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## CHOOSING CLAY

There are endless types of clay bodies to choose from to make your work. Though many of the techniques in this book can be applied to just about any clay body, I have narrowed the selection to three kinds that I recommend you use. To demonstrate the projects that are photographed for this book, I use a mid-range porcelain that I use in my studio. I use porcelain for many of its beneficial characteristics for surface decoration. Porcelain's white color is vibrant and provides contrast when adding line drawing. For me, using porcelain as a drawing surface is not far off from drawing on a blank piece of white paper. If you can, use a clay body that you are already familiar with to practice the surface techniques in this book, because you will have access to the correctly fitting glazes for your clay body and a sense of the limitations of your clay.



### < Porcelain

Porcelain is wonderful clay to use for surface decoration. Porcelain is white, which allows for good contrast of color and line in surface decoration. Colors pop off the white clay! It is non-groggy clay, which means it is smooth and doesn't contain any sand. So when using a sponge to wipe the surface, there is no sand or grogg that comes up. When scraping the surface of porcelain, there are no drag lines from the sand or grogg. Porcelain also takes re-hydration well when it is still green (unfired), so sponging is welcome and spraying with a water bottle is fine, too. I have had great fortune keeping porcelain pots at the leather-hard state in a damp box for months! Porcelain can be expensive and a challenge to work with—it isn't very forgiving and likes to crack and slump. If you are relatively new to throwing or handbuilding, working with porcelain is worth a try—don't be discouraged if you find it hard to work with! Porcelain is available in mid-to high range firing temperatures.

### Stoneware >

Stoneware is a good clay body for the studio potter and sculptor. It is typically fired to a high temperature and often has some grogg in it. The color of stoneware can range widely from very dark to an off-white color due to the impurities in the clay, which affect the brightness of colors added to its surface. Stoneware will work well with many of the techniques in this book—but not as well with techniques that require sponging, such as mishima (page OO) and shellac resist (page OO). Sponging will bring up the sandy texture of grogg in stoneware. You should be able to find stoneware clays that do not have grogg in them—throwing clays typically have little or no grogg.



### < Earthenware

With a high percentage of iron and other impurities, earthenware hardens at a lower temperature than stoneware and porcelain. Earthenware is typically red to white in color and available with or without grogg. Similar to stoneware, earthenware will work well with the techniques in this book if it doesn't contain grogg. Because most earthenware clays are red, white, and lighter colored, slips and underglazes will contrast well with the clay. Colors in ceramics are brightest fired at lower temperatures, so working with earthenware can be great for a larger range of color palettes.

# GLAZE, UNDERGLAZE AND SLIP

There are many different ways to add color to ceramics. For the projects in this book, I recommend sticking to slip, underglaze, and glaze. Experiment and always test before using new materials in the studio. Working with one or two colors at first will allow you to learn the process without a large investment of time and resources.





## Slip

Slip (shown right) is a liquid clay that can be applied to the ceramic surface before firing, typically at the leather-hard state. Slip can be colored using ceramic stains and oxides. Test your slip before using to be sure that it fits your clay body. It is a great way to make the surface of stoneware and earthenware a bright white for applying brighter colors in layers over the slip. Slip cannot be applied after bisque. Because slip is mostly made of clay, it is a static material, so it won't move or melt in the firing process. This is great if you want to have consistent results in the kiln—no surprises! It also works well for predicting what your work will look like in your end product. For those of you with access to a glaze lab, On page 00 I have included a recipe (as well as some percentages of certain stains and oxides for making this slip colored) for a versatile slip that works on low fire to high fire clays.

## Underglaze

Underglazes (shown center) are commercially manufactured and used to add color at both the green and bisque states. Underglaze can be used on bisque because it contains calcined materials that have already been fired and therefore have pre-shrunk and will not crack off the surface. Like slip, underglaze is a static material, so it won't move much in the firing process. If you are firing commercial underglazes in mid-range kilns that are meant to be

fired to cone 05, you are basically turning the underglaze into a matt glaze. This can cause certain colors to move more than others because they naturally flux a bit at a higher temperature. This is why I can use underglazes on the bottoms of my work and they don't stick to the kiln shelf in firing. There is just enough melt in the underglaze so that it sticks permanently to my pot, but not to the shelf. Underglaze is used in almost of the projects photographed for this book because of its versatility.

## Glaze

Glaze (shown left) is a layer of a glassy vitreous mixture we fuse to ceramics through the firing process. Glaze acts to seal the surface of clay, making it waterproof and food-safe in addition to adding color and decorating the surface. To streamline my studio practice, I use one clear glaze for all of my work and underglazes and slips to add color. Almost all of the projects in this book use a clear glaze designed for dipping, not brushing, which has been fired in oxidation and tested to fit the clay body. Use a glaze that you test and that fits your clay body well. In the recipe section I have provided you with the recipe for mixing the clear glaze that I use in making my work as well as suggestions for tinting the clear to make translucent tinted glazes. If you have access to a glaze lab, you can mix your own glaze.

## TRY IT!

A great way to add a layer to your ceramic surface is through using tinted clear glazes. Using a tinted clear glaze will allow you to add a layer of color over your underglaze or slip decoration. Keep in mind that if you try finishing your work with tinted glazes, the tint will affect the color of the underglaze or slip decoration below. As always, test glazes and underglazes together before using on an important piece. Colors in ceramics don't react or mix together the same way they do in paint. Adding white to red doesn't necessarily mean you will get pink! Because glazes move and melt together, decorating with glazes can mean unpredictable (and often exciting!) results. In the resource section of this book I have listed some great commercial tinted glazes for mid-range firing. In addition, I have listed percentages of stains and colorants for tinting my clear glaze in the recipe section of this book.





# LINE

Using line to decorate is my favorite approach to creating pattern and drawing on the ceramic surface. The projects in this chapter go over multiple techniques to create line-based artwork. Line drawing is perhaps the drawing method we are all most comfortable with thanks to the use of line in writing. Line work is one of the most basic and effective drawing methods to use in designing surfaces for clay, which is why I rely on it so heavily for my own artwork. I use the mishima technique to decorate almost everything I design in clay and other materials. I love that the lines I draw with mishima can be left monochromatic or colored in like a coloring book after the work has been bisque fired. The mishima line acts as a controlled ground for more expressive added color with underglazes and glazes.

Try using transfers to add line drawings to your surfaces if you are worried about knowing how to draw and not sure where to start. This approach will give you the opportunity to work out your compositions on paper before you commit to adding them to clay. Use the projects in this chapter as a step toward learning to draw as well as learning to draw on ceramic form.



## MAKING A TRANSFER

As a primer for many of the projects in chapters 4 and 5, this is a step-by-step guide to making templates for transferring imagery onto your ceramic surfaces. These “transfers” are a process I developed when I wanted to draw large and complex surfaces on my ceramics in graduate school but was crunched for time. I later adopted this transfer method in the surface decoration of my functional pottery. These transfers allow you to repeat a design or motif on the surface of your work, removing much of the hard work of the design process for each piece you make. Using templates allowed me to make more highly decorated surfaces on my pottery and maximize my time. It also means that when a client comes back for a replacement of a broken piece, I still have the same pattern and can make a new version that will match the original. Though this process isn’t archival because old templates wear out or age, you can always trace over the old template to make a fresh one!

### Tools

- source template  
(see page 00)
- clear packing tape (thinner  
is best!)
- pencil
- tracing paper
- scissors





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**1.** After you decide what image you would like to transfer onto your ceramic surface (this could be as simple as using a template from this book, sourcing your own original artwork, or using found imagery or even a photograph), place a sheet of tracing paper over your source imagery.



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**2.** Using a pencil or pen, trace over the line you want to transfer onto the tracing paper. This line will be the one you transfer onto your ceramic surface once your template is complete.



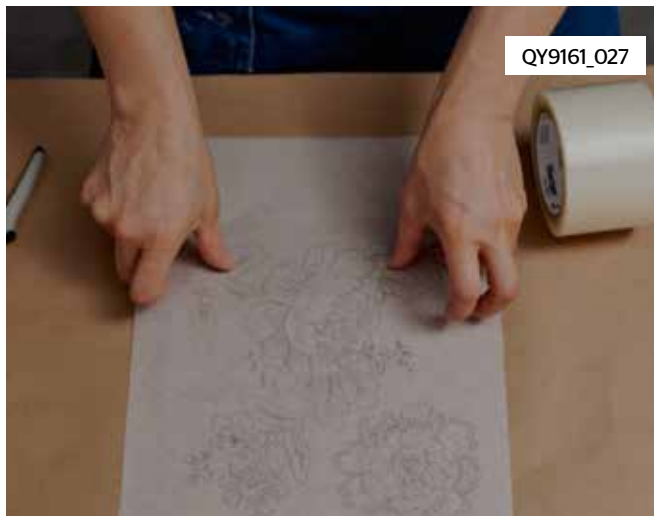
QY9161\_053

**4.** Carefully laminate the tracing paper with strips of light-weight packing tape on the front of your image.



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**5.** Flip the front laminated side over and laminate the back side using packing tape as well.



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**3.** Once you have completed the tracing, lay your traced image onto a clean, flat surface.

## TIPS

Although you do not have to use tracing paper, I recommend it. It is transparent, which means you can reverse, or mirror, an image if you need to use the same image on the back side of a form. It allows you to see through it enough when placing the image or register a design onto the surface.

Using cheap, lightweight packing tape is an easy and inexpensive way to laminate your transfers. Lamination that is too thick will make the transfer a challenge and harder to flex around a 3-D form.



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**6.** Using scissors, cut around the image leaving a small margin (about ¼" [6 mm]) around the outer-most line you want to transfer, removing the extra tracing paper as you cut. Leave a small margin around the edge of your image because if you cut right up to the outer line in your artwork, you won't be able to transfer it. Now you have a completed transfer for working on your projects!

## Troubleshooting

Sometimes tape can wrinkle when you laminate your tracing paper. This will be ok, but some of the wrinkles may transfer along with your image. If the tape is severely wrinkled, it may be worth retracing your image and starting again.





# MISHIMA SLIP INLAY

Perhaps my favorite project in this book, this is the process I use most for making my own ceramic designs. Mishima is the name for a slip inlay process that was adopted from Korea. The mishima line has a characteristic quality that appeals to the printmaker in me. It's a process very similar to engraving and the results have a similar aesthetic appeal—but it is in clay! I love the versatility of the mishima line. Although you can't make the line too thick or the underglaze will wipe out of the clay, you can make a line that varies from thin to thick and is calligraphic. This process lends itself to being colored after bisque and layers well with other techniques—or even with additional mishima lines. I choose to draw the lines into the leather-hard clay with a calligraphy pen and a cartoonist's nib, but I have seen just about every kind of mark-making tool used for mishima. Experiment with new tools to find the one you like most.

## Tools

- dry-leather hard ceramic surface
- laminated tracing paper transfer from template
- Amaco T-3 Stylus Tool
- natural sponge
- bucket of clean water
- underglaze
- Hunt Calligraphy pen and no. 107 nib
- two 1" hake brushes, one for applying underglaze and one for brushing clay crumbs from drawing



## Line Transfer



**1.** Place the laminated transfer from the book or a transfer of your own on the leather-hard ceramic surface and adjust to where you want the image to be on your surface. I will often make minor adjustments at this point from my original plan, responding to the form I am working on to make the composition that works the best with that form.



**2.** Once you have decided the placement of the template, hold in place and trace it over the lines using your Amaco T-3 stylus tool to press over the lines.



**4.** Using your calligraphy pen and nib, draw over the lines you transferred. You shouldn't need to draw too deeply as mishima works even in fine lines if wiped gently and the calligraphy pen should move nicely over the clay, allowing for a more flowing line.



**5.** Then use a clean, dry hake brush to brush away the "crumbs" on the surface of the piece. Some crumbs in the drawn lines are naturally left behind even after brushing. This is ok and part of the look of mishima. Don't fuss over the "crumbs" because you will be wiping the clay surface, which will remove any potentially sharp burrs.



**3.** Once you have transferred the line from the laminated template, you should see a light impression of the line on the surface of your leather-hard ceramic piece.



### TIP

**If you want to check whether you missed a spot in transferring your image from the template to the ceramic surface, hold your transfer in place with one hand while gently lifting the other side of the template with the other. Peek underneath to see your progress.**



**6.** Paint a layer of underglaze or slip over the whole piece. Applying the underglaze or slip over the areas where you have drawn may cause the piece to dry unevenly and crack. So I have generally made it my policy to cover the piece with the color I will be wiping off so that it dries evenly and avoids this problem. Apply the underglaze or slip before the piece gets too dry. If the piece is close to bone dry, adding the extra moisture from the underglaze or slip will cause it to crack.



**7.** Using a clean, damp natural sponge, wipe the top layer of the underglaze off of the piece. The result should be a contrast between the slip inlaid in the drawn line and the clay body.

## TIPS

If you find that when you sponge the surface of your clay there are streaks or that you are wiping away lines, let the piece dry again to a leather-hard state. Also double-check whether your water is clean—if it's not, change it and try wiping again. Using a soft natural sponge is also important to a good result when wiping your work. Rotate it in your hand as you use it to ensure that you are wiping with a clean surface each time. This means rinsing out the sponge a lot, but it is well worth the gorgeous results!

If there is still streaking once you have wiped your piece, let the piece become bone dry. Then sand the surface gently with a green kitchen scrubby (such as a Scotch-Brite pad). This will smooth out the surface as well as remove an additional layer of the surface—doing away with any streaking! Be safe and wear a dust mask while sanding.

When glazing mishima work, wipe off dust from any sanding you may have done before you apply underglaze or glaze. The dust from sanding will cause crawling in the glazed surface. To remove the dust, wipe the surface of your bisqued piece with a damp sponge.

Sometimes the mishima line that you have inlaid will sit just below the surface of the clay. This can easily make for pinholes in the glaze surface because air gets trapped in glazing. One way to easily avoid these pinholes is by gently rubbing the glaze surface just before loading the work into your kiln for glaze firing. This pushes the glaze into the holes, sealing them.

If you have applied underglaze to your bisque, wax the bottom of your piece to avoid wiping off your underglaze decoration once glazed. The spots where you have applied underglaze might not soak up as much glaze as the rest of your surface. Using a clean hake brush, apply a layer of glaze over the areas that you painted underglaze. This will ensure that these areas will have enough glaze to be as shiny as the rest of your piece once it is fired.



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## TRY IT!

After the piece has been bisque-fired, paint a layer of underglaze color using the mishima inlaid lines as your guide. Do this before you add clear glaze. I find this is a satisfying process—similar to coloring in a coloring book!



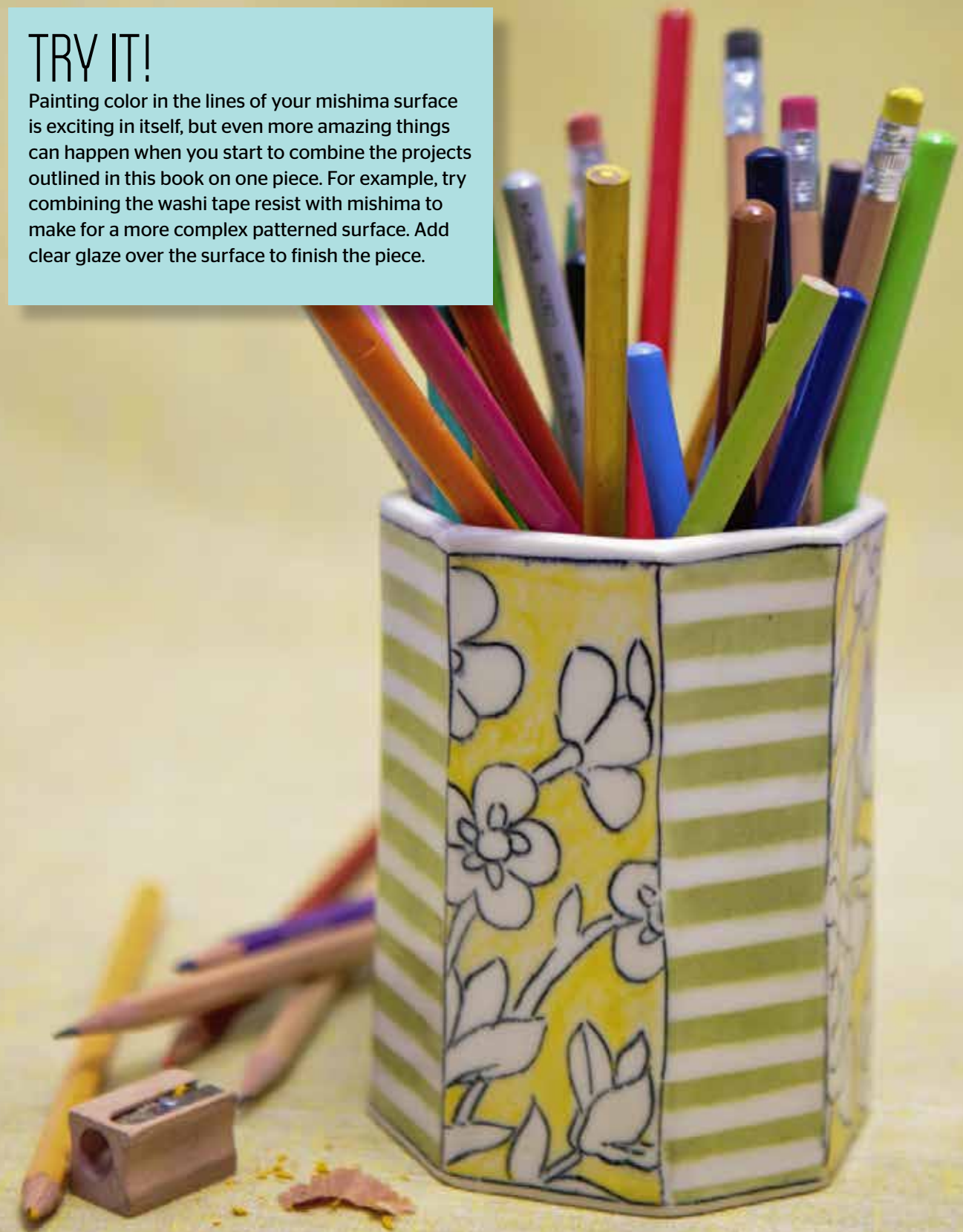
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## Finish it!

To finish your mishima surface, use a simple clear glaze over the bisqued piece and fire to your clay body's maturing temperature.

## TRY IT!

Painting color in the lines of your mishima surface is exciting in itself, but even more amazing things can happen when you start to combine the projects outlined in this book on one piece. For example, try combining the washi tape resist with mishima to make for a more complex patterned surface. Add clear glaze over the surface to finish the piece.



# ARTIST INSPIRATION

Doug Peltzman



Doug Peltzman is a full-time studio potter and teacher in the Hudson Valley area of New York. Doug's work is a wonderful example of how to use the mishima technique to create a dynamic ceramic surface. Doug is actively exhibiting his work and teaching workshops nationally. His pottery has been featured in many national publications and can be found in homes across the country.



Doug writes: "The detailed handwork in my pieces serves as a conduit to heighten one's perception and sensitivity about what a pot can be. Lines, dots, dashes, texture, and color are counterpoised to create structure, movement, and depth. Marks are both blurred and enhanced by the gravitational movement of glaze. Creating utilitarian objects with layered and active surfaces is an outlet for playful yet structured investigation. I aim to produce well-crafted functional objects that provide lasting experiences and moments of pause in day-to-day life."



**overrun** from pg 19

## **step 6** page 19

With the mishima technique, I can water down the commercial underglazes I use by about 50 percent, which allows for the underglaze to more easily get into the drawn lines as well as save on my use of underglaze. Once you have painted the piece with one coat of the underglaze or slip, let it air-dry back to a dry leather-hard state before wiping your surface. This is an important step because if you wipe your pot too soon after applying the underglaze, there will be lots of streaking.

can we cut copy so photos are be an equal size