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Pottery Making as a Community Work

By PAUL E. COX, Acting Head of Ceramic Engineering

SINCE women are the great purchasers of ceramic products, directly and indirectly, it is only natural that they wish, and carry out their wish, to become better acquainted with some of the processes of ceramic manufacture. And becoming acquainted with ceramic processes doesn’t afford half the thrill that does carrying these same into execution, and producing, all by one’s self, her very first piece of hand-made pottery. An oriental rug or a Cadillac coupe are nothing in comparison of luxury.

Handicraft of all kinds is greatly in demand, for the city and larger schools over the country are establishing in their lower grades as well as in high school, courses in handicraft of all kinds, and more particularly clay modeling. Nor is the work limited to the schools, for anyone living in a community where there is a pottery kiln may make her wares at home and have them fired in the kiln. She may be even more fortunate and live in a community where the women interested in the work have their classes in pottery instruction and have established their own kiln.

If she is not so fortunate, she may wish to start the work in her own town. And is it such a terrible process? Certainly not, when it takes such a short time for anyone with a desire and “feeling” for the work to learn to handle and mold the rather tricky medium.

A nearby pottery factory will sell washed clay, ready for immediate use, as fresh clay is too coarse and adulterated to use in its natural state.

After the clay has been softened for use, the modeling begins. Since only experts with months and even years of training are able to successfully use the potter’s wheel, the most of us are concerned with the hand-modeled or “patch” process. For this the only utensils needed are, an idea, a piece of cardboard, a small pan of water, a sponge, a setter, or a plaster plate thoroughly moistened, a paring knife, a medium sized knitting needle, a Jap paint brush and sandpaper. The few of these articles that are not obtainable at home may be purchased at a reasonable price from any ceramic supply company, and can be used a number of times.

The idea is put on cardboard in exact dimensions rather than in perspective, cut out, and the piece which is cut away from the plan is saved as a pattern. Only medium sized pieces of clay are used since it dries out so quickly in the air, and small pieces of this are broken off to use as needed. The bottom of the model is shaped on the setter, making sure that the joinings of the patches of clay are tight by moistening the slanting edges of the main piece before adding the patches and pressing tightly until there can be no possible danger of an airhole. The bottom or base of any piece should be uniform in size and never less than one-half inch thick. It is wiser always to make a base larger than is needed and to cut it down to the desired size.

The shaping of the sides is the next step. Here the patch process is used as before, working around and up, shaping it constantly with the pattern. The sides of a piece should be never less than a quarter inch thick, and should be as nearly as is possible completed at one time, since the part made will dry and shrink as it stands. In case it must stand, it should be covered with a layer of paper then a damp cloth and stored in a cool dark enclosure. The laboratories have a “collar,” a long damp, cement­floored box, that would be easy to construct in a home laboratory if the person so desired.

When the construction is complete, the piece is now ready for the design, which may be drawn directly onto the clay, but is usually much more successful when transferred form a drawing with carbon paper. The design may be carried out in many ways, but there are three commonly in use. Simplest of these is the outline method which is only tracing around the edge of the design with a rounded point of a knitting needle, digging in deep enough to leave a heavily marked outline. The other two processes are equal in simplicity, and are each very effective in appearance. Here either the part of the pottery around the design is scraped away with a sharply pointed knife, leaving the design in relief, or the design may be hollowed out, giving a shadowy or niched effect. In either case, the difference in depth is approximately one-eighth inch.

After the design has been smoothed with sandpaper, the piece is allowed to remain in the open until thoroughly dry, when it is ready for the kiln. The management of a kiln requires special training and is of small importance to the pottery maker at home, since her part is only constructing and designing the article.

When the piece has been thoroughly fired and cooled, it is ready for the glaze. In communities where enough work is being done at one time, these may be mixed in bulk, and placed in jars deep enough to allow the whole piece to be immersed at once. Only the standard colors as blue, brown, green or yellow need to be made in this way, since some of the less important ones, those to be used only in decoration, may be purchased in a powder form, and mixed in quantities just large enough for immediate use.

After the article has been immersed in

Dipping pottery in the glaze mixture. The jar is deep enough to allow the whole piece to be immersed at one time.

Modeling a bowl by the patch process. Notice the thickness of the base.

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the glaze, it requires only a few moments to dry sufficiently to finish the decoration. Here, too, the glaze is dug out in a manner similar to the removal of the clay, and the parts of the design to be in another color are filled in with that glaze, this being applied with a paint brush, and the whole allowed to dry. The piece is now ready for the final firing, and after this is ready for service.

Since the very great majority of people are interested only in the mechanical construction of pottery, that phase is the one taught in the elementary ceramic schools. The three months' course given at Iowa State College prepares a girl to go out and teach pottery modeling in the grades or higher schools, or to direct its progress in a community of women interested in the work.

**Fall Forecast for Children's Frocks**

*By HELEN PASCHAL*

WHEN my grandmother was a child, pantalettes were a necessary adjunct to every little frock. Sturdy little legs were covered almost to the ankles with lace-trimmed or beruffled pant legs. With the changing fashions, my mother wore no pantalettes but her little dresses were often made in this style. The pants were of brown-eyed boy dressed in a many fashions as there are for little girls. Their small cuffs. Large white buttons attached to the foundation of this idea. Jackies wears a sailor suit with short pants or a little play suit of small trousers buttoned to a fitted waist open in front. Summer frocks, many of which have rubbers; bloomers that have rubbers; bloomers that have cuffs; and bloomers which match the dress or the trimming on the dress. Lucky little girls who wear them and no longer need to be admonished with mother's "Keep your dress down, Betty!"

From bloomers we pass to dresses, the supreme topic of the feminine mind. Who does not want, after a glance through the pages of little girl's dress pattern, to adopt an orphan asylum of children and sew and sew for them.

Let us think for a moment of the perfectly lovely dotted swisses, cross barred organdies, dotted voiles, flowered capes in chiffon chiffon chiffion on the late summer market—