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Tips for Successful Glazing

Always take copious notes so that you can either repeat or avoid your results!

Disclaimer - These are techniques that we use at RCS. There are so many variations with application and materials that we cannot be held responsible for variations in results. This is our best effort to share information. Each person is responsible for their own testing, results, & safety.

Starting Out

Give yourself time to glaze. Invest in the surface.

Take Notes. Take Notes! Take NOTES!!!

Bisque-ware is fragile. Do not hold it by the handles, appendages, thin rims, or knobs while you are glazing.

Glaze particles are not good for us to breathe/ or ingest. Take precautions. Wear a mask. Don't eat while glazing.

Consider wearing gloves while you glaze, especially if you have cuts on your hands.

Clean up thoroughly. Please take extra care to wipe tables/ mop floor areas when you are finished.

TEST

Always test a glaze with the same application process that you usually employ before using it on your artwork.

Use the same clay - Use the same thickness of glaze - Apply it the way you would on your artwork - Consistency is Key.

One way to create more consistency is to measure the specific gravity of your glaze.

About Glaze

Ceramic Glazes are mixtures of particles suspended in water. *They settle out.* For results most similar to your test tiles, thoroughly mix the glaze before each use. There should not be sludge at the bottom of the bucket when you are done mixing it. Glazes are often best with a thickness of heavy cream, but this does vary by recipe.

Glazes Variation in Results

Glaze thickness affects the resulting glaze color and character greatly; a glaze will look different when applied thickly or thinly. Any drips will show. The longer you hold the bisque ware in the glaze, the thicker the application will be. When the glaze dries, if it is crackling on the surface, it may be too thick. This may require washing off and reapplication. *The final glazed surface should be about the thickness of a dime.*

Peak kiln temperature and the rate of firing/cooling can also change the appearance of the glaze dramatically.

Consider counting off seconds as you dip your artwork. (Include this information in your notes.) The longer you hold your work under the surface of the glaze the thicker the application will be.

For more surface options, try layering two glazes. **We recommend to not layer more than two glazes.** The first layer should be ¼" from the table. The second layer should be at least one inch from the table or very bottom of the foot...

Check test tiles for combinations that run and be careful in your application of these. Always let the first glaze layer dry completely before adding a second layer. Line your pot with a shiny glaze where food touches. **A shiny glaze will be the best food surface glaze.** They are easier to clean and are more pleasant to eat off of.

Applying Glaze

First, read the label on the studio bucket for basic info / check the test tile wall for visual information / test the glazes / consult your testing notebook research.

Glaze the inside first if you are using different glazes for the inside and outside.

Shiny glazes are recommended to line the inside of your pot (liners). This ensures food safety!

Matte glazes are best for the outside or for pots that you will not be eating off of.

Glaze will fuse to anything it touches - the kiln shelf, other people's pots... Wipe ALL glaze off the foot of the pot. Wipe all glaze off areas where lids touch. (Consider using wax resist...)

Glazes should not be mixed together. They are different chemical compositions and do not work if they contaminate each other. Keep lids on the buckets you are not using to prevent splashing and accidentally mixing glazes.

Glaze can be applied by dipping, brushing, sponging, or with an applicator bottle. Experiment with these. When brushing or sponging, the application will be thin and may require more than one layer.

Looking at Test Tiles

Notice if there are signs the glaze moves/ runs. Look for thickness built up at the base or drips forming. IF it does, give the glaze more space at the foot of your artwork to run downward without hitting the shelf.

Compare test tiles with thick vs. thin applications and notice the differences- color, texture, and underglaze coverage. See if underglaze or slip shows through the glaze you have chosen.

About Slip

Slip is essentially clay with extra water added. These *must be applied* on green-ware (unfired clay) that is still leather hard. If it is applied to dry clay or bisque-ware it will flake off. Use these slips to increase your color palette, carve through them to reveal the clay color, or apply them to create texture. You can check your local pottery supplier for slip options, or create your own from a recipe. Make test tiles to see how they interact with your glazes! There are lots of options to broaden your glaze palette.

Underglaze

Underglaze can be applied on both green-ware and bisque-ware. At RCS we use AMACO velvet underglazes.

Underglazes may be mixed together like paint on a palette. The color in the bottle is similar to the end result when covered by a clear glaze. Underglaze will show most clearly through transparent glazes or on bare clay. Underglaze may be used on the foot of your artwork, but the kilns wash may leave a white mark where it touches the kiln shelf.

Underglaze must have a glaze over it in order for the surface to be food safe.

It is recommended to brush on 2-3 layers for an opaque application.

Using Wax Resist on Bisque-ware

Wax does not come off once it is applied on bisque-ware unless it is fired or sanded away.

Be careful not to drip unwanted wax on your artwork or the table!

Clean your brushes well after waxing, between glazes, and after use. If they harden they will be unusable.

Apply wax resist (**without alumina**) to bisque ware anywhere you do not want glaze.

Apply it to lower ¼" of the foot of your artwork to create a clean line for the glaze to stop at.

Let it dry for 15 minutes before applying the first glaze.

Apply wax resist (**with alumina**) to lids and galleries of covered jars/ teapots.

Using Wax Resist Over Glaze

Use Wax over glaze to create patterns when layering glazes.

Let it dry a minimum of **30 minutes** when applied on bisqueware - such as the foot.

Let your wax dry for **4 hours or overnight** (when applied over glaze) before layering a second glaze.

Often it is best to apply it the day before you will dip the second glaze.

Cover the wax jar so it doesn't dry out. Clean your brushes right after use.

Clean glaze drips off of waxed areas well.

Using Wax Resist on on Greenware

Wax may be applied to greenware and "cut" through to create precise lines using carving tools. These lines may then be filled with oxides or underglaze. Any drips not absorbed into the lines may be wiped off to create a clear pattern.

Mending chipped Glaze

Do not add more glaze to chipped or bumped areas of the glazed surface until it is totally dry

Use thicker glaze (from the side of the bucket if possible) to patch