

RESIST & MASKING

Technical Tips And
Product Information

#23

- Resist and masking are techniques traditionally applied to the decoration of pottery rather than the forming. The materials most commonly used are latex, hot wax and cold wax resist emulsions. Each of these materials can be used on raw, bisque or glazed surfaces to resist/mask off areas of decorative material (oxide, underglaze, glaze, lustre, onglaze etc). The most important element of effective resist/masking is planning. You need to have mentally deconstructed your image making into areas/layers which can be done concurrently or consecutively.

NOTE: some masking/resist materials can be removed by hand, but others must be fired out/burnt off.

- Always carry out a series of tests/trials before embarking on your masterpiece.
- Always take care to allocate a set of cheap brushes for resist/masking. Latex can usually be removed with eucalyptus or tea tree oil. Hot wax can be softened by immersion into boiling water but not removed completely, and cold wax emulsion can be removed by washing in hot soapy water.
- Shellac resist is an interesting decorative/textural effect which involves brushing liquid shellac (shellac flakes mixed with methylated spirits) onto bone dry pottery (fine particle clays are best). Once your design has dried, sponge back the clay surface with a moist (not sloppy) sponge. Always work in one direction only when sponging. Keep sponging until the shellac-resisted areas are raised above the background clay by 3–5mm. Wash your shellac brushes in methylated spirits, then in warm soapy water. Once your pot is dry, bisque fire it to burn off the shellac. Then glaze the pot in a suitable glaze which highlights the texture (i.e. a breaking or a pooling glaze).
- Object resist/stencilling films can be an effective way of creating designs. Place a collection of flat interesting objects onto a platter/slab/tile then overspray with a light mixture of oxide/stain/underglaze. Cut stencils from architects or dressmakers tracing paper or a similar non-absorbent material. Hold the stencil against the clay surface and dab liquid underglaze/slip on with a dry stiff brush, or sponge on with an even textured sponge. This technique can be used to build up multiple layers of colour to form a complex design.
- Screen printing on clay is a form of masked decoration (*see Technical Tips and Product Information Sheet #22 Onglazes and Onglaze Decals*)