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**Ancient Clay: Handbuilding, Terra Sigillata, and Bonfiring
Five-Day Workshop - Information and Supply Lists for Hosting Venue**

This workshop is my favorite of all those I have taught, and I have done it more than any other. In graduate school in Massachusetts in the late 80s I noticed that art history classes paid little or no attention to the ceramics of ancient and tribal cultures other than the red and black figure vases of ancient Greece. I designed this workshop in response. Initially I called it "Primitive Ceramics," but quickly realized that "primitive" is an entirely inappropriate term in reference to this type of work. The circumstances and firing methods may be primitive, but the craftsmanship and aesthetic is often as sophisticated as any art/craft in the modern world.

Of all the workshops I teach, this one requires the most advance preparation and planning for the hosting venue. You have to commit to it, because there is nothing on the lists below that we can do without. You have to hustle the appropriate sawdust and wood, the steel grate/cage must be welded together close to the specifications I provide, and the clay must be mixed to the recipe provided, for the simple reason that wares made from any normal claybody will not survive the quick bisque and bonfire.

But given appropriate planning and preparation, I can promise an amazing experience and well-satisfied participants. To speak plainly, participants are often amazed at what they produce in this workshop. For nine years I taught Ancient Clay every summer at a studio in northwest Washington State, and had quite a few people come back and take it repeatedly.

Materials Provided by Host

- Buff high-grog claybody custom-mixed of equal parts Goldart, fireclay, ball clay, and extra-fine grog - no other claybody will do. Have on hand 50# per participant and 150# for instructor, plus some extra.
- One gallon white vinegar.
- Two gallons of joining slurry made in advance from the claybody. Cut 25# of clay into thin slices and dry completely. Break up the bone-dry clay into smaller pieces (not crushed) and immerse in water with several inches of water covering the clay and let sit overnight. The clay will slake down to slurry by itself. Next day, drain off all excess water, mix with drill impeller mixer or hand blender until completely smooth with no lumps, add one cup of vinegar, add water carefully, mixing frequently, until slurry will not pour if you tilt the bucket, but will if you shake it.
- Approximately four large trash-bags of sawdust.
- A 6" stack of newspaper.
- Four standard propane cylinders for a hand-held torch. I will bring several torches.
- A supply of thin-split dry firewood or dry scrap lumber (no plywood, no pressure-treated wood), 2' to 4'-long, no more than 1" to 2" in diameter (approximately one small pickup-truck full). Branches gathered in the forest work just fine as long as they approximately meet the above criteria and are completely dry. Get plenty.

Facilities and Equipment Provided by Host

- Digital projector and appropriately dark room with screen or white wall.
- Large sturdy work tables for handbuilding and decorating. Heavy plywood-covered tables are best, but sturdy 3x6' folding tables will work, with no more than four participants per 4x8' table and two per folding table.
- A 24" stool for the instructor to use.
- If I am driving to teach a workshop, I'll bring these, but otherwise you need to make a good supply of pukis - enough to have one for each participant to use, one for the instructor, and some extras. Puki is a Southwest Native American term for a small reusable bisque-fired form for supporting the lower portion of round-bottom coil vessels until they are stiff enough to support themselves. Pukis are just heavy-duty bisque-fired bowl-forms with a wide foot and a constant curve like a portion of a sphere on the inside from rim to rim. For our purpose, we should have a variety of sizes of pukis with the radius of the inside curvature of different pukis varying from 3" to 5". If that seems confusing, go to Walmart and buy cheap kids' balls in approximately 6", 8", and 10" diameters, and make some of the pukis where the inside snugly matches the curvature of the 6" ball, and same with the 8" and 10".
- Electric kilns for drying wares and for low (cone-018) bisque pre-fire (and 018 cones if not a programmable kiln).
- Re-bar grate/cage for bonfire-firing, fabricated from directions provided.
- Scrap sheet-steel to line grate/cage and cover pots (#10 cans, top and bottom removed, cut open work fine). If the workshop is conducted in the East and I am driving to it, I can bring the re-bar grate and sheet metal scraps.
- Safe open space for bonfiring (and approval from authorities if necessary) with water hose available. We either need to dig a pit for the bonfire in order to have the necessary supply of dirt to bury the bonfire to smother it in the blackware process, or you need to bring in a big pile of dirt/sand for the same purpose. I have done bonfirings on pavement, and it does require a big pile of dirt - at least a cubic yard.