

NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #19

DECORATING WITH GLAZE

- Glaze can be applied to pottery items with a wide variety of tools – ladles, spray guns, atomizers, brushes, trailers, jugs, stamps, sponges etc. Each will give a different effect depending on the thickness of the glaze deposit and what other materials surround/underlie the glaze deposit.
- Resist stencils such as waxes and latex can also be utilised for decorative effect, with multiple glazes.
- Glaze can be thickened by pouring off any clear water from a bucket of settled glaze, or by leaving a small amount of glaze uncovered to allow evaporation, or by mixing powdered glaze with less than the usual quantity of water.
- Glaze can be thinned by the addition of brushing medium or more water. Adding some glaze antiset can assist in handling very thin glaze mixtures.
- Taking a pint weight measurement enables you to recreate the same mixture again in the future. Simply weigh a litre of wet-mixed glaze to ascertain and record the appropriate weight for when you next need to repeat the mixture.
- Glaze decoration is most easily applied to ware which has not been high bisqued (i.e. less than 1100°C) and is not too thin walled/rimmed. This allows maximum absorption of glaze on the ware.
- Keep a record of any glaze experiments you do so they can be repeated in future (i.e. Glaze A over B gives ... , Glaze B over C gives ... , but when A is applied over both ...) and number all glaze samples/trials so you can keep them organised.
- It is also a good idea to try brushing some oxides over your glaze tests to see their reaction to your underlying glazes (i.e. red iron oxide, cobalt oxide, copper carbonate, manganese dioxide, rutile flour, nickel oxide etc.). Each oxide may react differently so keep a record of what you've done and what results were achieved. Your samples (if they are glaze test rings) can be strung up like sausages and hung from the roof of the studio for easy reference.
- Wonderful results can be achieved with glaze-on-glaze decoration – layering of glazes. The thickness of each glaze and its chemical reaction to other glazes can create stunning effects which are quite unexpected and very individual. There is no easy way to achieve this knowledge and understanding of your glazes. TESTING, TESTING, TESTING is the only way you will get to know how the glazes behave. THE factors which most affect the results are CLAY BODY, BISQUE FIRING TEMPERATURE, THICKNESS/THINNESS OF GLAZE APPLICATION, GLAZE CHEMISTRY, FIRING TEMPERATURE, AND COOLING RATE. Always remember to keep a record of the results from your tests so you don't need to reinvent the wheel again next time you'd like the same results.

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