

# Inlaying Slips

The ancient Japanese art of Mishima – inlaying slips – needs patience and a steady hand, but enables the creating of fine lines of contrasting color and yields elegant results.

## MAKING COLORED SLIPS:

Using a Cuisinart or blender, “puree” approximately 1 cup of colored clay with about 1/3 C of water. The resulting slip should have the consistency of a very thick cream, and not have any lumps in it. Add more water to thin if necessary.



- 1) Use ware that is at the leatherhard stage. Use a sharp knife or other incising tool to softly incise a flowing line, then widen the line into a V-shaped groove that is deep enough to hold your slip.
- 2) Fill the groove with slip, compressing it slightly to make sure that the groove is full.
- 3) Let the ware and slip dry/stiffen slightly, and then scrape the excess slip back with a razor blade to reveal a crisp line that is level with the surface of the ware.
- 4) Continue cleaning with a sponge, removing all traces of the colored slip.
- 5) After Bisque Firing, clean/rub the surface under water (no dust) with emery paper.

# Sgraffito

Sgraffito simply means scratching or drawing into clay. It comes from the Italian *graffiare*, to scratch. Sgraffito is done through an application of surface color revealing the clay body beneath. The color coating can be slip or other oxide colorant. A variety of instruments, from metal loop-ended tools, wooden modeling tools, skewers, metal points, needles, etc, can be used to draw through the colored surface, revealing the clay body beneath.



- 1) Apply slip to the surface of your leatherhard piece: For even application to wheel-thrown pieces or round objects, center your piece on a banding wheel and apply your slip to the surface.
- 2) Allow the slip surface to dry a bit.
- 3) Use a sharp tool to draw fine lines which cut through the surface color to the clay beneath.

Helpful tidbit: Before attempting a design on your final piece, practice “drawing” on a test tile or piece of clay. See how your different tools cut different lines. Get the feel of how much pressure you need to use, how deep you need to cut, and how “dry” your surface needs to be.