

THE PASSAGE *of* Time

by Naomi Clement



I make pots that celebrate the tangible joy of the everyday—objects that will weave themselves into your daily routine and bear witness to the beautiful, mundane moments that make a life. I incorporate texture into my work to convey the passage of time, and to create pots that already have a story when they reach you. The combination of texture with layers of underglaze and slip creates a richer surface, resulting in objects that ask to be noticed, and reveal themselves over time.

The graphic elements in my work are derived from text from old family correspondence and ephemera, as a way to explore my history and connect past and present. Letters are digitally scanned and then laser cut into newsprint. By using this technology, I'm able to work with marks that are made by someone else's hand, collaborating with the past to create objects for the future,

and make the ephemeral endure. These newsprint text elements act both as a stamp and resist for color and texture.

The inspiration for my platter form comes specifically from vintage, carved wooden dough bowls: these are open and inviting forms, and I love that they can be used many different ways.

Constructing the Platter

These platters are constructed using a 21×11×3-inch bisque mold that I formed and carved out of a solid piece of clay, then hollowed out at the leather-hard stage and bisque fired when dry (1). I begin by rolling a slab of clay to approximately 20×12× $\frac{3}{8}$ inches thick. Once the slab is a soft leather hard, I compress it using a soft, red rubber rib and apply texture using serrated metal ribs and handmade textured bisque rollers, overlapping different patterns and textures to create a rich, layered surface.

With the bisque mold on a banding wheel, I drape the slab over it textured side down and smooth it onto the mold using the soft red rib (2). To create the foot ring, I cut a long strip of clay ($29 \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{8}$ inches), and bevel one of the long edges to a 60° angle using an angle-cutting wire tool (3).

After thoroughly scoring and slipping both the bottom of the platter and the beveled edge of the foot ring, I attach the strip of clay with the beveled edge facing in, making sure to have the joining seam for the strip of clay on one of the long edges of the foot ring (4). I put the seam on one of the long edges as it can be a vulnerable place for cracking, and it's more likely to do so if it's on a shorter edge, as there is more tension there. I then smooth the foot ring down using a sponge and make sure both the interior and exterior seams are well attached, using a wooden tool and a soft red rib to smooth these connections. Lastly, I soften the outer angle of the foot ring using the red rib.

Next, I trim the edges of the platter, using a wooden yard stick first to measure out where I want to cut (5). Once the whole platter is at the leather-hard stage, I flip it over onto a clean drywall board and refine the shape using a Surform rasp (6). When the shaping and refining is complete, I'll lightly smooth the sharp edges with a damp sponge.

Adding the Rim

The last stage in construction is adding the rim. Because I want this platter to be an object that invites confidence in its use, I want it to have a nice, beefy, rounded rim that won't easily chip. To form the rim, I flip the platter back onto the mold, and attach a long coil of soft clay on the back edge, which will later get wrapped around to the top edge of the platter. Before attaching the coil (approximately $38 \times \frac{3}{4}$ inches), I score and slip a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strip around the back edge of the platter and score the coil of clay. To attach, I press the coil into the platter, leaving a slight overhang on the outer edge (7). Once the coil is attached all the way around, I further flatten it down using a wooden pony roller (8), and then smooth it with a damp sponge. To finish the rim, I take the platter back off of the mold and angle in the top edge of the coil using a wooden paddle and the pony roller (9), then smooth it all with a damp sponge.

Decorating the Platter

All of my work is decorated using a combination of underglazes, slip, and newsprint resist, with the majority of the decorating done at the leather-hard stage. I use Amaco Velvet underglazes, because I like how evenly they apply as well as the variety of bright colors available.

Since I want to leave the rim of the platter undecorated, I begin by waxing this edge. After protecting this edge with wax resist, I am less conscious of it while decorating, resulting in more fluid marks. I then select a newsprint stencil (10) and get a rough idea of where I want to place it. The first layer I add is a ground color over the whole textured surface—here it's the Amaco Velvet Bright Red underglaze, which I apply in one liberal coat. It's important that the clay be at a stiff leather-hard stage before applying the underglaze; if the clay is too wet, the underglaze will take too long to dry between layers.



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1

Use a bisque-fired mold formed out of solid clay to create a platter form.



2

Smooth and compress a slab of clay onto the bisque mold with a rubber rib.



3

Cut a bevel with a 60° angle on a strip of clay for the foot ring.



4

Attach the foot ring to the platter's bottom, making sure to thoroughly score and slip.



5

Trim excess from the rim of the platter using a fettling knife.



6

Refine the shape of the platter with a rasp, then bevel the angle of the rim inward.



7

With the platter back on the mold, attach a coil for the rim.



8

Flatten the rim down using a wooden pony roller.



9

Use a wooden paddle to refine the top edge of the coil rim.

Pottery Making Illustrated | Tear Out and Try



10

Create a newsprint stencil to use as a resist pattern on the platter's interior.



11

Apply Amaco Flame Orange underglaze to the back of one of the newsprint stencils.



12

Place the newsprint (underglaze side down) on the platter. Press it down well.



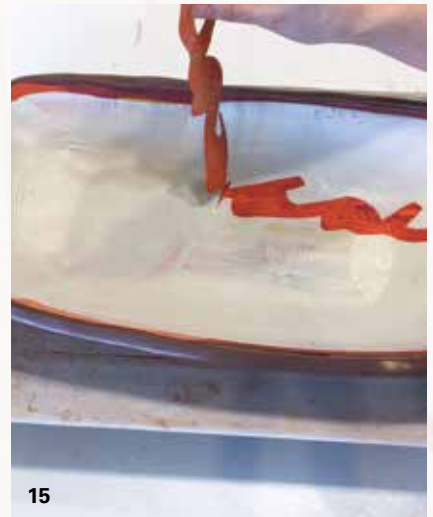
13

Apply contrasting colors of underglaze over top of it, to add depth to the surface.



14

When the underglaze is dry, apply a thin layer of semi-translucent white slip.



15

When the slip is dry to the touch, peel away the newsprint stencil.



16

Add sgraffito lines, pressing just enough to carve through the top layer of slip.



17

After the bisque firing, inlay underglaze into the seams and edges.



18

Use a damp sponge to remove excess underglaze and reveal a pop of color.



Next, I apply a contrasting color directly to the back of the newsprint resist (Amaco Flame Orange in this case). I then apply the newsprint resist (11) underglaze side down to the platter, making sure to press it down well so that it sticks securely (12)—the underglaze on it acts like a glue at this stage and later as a transfer. I then add another layer of underglaze over top of the newsprint resist (here I'm using Amaco Bright Yellow). This adds more depth to the surface, and serves the dual purpose of sealing the edges around the newsprint resist, so that the final layer of white slip doesn't seep under it. Other patterns and embellishments are layered on in additional colors (13).

Once everything is dry to the touch, a final layer of thin, semi-translucent White Slip is brushed on the whole surface, except the rim (14). The brushstrokes really show with the white slip, so I'm conscious to make confident and fluid marks. As soon as the white slip has lost its sheen, I peel back the newsprint resist using a pin tool—this is always my favorite part as it's so satisfying to see the whole composition revealed (15). At this point, it looks like the slip has obscured all the layers underneath, but don't worry, after firing, the slip is mostly translucent, and reveals much of the layers underneath.

The last bit of decoration is to add a thin sgraffito line through the leather-hard slip. Using a template shape that has been cut out of a thick cardstock or piece of Bristol paper, I place it lightly on top of the piece in the position I want, and then score around it with a thin plastic stylus, pressing just enough to carve through the top layer of slip (16). This thin line adds another type of line quality, which contributes to the overall depth of the piece. I let the piece dry slowly, and bisque fire it to cone 04.

Sanding, Inlay, and Glaze Application

All of my work gets wet-sanded twice: once after the bisque firing with a 220-grit sanding sponge to smooth down any of the rough edges from the slip transfer, and once after the glaze firing with 320-grit wet/dry sandpaper to give a final polish to the bare clay sections.

After sanding the bisque-fired piece, I then inlay colored underglazes into the seams. I like to highlight the seams in my work as I'm interested in how these moments record my decisions and become physical signposts left for a future user. Using a slip trailer, I trail underglaze into these crevices (17) and then wipe it back using a sponge and clean water (18), resulting in a faint pop of color in the seam.

Lastly, I wax the rim and apply a thin coat of food-safe clear glaze over the entire interior surface of the platter. I purposely choose to leave the exterior of the platter

WHITE SLIP
Cone 04–10 Oxidation and Reduction

Custer Feldspar	27 %
Grolleg Kaolin	34
OM 4 Ball Clay	20
Silica	19
	<hr/> 100 %

Add: Zircopax 3 %

This slip is a variation on Vince Pitelka's all-temperature slip recipe. Mix to a heavy cream consistency using a small amount of sodium silicate to flocculate it. For more translucency, mix it thinner. For more opacity, mix it a little thicker.

CLEAR GLAZE
Cone 4–6 Oxidation

Gerstley Borate	35 %
Minspar 200 Feldspar	40
OM 4 Ball Clay	15
Silica	10
	<hr/> 100 %

This is a good all-around, stable glaze that can be applied via dipping, brushing, or pouring. Mix to the consistency of 2% milk.

bare, unglazed clay, as I love the raw, chocolate brown color of my clay when it's fired, and I also enjoy the contrast between the texture of the glossy glaze and the stone-like surface of the bare clay.

Naomi Clement has participated in residencies, given lectures and workshops, and exhibited her work across Canada and the US. She served as an NCECA board member and was a 2019 summer artist in residence at the Archie Bray Foundation. Naomi received her MFA from Louisiana State University in 2017.