

# THE MAKING®

## Working with Ceramics

These resources are intended for use by teachers to help you get started with making ceramics in the classroom.

The information was supplied by the artists who contributed to the *Skills in the Making* workshop programme 2009-12, funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation.



### Introduction

Contemporary ceramic makers use clay to make a broad range of work that can be functional or sculptural. The practice of making ceramics encompasses a wide range of techniques which can be used individually or in combination. These include hand building techniques such as slab building, modelling and carving or wheel thrown work which can be manipulated on or off the wheel. Decoration is applied while the work is leather hard as slip or after the first firing on or under the glaze.

**For images of the work of The Making's ceramic artists, and the ideas that inform their work see:**

**Kate Malone: hand built natural forms** (image courtesy Clare Beck at Adrian Sassoon)

[www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2009/03/kate\\_malone.html](http://www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2009/03/kate_malone.html)

[www.katemaloneceramics.com](http://www.katemaloneceramics.com)

**Richard Phethean: thrown and moulded forms**

[www.phethean.clara.net](http://www.phethean.clara.net)

**Phil Eglin: slab built figurative forms**

[www.re-title.com/artists/Philip-Eglin.asp](http://www.re-title.com/artists/Philip-Eglin.asp) collection of work

[www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/eglin/frameset.htm](http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/eglin/frameset.htm) an exhibition at the V & A inspired by medieval sculpture

**Stephen Dixon: slabbed and modelled political and satirical works**

[www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2011/03/stephen\\_dixon.html](http://www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2011/03/stephen_dixon.html)

[www.vam.ac.uk/things-to-do/blogs/steve-dixon-0](http://www.vam.ac.uk/things-to-do/blogs/steve-dixon-0) record of workshops run at the V & A

**Katharine Morling: slab built sculptural ceramics**

[www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2010/11/katharine\\_morling.html#comments](http://www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2010/11/katharine_morling.html#comments)

**Rob Kessler: ceramics and print**

[www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2007/05/rob\\_kessler.html#comments](http://www.themaking.org.uk/Content/makers/2007/05/rob_kessler.html#comments)

[www.robkessler.co.uk/](http://www.robkessler.co.uk/)

The Making Contemporary Art Craft and Design,  
Civic Offices, London Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4AH, UK.  
T +44(0)1256 845 679 F +44(0)1256 350 080 [www.themaking.org.uk](http://www.themaking.org.uk)



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## Films

**Links to makers in action can be found on their websites, but here are a few links**

Kate Malone hand building [www.youtube.com/katemaloneceramics](http://www.youtube.com/katemaloneceramics)

Mike Eden demonstrates a range of making techniques

[www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/artists.php?artist=mike](http://www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/artists.php?artist=mike)

Paul Scott demonstrates hand building and printing on clay

[www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/artists.php?artist=paul](http://www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/artists.php?artist=paul)

Phil Eglin explores the V&A's medieval collections for inspiration

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HJ6PYEbyYw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HJ6PYEbyYw)

## Common ceramic terms explained

### Making techniques

Slab building: rolled out flat pieces of clay which can be joined or placed in or over a mould

Pinching: hollowing forms by hand

Modelling: using hands and tools to add and take away clay

Coiling: building up forms with coils of clay

Carving: subtracting material from a block of clay

Throwing: making a pot on the wheel

Turning: cutting away unwanted clay from a thrown pot

### Clay

Clay body: the name for the unworked clay in its raw state. Clays are mixed by suppliers to ensure consistency of plasticity (workability) and firing temperature

Earthenware clay: usually a red clay which can be fired to around 1100 degrees. To be fully waterproof earthenware clay must be glazed.

Stoneware clay: clay which matures at higher temperatures than earthenware but which becomes fused or fully water proof without a complete glaze covering; usually fired to between 1150 to 1260 degrees

Porcelain: fine white clay which when worked finely and fired sufficiently high becomes translucent.

Leather hard: state of drying clay when it is hard enough to turn, carve or decorate without bending

### Decoration

Slip decoration: slip is a thick solution of coloured clay which can be applied to a leather hard object by any of the techniques below.

Sgraffito: involves cutting through a slip to reveal the colour of the clay beneath

Slip trailing: using a special tool, a slip trailer, to flow lines and dots of slip over a surface, leaving a raised finish

Marbling: mingling wet colours on a wet slip base

Printing: applying patterns or texture with sponge or chosen tool

Transfer Printing: decals can be bought or made, and are applied over dry slip or glaze

Resist (non removable): wax emulsion or paraffin wax burns away during firing

Resist (removable): newspaper or latex laid over slip layer and then carefully removed

Inlay: brushing slip into carved patterns on leather hard clay. When slip is leather hard, the excess is scraped back with a metal kidney. A softer version can be done when slip is still

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wet, wiping excess slip off with a rubber kidney

Glaze: a coat of a glass forming coloured solution that must be fired to produce a water resistant surface

Glaze can be painted or sprayed on the work. Brightly coloured “brush on” glazes especially made for painting and use in schools are widely available.

Dipping is a traditional method of glazing pots. First the inside is filled with glaze and is immediately emptied. The piece is then held by its base and is dipped rim first in the glaze, held for a few seconds and withdrawn.

Metal oxides: used to colour slips and glazes, are mixed with a clear or opaque white glaze. Mixed thinly they are used to paint over a white glaze – the technique of Maiolica

Under glaze colours: ready mixed colours used in the same way, which are more stable.

## Firing

Biscuit firing: the first firing of a clay object so that it can take a glaze. The kiln temperature must rise very slowly to enable all moisture in the work to be expelled, and to prevent the work cracking, usually to 1050-1100 degrees centigrade

Glaze firing: the firing of the glaze onto an object, usually after it has been biscuit fired. The kiln temperature can rise more quickly, but care must be taken to reach and maintain the right temperature for the glaze to mature.

Raw glazing: the glaze is added to the leather hard pot and fired once only – this requires skill and is not usually done in school.

Oxidising Firing: a firing, as in a normal electric kiln, where glazes from with access to oxygen.

Reduction Firing: a method which excludes oxygen from the glaze surface changing the quality and colour of the glaze

Raku firing: is a form of firing where glazed pots made of strong clay are fired rapidly up to about 1000 degrees and removed from the kiln, plunged into a reducing medium such as saw dust, enabling the metallic qualities of the oxides used to colour the glaze to develop. An exciting process which enables students to see how glaze melts in the kiln and the effect of different firing environments on glazes.

## Suppliers for all things ceramics related

Potters Connection, Staffs [www.pottersconnection.co.uk](http://www.pottersconnection.co.uk) Tel: 01782 598729

PO BOX 3079 Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 9FW

Bath Potters Supplies, Bath [www.bathpotters.co.uk](http://www.bathpotters.co.uk) Tel: 01761 411 077

Unit 18, 4th Ave, Westfield Industrial Estate, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Avon BA3 4XE

Potclays Ltd, [www.potclays.co.uk](http://www.potclays.co.uk) Tel: 01782 219816

Brick kiln Lane, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7BP

PotteryCrafts Ltd [www.potteryCrafts.co.uk](http://www.potteryCrafts.co.uk) Tel: 01782 745000

Campbell Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4ET

## Clay specialists

Spencroft Ceramics, [www.spencroftceramics.co.uk](http://www.spencroftceramics.co.uk) Tel: 01782 627004

Spencroft Road, Holditch Industrial Estate, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 9JB.

**The Making** Contemporary Art Craft and Design,  
Civic Offices, London Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4AH, UK.  
T +44(0)1256 845 679 F +44(0)1256 350 080 [www.themaking.org.uk](http://www.themaking.org.uk)



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Valentines Clays Ltd, Staffs [www.valentinesclays.co.uk](http://www.valentinesclays.co.uk) Tel: 01782 271200  
The Sliphouse, 18-20 Chell Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6BA

## Tools, Materials and Equipment

Top Pot Supplies, Shropshire [www.toppotsupplies.co.uk](http://www.toppotsupplies.co.uk) Tel: 01952 813203  
Celadon House, 8 Plough Lane, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8BS

CTM Potters Supplies, [www.ctmpotterssupplies.co.uk](http://www.ctmpotterssupplies.co.uk)

Unit 8, Broomhouse Lane Ind Estate, Edlington, Doncaster, DN12 1EQ Tel: 01709 770 801  
Unit 10A, Mill Park Industrial Estate, White Cross Road, Woodbury Salterton, EX5 1EL  
Tel: 01395 233077

## Kiln Manufacture, Installation, Service, Repair (also second hand equipment)

Northern Kilns, Lancs. [www.northernkilns.com](http://www.northernkilns.com) Tel: 01253 790307  
Pilling Pottery, School Lane, Pilling (Nr. Garstang) Lancs, PR3 6HB

## Ceramics Specialist websites

[www.studiopottery.co.uk](http://www.studiopottery.co.uk) Studio Pottery: an excellent and wide ranging resource with makers' biographies, technical information and networking opportunities. Links to galleries and current events

[www.onlineceramics.com](http://www.onlineceramics.com) commercial site with a good range of makers work to view

[www.ceramicreview.com](http://www.ceramicreview.com) Ceramic Review, the international magazine of ceramics

[www.ukpotters.com](http://www.ukpotters.com) site with many UK potters

[www.new-ceramics.com](http://www.new-ceramics.com) European ceramics magazine

## Books

### Practical Ceramics Guides

There are many guides to pottery making

Casson, Michael (19 *The Craft of the Potter* A classic Guide to pottery making.

Mattison, Steven (2003) *The Complete Potter: The Complete Reference to Tools, Materials and Techniques for All Potters and Ceramicists* Quarto

Quinn, Anthony (2007), *The Ceramic Design Course*. London: Thames & Hudson

### Research and Development

Genders, C. (2002), *Sources of Inspiration*. London: A&C Black

Genders, C. (2009), *Pattern, Colour & Form*. London: A&C Black

Malone, K. & Jackson, L. (2003), *Kate Malone: A Book of Pots*. London: A&C Black

### History

Cooper, Emmanuel (2010) *10,000 Years of Pottery*. British Museum press

Cooper, Emmanuel (2009) *Contemporary Ceramics*. Thames and Hudson

## Journals

[www.ceramicreview.com](http://www.ceramicreview.com) Ceramic Review: International Magazine of Ceramic Art

[www.new-ceramics.com](http://www.new-ceramics.com) European Ceramics magazine

## Ceramics collections and displays in museums and galleries

Many local museums contain ceramics that reflect the availability of resources nearby and the history of the locality. So visit a museum near you...

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Some outstanding collections include:

[www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com](http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com) Aberystwyth University Ceramics Archive, Wales

[www.stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag](http://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag) The Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent, A vast historic collection and contemporary exhibitions

[www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/](http://www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/) Wedgwood Museum in Stoke on Trent, historic collection, tours and contemporary exhibitions

[www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/ceramics/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/ceramics/) fabulous new ceramics galleries, contemporary and historical exhibitions

[www.leachpottery.com](http://www.leachpottery.com) the famous leach pottery, now a museum and studio

## General Crafts Resources

### Craft & Design Theory

Adamson, G. (Ed.) (2010), *The Craft Reader*. London: Berg

Adamson, G. (2007), *Thinking through Craft*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Britton Newell, L. (2008), *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft*. London: V&A

Dormer, P. (ed.) (1997), *The Culture of Craft*. Manchester University Press

Dormer, P. (1994), *The Art of the Maker: Skill and its Meaning in Art, Craft and Design*. London: Thames and Hudson

Frayling, C. (Ed.) (1991), *Beyond the Dovetail: Craft, Skill and Imagination*. London: Crafts Council

Greenhalgh, P. (Ed.) (2002), *The Persistence of Craft*. London: A&C Black

Harrod, T. (ed.) (1997), *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the crafts in the twentieth century*. University of East Anglia & Crafts Council

McCullough, M. (1996), *Abstracting Craft: The Practiced Digital Hand*. London: MIT Press

Papanek, V. (1979), *Design for the Real World*. London: Paladin

Sennett, R. (2008), *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin

Williams, G. (2009), *Telling Tales: Fantasy and Fear in Contemporary Design*. London: V&A

### Articles/ reports

Clark, G. (2009), 'The Death of Crafts: A Post-modern Post-mortem' in *Crafts* No. 216 (January/February 2009) pp.48-51

Crafts Council (1998), *Learning Through Making: A national enquiry into the value of creative practical education in Britain*.

Creative & Cultural Skills (2009), *The Craft Blueprint*.

Downing, D. (2005), *School Art- What's in it?* National Foundation for Education Research

OFSTED (2009), *Drawing Together: art, craft and design in schools*.

Williams, G. (2009), 'Tales of the Unexpected' in *Crafts* No. 219 (July/August 2009) pp.48-55

### Journals

Crafts magazine: produced by the Crafts Council

### Websites

[www.themaking.org.uk](http://www.themaking.org.uk) craft development agency that promotes high quality contemporary art, craft and design and inspires new audiences to engage with the art of making. The

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website has information about 60 contemporary makers and links to their websites, and descriptions of crafts education events in schools and the community

[www.artisancam.org.uk](http://www.artisancam.org.uk): videos of makers and pupils in action, step by step guides to making. A section for teachers: [www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/teachers\\_notes.php](http://www.artisancam.org.uk/pages/teachers_notes.php) includes demonstrations of basket weaving, ceramics, metal sculpture, jewellery and sci/art projects.

[www.culture24.org.uk](http://www.culture24.org.uk) : information about museums and galleries across the UK: collections, exhibitions and events

[www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk): information on UK crafts and learning programmes at [www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learn/](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learn/)

[www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk](http://www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk) The Crafts Study Centre, Farnham has a collection and archive of twentieth century British Crafts. On-going exhibition and events programme.

[www.engage.org](http://www.engage.org) National Association for Gallery Education. Case studies of working with schools in craft galleries and studios: [www.engage.org/watchthisspace/studies.aspx](http://www.engage.org/watchthisspace/studies.aspx) including ceramics

[www.nsead.org](http://www.nsead.org): National Society for Education in Art and Design. Current issues in Art and Design education, Professional Development opportunities

[www.teachersmedia.com](http://www.teachersmedia.com) the new Teachers TV: an archive of educational films on all subjects including craft and cross curricular work

[www.craftspace.co.uk](http://www.craftspace.co.uk) Birmingham based organisation with strong educational remit - case studies of school projects

[www.craftanddesign.net](http://www.craftanddesign.net) information on contemporary craft galleries near you

## **Crafts Collections in Museums and Galleries**

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk) Victoria and Albert Museum international historic and contemporary international crafts.

[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) British Museum historic crafts from around the world

[www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk/](http://www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk/) Crafts Study Centre Farnham, Surrey

[www.manchestergalleries.org](http://www.manchestergalleries.org) Manchester Art Galleries historic and contemporary craft and design collection

[www.twmuseums.org.uk/shipley](http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/shipley) The Shipley Art Gallery, Tyne and Wear

[www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk) Bowes Museum, County Durham  
...and in a local museum near you: search Culture 24

## **Contemporary Crafts galleries with changing exhibitions**

[www.caa.org.uk](http://www.caa.org.uk) Contemporary Applied Art, London

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[www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk](http://www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk), Ruthin Craft Centre Clwyd, Wales

[www.bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://www.bluecoatdisplaycentre.com) The Bluecoat, Liverpool

[www.harleygallery.co.uk](http://www.harleygallery.co.uk) Harley Gallery, Nottinghamshire

[www.flowgallery.co.uk](http://www.flowgallery.co.uk) Flow Gallery, London

[www.crafts.org.uk](http://www.crafts.org.uk) Devon Guild of Craftsmen, Bovey Tracey, Devon

