.

Fig. 4–32. Notice how the shapes of the handles on the tray, cup, and teapot balance each other and contribute to the rhythm of the grouping. What other shapes are repeated in this composition?

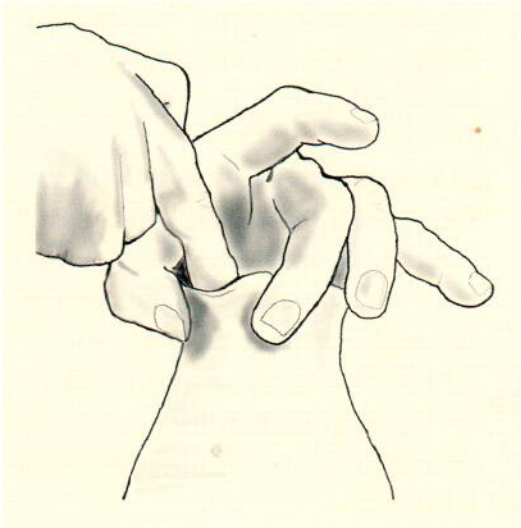
Erin Fitzsimmons, *Untitled (Strawberry tea service)*.

Midrange clay body with cone 04 glaze. Lancaster High School, Cheektowaga, NY. Photo by Anne Perry.

Making a Pouring Lip

Pouring lips are formed while the pot is still plastic and attached to the wheel. The rim of the pot is stretched and pulled outward by one finger while supported by the thumb and second finger of the opposite hand. If you make a mistake, just stretch another lip. Set the wheel in motion, collar the neck and rim, and try again.

- Throw a cylinder, collar the neck, and finish the rim with a sponge or leather. Stop the wheel.
- Place one hand inside the pot and pull a groove upward and slightly outward with your middle finger. Support the outside wall with the thumb and index finger of your other hand.
- Pinch the edges of the rim and create a smooth channel for the liquid by drawing it forward. Keep your fingers well lubricated.



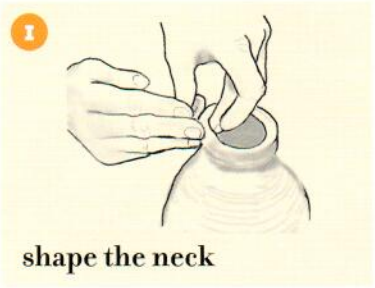
Shape a pouring lip; smooth the channel.

- Attach a handle on the opposite side of the pot after trimming. (See section on handles, page 109.)

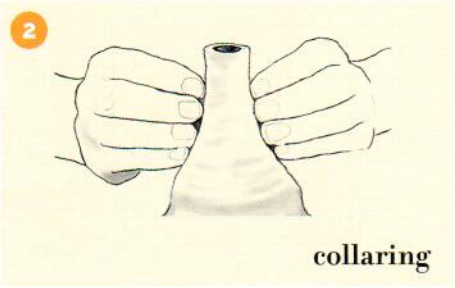
How to...

Make a Spout

You can create spouts for flasks, teapots, or coffeepots. It is wise to throw a few extra spouts because some spouts fit better than others.



shape the neck



collaring

angle the base

making holes

join spout to base

1 Throw a small, wide-based cylinder (about 1–1½ lbs.) with a narrow neck, using one finger on the inside to pull the wall upward. You can use a damp sponge on the outside to help smooth the pull.

2 Alternate pulling with collaring. Finish the lip with a slight outward curve. Smooth the edge with a chamois or fine sponge. Allow the spout to stiffen. Mark the spout location on the pot. Place it high enough so that the top of the spout will be higher than the liquid inside when the pot is filled.

3 When the spout dries to leather-hard, position the spout on the mark you made. You may need to angle the spout's base so it will conform to the shape of the pot.

4 Rest the spout on the pot and trace around it with a needle tool or dull pencil. Remove the spout. Score the outline and the base of the spout. Within the traced outline, make small holes in the wall (for the liquid to pour through).

5 Slip the scored edges of both pot and spout, and press them firmly together. You can reinforce the join with a thin coil and smooth it with your finger or the edge of a wooden tool.

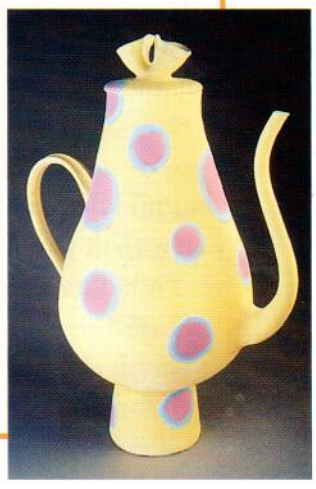


Fig. 4–33. This teapot's elegant stance is created by the height of its foot and the fanciful knob on its lid, balanced by the flowing movement of its handle and spout. What mood is created by the color treatment?
Emily Collins, *Tea for 200*. Earthenware, cone 04, 26" (66 cm) high. Stivers School for the Arts, Dayton, OH. Photo by Don Clark.

Fig. 4–34. How would it feel to drink from one of these cups? Would you use the handle? Why might a clay artist want to place handles in this unusual position?
Lindsay Reckson, *Cups*.
Soda fired, cone 10. Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL.

Handles

Handles can be functional or decorative. For example, in the twelfth century, Cistercian monks in England made vessels with multiple pulled handles that surrounded the neck and shoulders of the pot. The handles were purely utilitarian; if one handle broke, another was available—as long as one handle remained, the vessel was still useful.

Handles may be pulled, coiled, or thrown. Consider the following when planning to make a handle:

- Will the handle function as a handle or will it be merely a decorative attachment?
- If it is functional, how will it work? Will you grasp it with the whole hand or just a few fingers?
- If it is decorative, will you place it on the side, shoulder, or neck? How many handles do you want to create?
- Think about the negative space inside the handle's curve. Does it complement the shape of the pot?

Making a Pulled Handle

Each handle is unique, so you may want to pull many handles in order to have a wide selection. Keep a few extras on hand in case the first one doesn't fit.

- Wedge about 2–3 pounds of clay and shape it into a short, fat coil.
- Grasp the coil in one hand and hold it so that the coil hangs down.
- Encircle the top of the coil with your hand, your thumb facing you. This hand will remain stationary while your other hand pulls.

Hand position for beginning pull.

- Under the holding hand, make a ring around the coil with the thumb and forefinger of your other hand (this will be your pulling hand).
- With your pulling hand, pull down very gently. It helps to have your pulling hand slightly wet but not dripping for each pull.

Fig. 4–35. The slightly curving walls coupled with subtle handles give this functional form a tranquil dignity that enhances the presentation of food.
Lindsay Reckson, *Untitled*.
Soda fired, 12" (30.5 cm) long, 5" (12.7 cm) high. Spruce Creek High School, Port Orange, FL. Photo by Timothy Ludwig.

Fig. 4–36. Why are lug handles the best type to support lifting a large casserole?
Marcy Wrenn, *Untitled*, 2000.
Layered glazes, sponge-stamped oxide accents, cone 10/11 gas reduction fired, 8" (20.3 cm) high, 11" (27.9 cm) diameter. Courtesy of the artist.

Pulling clay down.

- After each pull, rotate the coil a quarter turn with your holding hand.
- Repeat until the handle is pulled to the desired thickness.
- With your pulling hand, close the thumb and forefinger to form an oval shape.
- Flatten the ring of clay into an oval shape with one more pull.
- For the final pull, place the thumb of your pulling hand smack against the coil.
- Pull all the way down to make a groove.

Final pull with thumb making groove.

- Pinch off excess clay at the bottom.
- Anchor the top of the clay by pressing it onto a board. The tug of gravity forms a natural curve on the handle. Allow the handle to stiffen to almost leather-hard before attaching to the pot.

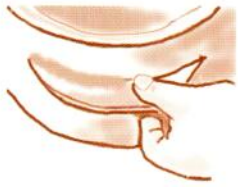
Note It When you're pulling a handle, you want your pulling hand to be moist but not dripping wet. Keep a small bucket of water nearby. Touch the water with your pulling hand and shake off the excess prior to each pull.

Making Lug Handles

Lug handles are attached horizontally to the sides of a pot. These handles are good for casseroles, large bowls, baking dishes, and jars. Lugs can be made from pulled handles, coils, or thrown sections.

Try It Throw a pair of lug handles.

- Throw a bottomless cylinder about 1" (2.5 cm) tall and 3" (7.6 cm) in diameter. Smooth the top edge with a sponge or piece of leather.
- Allow the cylinder to stiffen—about 20 minutes or until it holds its shape.
- Run a wire tool under the pot to release it from the wheel head or bat. Cut the cylinder in half vertically to form the two handles.



A lug handle.

- Score and slip the bottom edge of each handle. Attach handles opposite each other on the pot's shoulder, taking care to balance their placement.
- Add a coil under each handle and against the pot for added strength. Press and seal the joins.

Making Thrown Handles

You can form several handles from one cylinder using this technique.

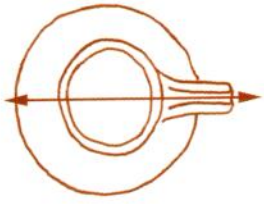
- Throw a cylinder with walls at least 3/8" (.7 cm) thick. Finish the rim. Support the inside walls near the top with the fingers of your stabilizing hand while the tip of your other thumb presses against the outside wall to form a slight groove. The wheel should be turning at a slow speed.
- Position the needle tool below the bottom of the groove, and trim through the clay. Lift the ring from the cylinder and put it on a board.
- Cut the ring in one place, open it to form the handle's curve, and allow it to stiffen until it is firm enough to keep its shape.
- Smooth the cut edge with a damp sponge. Score and slip the edges of the handle and the area where you'll join the handle to the pot.

Attaching the Handle

- Examine the profile of the curve on your pot's wall where you will attach the handle.
- Cut the top of the handle to match the contour of the wall's curve.

Determine angle for cut.

- Test the size and shape of your handle against the pot.
- If necessary, cut the bottom of the handle to fit the pot.
- View the join from above to make sure the handle is straight, not slanted. Adjust as needed.
- Trace around areas where the handle will join the wall.
- Score and slip the handle ends and wall joins, and use gentle pressure to attach the handle to the pot.
- Seal the joins with your thumb or a wooden tool, gently pulling the clay from the handle to the walls.
- Smooth the surface of the joined sections with a slightly damp sponge or leather.



View from above to check position.

Attach with slip, and seal joins.

Teapots

Making a teapot combines everything you've learned so far about using the wheel to throw clay. It's a challenging exercise, and it may require several tries to get it right. Don't give up! If you end up making a few nonfunctional teapots, you can always turn them into pieces of sculpture.

Planning Your Teapot

Before you begin, decide on your desired teapot shape. It can be squat, tall, narrow, or cone-shaped. Make a simple drawing of the shape and outline the profile. Then

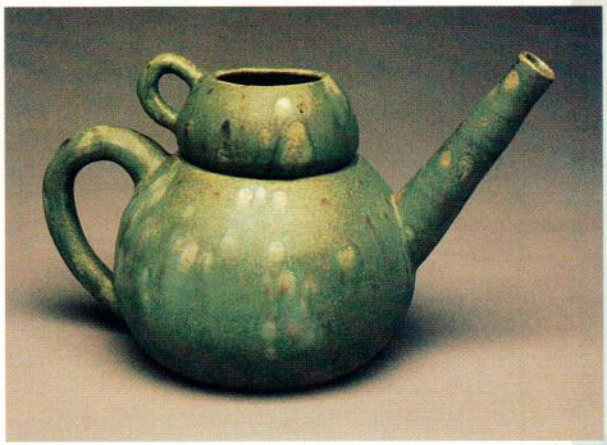
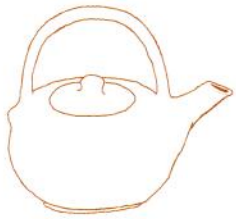


Fig. 4–37. The shape of the cup and its handle mirrors that of its companion teapot. What two functions does the cup serve?
Bethany Krull, *Untitled (Stacking Tea Set)*.
Low fire clay and cone 04 glaze. Lancaster Central High School, Lancaster, NY. Photo by Ann Perry.

Fig. 4–38. Thrown forms are often altered. Some are barely recognizable as thrown work when they are complete. How do you think this teapot was constructed?
Susan Beiner, *Vegetable Medley*, 1998.
Porcelain, 8 x 11 x 6" (20.3 x 28 x 15.2 cm). Courtesy of Ferrin Gallery.

sketch a lid. As you consider your ideas about a teapot, ask yourself:

- Will the lid be flat or domed?
- Will it rise out of the pot or sink into the opening?
- What type of knob will it have—thrown or hand-built?
- Does the lid shape complement the form?
- Do you want to place the handle over the lid, on top of the shoulders of the pot—or on the side, opposite the spout?
- What size spout complements the shape?



Handle over lid.

Handle on side.

Elements of Design

Line

When you think of line and the way it can be used in ceramic art, what comes to mind? In general, lines connect two points and are longer than they are wide. But more importantly, lines have a personality—they can be straight or curved, thick or thin, continuous or interrupted. A bold line with sharp edges that abruptly changes direction produces a different feeling than a thin, flowing line. While line's most obvious use might be that of surface decoration (drawing, incising, or carving), you might want to consider other ways to incorporate this powerful element into your work.

Fig. 4–39. Using line thoughtfully in your design can make the difference between a dull artwork and an exciting one.
Ann Perry, *Ginko Green Tea*.
Sculptural tea set cone 6 fired with cone 6 and 04 glaze. Courtesy of the artist.

Making a Teapot

Use the same clay for every part of your teapot: body, lid, spout, and handle. Be sure to throw or form these pieces at the same time. Then, all the components will shrink at the same rate, they'll fit better together, and the measurements will be more accurate. You can assemble the pieces at another time, but remember to cover them in plastic to keep them workable.

- Throw the body of the teapot.
- Measure the diameter of the opening and create a flanged lid.
- Pull or throw the handle. Shape it and allow it to stiffen.
- Throw the spout (and a few extras).
- Let all pieces stiffen to leather-hard.
- Trim a foot ring on your pot before you attach the spout and handle.
- Hold the spout against the side wall and adjust its fit.

Fig. 4–41. The circulating and flowing applied decoration on this diminutive teapot unifies and balances its shape. How does the exaggerated handle further your perception of space and volume?
Jessica Schell, *Untitled.*
Stoneware, cone 6 electric, 8½ x 10" (21.6 x 25.4 cm). Blue Valley High School, Stilwell, KS. Photo by Janet Ryan.

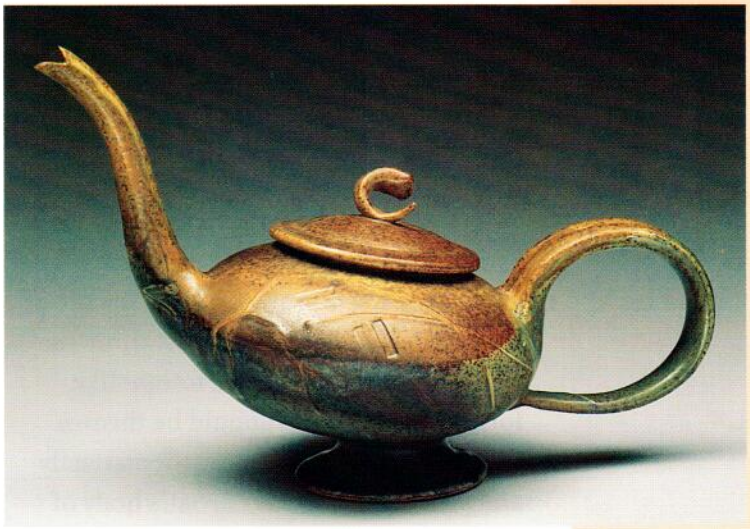


Fig. 4–40. A teapot is one of the more complex objects that can be developed from wheel-thrown forms.
Robert Putnam, *Untitled.*
Thrown and altered teapot. Stoneware, cone 9 reduction with multiple glazes. 8 x 12½ x 6" (20.3 x 31.7 x 15.2 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

Note It Make sure the top of the spout is as high as or higher than the top of the pot. If the spout is too low, tea will spill out when the pot is filled.

- Trace around the spout on the pot wall.
- Supporting the wall, cut a series of holes within the outline.
- Smooth rough edges with a damp sponge.
- Score and slip the base of the spout and the traced outline on the pot.
- Press the two pieces firmly together and smooth around the join. You can reinforce the join with a thin coil and smooth it with your finger or the edge of a wooden tool.
- Balance the placement of the handle.
- Score, slip, and join the handle to the pot.
- Let your teapot dry slowly with the lid in place.
- Bisque fire, decorate, and glaze fire.

Studio Experience:

Mixed-Media Sculpture

You will study the works of a well-known artist (painter, sculptor, or clay artist) and create a sculpture that reflects his or her style. Plan to stack at least three sections, or levels, to make a totem-like form. Distinct parts should be thrown and hand-built, and relate thematically and stylistically to your artist's body of work. Include found objects or other mixed media in your sculpture.

For inspiration, you might want to consider artists in the last half of the twentieth century. After World War II, painters and sculptors began boldly experimenting with new styles and themes. Their departure from tradition inspired clay artists to work in new ways too. As innovative styles merged with form and design, ceramics became an art form that could stand apart from its historical ties to function.

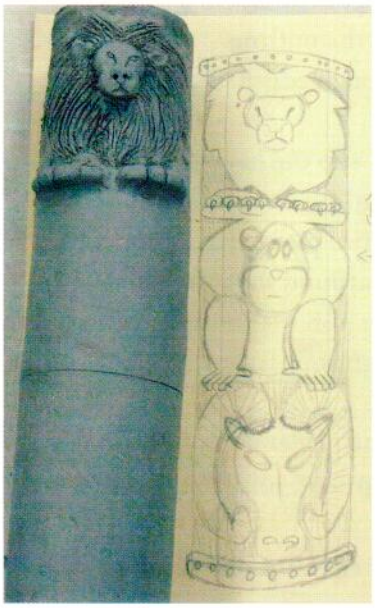


Fig. 4–42. Patrick made a drawing to help visualize his clay sculpture. Do you think he might have been inspired by the work of Henri Rousseau? How would you use found objects to add to this design?

Fig. 4–43. Before bisque firing, Cassie Gonzales painted underglaze on her greenware pieces. Note the center holes.

Before You Begin

- Research a painter, sculptor, or clay artist whose work interests you. What stylistic qualities help you to identify this artist's work? Consider how you can integrate them into your sculpture. Will you emphasize form, color, or surface decoration? Make some drawings to help you visualize your composition.
- Plan how you will make each section relate to the theme. What imagery will you use? Will your sculpture have a separate base? Where will you use hand-building? Will you make molded pieces? How will you incorporate thrown pieces?
- Gather mixed-media materials for your piece. Think about how you will use them. Will you attach them after the firing?

You will need:

- hand-building and throwing tools
- molds, if desired
- decorating and glazing tools and brushes
- materials for bonding and attaching pieces

Create It

1 Make the individual pieces for each level, hand-building and wheel throwing as appropriate. Keep the clay to a uniform thickness, about 3/8". Consider poking holes if you will attach pieces using wire,

or cutting a center hole if you will connect pieces with a dowel or threaded metal rod.

2 Bisque fire the pieces when they have dried sufficiently.

3 Add further decoration and glaze fire.

4 Erect your sculpture, combining pieces securely with a dowel or rod and hardware, wire, or adhesives. Attach mixed-media materials and found objects.

5 Be prepared to share information about the artist you researched, and to explain the techniques you used.

Check It Does your piece have a theme that reflects the style of the artist you selected? Does each section echo that theme? How? How many different forming techniques did you incorporate in your piece? Were you able to attach found objects successfully? Were you able to assemble the sculpture securely? What did you learn from this project? What would you do differently if you had to do it again?

Sketchbook Connection

As you plan your design, refine your ideas by drawing not only the front of your sculpture but also the back and sides. Draw each section from different angles. After your work is complete, sketch ideas for some ways you might utilize mixed media in other clay sculptures.

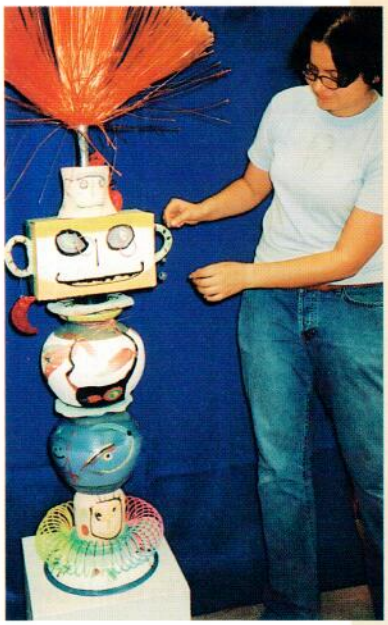


Fig. 4–44. Placing "earrings" on the figurative sculpture. The center pole was made from an overturned broom. What other found objects were used? Cassie Gonzales, *A Whole Lot of Miro*, 2002. Slab and thrown clay, mixed media, cone 04, 50" (127 cm) high. Photo by Maureen Mackey.

Rubric: Studio Assessment

4	3	2	1
Style and Theme • Style and theme used relates to that of a specific artist • Consistent style/theme between sections			
Final sculpture is a perceptive, inventive transfer of important aspects of researched artist's ideas. Style and theme very consistent among sections. Inventive, knowledgeable	Final sculpture is an accurate transfer of important aspects of researched artist's ideas. Style and theme consistent among sections. Related, consistent	Final sculpture exhibits a somewhat rough or superficial relationship to researched artist's ideas OR style and theme inconsistent. Some understanding	Final sculpture exhibits a limited relationship to researched artist's ideas OR style and theme highly inconsistent. Uninspired or insufficient
Design Elements • Interaction of forms with surrounding space • Use of found objects or mixed media • Surface treatment			
Interaction of forms and space, found objects (or mixed media additions) and surface treatment work smoothly together to add great interest and unity to sculpture. Sophisticated, holistic	Interaction of forms and space, found objects (or mixed media additions) and surface treatment add pleasing interest and unity to sculpture. Pleasing, unified	1 of these: little interaction of forms and space; little attention given or haphazard incorporation of mixed media/found objects; surface treatment is neglected. Needs additions or edits	2–3 of the factors listed in level 2. Monotonous, unfinished
Media Use • Thrown and handbuilt techniques • Other media included • Structural craftsmanship • Glaze application			
No apparent mistakes in techniques used and construction of sculpture. Very successful glaze application. Polished finish	Few apparent mistakes in techniques used and construction of sculpture. Successful glaze application. Skillful finish	Some noticeable mistakes in media use. Glaze application may yield an uneven finish. More care indicated	Many noticeable, significant mistakes in media use. Rudimentary difficulties
Work Process • Research • Sketches • Reflection/Evaluation			
Thorough documentation; goes above and beyond assignment expectations. Thoughtful, thorough, independent	Complete documentation; meets assignment expectations. Meets expectations	Documentation is somewhat haphazard or incomplete. Incomplete, hit and miss	Documentation is minimal or very disorganized. Very incomplete

Web Links

The American Ceramic Society home page offers a variety of information for the professional potter.

www.acers.org

Photographs and descriptions of pottery made by artists from Finland to Nigeria, over 4,000 pages of pictures and information.

www.studiopottery.com

Career Profile:
Charles Smith

Photo: Edmond Dean.

Charles Smith creates raku and stoneware pottery that is influenced and inspired by nature and the art of pre-Columbian, African, and Native American cultures. After junior college, Smith applied to Jackson State University in Mississippi but did not receive a scholarship. He stubbornly requested an interview to show his "portfolio"—boxes filled with pots—and was offered a scholarship that same day. He graduated with a degree in art education and taught for awhile, but found that he needed to be able to work on his craft twenty-four hours a day. Today Smith works in his own studio, where he is in control of his time and is always ready when the creative spirit arrives.

How do you decorate your pottery?

Charles: I love carving—I could carve all day long. People should be able to recognize a pot by the design, and the carving is my "signature." My designs are simple but look complex. I have also worked out a special tripod process that merges into a single element with the bottom of the pot.

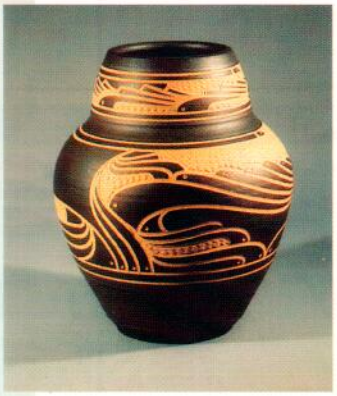


Fig. 4–46. Smith uses line to balance out his work and capture the eye of the viewer. The carved surface design on this ceremonial jar is made of flowing lines that subtly turn into serpents as they move around the piece.
Photo: Edmond Dean.

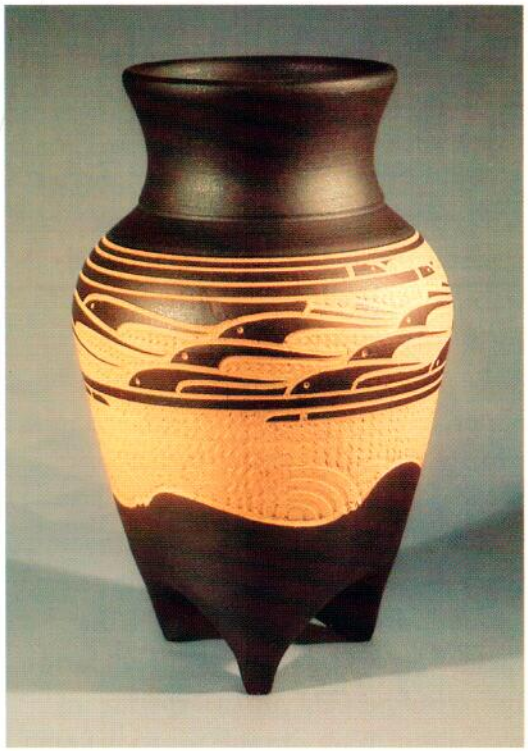


Fig. 4–45. Smith often carves shapes with the pot upside down. He says, "Nature has been my biggest teacher."
Photo: Edmond Dean.

What is most rewarding about being a studio artist?

Charles: The studio is my own space, and it's where I work through problems and challenges. In your own studio you can leave things in a mess and clean up later because studio work is an ongoing process. I listen to music when I'm working. I like jazz when I'm doing big pots and blues for the smaller ones.

What is your advice to a young person interested in a career as a studio artist?

Charles: Listen to positive criticism of your work, even if you don't act on it immediately. It's also important to find a space—in a shed, on a table, under a tree—to make truly your own. And practice, practice, practice! Remember that you're never in total control. Pots blow up. Glazes fail. When this happens, don't throw away the mistakes. Learn from them as you work to master the challenges of the material.

Key Terms

sprigging
oxides
carbonates
flux
bisque ware
greenware

Fig. 5–1. Kurt Weiser uses china paint to decorate porcelain that is bisque fired and glazed white. Most of Weiser's complex pieces are fired about five times, due to the different temperatures at which the overglaze colors mature.

Kurt Weiser, *Blue Horizon*, 1992.

Porcelain with china paint, 11⅞ x 12½ x 4¾" (30.4 x 31.7 x 12 cm). © Mint Museum of Craft and Design, museum purchase: Delhom Service League Fund.

Chapter Review

Recall List the steps for throwing a cylinder.

Understand Explain why centering is important when throwing pottery on a wheel.

Apply Throw a small cylinder. Then change its appearance by adding handles or a spout. Have you made it more functional or less functional?

Analyze Examine Ursula Mommens's vase shown on page 84. Describe the form, paying particular attention to its foot, body, shoulders, neck, and lip.

Synthesize Can an abstract claywork be functional? Give an example from the chapter to support your argument.

Evaluate Work with your classmates to test the pouring abilities of the clay pieces you've made that have spouts. Are there any that pour especially well? Identify and explain the qualities of a good pouring spout.

Fig. 4–47. How do surface, color, and form reflect the title of this piece?
Tim Ballingham, *Lotus Lantern.*
Mishima technique.
Courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 4–48. Attach handles when leather-hard. Carefully seal all the joined areas with your fingers and smooth the connection. Check negative space inside the handle and make final adjustments to the curve.
Photo by Randy O'Brien.

Writing about Art

Review the clay pieces you have created so far for this course. Write a critique of your work. Include comments on your intent versus the actual result. List the strengths and weaknesses of your creations. Follow up by writing a plan of action for improving your skills and furthering your artistic development.

For Your Portfolio

Photograph your mixed-media sculpture and document with title, date, and size. Write a brief description of the methods you used to build, assemble, glaze, and fire your piece. Note your sources of inspiration.