

Experiments in 'throwing' on the wheel

These pots are my first (surviving) attempts to use the wheel.

The first two are exercises in trying to control the shape as simple cylinders, make the base an appropriate thickness and exploring simple glazing by painting with a brush.



Preparation

The first step is to knead the clay to ensure it is of even consistency and is free of air bubbles.

A 'bat' is put on the wheel - a simple circular wooden platform which makes removal from the wheel easier later.

Having made a round lump (I try to make it the shape of the earth re-entry capsule from moon landings!), it is hurled at the centre of the 'bat' on the wheel.

Centring

Next is centring the clay lump on the wheel, by squeezing it into a high cylinder and then

squashing it down, attempting to distribute the clay evenly so that it doesn't wobble.

I learnt that resting my arms on the wheel frame to brace my hands helped enormously.

Centring also makes the clay 'aligned' at the microscopic level which makes for a stronger and more easily worked shape.

Shaping

The next step is to begin an indentation and push down inside until the base of the pot is established - it can help to use a needle to test the depth of the base to get it right.

The walls are then thinned and shaped gradually until the pot is the desired shape.

Finally a thin wire is used to cut through at the base to make it easy to separate from the bat when dry.

The second two pots were more complex shapes and involved opening up the shape before squeezing in to make the thin neck.



In three of the pots I scored grooves on the outside to decorate.

Glazing

The pots were bisque fired after drying.

Then the pots were glazed by brushing glaze on. This proved impossible inside for the thin necked pots, so a thin milky glaze was poured into the pot, allowed to soak in to the bisque fired clay and then poured out. I should have also dipped the pots in this thin glaze to glaze the exterior too, since it achieves such a nice even finish - next time!

It has helped to be persistent and to cut open pots to see how they have gone wrong before discarding and trying again. I have enjoyed these activities - they are utterly absorbing and the time simply flies by.

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My thanks for the excellent teaching from Peter Norris and suggestions from Malcolm and fellow potters at the Fold.