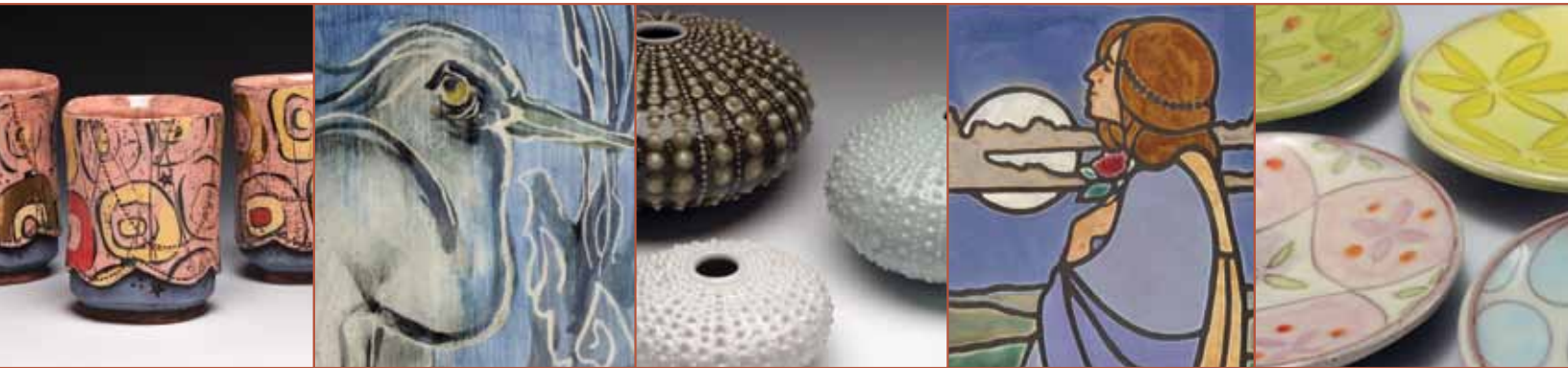


five great pottery decorating techniques



a how-to guide for decorating
ceramic surfaces



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Five Great Pottery Decorating Techniques

A How-To Guide for Decorating Ceramics Surfaces

Decorating ceramics is one of the most rewarding aspects of working in clay. It's the time when you can add color and life to a bare clay surface and show off your creative talents. There are scores of decorating techniques available and here are five successful techniques that are sure to add that extra flair to your work that will make it a masterpiece.

Slip Transfers by Jason Bige Burnett

Jason Burnett was influenced by the pots he saw in the cartoons of the fifties and sixties. His forms look a little cartoonish and his decorating technique consists of slip transfer, sgraffito, sponging, and brushing.

Urchin Texture by Annie Chrietzberg

Marcos Lewis used to live in the Pacific Northwest where he worked as a commercial fisherman. Although he moved inland long ago, he remembers the texture of sea urchins and has captured that texture on his pots. Here he describes the tools and techniques he uses to re-create one of Mother Nature's most distinctive textures.

Grouting for Effect by Laura Reutter

Laura Reutter is a tile artist who's discovered a simple way to get around the tedium of working with a lot of small tiles—she makes grout lines in her large tiles. This unusual surface decoration features the look and feel of a complex tile installation that basically fills in a sgraffito line with grout after the glaze firing.

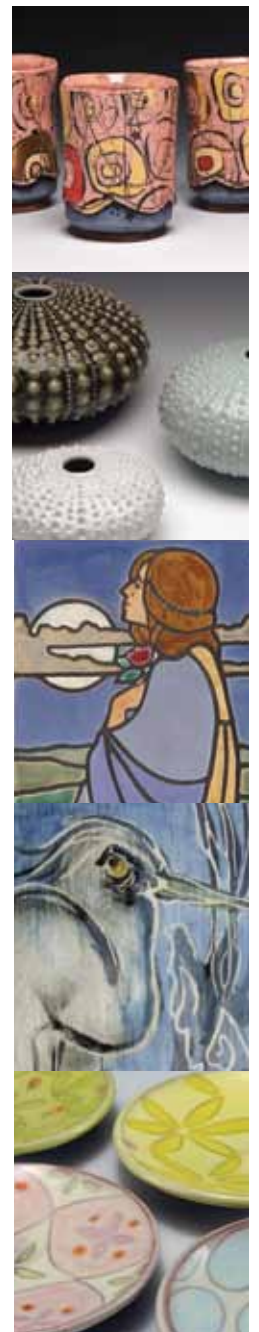
Chinese Brush Painting by Elizabeth Priddy

Elizabeth Priddy studied for years to master the art of Chinese brush painting and her surface decoration shows it. She describes the brushes you need, how to load the brushes for different strokes, and guides you through a practice piece so you can put what you learn to work.

Colorful Earthenware Plates

by Kristin Pavelka

Kristin Pavelka was influenced by the sgraffito wares from 11th and 12th century Iran, Scandinavian patterns, sugary confections, and mid-century design motifs. To combine all these influences she turns to a combination of slip decoration and sgraffito along with a palette of colorful pastels.



Slip Transfers

by Jason Bige Burnett



Too Much Television, uses newsprint and slip decoration combined with incised decoration, decals, luster, and glaze, creating dimensional surfaces that also pop with color.

My childhood interest in television cartoons influenced my current ceramic forms and surfaces. The bright colors, graphic patterns, and illustrative qualities recapture and celebrate my fascination with whimsical domestic representation. I'm inspired by the stylized hand-drawn utilitarian objects like a coffee mug in a cartoon character's hand or the mixing bowl displayed on the shelf in their kitchen. I hope to continue that sense of wonder through real physical objects.

The combination of commercial stained slips and newsprint create a stick-and-peel process. By applying slips saturated with bold colors onto newsprint, then transferring the drawn images to a slipped clay object, I can achieve an animated surface. Playtime doesn't end there; I continue by introducing stamps, stains, and stickers to further enhance the ceramic surface until the desired effect is fully achieved.

Creating Newsprint Transfers

The process I'm using is equivalent to making a monoprint in traditional printmaking. Instead of drawing on a metal plate and transferring the image to paper, I'm drawing on newspaper then transferring to clay. As with all monoprints, keep in mind that the image you create will be reversed. Text must be backwards and layers of color must be applied foreground to background (*figure 1*). Whether it be stripes, shapes, illustrations, or a color field, start with an idea of how you would like to approach the surfaces of your piece before you start.

Apply your pattern or drawing to strips or blocks of newsprint, varying the colors of slip using brushes, slip trailers, and sponge stamps. Use caution as the paper causes the slip to dry; and if it dries too much, it may chip off. Use a spray bottle to keep the image damp but don't spray too much water, as it could puddle and smear the slip. The local news-

paper works well but I prefer using Strathmore brand Newsprint Paper available at any art supply store. The thickness and tooth of this paper is durable and tough enough to hold and transfer slip.

Slip it and Stick it

After you've completed the newsprint image, wait for the slip to become leather hard and then apply a slip coat over the drawing. Lightly dab the first coat of slip on (*figure 2*), wait for this coat to become leather hard and then brush on a second coat. A hair dryer assists in getting the slipped newsprint to leather-hard. If the slip has a glossy shine then it's too wet to continue.

The slip application works best on leather-hard clay. Using a hake brush, apply a moderate coat of slip to the surface of your piece. This layer of slip shouldn't be too thin or too thick and it should be the consistency of heavy whipping cream. This slip coat creates a tactile surface perfect for pressing newsprint into and absorbs transferred slip and imagery well.

When the slip-coated clay piece and the slip decoration on the newsprint are both at leather hard, you are ready to print. There is a narrow window of time here where the surface of your piece and the newspaper are perfect for application. If one or the other is too wet when applied, the result could be sloppy and undesirable. If the image and object are too dry then this affects the quality of adhesion. When the slip on the object is soft but not tacky and all the slip on the paper has lost its sheen, you're ready to transfer the image.

Carefully pick up your piece of newsprint and slowly bring it towards the object. You'll see the image through the newsprint and that assists with placement. Once any part of the newsprint transfer touches the object, gently press the rest of the newsprint onto the surface (*figure 3*). Note that air pockets result on curved surfaces. These are addressed after the pressing. Softly press the newsprint transfer onto the surface with your hands, working over the general area. The trapped air pockets can be removed by piercing them with a needle tool or a small X-Acto blade. If the air pockets are not taken care of, they can cause defects or misprinting of the transfer.

Now that the newsprint has been applied to the object, there's a layer of moisture trapped between the object and the paper. Within the first minute or two the clay object begins absorbing that moisture.

Using a soft rib, press the newsprint down, applying more pressure than before. Between thirty seconds and two minutes is about the time when you'll notice the newsprint drying out again. Now take a slightly harder rib and, with more force than before, rub the newsprint one last time into the clay. Rubbing too hard could smudge the slip underneath or tear through the paper. Practice and experience with this method is the best way to find your limits.



Circus Stars and Stripes, 7 in. (18 cm) in height, earthenware, slip, underglaze, glaze, iron-toner decals, and gold luster, 2010.

All Purpose White Slip

Cone 04-10

Ferro Frit 3124.....	19.2 %
OM4 Ball Clay.....	27.0
EPK Kaolin.....	27.0
Silica.....	21.4
Zircopax.....	5.4
Total	100.0 %

Add: Mason Stains

Mason stain percentages vary per color. Try testing within the range of 3–10% to start.

Grab a corner or take the edge of the newsprint and slowly begin to peel away (*figure 4*). It's important to do this slowly so you'll catch the spots that did not adhere to the surface. Just place it back down gently and massage the spot down into the surface with the medium-soft rib. Repeat if necessary. Not addressing the spots creates potential reservoirs for stain and glazes later. Now that your image is transferred, handle the piece carefully. Applying slip onto leather-hard clay will make the clay soft and malleable again. I suggest waiting until your piece becomes firm and the slip isn't sticky to the touch before applying anything else to the surface.

Additional Decorations

If you want a contrasting decorations in an adjoining area, apply another coat of slip to the leather-hard clay. This time, try cutting out stripes or shapes of plain newsprint, spritz with water until slightly damp, and lay them over the slip coat to act as a stencil resist (*figure 5*). Brush over the piece with another slip, again any color works, and let sit until the slip firms up (*figure 6*).

On top of the slip and strip layer, I also like creating built up textures of slip. Brush a moderate coat of slip onto a wide strip of newsprint and vary the thickness of application. Once leather hard, place the wide strip over the slip-coated object



1
Create patterns with colored slips. Remember to paint on the colors for the foreground layer first and the background last.



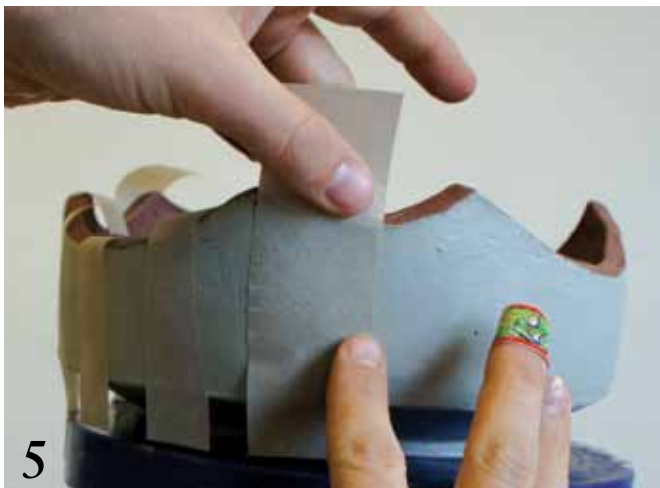
2
When the slip on the newsprint has become leather-hard, blot and brush on the background slip which also serves as a transfer coat.



3
Gently apply the newsprint to the piece. Use your hand and a soft rib to ensure good contact and pierce any trapped air.



4
When the slip has had time to absorb and the newsprint has lost a lot of the moisture it had, slowly peel it away from the surface.



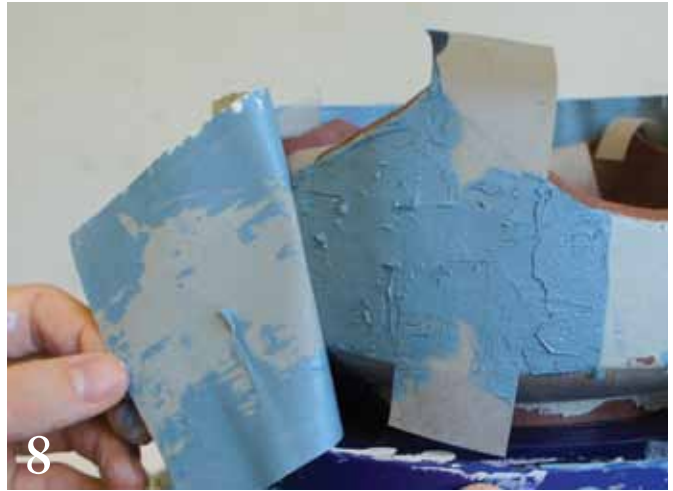
5
Apply damp newsprint strips to the surface and press down all edges to prevent the second slip coat from seeping underneath.



6
Brush additional slip coats over both the first layer of slip on the piece and the damp newsprint strips. Use any color or combination of colors you wish.



7
Create more of a tactile surface by applying another layer of thick slip onto a fresh piece of newsprint and wrapping it around the object.



8
After allowing the slip to absorb into the surface for a minute or two, peel away the newsprint again to reveal the varied, textured surfaces.



9
Mark the surface with stamps, rollers (like a fabric tracing wheel), and carving tools, creating new patterns and echoing the lines of the form or of the colored slip bands.



10
Take advantage of the piece being leather hard and carve away some larger areas of the slip, revealing the contrasting color of the clay body below.



11
After the work has been bisqued, apply underglaze or stain over the object and wipe away to accentuate the process marks.



12
Apply soda ash wash, wax resist, and glazes to desired surfaces. This is the time to plan for a final layer of decals and lusters.



***Swirls and Stripes*, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (26 cm) in diameter, earthenware, slip, underglaze, glaze, iron-toner decals, commercial decals, and gold luster, 2011.**

with the newsprint stripes still in place (*figure 7*). Be more relaxed with this and just gently pat down the strip. Give it a variation of rubs and pressings, then peel away and notice the loose quality and nature of the slipped surface (*figure 8*). Any sharp edges of slip should be tapped down or pressed in with your fingers. After this surface has been bisqued, stains and washes enhance the loose look, suggesting surfaces such as torn wallpaper or chipped paint.

Next, carefully peel the stripes away. If locating the paper and peeling it away is difficult, lightly heat the surface with a blow dryer until the slip above the newsprint becomes noticeably different in color and dryness. Now the paper can be removed with the aid of a needle tool or an X-Acto blade.

Stamp it Out

Since the object is still leather hard after the newsprint and resist techniques, more adornment may be applied. You can create additional marks using stamps, drawn in lines, and texture rollers (*figure 9*). Larger areas of slip can also be carved away and create more surface depth (*figure 10*).

Layering After the Bisque

Staining the work with an underglaze creates more depth and enhances the process marks and indentations previously made on the surface. Coat the entire piece with one or two

layers of underglaze, let dry, and sponge it away from the high points leaving it in the recesses (*figure 11*). I use a black underglaze to give my work a distressed look and to enhance all the intricate marking made up until this point. Let the underglaze dry prior to applying wash and glazes.

Tip: Since the whole object will not be covered in glaze, some areas will remain matte. If the matte surfaces remain untreated they come out looking chalky and dry. To prevent this, apply a soda ash wash over the piece in two generous brush coats. To make the soda ash wash, combine 57 grams of soda ash to 1 cup of heated water and stir to dissolve the ingredients. Allow the piece to dry again. The soda ash wash will cause the matte surfaces to retain a moist and saturated look. I fire the stains, glazes, and soda ash wash together to cone 05–04, and then do a second firing of the iron toner decals to cone 08, finally I do a third firing of gold luster and commercial decals together to cone 017. I've fired the soda ash wash up to cone 2 but not past that.

I use a variety of shop-made and commercial glazes. For many, glazing is the last and final step, but I find glaze firing is only an intermediate step when pushing surfaces even further. When glazing, try setting up areas for decals and lusters by selectively applying the glaze (*figure 12*). Remember, decals and lusters reflect the surface below them and work best when applied to a shiny surface.

Urchin Texture

by Annie Chrietberg



Large urchin form made from dark brown stoneware and porcelain slip, glazed with a green celadon; two smaller urchin forms, both made from porcelain and porcelain slip, one with a pale blue celadon, and the other with a clear glaze.

Marcos Lewis' Sea Urchin vessels are inspired by the time when he lived in the Pacific Northwest working as a commercial fisherman. "All my years, first as a kid on the beach digging clams, looking under rocks, and later working as a commercial fisherman, have filled my memory with shapes and patterns," he states. Marcos has been making sea urchin forms for about seven years and he has developed a process and a few tricks along the way that he's happy to share.

Marcos throws his urchin form on the wheel, using a rib to form the inside, then closes the form until only a tiny hole remains on top (*figure 1*). He throws

with very little water in order to trim and decorate as quickly as possible. Once the piece has set up to leather hard, he places the pot back on the wheel and brushes the inside of it with a white slip. He then trims the outside of the form to match the space he created on the inside, taking care to leave an even wall (*figure 2*).

After trimming, Marcos uses a ball syringe with a piece of an ink tube from a ballpoint pen fitted into the end to slip trail the textured bumps similar to a sea urchin. As he trails slip, he scores the surface of the pot with the tip of the ball syringe for better adhesion (*figure 3*). "When making the beads of slip, I



1 Throw the urchin form by bellying out then collaring in a cylinder and close it leaving only a small opening.



2 Place the piece upside-down in a padded chuck and then trim the bottom.



3 Slip trail a pattern of dots. Use the end the slip trailer to score the piece as you apply the slip.



4 Left to right: A disposable paint brush handle with the plastic support trimmed down, a wooden rib, and a squeeze bulb with a piece of an ink tube and a guitar string.

tend to poke and jab the plastic tip of my trailer into the clay, this makes small cuts and dents in the clay under the slip and gives the slip a rough scratched surface to adhere to. I also sometimes go back and gently press the bumps onto the clay as they dry if I see some separation happening,” he notes. When his syringe is not in use, he uses a piece of guitar string to plug the hole. He joked, “It’s ironic that when I was a commercial fisherman in Alaska, I used to keep my hands in shape when not fishing by squeezing a rubber ball, now I make my living by squeezing a rubber ball!”

Laying out the patterns by eye, Marcos makes a first line of bumps from the top of the pot, straight down the side of the pot, then does the next line directly opposite the first. By eye he finds the halfway point between two existing lines and continues his decoration around the pot, but he doesn’t always stick to

straight lines. He’s made a special tool to clean up around the bumps if he needs to; he simply ripped the foam rubber off of a disposable paint brush, and cut the plastic support inside down to the exact shape and size he needs. “This is also a good tool for cleaning up around handles,” he said (*figure 4*).

Marcos is experimental with his clay bodies, slips, and firing methods. He’ll run the gamut from using a white porcelain slip on a dark clay body and creating an atmospheric effect with soda ash, to a stark white on white with a clear glaze, and everything in between. He’ll even modify the density of bumps to get particular effects from ‘stunt glazing’. “I pretty much use any combination [of clay, slip, and firing] I can get my hands on, low fire, micaceous, standard high fire, reduction, salt, soda, etc. If there is any. . . combination that I haven’t tried yet, then I plan on it!”

Grouting for Effect

by Laura Reutter

Adding grout to tiles, mosaics, and tile installations can enhance a design, strengthen linear elements, and even create a stained-glass effect. Furthermore, grout can impart a patina to glazed tiles, producing an aged or weathered appearance. Grouting for effect isn't a new idea—several tile companies around the turn of the last century used grout in decorative as well as functional ways, including Moravian Tile Works and the Hartford Faience Company.

Grout

Grout is a mixture of cement, sand, and colorant to which water is added. Like mortar, grout hardens slowly over a period of time. In conventional tile installations, grout fills the spaces between ceramic pieces, creating a smooth durable surface that prevents the penetration of moisture and dirt. Grout is available in a wide range of premixed colors, making it easy for artists to pick and choose the appropriate hue for their project.

To achieve a decorative effect, tiles require recessed areas in their surface that will hold grout. These recessed areas may be linear elements such as grooves or negative shapes carved into the tile. Grout is applied to the tile after the glaze firing. Gaps between whole tiles and tile mosaics also create grout lines. Depending on the width of the grout line, the effect can range from subtle to dramatic.



Reverie, after grouting. 17 in. (43 cm) in height, press-molded stoneware, glaze, black grout, fired to cone 6.

The following examples focus on using charcoal black grout applied to the surface of glazed stoneware tiles that have been fired to cone 6.

Narrow Lines

The swan tile is a simple 4×8-inch tile based on an Art Nouveau period design. First roll out a ½-inch thick slab of clay that's large enough to accommodate the design. Make the paper pattern slightly larger than the final tile size to allow for shrinkage during drying and firing. Transfer the image to the clay slab by tracing over the paper pattern with a pencil, pressing firmly to ensure the design is inscribed into the clay.

Cut the slab to its desired size and allow it to stiffen overnight. Once the clay is almost leather hard, incise narrow lines—approximately 1/16-inch wide and 1/8-inch deep—around the primary

shapes on the clay tile. Use a combination of wooden and metal clay modeling tools and bamboo skewers to create the lines. Add additional linear details to the swan tile, such as feathers and ripples in the water, if desired. Keep in mind that the wider and deeper the incised line, the more grout it will hold and the more prominent the grout line becomes. Extremely shallow details will not retain the grout.

Brush, pour or dip glazes onto the tile, taking care not to fill the grooves. After glazing but before firing, any glaze drips that have settled into the grooves must be removed using a needle tool or pointed wooden stick (*figure 1*). Grout won't stick in a shallow groove that's partially filled with glaze. Once the tile has been glaze fired, it's ready to accept grout.



1
Remove excess glaze with a pointed tool from all areas that will receive grout.



2
Necessary tools: plastic drop cloth, gloves, containers, water, sponge, stir stick, grout, and squeegee.



3
Apply grout to the tile surface with a flexible tool. Wear protective gloves.



4
Carefully sponge off excess grout after it has set up.

Note: Colored grout stains everything it touches! Protect your work area with plastic sheeting or newsprint and wear gloves. In addition to the grout, available in home centers and flooring stores, you'll also need a sponge, container of water, container for grout, stirring stick, and a flexible squeegee for application (*figure 2*). Mix the grout as instructed by the manufacturer and apply to the surface of the tile.

I like to use a flexible rubber pottery rib to push the grout firmly in all directions over the tile (*figure 3*). Make sure the grout penetrates into the bottom of every groove. The surface and sides of the tile should be completely covered with grout so that any color changes are consistent overall.

Once the lines are filled, the grout should be left undisturbed in order to set up. After 30 minutes or so, sponge off any excess grout. Use a slightly damp sponge and be careful not to lift grout out of the grooves (*figure 4*). If you do accidentally remove too much grout, you can add a little where needed at this time.

There will probably be some alteration of glaze colors during grouting. Light glazes and matte glazes are especially prone to picking up colors from grout. Test a sample of your glaze with some grout first if you want to avoid unexpected color shifts. Areas that are sensitive to staining may be coated with a resist such as paste wax or varnish prior to applying grout. Again, testing is recommended.

I found that the white glaze on the swan's body was readily stained by the black grout, but I wanted the grayish muted effect that resulted and did not mask this color (*figure 5*).

Moderate Lines

My *Idyll* tile was designed specifically to utilize black grout lines that would strengthen the composition, enhancing an already linear Arts and Crafts-style image.

The first step is to establish a basic pattern on paper. Use a wide-tipped permanent marker over a pre-existing drawing to give an idea of how the final grout lines will look. Trace the pattern using a stylus, transferring the design to a stiffened clay slab. Once the design is established on the slab, carve grooves to a width and depth of at least $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (*figure 6*). The grout requires a groove deep enough to anchor it, ensuring it will stay in place during application and sponging.

As described above, apply grout liberally and use firm pressure in all directions. Sponging off the grout reveals dramatic changes in the appearance of the tile.

The finished tile will probably appear darker and/or more muted than the original due to coloration from the grout. This is normal and part of the charm of the process. The addition of black grout lines strengthens this composition greatly. Compare the photograph of *Idyll* before and after grouting.



5 Swan tile after grouting, showing altered glaze colors.



6 Carve grout lines deep enough to provide plenty of 'grab'.

Wide Lines

My goal in designing *Reverie* (see page 29) was to produce an effect similar to a stained glass window. Strong grout lines form an integral part of the composition much like lead lines do in stained glass.

Reverie is a multi-part tile assemblage measuring 12×17×½ inch. Its four press-molded sections have grooves approximately ¼-inch wide and ¼-inch deep to accept grout. The 20 border pieces are made separately from stiff clay slabs cut to size. I used a decorative stamp to impress a rose motif at the corners.

In this example, grout fills the grooves in the tiles, gaps between molded sections, details in the face and hair, as well as filling in the letters of *Reverie*—producing positive letters from a carved negative space.

For a multi-part project, all the glazed pieces must be adhered to a support before grouting. Suitable supports include plywood, mold resistant drywall, cement board, brick, and concrete. Depending on the support chosen, prep work may be involved, such as sanding painted surfaces. There are tile adhesives available for every need. Check your home center and follow the instructions provided with the adhesive. I prefer to use water-based adhesives, which give off less odor and are easier to clean up. Spacing between sections is an important consideration; it should be consistent and pleasing to the eye. Remember that gaps become dark filled in lines and play a big role in the final appearance of your project. Tile adhesive doesn't set up instantly so you have time to adjust the placement of individual pieces if you don't like the initial placement.



The cone 6 glaze-fired stoneware *Idyll* tile (10×8 in.), before adding grout to the incised lines.



Idyll after grouting. The black grout defines the different elements of the landscape.

Chinese Brush Painting

by Elizabeth Priddy



Egret Moon, is one in a series of tile paintings Elizabeth Priddy made using Chinese brush painting techniques.

Chinese brush painting uses specific brushes, brush strokes, and color loading methods. My painting has the character and color depth of traditional china painting but uses techniques of rice paper brush painting. I use true-color, blending underglazes on white stoneware clay and only one glaze firing is required. The painting itself is layered between a satin white base glaze and a glossy clear glaze, both of which must fit well with the clay body. After firing, the image looks as though it's trapped in glass. The painting stains the translucent glossy glaze, making an integrated surface that has more visual depth than paintings done over a matt slip.

Painting directly onto a base glaze also allows for easy erasing with a palette knife or a bamboo skewer. Since glaze particles are fine enough to lift away cleanly, the top layer of a tinted glaze or an individual section can be pulled away, revealing fine lines of white glaze. In contrast, engobes or slips leave ragged edges when the top painting is removed.

Commercial underglazes work like tubes of liquid watercolors. Paint with the underglazes straight from the jar. As you clean your brush between strokes, enough water remains for loading and blending the color. I use just seven colors to create the entire palette in my pieces: black, white, yellow, red, blue, dark green, and brown.

This technique can be adapted for oxidation or reduction firing and for temperature ranges from earthenware to stoneware. If you want to maintain optimal clarity of color, then use a white clay, zinc-free glazes, and fire the pieces in an electric kiln.

Brushes

The main component of brush painting is the special technique of mixing and blending color directly in an absorbent, natural hair, compound brush. Chinese bamboo mounted brushes come to perfect points that can be reshaped to create special effects or strokes. I use a variety of sizes and hair compositions. The round bamboo handle allows the brush to twirl and dance or be gripped tightly for miniscule detail work. The hair bundle is arranged in the ferrule with the very absorbent core hair and stiff hairs for spring at the center. Softer, smoother, oilier hair surrounds the core to retain moisture and direct the paint to the point. Hair varies by quality of absorption and color from goat to weasel, deer, fox, or horse. Flat goat hair *hake* brushes are used for washes and applying glaze. Many brushes marketed to potters are only good for base loaded grass and calligraphy marks. They do not have the springy quality that is necessary for bone and vertical stroke. Expect to pay about \$25 for the essential Chinese painting tool, the compound brush.

Strokes and Loads

I mainly use five strokes, four loads, and *dian* or shaped dots made with the brush tip. The five strokes are bone, grass, vertical, side, and calligraphy. The loads are base, five-color, moon, and bamboo. Base load is one color throughout the brush, five-color is a base of water, then each color loaded in sequence and proportionally, starting with the lightest color at the base of the brush and ending with the darkest color in the tip. The brush is flattened at the tip for the moon load and after loading the brush with one color, one edge of the tip is dipped in black. Bamboo load is the same as the moon load, only the black is dipped along both edges of a flattened brush and blended to make a shaded stroke resulting in a rounded tube mark; this is the load for the bone stroke, which looks like a short bone with rounded ends.



A hake brush is used for applying fields and washes of color. Two colors are loaded onto the brush and blended by brushing back and forth on a flat surface to create a fade.



For dimensional dots, select a brush that is large enough to cover half the width of the dot. Place the brush light side to the center and swirl the brush around to meet itself.



Edges of forms, banding, or dropped shadows are made with a moon load-ed, or half-bamboo stroke. It is made on a compound brush that is flattened before loading.



The bone stroke is used to show rounded or hollow forms. The load is dark on both sides of a flattened brush. Jiggle the brush to widen and finish the stroke at each end.



Grass strokes are for calligraphy and detailed line drawing. Even in simple drawing, variation in pressure of the point is used to create thick and thin lines within one stroke.



The marks across the top show how each color is added and blended into the brush for a five color load. The bottom stroke which is called a vertical stroke shows varied color and lines as the brush drags through.

Practice Makes Perfect

To begin, practice on rice paper with ink to get to know your brushes, loads, and strokes. Also, test on examples of your materials and try the stroke techniques before completing entire pieces.

When you're ready to start painting on clay, try starting with an image like the one of the egret and moon demonstrated here. Glaze a slab tile with the satin white glaze. Allow a space for the moon in the clay frame. Cover the moon area with a paper resist and wash in the sky and ground using a hake brush (*figure 1*).

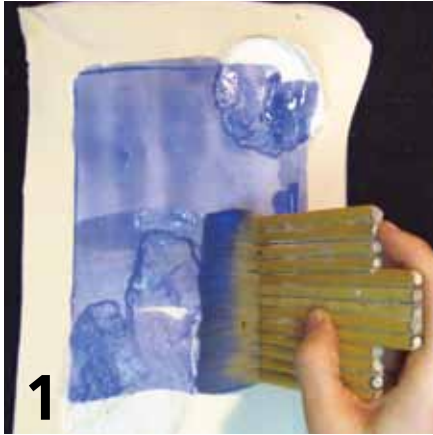
Paint the moon in using the moon load with white, yellow, and black. The clean side of the tip is presented to the interior of the moon shape and the black side is swept in a circle around the exterior to meet itself. This is a vertical stroke using a large brush equal to the size of the radius of the circle. This creates a dimensional dot. It's used for any fleshy shapes with fullness like eyes, grapes, cherries, moons, or rounded shells (*figure 2*).

Create the neck of the egret using a bamboo load with gray at the center and black edges. By applying pressure down and then lifting up part way, the head is formed and extended into the neck of the bird with one fluid vertical stroke. This defines the plumbing pipe shape of the neck that distinguishes an egret from a goose or a swan (*figure 3*). Each bird has a distinctive quality, usually it's the shape of the beak or plumage, but for egrets, it's their neck at rest.

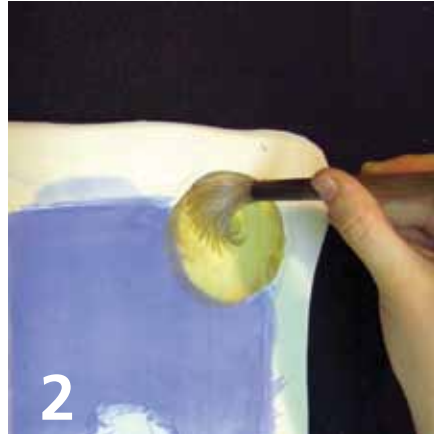
The body is a side stroke with a moon load. The clean side of the tip faces the interior of the body (*figure 4*).

The beak and eye are placed carefully using a three-color load of white, yellow, and black on a small brush and vertical strokes (*figure 5*).

Feathers are formed with the grass stroke. Dry the clean brush hair on a cloth and twist it to a gnarled head. Drag the splayed hairs through a wet, diluted, gray for a base load of just the tips of the brush. Place, then lift the brush in the same soft motion (*figure 6*). Define the legs last; scrape through the blue was to reveal the white glaze, then use linked bone strokes and a bamboo load. They



1 Paint a wash with a solid loaded hake brush over rice paper masks for the moon and egret shapes.



2 The brush is swept in a circle with the light yellow side to the center of the moon, creating a fade to the outside.



3 A bamboo loaded brush with white at the center and black edges, follows the form of the egret's head and neck.



4 A load of white fading to black in the tip rounds out the form of the belly of the bird with a side stroke.



5 A round vertical stroke with a moon load makes the eye. A five color load with a vertical stroke makes the beak.



6 Grass strokes make body feathers. Spread the brush into finger shapes to make multiple marks.



7 Blue is scraped back to reveal white for the legs. A small bone stroke and a bamboo load is used to position legs.



8 A combination of calligraphy strokes, dian and white scratch work refine the image.



9 Scratch in with a bamboo skewer to make white line work details for rocks, grass, and a snail.



Coat the painting with clear glaze. Move quickly and lightly.



An oil spot black glaze is painted over the black outline, creating a dark frame.

must be placed carefully to balance the weight of the completed bird (*figure 7*).

Lastly, use calligraphy strokes to refine the image and apply detail work in the form of dian or lively shaped dots made with the brush tip. Correct imperfect marks and add lines to the feathers, rocks, and the grass (*figure 8*). Then go back and do white scratch work to place highlights and apply white dian (*figure 9*).

Apply the top, sealing, clear glossy glaze with a hake brush in one clean swift stroke. Do not rub or hesitate as this will catch and lift the painting off instead of coating it (*figure 10*). **Tip:** You can also use a roller to apply the clear glaze.

Use an oil spot black glaze to create the frame around the image and then it is ready to fire to cone 7–8 in an electric kiln (*figure 11*).

Raku, gas, electric, and wood all require distinct adjustments, but I have found a way with every material set that I have tried. Each surprises me with its own unique quality and beauty.

Painting Styles

There are four basic styles of Chinese brush painting. *Baimiao* or line work, is most similar to Japanese *sumi-e* painting. *Gongbi*, or meticulous style, is the most common and familiar and is basic flower and bird painting. *Mogu*, or boneless style, uses no understructure of line work to compose. All shapes and forms come from the load and tone of the brush marks. There are at least 24 shapes of leaves and rocks required for mastery of this technique. While it is evaluated by the full use of the catalog of marks, it is the most free and loose style of painting. As it relies on fades and tonal variation to create form structure, this creates a problem in clay. The color generally stays true but its final intensity can



The finished piece, one in a series of paintings with this theme on tiles created with a moon pop-out in the frame.

vary according to glaze application or placement in the kiln. Because of this, I paint mainly in the boneless style and then add calligraphy, or line work. These “insurance strokes” guarantee that my compositions hold their structure even if some delicate marks recede during firing. As you practice, you become accomplished at every style, load, and stroke. The ultimate goal of practice with the brush is to pick and choose among those elements freely. When you can do this, it is called *Xieyi* or scholar’s style.

Colorful Earthenware Plates

by Kristin Pavelka



Tidbits and more! Kristin Pavelka's patterned plates may have different motifs, but the drawn shapes and layers of colorful satin glazes complement one another so well that they can be mixed and matched, just like your favorite appetizers.

I fell in love with red earthenware after viewing the Iranian sgraffito wares of the 11th and 12th centuries in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C. I enjoyed the casual application of glaze as it moved beyond its established etched boundaries or dripped down the sides of the outside wall. The pots displayed a depth and softness of surface that I was excited to utilize in my own work while putting a contemporary spin on these beautiful historical pots. My current work blends ideas from these Iranian wares as well as sugary confections, mid-century and Scandinavian patterns, personal surroundings, and the styling of Martha Stewart.

Decorating with Slip and Sgraffito

I slip my pots when they look dry but have a small bit of moisture in them. This allows for a relatively even coating of slip, yet it dries a bit slower giving me time to complete my sgraffito before the slip starts to chip when scratched. Because the slip dries quickly, I have to work fast to com-

plete my design, so I plan the patterns ahead of time in a sketchbook or by drawing with a soft pencil on the unslipped plate itself.

Once I've decided on a pattern, I can begin slipping. Holding the plate vertically, I pour the white slip onto the middle of the plate using a large ladle, turning the piece clockwise until the entire face is covered (*figure 1*). Keep the plate vertical until the slip drips have firmed, then rest the plate on the tabletop and allow the slip to dry for a few minutes until you can touch it without a fingerprint remaining, but while it still feels cold and damp.

Lightly draw a grid on the piece using a soft pencil, like a 2B. Breaking up the space symmetrically on a circular form is a quick and easy way to understand the space. I sometimes draw my pattern on the piece to double check the placement of key elements, but usually I draw directly with my sgraffito tool using just the grid as an aid for placing the design.

My sgraffito tool had a previous life as a dentistry tool and is thicker and duller than a standard needle tool. A long nail with a dull point is a good substitute. The line created is thicker than

an X-Acto blade or needle tool and can give a similar line quality as a standard-sized pencil lead. Medium pressure is exerted with the tool tip so that it scratches through the white slip and just barely digs into the red underlying clay (*figure 2*). I brush a stiff yet soft-bristled brush across the surface of the plate once the design is carved to clean up the edges of the incised lines as well to rid the surface of the slip crumbs (*figure 3*).

Finally, a Scotch Brite pad is lightly rubbed along the rim to help expose the red earthenware beneath. This final touch helps create a little more depth to the surface once it has gone through the glaze firing. **Note:** For all three of the above steps that create crumbles or fine powder, wear a mask and work over a bucket of water to minimize the amount of dust entering the air and to make clean-up easier.

Glazing by Numbers

I bisque fire to cone 01, then, to prepare the piece for glazing, give it a good shower under running water to clean any leftover sgraffito dust from the surface. Leave the piece to dry overnight. The first glaze application is much like a paint-by-number painting. Often using two tones of the same color, I'll load up a small brush with the darker tone and fill in the "pod" shapes. Little pressure is used when painting as the glaze should flow from the brush onto the bisque, eliminating brush strokes (*figure 4*). I fill the sgraffito lines with this first glaze, which helps eliminate pinholes in the glaze-fired impression. This first layer of glaze is left to dry several hours to overnight.



1 Pour white slip onto the middle of the plate, turning the piece clockwise until the entire face is covered.



2 Scratch through the slip so that the tool just barely digs into the underlying clay.



3 Brush the surface once the design is complete to clean up the edges of the incised lines.



4 Load up a small brush with the darker-toned glaze and fill in the pod shapes on the bisque-fired plate.

Recipes

Pete's Forgiving White Slip

Cone 04

Talc	40 %
Nepheline Syenite	10
OM4 Ball Clay	40
Silica	10
	<u>100 %</u>

This slip can be applied to leather-hard, bone dry, or bisqued clay.

Satin Base

Cone 04

Ferro Frit 3124	65.5 %
Nepheline Syenite	11.0
EPK Kaolin	5.5
Silica	18.0
	<u>100.0 %</u>

Add: Bentonite 2.0 %

I use Mason stains to color this glaze. For a dark yellow add 4% MS Vanadium Yellow 6440 and for the light yellow add 2.5% praseodymium yellow 6450. Light and dark pinks are 1% and 2% MS Crimson 6003.

Add an Epsom salt solution to the wet glaze to help keep it suspended. Add the Epsom salts to boiling water until the solution is supersaturated. Add 1 tsp at a time until the glaze changes from thin and watery to light and fluffy, or the materials no longer settle out. Use 1 tsp for a 1000 gram batch and 3-4 tsp for a 5-gallon bucket.

Worthington Clear

Cone 04

Gerstley Borate	55 %
EPK Kaolin	30
Silica	15
	<u>100 %</u>

I use this base glaze along with colorants to create my red and orange glazes. (Used with 10% Degussa orange stain for orange dots on the plates on page 17.)

Kat Red

Cone 04

Wollastonite	13.7 %
Ferro Frit 3195	42.5
EPK Kaolin	23.5
Silica	10.7
	<u>100.0 %</u>

Add: Bentonite 2.0 %
Degussa Bright Red stain 12.0 %

This is an opaque, fat-looking satin glaze, used to make the dots on my plates.

"Frosting" Maiolica

Cone 04

Ferro Frit 3195	54.8 %
F4 Feldspar (Minspar 200)	14.3
Georgia Kaolin	4.5
Nepheline Syenite	5.2
EPK Kaolin	4.5
Zircopax	16.7
	<u>100.0 %</u>

This glaze has the look of marshmallow when layered on top of my other glazes.

The second, lighter tone of glaze is then poured on the plate in a similar fashion to the white slip—rotating a vertically-held plate clockwise while pouring the glaze in the middle of the piece (*figure 5*). This second coat is left to dry.

The final glazes are now ready to be applied to the dots using a small soft brush or a fingertip. I can usually see a light indentation of the sgraffito dot through the poured glaze to use as a guide for dot placement. If I am unable to determine where to place my dot within the design, I sometimes guess and other times fire the piece and then apply the dots to the fired glaze and refire. The final dots are made up of a lighter-toned large dot with a smaller dark toned dot on top (*figure 6*).

The dry, glazed piece is fired to cone 04, held at that temperature for 15 minutes and then fired down to cone 010 before being turned off. This schedule helps to produce a nice satiny finish to the glaze surface.



Once the first glaze is dry, apply a coat of a lighter-toned satin glaze using the same technique as for pouring the slip.



Apply the accent glazes, starting with the lighter glaze, and finishing with small dots of darker glaze.

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