

Vince Pitelka, 2016

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## **Handbuilding: Tricks of the Trade - Five-Day Workshop Description and Schedule**

***Skill Level*** – Beginning through advanced – at whatever level you begin this workshop, you'll advance significantly.

### ***Background***

In our technological world of iPhones, cloud storage, video games, and autonomous vehicles, we are easily seduced by tools and machinery, assuming that the product of our endeavors will be improved by their use. In ceramics, that can be misleading. The Potter's wheel is appropriate for certain kinds of forms, while handbuilding offers unlimited possibilities. The wheel tends to impose symmetry unless the potter purposefully introduces asymmetry. Handbuilt form tends toward asymmetry unless the potter asserts the choice and has the skill to make the work symmetrical. And no matter how symmetrical a handbuilt form might appear, it never has the mechanically-imposed symmetry of most wheel-thrown forms, and instead reveals an organic, human quality representing the hands, movements, and personality of the maker. Slab-rollers and clay-extruders are handy devices and time-savers, but very effective handbuilding can be accomplished with nothing more than clay, hands, and a few easily-improvised tools. Many cultures through world history have always preferred handbuilding techniques, and today, handbuilt ceramics encompasses an extraordinary diversity of utilitarian and sculptural form. Those devoted to the potter's wheel will be a far better potter if they can also employ the broad range of handbuilding techniques.

### ***Workshop Description***

Our objective is to handbuild with a sense of adventure and discovery. We will explore different approaches to pinch, coil, and slab construction with the hope of fostering an adventurous inclination to use handbuilding in new ways, opening up the possibility of original invention inaccessible through more familiar methods. Our primary concerns are design, construction, and decoration, but there may be the option to bisque-fire work to facilitate safe transportation. We will have a number of slide shows to introduce a range of important historical and contemporary handbuilt form and technique.

### ***Schedule***

This schedule serves as a general guide, but must remain flexible. Every workshop group is different, and the schedule always evolves to suit the needs and productivity of the participants.

- ***First Day Morning*** - Introduction to the workshop, general information about the studio, our work schedule, and safety considerations. Discussion/demo of coil construction. Begin large coil-built form. Slide show "Hallmarks of Handbuilding, Part One."

- **First Day Afternoon** - Discussion/demo of simple soft-slab construction including cups and boxes, demo of small pinch forms. Discussion of problems with clay-memory, especially when working with slabs and when combining different construction methods. Work on coil, slab, and pinch forms.
- **Second Day Morning** - Discussion/demo of lid systems for soft-slab boxes, handles for soft-slab cups/mugs, making and using templates for soft-slab vessels. Work on coil, pinch, soft-slab forms. Slide show "Hallmarks of Handbuilding, Part Two."
- **Second Day Afternoon** - Discussion/demo of bisque-stamps and other ways of impressing pattern and texture; making pre-textured slabs; stiff-slab vessel and box-construction using templates.
- **Third Day Morning** - Continued discussion/demo of stiff-slab construction, lid systems, raised feet. Work on projects.
- **Third Day Afternoon** - Demo of assembly of soft-slab and stiff-slab component parts. Work on projects. Finish all work to be bisque-fired.
- **Third Day Afternoon or Evening** - Slide lecture on Vince's work.
- **Fourth Day Morning** - Discussion/demo of making component parts for multi-piece pouring vessels, including tube components and spouts. Work on projects.
- **Fourth Day Afternoon** - Discussion/demo of assembly of multi-piece soft/stiff-slab pouring vessel. Work on projects, load bisque-firings.
- **Fifth Day Morning** - Finish demo of assembly of multi-piece soft/stiff-slab pouring vessels. Finish projects, unload bisque firings (if any), clean up our mess. Discuss work, outcomes, possibilities. We sometimes have a potluck lunch on the final day and invite participants to bring samples of their own work for a show-and-tell. That works well when the participants are mostly local. The workshop generally concludes with lunch.