

FUSION

Annual Conference

“British Potters Potting”

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McMaster University
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KITTY SHEPHERD

CLASS NOTES

PART ONE

MAKING A PROFILE

Introduction

I have spent quite a long-time researching shapes,

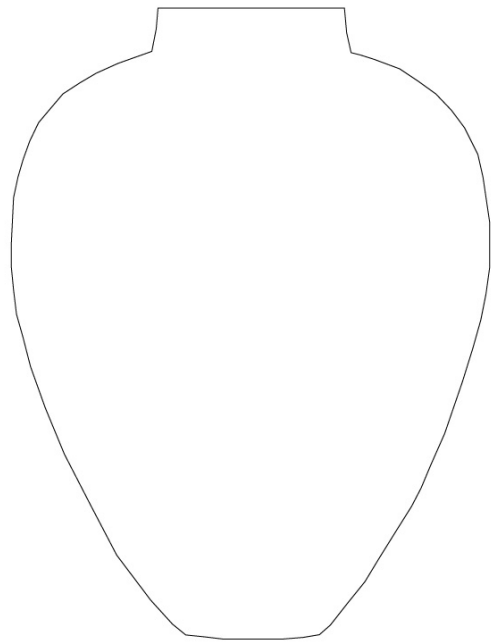
as well as pattern and design. A history of European and oriental ceramics has obviously inspired my work and I am making my own style by appropriating and reinterpreting the shapes I admire. My work is primarily illustrative and narrative and therefore I am drawn to shapes that work with the surface decoration that is going to be applied to each individual piece.

For example, a tall narrow vase with a small base and a narrow neck is going to show a tessellating pattern to greater effect than a square sided bottle. In order to work out the curves of a shape one must consider the eventual piece as a whole. Great advantage can be achieved by playing with the illusion of curve by dynamically positioning a repeating motif on a particular shape. Additionally, a secondary background tessellation can also be applied and manipulated to take the illusion of shape in a very different direction to the actual shape. Once you start to think in this way, anything is possible. Look at the work of Elizabeth Fritch.

So, taking historical and ancient ceramics as a guide we can use those shapes to talk to our contemporary world of ceramics. It is a good place to start. By meticulously copying a shape you begin to understand another craftsman's journey as intimately as if you were running your blind hands over his, or her face.

Creating a cardboard profile for hand building shapes is the simplest and most accurate method of hand building to create a complex pre designed shape.

When I say complex, remember, the simplest of curves can be complex, they need to render into 3 dimensions just as you designed them and the slightest variation can alter the shape dramatically by the time you have finished the build. This is why I encourage the discipline of emulating historical shapes as a starting point. The precision of building is further enhanced by the addition of the "stop-break" as I call it.



Above: *FAB Shape illustrator*

Top: *finished FAB pot*

Method

You will need:

A banding wheel of a heavy weight and a certain diameter is my preferred way to build, it is for these reasons:

- It is important to build at table-top height. Your eye level is then horizontal to the shape, rather than looking down into the build.
- The banding wheel will give you the space beneath to accommodate your “stop-break” which is attached to the profile.
- The controlled hand eye coordination, for me, is better to the hand, eye, foot coordination which is required if you are building on the potters’ wheel.

Use double or triple wall corrugated cardboard, because:

- Cardboard is light to handle; wood or hardboard are not. The constant lifting and offering up the profile to the shape is significant
- Double corrugated is perfect for profiles up to 30 cm, triple is good for bigger profiles.

All other components to make a profile you will have to hand like sticky tape to bind your profile and a staple gun to fix the stop-break. I use a scalpel to cut the shape out.

The stop-break needs to be calibrated to your individual banding wheel, I work this out by standing the negative shape, which I cut from the profile on the surface of the wheel and mark where I want the foot ring to sit. After this it is a simple case of offering the profile to the wheel, marking where the stop break should be and stapling firmly through all layers to hold securely. Then bind the whole profile edge in tape. You are ready to start your build.

A second illustrated PDF follows on the building technique.

If you feel confident to start the pot with your new profile then go ahead. The one thing to be absolutely sure about is the foot ring for the piece you are starting off. This must be precise. I usually roll out a slab of about 4 mm thickness to a larger than required rough circle. Place it on the banding wheel then offer up the profile and gently mark the slab all the way around with the tip of the profile. Then, with a pin, set the banding wheel off and cut surely and precisely into the slab to be left with a perfect circle with which to start your pot.



Above: finished profile by Kitty Shepherd