

Ceramics

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Suze Lindsay SETS OF SQUARES



An integral part of my work is using surface decoration to enhance form. After throwing and altering or forming from a slab, my problem-solving concerns the patterning and the painting of slips and glazes that emphasize specific areas of the pots. I have studied various cultures and inspiring historic ceramics that influence the way I organize spacing and place motifs.

Function First

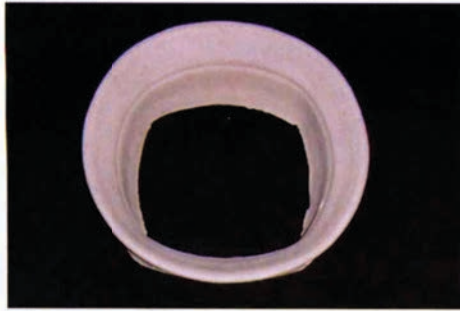
First there is the functionality. The plates need to be thick enough that they don't warp in the firing, yet light enough to be able to stack for storage. When working with slabs, it is always important to consider all the edges and how they are treated, so those edges are defined and refined in some manner, both to "finish" them and

to compress them and provide strength. Another consideration is the decision and application of the foot. If a thrown foot ring is added, does it stay round or is it altered to reflect the form? I am continually asking questions like this.

Building a Set

My interest resides in creating a "family" of pots when working in sets like this. A place setting would include a cup, salad plate, dinner plate, and bowl. Beyond that, it is up to me to decide how I create a dialog between these pots. Working with the square, I can approach the unifying set by the form alone, or use the same palette of slips and glazes to decorate each piece so they are recognizable as a set.

Facing page: Square place setting, dinner plate 10 in. (25 cm) square, stoneware, slips and glazes, salt fired to cone 10, 2010.



Right: A thick slab is roughly cut and placed in a bisque-fired mold and is then pressed down into the mold using a bag filled with sand, grog, or rice.

The slab is stretched into the mold until it nearly reaches the bottom. A tall foot ring is then added.

Below: A slab is cut using a cardboard template and is draped over a dry, plaster hump mold to create a curve.

The edges are smoothed in order to compress and strengthen them, and a squared-off foot ring is added after it has set up, which does not take long on the porous plaster mold.



A Square Meal

When I first started making square plates, they were thrown on the wheel, with a diameter large enough that the plate would still be 9 inches to an edge when the rims were cut square. The construction of this kind of plate led to a "soft square," and when I looked at it critically, I realized I wanted the square to be more articulated, so I went to the handbuilt slab form with a thrown foot ring. Technically, one needs to be sure the added foot is properly centered from the rim, and that edges remain thick enough so that they do not slump in the firing.

Selling Sets

I think about people who like the tradition of a "china pattern" for their new home, and then how I might guide their interest from a traditional set of bone china to handmade pottery for their table. Accepting a larger order of place settings requires time for the potter, and patience on the customer's end. Clear communication between the two "parties" is essential.

In our gallery, we try to create areas that suggest how we live with pots. From mantles, to cupboards and particularly a kitchen table for place settings, these areas help the customer imagine how pots may feel in their own home.

Suze Lindsay makes pots with her husband Kent McLaughlin at Fork Mountain Pottery (www.forkmountainpottery.net) in Bakersville, North Carolina. Works by Lindsay were included in the "Table Manners" exhibition, on view at Lark & Key gallery (www.larkandkey.com) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

