

Ceramic Contemporaries 4

Note: These teachers' notes and suggested activities are designed to help students and teachers engage with the exhibition and to be the starting point for some simple ceramic based projects back at school. They are not intended as a comprehensive guide for teaching ceramics. If you need further information, there are several excellent "How to do it" books on Ceramics. Check your local library or bookshop. We would recommend the following book; "Two-in-one Manuals, Ceramics" by Steve Mattison, published by Apple in 1998, ISBN 1-84092-179-X. It is well illustrated with clear, easy to understand instructions and a good range of simple starter projects to try out.

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About this exhibition

What is *Ceramic Contemporaries 4*?

Ceramic Contemporaries 4 was organised by the National Association of Ceramics in Higher Education (nache) in collaboration with Aberystwyth Arts Centre. It is the latest in a series of triennial exhibitions intended to support ceramists early in their careers, and is often considered to be a 'snapshot' of a new generation in ceramics. The exhibition generally attracts press coverage and many past exhibitors have now become prominent in their field. Further information about past *Ceramic Contemporaries* exhibitions is available from the nache web site.

How *Ceramic Contemporaries 4* was selected

Ceramic Contemporaries is open to current students and recent graduates up to five years after completing any clay-based course in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Each applicant submits up to 6 slides of their work, and an independent panel of selectors is invited to choose the exhibition from these slides. There were 275 applications to *Ceramic Contemporaries 4*. The selectors were: critic and writer Tanya Harrod, artist Andrew Lord, senior designer at Wedgwood Keely Traae, and writer and potter Edmund de Waal. The selection process was 'blind'; i.e. the selectors had no access to names or origins of applicants. The catalogue includes short reports by the selectors.

Thinking about ceramics: material properties

When looking at a piece of ceramics, there are material properties to take into account, particularly the type of clay and the surface effects. (See glossary for definitions of commonly used terms.) In the ceramics world, as in other creative arenas, modes, methods and materials come in and go out of fashion. At the moment porcelain clay is a much-used material, and slip-casting is a popular making method.

It is often helpful to have some idea how and why a piece was made - the makers' statements in the catalogue give some useful insight on this.

Touch is an important aspect of our appreciation of ceramics and some museums and galleries have handling collections to help pupils gain experience in touching a range of different clay objects. All the objects in this exhibition have tactile surfaces. Although they cannot actually handle them, pupils can be encouraged to imagine how they might feel by remembering familiar objects: a favourite mug for instance, a teacup, or a pottery bowl.

Thinking about ceramics: self-expression and process

The question of self-expression, or expressiveness, is a complicated one in ceramics. The importance of technique and process sets it at variance from, say, expressive painting which can seem to be a direct out-pouring of the maker's state of mind. Even if a maker handles the raw clay in an immediate, expressive way, their work must undergo the firing process. They must anticipate the changes that will happen in the kiln. Ceramics are generally fired twice. The first firing is known as the biscuit firing and results in a hard blank object. Next the surface effects are applied, sometimes followed by a layer of glaze that will give a transparent, glossy finish. The

object is then fired for the second time, after which it will normally be ready to use. This is the traditional method. A wide range of surface effects, often experimental, employing many different materials, can be seen in *Ceramic Contemporaries 4*. Some makers fire their work many times in order to attain particular effects.

Thinking about ceramics: the ‘art/craft debate’

Ceramic works are variously categorised as ‘art’ or ‘craft’, according to how they are made, used and displayed. What are the implications of labelling objects in this way? For many people, ‘craft’ implies something made by a time-honoured method, using traditional materials. We might think of a wicker basket. Such an object has associations with nature and the rural, rather than the urban, environment. Nowadays it is generally accepted that ‘art’ *represents* something - whether it be real things, or ideas, or simply a state of mind. In theory at least, there is no limit to the forms that art can take, nor to the materials that it can employ. Broadly speaking, craft is made to be used; art is made to be contemplated. The intellectual aspect of the art object means that it often attracts higher status - and higher prices - than the craft object. Many of the exhibits here are for sale, and a maker’s prices can give an indication of the way they expect their work to be regarded. At £350 and £400, for example, Elly Wall’s cylindrical vessels are unlikely to be used principally as containers.

Discussing the works in the *Ceramic Contemporaries 4* exhibition

Ceramic Contemporaries 4 shows a huge range of works in different sizes, with all sorts of materials and surface effects used. They can be roughly sorted into the following categories or ‘genres’.

- * Tableware and other functional forms
- * Vessel forms
- * Sculptural forms, including figurative sculpture
- * Other forms, such as conceptual and installation work

We have chosen individual pieces for further discussion in order to expand on the categories given above, and to introduce a number of related themes and issues, which teachers can adapt and introduce as appropriate for different key stages.

Knowledge and Understanding: Tableware and other ‘functional’ works

Most people, whatever their age, will be familiar with the concept of tableware. We handle it every day; it is the commonest ceramic ‘genre’. While the exhibition includes relatively little traditional tableware, there are some interesting alternative approaches on display. Ceramics also play a functional role in architecture. Tiles for instance have a very long history and they are still much used nowadays. They can be decorative, as in Victorian fireplace surrounds, and/or practical, as in bathrooms.

Look at:

Brenda Fee’s bowl and plate. **Material:** porcelain. **Technique:** slip casting. Unusually for tableware, this also has landscape qualities, with the small bowl nestling in a hollow of the undulating plate like a building tucked into a hillside. What

kind of food would be eaten from a plate and bowl like this? The question encourages pupils to think imaginatively about the rituals of the table, ethnicity (the design perhaps suggests oriental foods), current food fashions - even the phenomenon of 'celebrity chefs'.

Look at:

Graham Hudson's bottles, mugs and bowl. **Material:** semi-porcelain **Technique:** slip casting.

These are much more like familiar everyday ceramic objects. Their simple shapes reflect the way they will be used. In other words, their form is dictated by their function. Their surfaces - shiny glaze at the top and matt terracotta at the bottom - make for ease of handling.

Look at:

Hanne Rysgaard's bowls and containers. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** slip casting.

These have printed panels in floral chintzes reminiscent of textiles and country house interiors. At the same time, some of their plain shapes recall plastic 'tupperware' products. This collision of styles makes Rysgaard's work look anything but old-fashioned.

Look at:

Justin Marshall's tile panels. **Material:** earthenware. **Technique:** computerised method.

Tiles are generally square and often illustrated with coloured images such as flowers and patterns, but these are hexagonal and textured with three different geometric designs. Designed and cut out using computer technology, they can be re-arranged into a series of simple house shapes with differently angled roofs.

Knowledge and Understanding: Playing on function

Some makers play on the notion of function - in other words, their works are unlikely to be used in the traditional, everyday sense, but we bring an understanding of traditional use to our appreciation of them. Works like these might lead us to consider the nature of function itself. Is there such a thing as 'aesthetic function'? Do human beings have a need to display objects? If we look around our own homes, we are likely to encounter items that seem to serve no useful function. What are they? Why are they there? These are themes that can engage the interest of pupils at all key stages.

Look at:

Jeremy Nichols' teapots **Material:** stoneware **Technique:** thrown on the wheel.

These have a real work-a-day feeling; we associate both the solid body and the salt-glazed surface with objects that will be subjected to heavy use - wine jars, jugs etc. - while the shape is reminiscent of an oil can. But would they be convenient for making a pot of tea?

Look at:

Paul McAllister's *A Certain Syrup*. **Material:** stoneware. **Technique:** slip casting and assemblage.

At first glance these animated, Disney-esque pieces might seem functional. But look again: how much liquid could they actually hold? They are an assemblage of components. slip-cast from found objects.

Look at:

Yardena Kuralkar's untitled pieces. **Material:** paperclay **Technique:** thrown on the wheel, hand-built and altered.

With their fragmented textured surfaces, these are expressive rather than functional. They would probably leak, and yet they draw undeniably on jug forms.

Look at:

Trevor Hogan's 'teapots'. **Material:** stoneware. **Technique:** press-moulded.

Hogan has taken a teapot apart and put it together again. Thus he has abstracted the separate elements of a normal teapot. Can pupils identify the different parts?

Knowledge and Understanding: Vessel forms

The word 'vessel' describes a container, and as discussed, traditionally ceramics are used to contain food, liquids etc. However, as we have seen, the notion of the vessel can lead to works that will not be used in this way. They are more likely to be displayed and appreciated for their aesthetic qualities, and they constitute a particular genre within ceramics.

Look at:

Geoff Wilcock's **Material:** porcelain **Technique:** thrown on the wheel and textured.

These careful, textured surfaces have a quiet beauty, like patterns in wind-blown sand, or woven linen.

Look at:

Martin Lungley's 'Drift'. **Material:** porcelain with additions **Technique:** thrown on the wheel and altered.

Creamy and sensuous with a luscious buttery sweep on the inside, this has a graceful, effortless look, although it was made - rather unromantically - by compressing a thrown cylinder and packing it in sludgy clay.

Look at:

Elly Wall's cylindrical vessels. **Material:** T-material **Technique:** coiled

Here the clay seems to act like a canvas, and there is a sense in which these two pieces can be regarded as three-dimensional paintings. At the same time, they have been individually hand-built - not thrown on the wheel or slip cast - so that the clay retains a certain irregularity: it is not completely smooth. Even when coloured over, such peculiarities of surface recall the touch of the maker's hand and add something to the work.

Look at:

Taryn Childs' 'Mayone'. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** coiled and burnished
Childs has been living in East Africa, and is influenced by traditional African ceramics, such as water jars and other domestic wares, made by the coiling method and given deep burnished surfaces. In less technological, non-western societies making ceramics is almost always women's work and a number of themes and issues can be raised when looking at this piece. For younger pupils explain the references to African pots, and discuss the visual qualities that recall them. For older pupils (key stages 4 and above), expand the discussion to include notions of ethnicity and gender. Which types of objects might we associate with men, and which with women?

Knowledge and Understanding: Sculptural forms: figures, creatures and other subjects from the 'real' world

The word 'sculpture' is used to describe three-dimensional works of art. But whether or not we 'read' an object as sculpture often depends on where we encounter it. It might be argued that all the works on show in *Ceramic Contemporaries 4* can be regarded as sculpture simply by virtue of being displayed in an art gallery. A pot on a plinth is viewed differently to a pot on a kitchen table. The gallery setting calls for a particular kind of attention.

The human figure

The human figure has always been a principal subject for art, and the figurative works in *Ceramic Contemporaries 4* show a range of different approaches.

Sculptures and ornaments

What is the difference between a sculpture and an ornament? Questions of social and cultural status are raised. Ornaments may be three dimensional, but they are usually associated with the 'private' domestic interior, and because of this they are not seen as capable of addressing significant 'public' ideas.

Look at:

Eileen Newell's carved and modelled busts. **Material:** crank **Technique:** carved and modelled.

This work displays many of the characteristics associated with high art (and high taste). It is the epitome of serene classical beauty. These are not portraits, but idealised forms - more perfect than reality.

Look at:

John Blackwell's 'Osmosis'. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** hand built.

With elements of the self-portrait, this piece is anything but idealised. Instead it seems to express a state of mental turmoil. Indeed, John Blackwell explains that, after building up the basic 'skin' of the head and face, he 'tried to create all the features by pushing from inside this 'skin' so that the final image would appear to have been formed by forces working below the surface.'

Look at:

Natasha Mayo's female nude. **Material:** 'White St Thomas' clay **Technique:** hand built and modelled.

Mayo aims to 'expressively render flesh and skin.' The surfaces of her female nude are not intended to accurately represent human flesh, but to 'express something of its nature'. For older pupils, her work lends itself well to discussion on issues concerning the representation of the female body. These could include contrasting the nude with the pin-up, and the debate surrounding fashion and media images of women. (Compare with the paintings of Jenny Saville).

Look at:

Carole Windham's 'Proud to be Shits'. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** slip cast.

This celebration of the artists Gilbert and George raises the question of good and bad, high and low taste in a very direct way. It is a contemporary version of familiar eighteenth and nineteenth century Staffordshire 'flatback' figures that were made to sit on a mantelpiece. We might think that because Windham's work can be rather

'naughty' ('Proud to be Shits' shows the artists sitting on toilets, and the piece stands on casts of her own faeces) they have little in common with historical ceramic ornaments. It is worth remembering however, that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ceramics manufacturers responded to the popular culture of their day, and many ornaments represented contemporary celebrities.

Look at:

Mike Amorelli's 'Great Big Fancy'. **Material:** casting slip for sanitary ware
Technique: slip cast

Although not so risky as 'Proud to be Shits' in terms of its subject matter, this huge slice of cheese is on a similar wavelength. It is an irreverent object that ignores the conventions of taste. For A level pupils, 'Great Big Fancy' can be compared to Pop Art. (See, for example, the work of Claes Oldenberg.)

Look at:

Ed Silverton's 'St Edward the Confessor'. **Material:** mixed clays **Technique:** hand built.

This has child-like qualities. Its form is simplified; its colours are primary, but it is too big for the mantle-piece. How would we categorise it?

Look at:

Nicola Fowler's 'Victory' and 'Mini Subs'. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** press moulded and slab work.

With their bright paper flags, their lines of rivets and their colourful weathered surfaces these whimsical submarines have a cheerful, toy-like quality. Who will play with them, and how?

Look at:

Terence Casey's 'Fallen Angel' and 'In Passing'. **Material:** porcelain **Technique:** hand-moulded.

The quiet purity of Terence Casey's creatures has something to do with the translucent porcelain from which they are made. What feelings do these small bodies, with their delicate bones and feathers, evoke in the viewer? Are pupils fascinated or repelled?

Look at:

Akira Koike Curtis's 'Small wire horse'. **Material:** various clays, wire, beads etc.
Technique: constructed in mixed media

Trailing wire tendrils lend a sense of movement to this animal form, which is sketched in clay fragments. What makes it a horse? Ask pupils to analysis the different elements of the piece. How do they 'read' a work like this?

Knowledge and Understanding: Abstract sculptural forms

Before the twentieth century sculpture, like other art forms, was almost always representational. In other words, it gave the audience something they could recognise from the 'real' world. With the development of abstract art, the possibilities for sculptural forms increased enormously. Rather than representing some 'real' subject, the focus is on the 'formal' qualities of the work, such as: shape, space, line, tone, colour, pattern and texture. In a sense, every work of art depends on the organisation of abstract qualities by the maker. We might say that an artist has developed an

intuitive sense of balance - persevering with a work until the configuration of shapes within it satisfies the eye, or produces the desired effect.

Looking at abstract art can be closely allied to pupils' study of mathematics. Their knowledge of basic geometrical shapes - the square, the circle, the triangle and so on - can be used and expanded to encourage recognition and appreciation of the various shapes that surround them in the exhibition. The differences between regular and irregular shapes can be discussed and connected to the effects they produce. Such activity, particularly for younger pupils, nurtures the ability to concentrate on looking, and all visual art depends on this. In fact, even when looking at the most abstract of works, most people experience an urge to organise what they see into coherent shapes, and if at all possible to find, or at least be reminded of, a recognisable subject. Although simplistic, this may well be as good a starting point as any for discussion.

Look at:

Sarah Bosworth's untitled works. **Material:** earthenware **Technique:** slip cast.

These pieces have proved popular with younger children, who are interested in their futuristic, science fiction appearance. They began as an assemblage of ordinary objects; can pupils identify the different components?

Look at:

Nicholas Lees's untitled works. **Material:** casting slip with various additions **Technique:** hand built.

Nicholas Lees aims to challenge our preconceptions about clay objects. He does this by altering the material itself, mixing various things into the clay to produce a different looking coarse texture. Gold and silver leaf has been applied to some of the surfaces, giving them a gleaming metallic finish. The shapes are strong and striking.

Look at:

Sarah Tanner's 'Three Tall Lined Vessels' **Material:** semi-porcelain slip **Technique:** slip cast.

Sarah Tanner lives by the sea, and this influences the look of her tall cylindrical forms. The close horizontal lines that cover their surfaces are intended to evoke a feeling of movement - recalling the rhythm of the tides.

Look at:

Rebecca Catterall's 'Chartreuse Tubiform' and 'Cup' **Material:** stoneware **Technique:** slab built.

The repetition of a single shape or form can produce interesting abstract effects. These pieces have been built up by joining together simple triangles of clay, much like a quilted surface.

Look at:

Barnaby Barford's 'Ctrl, Alt, Del'. **Material:** stoneware **Technique:** slip cast.

The title refers to a computer keyboard (Ctrl, Alt, and Delete are the keys that one uses to 'log on' and begin working) and Barnaby Barford has used computer technology to design a twisted shape, which was then repeated many times over. How does the repetition change the way we read the sculpture? Taken singly, each piece might remind us of a vase, or vessel form. But altogether they add up to something different. A mountainous landscape perhaps, or industrial chimneys?

Knowledge and Understanding: different ways of working

Some of the objects in *Ceramic Contemporaries 4* do not fit neatly into any of the traditional categories that we associate with work in clay. Such pieces take their cue from the contemporary art world, where different ways of working, such as conceptual art and installations have become commonplace. Conceptual art means that the artist chooses the material that she/he feels most suitable for expressing her/his ideas. This is a basic underlying principle: the idea is paramount. Installation art and conceptual art have much in common, in that both tend to focus on ideas, but installation art is made specifically for a particular exhibition space and relies on that space to complete it. In other words, we 'read' it where we find it, and if it were installed elsewhere, not only would it look different, but its meaning might alter. However, appreciating this sort of work only depends in part on 'reading' it in a particular way; it can of course be enjoyed simply for its beauty.

Look at:

Emilie Taylor's 'First Blood'. Material: earthenware **Technique:** slip cast.

Emilie Taylor does not class herself as a ceramist, but as an artist/sculptor. The title of her work gives a first clue as to the concerns that inspired it. 'First Blood' immediately evokes some significant event, and she is interested in rites of passage: first-time hunters daubed with blood from the kill; first menstruation; the Last Supper; the first communion. These themes are embodied in the rich red surfaces of her thirteen horned vessels (the number itself having superstitious significance, of course).

Look at:

Fiona Meagher's 'Lid Dresses'. Material: porcelain and bone china **Technique:** slip cast and constructed.

These dress skeletons are made up of casts of container lids strung together. Fiona Meagher is fascinated by the way people collect objects, and by how quite ordinary items can become more interesting as part of a collection. She thought about 'the burden of carrying around everything you collect, and so came to making garments: heavy and confining, yet alluring, even captivating.' At the same time, the dress form itself raises questions of gender and identity. (This work also offers stimulating possibilities for innovative costume design.)

Look at:

Marian Anderson's 'Installation 2001'. Material: porcelain **Technique:** slip cast and constructed.

'Installation 2001' is made up of delicate porcelain spheres hanging from a metal grid which is fixed to the gallery walls. The ideas behind it are to do with inter-personal relationships, and how 'each person is connected to the universe and each other in an inextricable way.' Marian Anderson is reluctant to explain her work too much however, for fear of hampering the viewer's own response.

Look at:

Basil Olton's 'Black Light White'. Material: porcelain, lace and metal **Technique:** hand built and constructed.

This grand, chandelier-like installation is made of small ceramic pieces strung in 'freeform clusters' from a metal hoop with a lace skirt. Like Marian Anderson's installation, it has a strong visual presence, but it also expresses the maker's ideas. Basil Olton is concerned with social inequalities. He takes the chandelier as a 'symbol of opulence' for those in power, which becomes a 'symbol of oppression' for the underdog. Viewed from this perspective, the delicate hanging fragments might

begin to take on a more sinister meaning. With older pupils, discuss how objects can be symbolic in this way. Further discussion might focus on how knowing the maker's intentions (sometimes just a title is enough) might (or might not) affect the way we understand a work.

Working with clay and clay-like materials

One of the main problems with clay work is the drying out of the clay. Unfinished clay work can be kept fresh if it is well wrapped in plastic bags. (Clay objects that are not fired will dry out and gradually deteriorate, this process can be retarded by a coat of diluted PVA, which also makes a good base for painted decoration.) Clearly it is desirable to fire pupils' work in clay; if there are no facilities on the premises, it might be possible to come to some arrangement with a local secondary school, FE college etc., where there is a kiln. It is not necessary to glaze pupils' clay work if it is purely decorative. After one 'biscuit' firing it can be painted. However, if the work is functional, a mug for example, which pupils want to use, it will have to be glazed.

Modelling

Clay, commercially available 'clay type' preparations, plasticine, playdough etc., can all be used for modelling. As pupils become more experienced in these media, they will improvise tools to suit the effect they want. It will be useful to have a selection of potential tools on hand - like old cutlery and sticks. When clay models are to be kiln fired, care should be taken that the clay is not more than about 1" thick. If models are thicker than this, they should be hollowed out, otherwise they may explode in the kiln. Also, make sure work has dried out completely before going in the kiln. Moisture can also cause work to explode.

Joining Clay

If you push two soft bits of clay together, they will usually stick together and appear to be joined. However, this is really just the moisture in the clay holding it together, and often once it has dried out it will come apart. Even if it survives the firing it will probably be a weak join. To give a good join, score the surfaces of the two pieces of clay with a sharp tool and brush on sticking slip - the clay you are using mixed with water. Carefully press the two together. Wipe away any excess slip and smooth over

the join with a modelling tool.

Slab building

Slab building is another way of constructing three-dimensional forms with clay. Sheets of clay are rolled out like pastry between two “rolling guides” - flat pieces of wood, the same thickness. (NB. roll clay out on a piece of cloth, otherwise it will stick to the board or tabletop.) Shapes are then cut out and joined together using slip. Both edges to be joined should be scored before applying the slip, then brought together and pressed carefully. Paper templates are useful for preparing different shapes in slab work.

If pupils are making a curved or circular form with the slab, they should be able to use it as soon as it has been rolled out, though they might need some sort of “former” such as a rolling pin (see project 3) to give support. If they are making something with flat sides such as a square pot, they will have to allow the clay to become “leather hard” before using. This can be achieved either by leaving the clay exposed for a few hours, or if this isn’t possible, by leaving it on a board loosely wrapped in polythene for a longer period. How long this takes depends on the clay used, temperature of the room etc. You may want to do a couple of tests yourself before working with a group.

Using moulds

Another way of forming clay is in moulds. A traditional mould is made out of plaster and allowed to dry, then it is lined with fresh clay. Biscuit fired clay can also be used to make moulds. Other materials, such as plastic bowls, can also be used, but care should be taken to powder the surface of the mould, or line it with cloth or paper, so that the wet clay does not stick. As the clay dries it shrinks away from the mould and can be tipped out easily.

Slip casting

Slip casting is the technique used to produce tableware in Industry. For example, virtually any mug you buy in a general china shop will have been made using this technique. First, clay is made into a casting slip. A deflocculant is added – a chemical which means the clay needs less water to become runny. This helps the casting process. The slip is then poured into a plaster of paris mould and left to stand for a period of time. The plaster absorbs the water, and the slip starts to form a “skin” or “layer” where it touches the plaster. The slip in the middle stays runny. Once this “skin” is thick enough to form the pot, the runny slip inside is poured out and the mould left to drain. The pot will then shrink away from the mould and can be carefully removed. Because the clay is used in a liquid state, very complicated shapes can be made using this technique. The mould can be used many times so multiple copies of the same object can be produced.

Health and Safety

As with many subjects, there are health and safety considerations with Ceramics. Some materials can be dangerous if used incorrectly. However, as long as proper working practises are followed the subject is safe. If using clay for the first time, contact your education authority - they may have their own guidelines for working with ceramics. If not, we would recommend the following general precautions and that you contact your supplier for further information / guidance.

The danger comes from inhaling or ingesting certain materials and tends to be cumulative. It is very important then, that good, safe working practises are established from the start.

The most important danger to be aware of is dust, either from clay, glaze or decorating materials. "Good Housekeeping" is essential. Make sure that all tools and work surfaces are well washed down after use. Children should wear aprons which are cleaned regularly. Always use wet cleaning processes - ie, mopping and washing rather than sweeping and dusting. If glaze or slip is spilt, mop it up immediately before it dries. At the end of a session, don't sweep the floor - mop it.

Never eat, drink or smoke in the workshop.

Always wash hands at the end of the session, or before eating or drinking.

If you are mixing up any dry materials like a glaze or plaster of paris, always wear a mask. Always add the powder to the water rather than the other way round as this creates less dust.

If possible, use ready mixed decorating slips, glazes etc., and check that the suppliers recommend them for use with children.

If using an earthenware glaze, choose a lead free one.

For information on specific materials contact the supplier who will be able to advise you and supply you with a c.o.s.h.h form if appropriate.

It is assumed that anyone loading and firing a kiln will have been adequately trained to use it.

Making Activities

Note: For Primary Schools without ceramics facilities. it is always worth approaching your local secondary schools to see if they have facilities and would be prepared to fire, (put through the kiln), the work for you.

Most of the projects have deliberately been kept simple to enable teachers with no experience of ceramics to “have a go”, and be able to use them with younger children. It is expected that teachers with experience, or those who work with older pupils, will use the activities as a starting point and develop them as appropriate, or plan their own projects. The exhibition covers an extremely wide range of ceramic techniques and styles, and is an excellent starting point for numerous projects and ways of working.

These activities are intended for art teachers / classes. However, ceramics also provides wonderful opportunities for cross-curricular activities, so you may be able to use the exhibition as a starting point for other subject areas. For example; history – some of the oldest artefacts discovered are pots, and most primitive civilisations used them; science – clays and glazes are formulated from raw materials, and heat changes them.

We recommend that you read the “Working with clay and clay-like materials” and “Health and Safety” sections before starting the making activities.

For Schools without Ceramics Facilities

Project 1. Assemblages / Abstract Constructions

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and up. The project is adaptable for many ages – for younger children, offer a small range of objects, and stick to very simple construction techniques. For older children, the range of objects can be much wider and construction more complicated.

The aim of this project is to get the children to develop building skills, and to understand that seemingly separate pieces can be brought together to make one piece of work.

Note, the pupils are going to make a 3 dimensional piece of work. Flat pieces of art such as drawings and paintings are 2 dimensional - ie, they only have two dimensions; height and width. An object or a sculpture can be seen from all sides and is 3 dimensional – ie, it has three dimensions; height, width and depth. Most of the work in the exhibition, and ceramics in general, is 3 dimensional.

Materials needed

- Paper
- Paints
- Glue
- Scrap objects – as many as possible
- PVA

Stage 1

Visit exhibition. If possible, Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. Look particularly at the work of:

Sarah Bosworth

Trevor Hogan

Paul McAllister

Fiona Meagher

And the installation work of:

Marion Anderson

Basil Olton

The students should study the work and make some record drawings. Draw their attention to the fact that the work can be broken down into sections which the artist has joined together to make one piece of work. If the sections are not physically joined, ask the students to consider what it is that makes them realise this is one piece of work. Also, get the children to discuss what the difference between 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional work is.

Back at School

Cardboard / Scrap Sculpture

Gather lots of scrap objects; inside of toilet rolls, old cardboard boxes, egg boxes, cotton reels, match boxes, bits of wood etc,

Give the students a selection of objects and ask them to study them carefully. See if any of them remind them of body parts in any way – heads, arms, eyes etc., either on their own or when combined with one of the other objects. (They may need encouragement in this! Show them some examples – ie, a cornflake box may not look like a head on it's own, but with two buttons for eyes, and a comb for a mouth, it starts to suggest a head). Then ask them to construct a figurative sculpture using appropriate pieces.

Use colour to pull all the separate pieces together. If you mix a small amount of PVA with the paint it will help it adhere to surfaces and also give it a sheen. (Remember to wash brushes immediately after use.) Alternatively, you could use spray paint, which will cover the whole object more easily. Once painted, you should start to look at the object as a “Whole” rather than something which has been made up of separate parts.

Further study

Sculpture made using found objects and other non-traditional materials developed during the 20th Century in art movements such as Cubism and Dada. Look at the sculpture of Picasso.

“Bull’s Head”, 1942

“Still Life”, 1914

and Marcel Duchamp

“Bicycle Wheel”, 1913

Project 2. Design a plate.

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and up

Note: You could try this project with key stage 1 pupils, working in small groups. Get them to do simple painted patterns on their sheets. Then get them to paint their favourite on a paper plate, without bothering with the papier mache stage.

The aim of this project is to get the pupils to do a design for a piece of tableware.

Materials needed

Paper
Pencils
Paints
Sponges
PVA
Scissors
Newspaper
Paper plate and cup

Stage 1

Visit exhibition. If possible, Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. Students should look at the work and make record sketches. Encourage the pupils to collect visual images of “patterns” in the exhibition

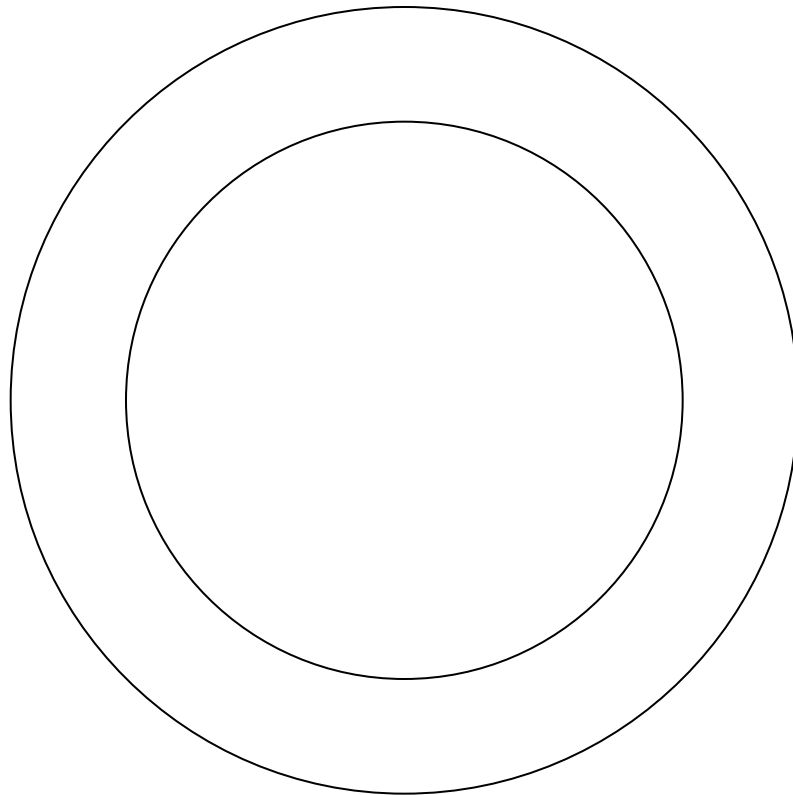
Back at school.

Paints should be fairly thick. You can mix a bit of PVA with the paint to help with the consistency. It will also give the paint a “sheen” when it dries. Using their drawings as a source, students should section up a sheet of paper and do a series of tests using the following decorating techniques:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Painting. | Go for bold bright colours. Practice making various marks and patterns using different shaped and size brushes. Think about how easy it will be to repeat any images / patterns chosen. |
| Sponging | build up layers of paint with a sponge. Sponges can also be cut into a shape such as fish, and students can “print” repeat images with this. |
| Stencilling | Cut a paper stencil and lay it on the paper. Holding it with one hand, gently brush or sponge colour over the top. |
| Sgraffito | Apply a thick layer of paint to the paper. Use the end of a pencil or pen to scratch through the paint to show the paper underneath – don’t press too hard! |

If the pupils use the same basic image each time, for example, a fish, the variation in technique will be more obvious

Stage 2.



Make up two sheets with the above image.
One sheet should have a smaller version repeated, the other just one larger image.
Hand out to the students

Referring to their drawings from the gallery and their design sheets from the last session, students should select the technique/s and image they feel would be most appropriate to use to decorate the plate. They need to decide whether or not they wish to use the same image in the centre of the plate and on the rim. They should also think about how easy their design would be to repeat, if they were making a dinner set. Use the sheet with the smaller plates on to test the different designs and then do the final version on the large one.

Stage 3

Buy some paper plates and cups. Stick a piece of cardboard on to the cup to make a handle. Cover both with several layers of papier mache to build up thickness and strength. Once dry, the plate and mug are ready to decorate. Paint the final design identified in Stage 2 on to the plate. Then get the students to adapt the design so it will fit on the mug. Get them to consider how designs change once applied to a 3 dimensional object. Bring in some examples of household tableware to help them with this, or look at project 3 - wallpaper vases. Once finished, varnish. It will look like a glaze.

Note: The plate and mug will be for decorative purposes only - not to be used!

Project 3 - Wallpaper patterned pots

Suitable for all Key Stages.

This is a very simple project designed to get pupils to understand how a pattern can change once it is applied to a three dimensional form, and also how that three dimensional form can appear to be changed once it has a pattern or texture applied to it. This is something people who work in ceramic have to consider.

Materials needed

Patterned / textured paper / old wallpaper sample books, or large sheets of sugar paper, various colours
 Scissors
 Glue - prit stick is ideal
 A “former” to roll the paper around to make the cylinder - washing up bottle / rolling pin / stiff cardboard roll etc.
 Pens, pencils, ruler

Stage 1

Get some large sheets of thickish paper with a strong pattern on it. Wallpaper is ideal. Note: Decorating shops will often let you have their old sample books, which are ideal as they will give a variety of patterns / textures for the pupils to try.

Alternatively, you could get the pupils to make their own design using strips of thin paper glued onto a sheet of sugar paper.

Give each pupil a large sheet of paper. Each pupil is going to make 3 paper cylinders, all the same size, and from the same original sheet of paper. However, each should look different because of the pattern.

Pupils need to cut a rectangle out of their sheet of paper that is big enough to wrap around their “former” with a bit of an overlap which they can glue to make the cylinder. (Note: you might want to make a wooden or cardboard template for them to draw around.)

Using this first piece as a template to make sure all the pieces are the same size, pupils should then cut out two more rectangles. The template should be laid on the paper at a different angle than the original. Ideally one rectangle should be horizontal, one vertical and one at 45 degrees.

Roll the paper around the former. Put glue on the overlap and stick. Once dry, (very quick if using prit stick), the former can be removed and the cylinder or “pot” should stand by itself. Do the same with the other two sheets of paper.

Each pupil should now have 3 cylinders. Get them to study them carefully. If the paper has a strong, regular pattern such as the stripes illustrated here, the 3 cylinders will look completely different even though they are the same shape and size, and have been made from the same sheet of paper. If the paper had a more random pattern / texture - perhaps a floral pattern - then the difference won't be so noticeable. Get the pupils to discuss why this might be so.

Project 4. Press moulds / relief work / repetition / plaster plaques.

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and up

This project will let pupils see what happens when they press objects into clay, let them see the effect of repeating an image, and will produce a simple relief panel. It is also a way of producing a hard, durable object which comes originally from clay, without needing access to a kiln.

Materials needed

Clay
 Wooden boards / cloths to roll out on
 Rolling pin, rolling guides,
 Plaster of Paris
 Pencils and tools to draw into the surface of the clay with.
 A range of objects to press into the clay such as shells, combs, screws, stones, lace, pine cones, old broken bits of wood, small toys such as farmyard animals, leaves etc.

Stage 1

Visit the exhibition. If possible, the Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. A lot of the work in the exhibition uses repetition, and moulds are often used to make the individual pieces. Look particularly at the work of:

Marion Anderson	Barnaby Barford	Rebecca Catterall
Joanna Hartrup	Justin Marshall	Fiona Meagher
Basil Olton	Sarah Tanner	Emilie Taylor

Get the pupils to see if they can work out how the different objects were made.

Back at school

Get each pupil to roll out a thick slab of clay. See Slab building.

Get the pupils to experiment with pressing different objects into the clay. Once they have found an effect they like, get them to experiment with repeating the image.

If they do not like the effects of pressing objects into the clay, they can also draw a picture in the clay, or they may want to do a combination of the two.

Note, if they after pressing various objects in / drawing on the surface of they clay, they don't like the image they end up with, they can just smooth the surface of the clay over and start again.

Once the pupils have an image they want to keep, they need to build a small wall of clay, at least 1 inch high, around it. It is very important that this is done carefully, and that the clay wall is joined properly to the slab as the next step is to pour plaster of paris into it to make the plaque, and this will run out if there are any gaps / holes.

Note: You are actually using the clay as a mould for your relief panel.

Once the wall is secure, mix a small amount of plaster of paris, and pour it in until it reaches the top of the wall. This means the plaster will be at least 1 inch thick.

Once the plaster is dry, peel off the clay. You will be left with a plaster of paris relief panel, which is strong, durable and can be painted if wished.

Further study

Many fine artists use repetition in their work. For example, look at the work of Andy Warhol and Anthony Gormley's sculpture "Field for the British Isles"

For schools with Ceramics facilities

Project 1 - Making a simple dish for decoration

See also Projects 2 and 3 for ideas on how to decorate the dish

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and up

Materials needed

Sturdy Tables
 Wooden boards / cloths for rolling out on
 Rolling pins / Guide sticks
 Clay
 Newspaper
 Pottery knife / cutting tool
 Kiln

If you have moulds, use those. If not, this is a very easy way of making a large, flat dish / platter which is ideal for decorating. The principle is the same as laying pastry in a pie dish. The coil you make will support the rim of the dish.

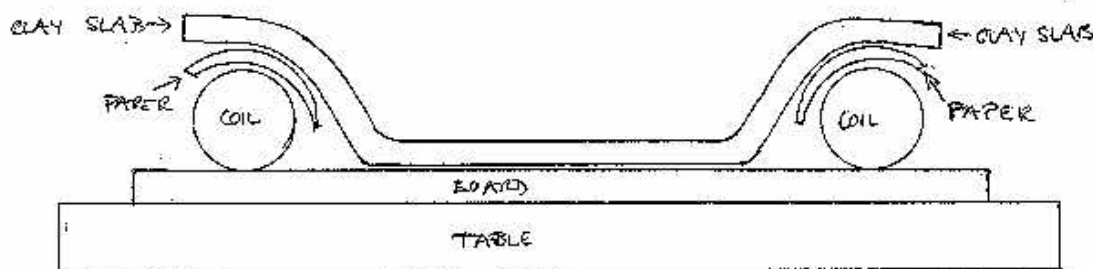
1. Roll out clay, and cut out a large circular slab.
2. Make a thick coil of clay, (approx. 1 - 1.5 inch diameter), and lay it in a circle on a board, making it slightly smaller than the flat circle of clay, (slab), you've just cut out. The coil is going to be used to raise the edges of the slab to form the rim of the dish..
3. Cover the coil with strips of newspaper. This will make a barrier and prevent the coil and the slab sticking together.
4. Lay the slab on top of the coil to make the dish. The middle should lie flat on the board to make the base of the dish, the rim should rest on the coil. Ideally the edge of the dish should stick out beyond the coil so the edge can be

finished properly.

5. Decorate! You could look at the techniques described in Projects 2 and 3 for ideas.
6. Leave to dry. Once dry, the clay will keep its shape without support and the decorated dish can be lifted off the coil. (Be very careful with it at this stage as dry clay can be brittle and fragile. Lift it with both hands. Once fired it will be strong.)
7. Work should be fired and glazed.

Note: I have used a round dish as an example, the photo shows a rectangular dish. In fact you can make the dish any shape you want, you just have to make sure you lay your coil/support in the same shape as your slab of clay.

CROSS SECTION SHOWING CLAY SLAB LAYING ON COILS



Project 2 - Decorating with Slips

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and up, though it is recommended to work in small groups for Key Stage 2.

Slip is a wonderful decorating medium. It is a great way of introducing colour on ceramics without the need for lots of different glazes – you can just use a transparent unleaded glaze over the top - and so is ideal for schools. It is very like paint in its behaviour and application, and many of the traditional decorating techniques such as stencilling, sponging and marbling can be used. Unlike glaze, once dried, it stays where you have put it and doesn't melt or run, and the colours don't change much during firing, so you have a fairly good idea of how it will look when finished at the time of application. This is very helpful when working with children.

(A slip is just clay mixed with water. A decorating slip is clay mixed with water with some sort of colouring agent added.)

Materials / Tools needed

Sturdy Tables
 Wooden boards(not varnished) / cloths for rolling out on
 Rolling pins / Guide sticks
 Soft paint brushes
 Clay – ideally red earthenware
 Decorating slips
 Transparent glaze, preferably earthenware - lead free
 Kiln
 General pottery tools
 Slip trailers - optional
 Pencils, paper, scissors etc

Stage 1

Visit exhibition. If possible, the Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. Look particularly at the work of:

Jonna Behrens
 Elly Wall

Bernard Smith

If you have the opportunity look at the work of other established contemporary ceramicists who use slip including:

Jean Paul Landreau
 Clive Bowen
 Mary Wondrausch

Josie Walter
 John Pollex

and in particular the historical dishes of Thomas Toft made in Staffordshire in the 17th Century

Students should make record sketches. Encourage them to look at the colours used, and record the different textures and designs. Ask them to try and work out how they were done. For example, has a colour been applied with a brush, or perhaps with a sponge? If there is a line, has it been painted, trailed on top or scratched through the surface?

Back at School.

Each pupil will make a series of tiles trying out the following slip decorating techniques. They should refer to their drawings for ideas and inspiration.

Note: Slip must be applied before the clay has dried out – the “leather hard” stage is ideal.

Step 1.

Each pupil rolls out a slab of clay using rolling guides and cuts out 6 tiles.

Tile 1 Painting. The student just does a straight forward painted design on the tile. Decorating slips behave in a similar fashion to poster paints. They are best applied using soft brushes.

Tile 2. Sponging. Apply the slips with a sponge. You can either build up abstract layers of patterns with different coloured slips, or you could cut sponges into shapes – a fish for example – and make a repeat pattern using this.

Tile 3. Stencils. First, make a simple stencil from newspaper, or use a found object such as a leaf or paper doily. Lay them on the surface of the clay and gently press in – you can use the rolling pin to do this. Either paint or sponge slip over the stencils. Allow to dry and peel away.

Tile 4. Sgraffito. Paint slip evenly on the surface of the tile. Use a slip which is a contrasting colour to the clay body underneath. When it is dry to the touch, but before the clay becomes hard, use a pointed tool to scratch through the slip. The clay underneath will show through as a fine line. Various implements can be used to give different patterns. For example, a comb or fork will give a very different effect to something making a single line. This is one of the earliest methods of decorating pots.

Tile 5. Marbling. Use two or more colours of slip. Pour small amounts of the two slips onto the tile - it is best if they are touching, or even better, if one is poured carefully on top of the other. The tile is then lifted and gently tilted in a circular motion so the slips gently run into one another creating the marbled effect.

Tile 6. Slip trailing. Only suitable for older pupils unless very carefully supervised! Slip trailing is very similar in technique to icing a cake, and can be quite difficult. However, once mastered, it is a very useful and satisfying technique. It is a very traditional British technique. Look at examples of its use on simple country pottery such as Buckley ware, and more elaborate decorative ware such as the dishes made by the Toft brothers in the 17th century.

A slip trailer is basically a container with a thin nozzle which you use to squeeze either a raised line, or a series of dots of slip. The slip must be thickish, and extremely smooth and well mixed for this technique. If not, the nozzle becomes blocked, and the slip can splatter out when extra pressure is applied. If possible it is best to sieve the slip so there are no lumps. Students should experiment with drawing lines, making repeat patterns with circles, squiggles, curves and dots.

Project 3 - Working with texture and pattern

(Also see projects 3 and 4 for schools without ceramic facilities)

Suitable for key stage 1 and up

Clay is a wonderful medium. To start with, it is soft and malleable, and can be worked and pushed into many shapes and forms. Once dry, it retains that form, and once fired, it becomes hard, strong and durable. It is the perfect medium to experiment with and learn about “texture”.

Materials needed:

Paper
Pencils / crayons
Clay / glaze – lead free
Rolling pin
Rolling guides
Wooden boards / cloths to roll out on
Various tools and found items for pressing into the surface of the clay. Bring in things like shells, combs, screws, stones, lace, pine cones, old broken bits of wood, small toys such as farmyard animals, leaves etc. Pupils should also look around the art room for items to use to texture the clay.

Stage 1

Visit the exhibition. If possible, the Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. Look particularly at the work of:

Nicholas Lees	John Blackwell	Rebecca Catteral
Isla Chaney	Brenda Fee	Martin Lungley
Max Hodgetts	Ashley Howard	Yardena Kurulkar
Freda Rupp	Hanna Rysgaard	Sarah Tanner
Geoff Wilcox	Paul Wearing	

Get pupils to look carefully at the surfaces of the objects. Get them to try and make drawings of them.

Back at school

Of course, the pupils will not have been able to touch the work in the exhibition, and touch / feel is the best way of experiencing texture. To start to get the concept of texture across, get the pupils to go around the room / playground taking rubbings of various surfaces - walls, floors, doors, trees, carpets, grills etc. Tell them to gently run their fingers over each surface when they've finished so they can link the visual image with the feel of the surface.

When back in the classroom, hold up some of the sheets and get the other children to try and guess what the original surface was. Ask the children to describe how the different surfaces felt when they touched them. You may want to list a vocabulary on the blackboard to help them with this.

Get the pupils to think about why some surfaces are more suitable for some types of ceramics than others. For example, a mug needs to be comfortable to hold / drink out of, hygienic and easy to clean. What type of surface should it have?

Stage 2 - Texturing a piece of clay.

Get the pupils to roll out a sheet of clay, and try different ways of adding texture to the surface. Get the pupils to experiment with pressing different tools and objects into the clay. Once they have found an effect they like, get them to experiment with repeating the image. They can also score and scratch the surface, paint decorating slip on and scratch through that (see Project 2, Decorating with slips), drag things like combs and forks over the surface - and what happens if they push the clay from underneath? Texture can make a regular pattern, or be random.

Stage 3 - make a pot from the textured slab

(**Note:** Not suitable for Key Stage 1)

Pupils could use their textured slab to make a flat dish – see **Project 1** for instructions – or they could use it to make a simple slab pot. They will need some sort of “former” such as a rolling pin, cardboard tube, yoghurt pot etc., to support the pot during making. See Slab Building in the working with clay section.

1. Cut out a rectangle of clay from the slab. It will need to be long enough to wrap around the rolling pin with a bit left over. (Note, you may wish to make a template for the pupils to use to make sure they get the right size.) Make sure you have another small piece of plain clay rolled out as well to make the base.
2. Wrap a sheet of newspaper around the rolling pin - this will prevent the clay sticking to it.
3. Wrap the piece of clay around the rolling pin, making sure that the one of the edges of the slab is lined up with the end of the rolling pin. (This will make it easier to join the base.) Score the overlap, apply sticking slip and carefully press together. You should now have a cylinder of clay wrapped around the rolling pin.
4. Place the rolling pin/ cylinder on the other piece of clay and draw around to make the base. Cut out, score edges of cylinder and base, apply slip and join. The pot should be able to support itself now, so carefully remove the rolling pin. If it starts to sag, leave for a little while, and try again. Note: do not allow clay to dry on the rolling pin, or it will crack as it dries.
5. If all the pupils have used rolling pins as a former, their pots should be very similar in shape and size. They will probably look very different however, due to the different textures used. Get the pupils to discuss this.

Project 4 - Slab Portraits, Constructions and Assemblages

Suitable for Key stage 2 and up if making assemblages. Note, Key stage 1 pupils should be able to just do Stage 1 and make a simple mask if working in very small groups.

The aim of the project is to make a simple 3 dimensional sculpture. There is a lot of figurative work in the exhibition, and this is a relatively simple way to make a 3 dimensional figurative form that will not be too thick to fire safely.

Materials needed

Wooden boards / cloths for rolling out on
 Rolling pins and guide sticks
 General pottery tools
 Soft paint brushes
 Clay
 Decorating slips or brush on glazes to give colour - optional
 Glaze, lead free – transparent if over slips

Stage 1

Visit the exhibition. If possible, the Gallery or school should provide drawing boards, paper and coloured pencils. Look particularly at the work of:

John Blackwell
 Valeri Merlo
 Bernard Smith

Akira Koike Curtis
 Eileen Newell
 Carol Windham

Natasha Mayo
 Ed Silverton

Back at school

Step 1.

Start with life drawing. Split the pupils into pairs and get them to sit opposite each other. Get them to take it in turns drawing each other. Get them to really look at each other when doing this, rather than just drawing what they think a face looks like. For example, children almost always draw eyes too high up on a face. If you look carefully at the whole head - ie, from the chin to the top of the head, they are actually in the middle.

Step 2.

Make the sculpture – See Slab building and Joining clay in the working with clay section.

Roll out a slab of clay

Using the drawings as a reference, get the pupils to draw a head on it. They should include a neck and shoulders.

Cut the head out from the slab. At the same time, cut out a triangle of clay nearly as tall as the head, but not quite. Put this to one side. This will be stuck on the back of the head when both are leather hard so the portrait will be able to stand up.

Get the pupils to add features to the slab head. They can do this using various techniques; sticking on clay noses, eyebrows etc, drawing the shape of them into the surface of the clay, painting them on using slip, or a combination of all these. If the pupils have a spare piece of clay, they can experiment with different techniques and ideas before working on the final piece. Get them to see what happens if they gently push the clay from underneath. (John Blackwell uses this technique)

When the decoration is finished, put both the head and triangle of clay aside until they are leather hard.

When they have reached the leather hard stage, hold the triangle at a right angle against the back of the head, and see if it will stand up properly when joined. (Note it should look a bit like the support on the back of a photo frame.) Trim the triangle if necessary. Finally, score the edge of the triangle and the back of the head, add sticking slip and join together. The head should now be free standing.

Fire and glaze as appropriate.

Note: If working with key stage 1 pupils, use the same techniques to make a simple mask. Work in small groups. Get the pupils to look at pictures of various masks first, and see how usually the eyes and mouths will have been cut out so the real eyes and mouths of the person wearing the mask will show through. Ask them if they can work out why this is. (If the eyes and mouths are cut out it means the person wearing the mask can be more expressive by using their own eyes and mouths to show anger, happiness etc.) If you can, bring in some masks for the pupils to try out themselves.

Keep the design very simple. Get the pupils to cut out a stylised shape for the head out of a slab of clay. (Make a cardboard or wooden template for the pupils to draw around to help them with this.) Then get them to draw and cut out eyes and a mouth. Finally, get them to add some simple marks or paint for decoration. Once finished, the masks can be left to dry over a rolling pin to give a slightly curved shape.

Project 5 - Making Moulds and using them

(See also – “**Project 4. Press moulds / relief work / repetition / plaster plaques**” in the projects for schools without ceramic facilities section)

Suitable for Key Stage 3 and up

Note, a lot of the work in the exhibition makes use of repetition. This is usually done by using moulds and in particular in this exhibition, by slip casting. The advantage of slip casting is that you can make a lifelike cast of virtually anything, provided you can make a complicated enough mould, and it can be a very exciting technique. The disadvantage is that slip casting and mould making can be messy and complicated and unless you are used to working with plaster / ceramics, I would really only recommend using this technique if you are working with a small group of older pupils – ie, a small Key stage 4 or A level class.

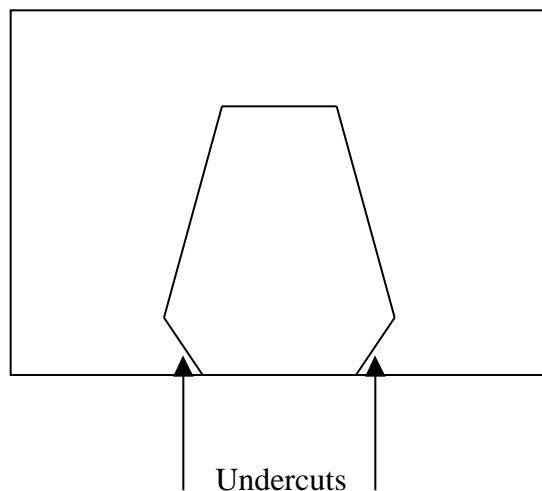
You can however use / buy ready made moulds for slip casting, and simple press

moulds are much easier to make and use. This work would be suitable for Key Stage 3 pupils and up, and even very small groups of key stage 2.

Undercuts

You must avoid undercuts when making moulds. If you have an undercut, you will not be able to remove your object from the mould or be able to open a two piece mould. Remember, plaster isn't flexible like latex.

For example, the object in fig 1 in the slip casting section of "Working with Clay and clay-like materials", will come out easily because there are no undercuts. (A mould like that is called a "one piece drop-out mould"). However, if the shape was like this:



it would not drop out because of the undercuts, and the mould would have to be in two pieces.

A good example is a mould of a heart. You should be able to make a two piece mould of a heart that will come apart easily, but only if you put the join in the right place.

We can see how this works. In Figure 1 the mould will not come apart because of undercuts

Figure 1:

Where as in Figure 2, the mould will part easily – no undercuts!

The skill in mould making is working out where the joins should be so as to avoid undercuts.

Ceramic Materials Suppliers

Bath Potter Supplies

2 Dorset Close

Bath, BA2 3Rf

Tel: 01225 337047 Fax: 01225 462712

e.mail enquiries@bathpotters.demon.co.uk

<http://www.bathpotters.demon.co.uk>

Very friendly and helpful outfit. Particularly good if you need advice. They keep a good range of clays, lead free glazes, ready mixed decorating slips, brush on glazes, tools etc.

The Consortium

Tel, orders: 01225 771320

Tel, enquiries: 01225 771350

Fax: 01225 777920

Good prices. Clay prices are the same whether you order large or small amounts, which isn't true for the other suppliers. They only keep a basic range of tools, clays and brush on glazes, but this should be fine for the needs of most schools.

Unfortunately they no longer keep decorating slips, but you can get these from the other suppliers. Obviously they won't be as good on specific advice, but all their products will be suitable for working with children, and delivery on orders over £25 is free. This is an important consideration when buying clay as it's very heavy, and delivery charges can be high.

PotteryCrafts Ltd

Campbell rd

Stoke on Trent ST4 4ET

Tel: 01782 745000, Fax: 01782 746000

<http://www.potteryCrafts.co.uk>

Keep a comprehensive range of clays, glazes, tools, decorating slips etc. Also have a very useful website with specific and general information on health and safety, technical information and various making techniques. You can download C.O.S.H.H sheets on specific materials.

Glossary of Terms

ABSTRACT Concerned with qualities of form and colour etc.. Not representative, not narrative.

AESTHETICS Study of or appreciation for beauty. Philosophies of form. Ideas about taste.

ASSEMBLAGE Like collage (see below), but generally used of arrangements of found objects.

BONE CHINA Fine, hard, translucent china made of clay mixed with bone ash. Most often used for slip casting industrial ware.

BURNISH Polish to a smooth finish, often using a smooth pebble or the back of a spoon.

CASTING SLIP Liquid clay used for casting objects in a mould - see also 'Working with clay and clay-like materials.'

CLASSICAL Standard of beauty derived from the art and architecture of the classical period in Greece (such as the Parthenon in Athens).

COILING A making technique. Long "worm like" coils of clay are coiled around and around on top of each other to form a pot. This is an excellent technique for making large round pots. For example, most traditional African pots are made this way.

COLLAGE Selection of objects, images etc. combined together in a work of art. Commonly used for montages of magazine or newspaper cuttings, photographs, etc.

COMPOSITION Arrangement of component parts of a work of art, especially in picture design.

CONCEPTUAL Where the concept or idea behind the work is the most important thing.

CLAY – types of:

CRANK - Clay body coarsened by the addition of ground up fired clay.

EARTHENWARE - Clay fired to between 1000 – 1100 degrees centigrade. The clay usually stays porous, and needs to be glazed to become waterproof.

PAPERCLAY Clay with paper pulp added

PORCELAIN – Very strong, high fired translucent white clay

STONEWARE – Clay which can be fired above 1200 degrees centigrade. The clay is usually non-porous at this temperature, strong, and the glaze and clay body start to fuse together.

EXPRESSIONIST Art works with emotional intensity, expressing the artist's mood.

FIGURATIVE Represents the human figure.

FUNCTION Use (see 'utilitarian').

GENRE Category - such as tableware, sculpture, portraiture etc.

GLAZE Glassy coating melted onto the surface of the pot.

IDEAL FORM Perfect form. Art improving on nature, especially used of figurative work, often related to classical style.

LEATHER HARD Clay that is dry / stiff enough to hold it's shape, but still soft / wet enough to be joined together

NARRATIVE Telling a story.

MOULD Form, usually made of plaster of paris, used to shape clay and to produce multiple copies

PIGMENT Substance, often in powdered form, that gives colour.

PRESS MOULDED Way of forming ceramics by pressing a sheet of clay into a mould.

RELIEF A raised effect on the surface of a work of art.

SALTGLAZE Method of glazing pottery whereby salt is introduced into the kiln during the firing. Produces a characteristic "orange peel" effect.

SODA GLAZE As above, but environmentally less harmful

SLAB WORK Method of constructing ceramic forms using slabs of clay - see also 'Working with clay and clay-like materials'.

SLIP Clay that has been diluted with water to the consistency of cream

SLIP – DECORATING – slip with oxides or stains added to give colour

STICKING - the clay you are using mixed with water, which you then use as a "glue" when joining clay together

CASTING – slip with a special chemical - a "deflocculant" - added to make the slip runny with the minimum amount of water.

SLIP CASTING A technique which produces pots or sculptures by pouring liquid clay "casting slip" into a mould. The moulds can be used several times which means that multiple copies of a pot or object can be made

STUDIO POTTER One who works from a studio. making individual pieces - as

opposed to designing for mass production within the ceramics industry.

STYLISTED Natural forms altered in a particular way - such as elongated.

T-MATERIAL Proprietary brand of clay, developed for its ability to withstand thermal shock.

TEMPLATE 2 Dimensional form cut out of paper / card / wood which you can draw around to give the shape you want. Particularly useful for repetitive work or where accuracy is important.

THERMAL SHOCK Refers to the extremes of temperature change undergone by clay during the firing process.

THROWING The name given to the technique of making pots on the potters wheel

TURNING The leather hard clay object is spun on the wheel; the potter holds a tool against the edge of the pot as it spins. The method is often used to tidy rough edges and bottoms on pots.

UTILITARIAN Made to be used. Functional.

WHITE ST THOMAS CLAY Type of clay.

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