

# UNDERSTANDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL CERAMICS

## VESSEL CONSTRUCTION AND IDENTIFICATION

# 1

### WEDGING THE CLAY

‘Wedging’ is the process of mixing in *temper* and removing air from the clay (*fabric*).

#### Terminology

**Temper:** Material added to clay to prevent shrinkage including, crushed rocks, shells, plant fibers and even broken pottery.

**Fabric:** Refers to the clay body itself, Including it's *Matrix* (Fine particles) and *Inclusions* (Larger mineral or Organic particles). In archaeological analysis the fabric can help us understand a ceramic pieces origin and manufacturing techniques.

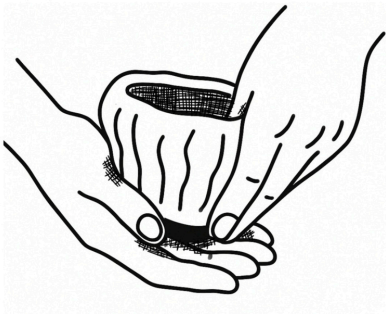


# 2

### CREATION OF THE VESSEL

#### HAND MODELLING

Hand modeling is the manipulation of clay with your hands.



#### COILING

Coiling is the layering of a cylindrical rope of clay to form a vessel.



#### SLAB

Slab ceramics are created by piecing together individual ‘slabs’ of clay.



#### THROWN

Thrown ceramics are created through the use of a pottery wheel.



# 3

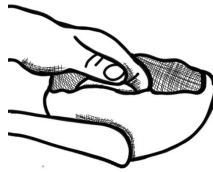
## FINISHING TECHNIQUES

### Smoothing



The use of tools including: stones, sponges, hands etc., to create an even surface.

### Paddle/Anvil



The use of a flat wooden paddle to shape the outside of the vessel, while a smaller anvil (typically stone) is held on the inside.

### Scrapping



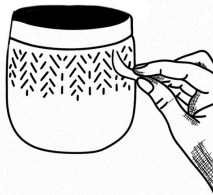
The use of various techniques to shape, trim or decorate ceramic pieces.

### Burnishing



The use of a hard tool to polish the clay, to achieve a sheen or shine without the use of glaze.

### Texturizing



The process of creating varied surface textures on ceramic pieces to add visual interest and tactile qualities

### Polishing



Using mechanical, chemical, or thermal methods to refine the surface, creating a smooth finish.

## EXTRAS

### Slipping

The process of dipping a vessel in liquid clay to change the colour.

### Glazing

The addition of a glaze to offer a shiny look and make the vessel impermeable to liquid.

### Applique

The addition of smaller separate clay pieces are added to a larger piece. (Can be for decoration or function)

### Painting

The addition of colour to the surface of the vessel using paint.

# 4

## DRYING AND FIRING

### FIRING METHOD

**OPEN FIRE:** Requires careful control of the fire's temperature and duration, does not reach high enough temperatures for all pottery types.

**KILN:** Allows for precise temperature adjustments and the ability to control the atmospheric conditions

### DRYING AND FIRING STAGES

#### 1. Air Drying

- Temperature of local environment.

#### 2. Dehydration Stage

- 100-200c

#### 3. Oxidization Stage

- 600-900c

#### 4. Vitrification

- 1200c, Flux 800--900c (Ca,Pb,Na,K)