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Soft Celadon Slabs

Joan Johnson

June 1974

I haven't worked much with slabs before. Judy Cornell got me into it when she came to do a work shop this year. I have also discovered that since I've been using the electric wheel-throwing had made me tense and I'd get a headache, probably from keeping up with the speed of the machine. Anyway, I started building steins with porcelain and they were pretty heavy because I didn't roll them out thin enough.

I began collecting different sized cylindrical forms to use as molds. A cardboard tube three inches in diameter, my small rolling pin- two inches in diameter, some cans about six inches, and the largest was an eleven inch diameter cardboard barrel.

When rolling out my slabs with my small rolling pin I had trouble keeping the edge of the roller from making lines in the clay because the slab was wider than the roller. However the lines looked like they had potential as a texture. I then made my first flower vase with the lines growing from one point at the base, just using the edge of my small rolling pin. I then wrapped my three inch cylinder with newspaper, flipped the textured slab over and rolled it on the form. Where the edges met, I used a toothbrush to slip it and then with a little pressure rolled the joint together making a clean overlap. When the clay was stiff enough to stand alone I took out the form, but not the paper, smoothed the lip and made it wider, and then cut the slab for the bottom, scored it with the toothbrush and rolled the clay cylinder onto it. Then I removed the paper.

Cynthia Bringle pushes some of her pots out in spots from the inside which makes a nice stretched texture on the outside. I pushed out between some of the rolling pin lines for that texture and also to make the form more pleasing. My final touch ups on my first vase were smoothing the coil on the lip and smoothing the joint of the bottom. (This is slide #1).

My next experiment was a more slender cylinder- two inches. I used horizontal roller lines and my striped rolling pin for a XX texture alternately with no texture. (Slide #2).

After making a few vases, I found that it was quicker to run my chamois along the lip edge, with my thumb making a line defining it more, before I rolled it up on the form. Also I smoothed the inside edge when I flipped the slab over. Then I worked the same way on the joining and putting the bottom on, etc. While it was still soft I let the base collapse a little bit by tapping it on the table top.

For the necked in vases (slide#3) I smoothed a larger area at the lip on the slab. Rolled it up, etc, and after the paper was out and the bottom on, I made verticle slits through the lip edge. Then slip where the sections would overlap and then gently take them in, trim the edge and press a coil on it.

The fan textured vases needed a more more fluid lip so I cut it down irregularly when it was still a slab. Cutting (slide #4) it on a diagonal made it more graceful and flowerlike.

I wanted to make some covered jars and approached it from a few ways. I threw some lids and some lips. I made the spiral form and attached the lip and used a thrown lid. However it made the pot kind of stiff looking because the spiral is too fluid for the thrown

neck. Also I didn't like incorporating the wheel with working in the slabs this way. It just didn't feel right. (This was slide #5).

Still using a thrown lid, I smoothed the lip a little wider than for a vase, on the slab, and necked it in after it was a cylinder by smoothing it and coaxing it. It was soft enough so it didn't take much time. Then I fit it to the lid. (Slide #6).

I also necked in the jar by taking in darts, some I'd smooth away the overlaps, some not. (Slide #7&8). I cut circles out of slabs for the lid. Textured them with the rolling pin lines according to the body and smooth the edge with a chamois. Then domed it by setting it on a balloon until it was stiff. When stiff enough, I attached the flange, which was a strip of slab- one edge smoothed with chamois. Slipped it and worked it in place.

The other lids were made by just cutting into the form. I closed both ends. The lid end I would either roll the edge away, which also made the top dome some more because of the air pressure on the inside. (Slide #9). Others I let it slump in with a smooth edge. Then when set up enough I used a sharp blade to cut the lid at an angle and with an irregular cut, so it wouldn't slip off. I finished up by smoothing the edges of jar and lid separately.

For the mugs, the only thing different is the handle. It's made from a slab- the edges smoothed and a finger depression running down the center. I think this handle works well, it ties in with the rest of the form with evenness of width and texture.

I have never covered ~~and~~ of my porcelain pots with plastic or put them in the damp room after they were finished. Just set them on the shelf and let them dry.

I had always thought that I should be cautious with drying and at one point I added 25% insulation fiber to my clay. Supposedly it would give it more dry strength and when rolling out large slabs- they would be easily to manipulate- in other words less tearing and cracking. Alas it made no difference. So back to the old regular porcelain body, which is a salt body too.

XX Sagger	25
OM #4	25
EPK	25
Flint	12.5
Kona F4	12.5
Sodaspar	

Originally I fired my slab porcelain in the salt kiln. (Slide #10).

I was really pleased with the form salted and the way the slips worked. However the facilities weren't available so I couldn't continue in salt. The porcelain works fine at cone eleven reduction with Marci's clear celadon glaze, JF celadon, and Secrest celadon. With these glazes I was even able to use some of the salt slips.

I applied the slips to cone 06 bisque ware. On the pushed out areas sometimes I brushed on a slip and then wiped it with a damp sponge so the slip stayed in the cracks. Using a dry brush I applied the slip over the cross texture, so it would only go on the high areas. I diluted some of them to get softer, more subtle color or use it thicker to make the stripes more solid and defined. However when too thick, the glazes tend to pinhole.

Glaze formulas I used:

Marci's clear cone 9-11 (Slide # 11)

Cornwall Stone	20
Spodumene	18
Dolomite	20
EPK	20
Flint	25
Frit 3191	5

When fired to cone 9 it's almost an opaque white and slips come through but not very clearly. At cone 10 it's clear, a white clear, not real bright. At cone 11 it's very bright and has a green tone to it. Like ice. The slips are very clear and the only one that is unstable is the 50-50 iron oxide and rutile over slip, unless I soaked the kiln for a few hours at cone nine or ten. Then the slips tended to run a little.

I also used JF Celedon: (Slide # 12)

Cornwall Stone	20
Spodumene	20
Dolomite	20
Kaolin	20
Flint	25
Frit 3124	10
Tin Oxide	2
Red Iron Oxide	1.5

This is a rich green celedon. I really liked the way it flowed on the spireled pots. The 50-50 iron and rutile worked well with it however the other slips didn't come out as strong as with Marci's clear.

Also I used Secret Celadon: (Slide # 13)

Clinenfield	54
Whiting	13
Barium Carbonate	2.5
Zinc Oxide	2.5
EPK	6
Flint	22.5
Tin	5
Iron Oxide	1

This is a little more blue green than Marci's clear. All the slips work well with it.

Slips:

David Martin Slip

Black (although green with the glazes I used)

Albany Slip	63.5
Nepheline Syenite	12.2
BaCO ₃	9.7
Talc	14.6
Chrome Oxide	2%
Red Iron Oxide	1
Manganese Dioxide	1
Cobalt Oxide	1

Blue

Albany Slip	63.5
Nephsy	12.2
BaCO ₃	9.7
Talc	14.6
Cobalt Carbonate	3%

Salt Slips:

Base Slip:

XX Sagger	25
Tennessee Ball Clay	25
Flint	25
Potash	25

Colorants:

For Blue: Cobalt oxide 1%.

For Grey: Rutile 10%.

For Blue Green : Cobalt 2%, Rutile 6%.

GH₃ Slip: (soft light blue)

Flint	55
Ball Clay	15
Kona F ⁴	10
Frit 3110	15
Opax	5
Cobalt	3%

I tried to set things up so I could have a few cylinders stiffening up, while I was completeing another one. It took about a half an hour for the tall twenty inch cylinder to stiffen up enough to be bottomed and pushed out. While two of them were stiffening I could make four mugs or two tenn inch vases. Then I'd cover one of the tall cylinders so it wouldn't dry too much and work on the others. It takes me about fifteen minutes to push out some of the patterns. However the tall twenty inch vases I couldn't start pushing out at the bottom because they would collapse. So I'd work with the top half and wait until the bottom was a little stiffer. This way it wouldn't collapse when I was

fussing with the top. Total time for the tall vases was an hour and fifteen minutes.

Also I tried to schedule my firing time so I could fire every two weeks. I used the sixteen foot Alpine and split it with another person who was using the same glazes. We usually soaked the kiln at cone ten for a couple of hours so the glaze would be very glassy and so the iron and rutile would come out very strong, At cone eleven we reduced for twenty-five minutes.

I would like to continue with these forms and try more designs and combinations of patterns. Instead of pushing out every other stripe, I'd like to push out on just half of the stripe. Also I'd like to make some sets of cannisters and maybe even a whole dinnerware set. The plates being slightly slumped with a simple line at the edge.

Keeping the colors soft and quiet lets the texture and form stand out. The celadon offers a nice soft surface that's touchable. I think that's important. They are functional pots and I want people to touch them as well as look at them and decorate their homes with them.

Mostly I've enjoyed making them. Working with clay this way is so complete. I don't get bored because the possibilities within the designs and patterns I use on the cylinder are never ending. I set up a rythm with the clay's drying time and work on a few at a time giving myself a chance to think of what new pattern I can put on the next one that's sitting there waiting to be decorated.

Doing a firing every other week gives me a good look at the progress and I can go right ahead after looking at the finished pieces and make improvements on the next load.

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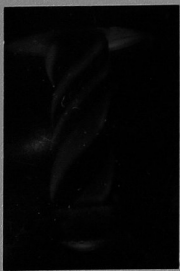
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