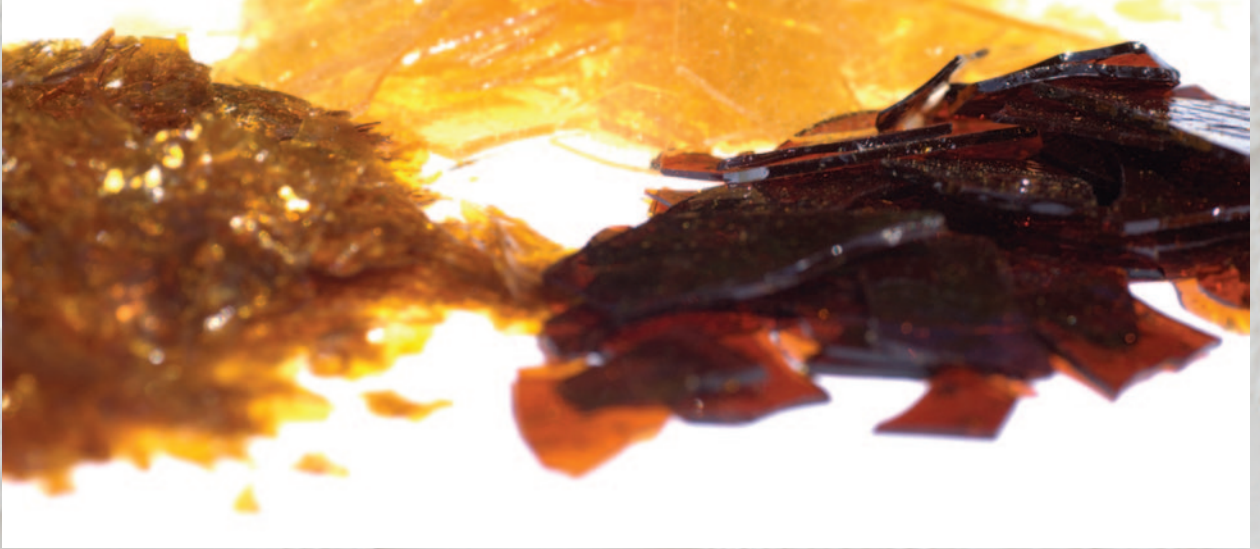


Discovering the Layers Hidden in Ceramic Bodies



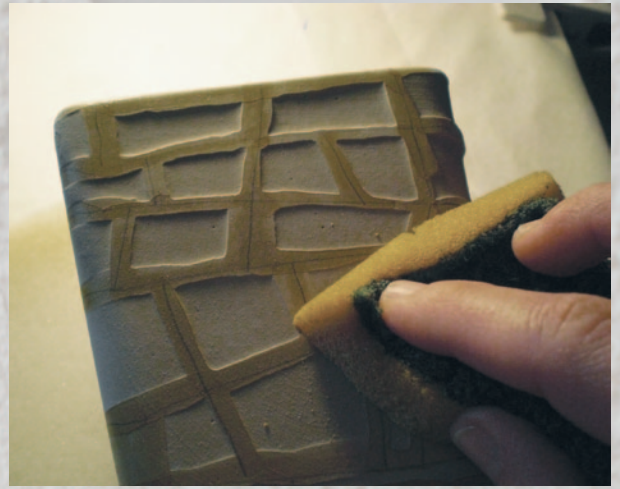
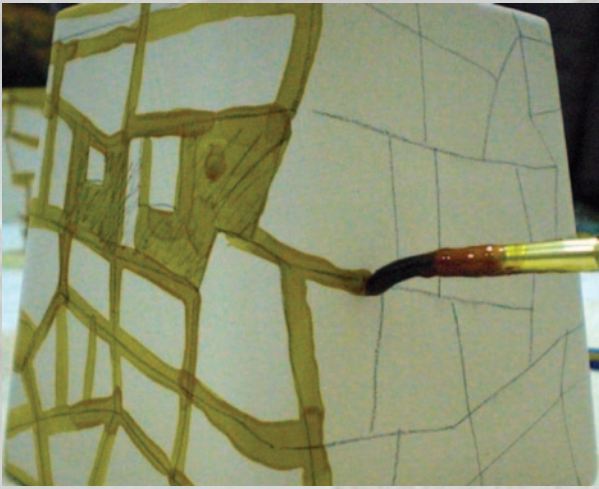
A Feyza Çakir Özgündoğdu describes her technique for shellac resist

*Above: Shellac Types.
Background image: Shellac Ashes
after Bisque Firing.*

ALTHOUGH THE EARTH ON WHICH WE ARE living is a definable system due to scientific findings with its calculated age, measured area, layers and predictable change; on the other hand it is an infinite structure which has a memory of its own and continues expanding in time. The closest layer that we have observed (on which life forms have emerged and terminated since the existence of earth beginning with the condensation of carbon cloud) is soil. In this sense, soil absorbs concrete traces of time and forms the research area of disciplines such as geology and archeology. Layers that can be observed by a geologist who studies a section of earth are important indicators that tell specific changes. For an archeologist, soil which is excavated layer by layer tells the history of some other time. Symbolically, soil includes different extents of existence as well: according to various beliefs, mythology and artistic comment; soil is an old wise man that bears sounds, emotions, stories in its mind. I believe that this wisdom that is bestowed to soil gives a special quality to ceramics, which uses and gives shape to soil.

CONCEPT

I can state that while designing my artistic studies, the quality of soil, 'being witness of time'; has shown itself in my recent studies. There is a statement in Turkish: "If these walls could talk. . ." In this statement there is the meaning that places are the silent witnesses of time. My ceramic buildings, which are built with a similar thought, have found their tongue in my latest study. Due to my interest in archeology,



I believe I revealed some non-materialistic data in the excavations during my ceramic work. My sketches, which I began collecting by taking photographs of compositions formed by the shadows reflecting on walls, continues reflecting on the surfaces of my ceramic studies in time. On my walls, I wanted to stabilise shadows which prove the existence and transience of time, which appear and disappear on the walls. I thought I would show that walls would find their tongues in this way and I decided that the most suitable technique by which I can reflect this thought is shellac resist.

RAW MATERIAL

Shellac resist, which is a decoration technique applied on unfired ceramic surfaces, is based on the principle of application of water-proof solution on a specific area according to a design and etching the unpainted surfaces with a damp sponge. Controlled gaps are formed on the surface with this etching process. This technique resembles the formation of press mould by etching the surface with acid which is used in graphic printing process.

Shellac, which is an English word, (*gomme à laque* in French) is a resinous substance obtained by the secretion of an insect seen in India and Thailand. This substance, which is soluble in alcohol, is commonly used for making wood polish and glue. Today, synthetic solutions that have the same function for isolation are widespread: solutions such as wax, polyurethane-based polishes can be used on ceramic surface with the same aim. Due to forming a smooth and resistant film layer on the surface, shellac also functions as a mould-release. In order to obtain a water-resistant surface on raw ceramic surfaces, synthetic liquid other than natural resin can be preferred as well.

PREPARATION OF SOLUTION

Shellac can be obtained in fine plates from the stores selling paint and wood-protection products. Honey-coloured or brownish resin is quite fragile and can be used as a powder by grinding well in order to be dissolved easily.

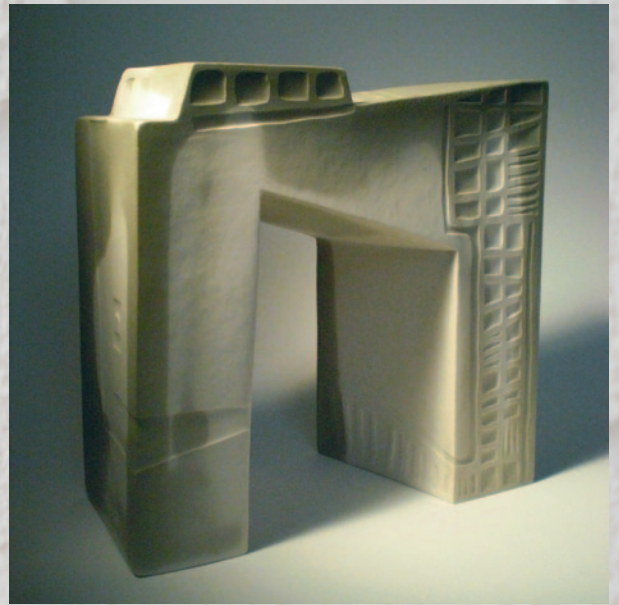
Shellac is dissolved with a spirit known as denature alcohol, prepared with the mixture of ethyl and methyl alcohol and colourant and used in cleaning and as fuel. The rate of dry and liquid amount can change according to the desired density. The mixture to be used in this practice was prepared at the rate of 1/10 (100 grams shellac + 900 ml spirits). The mixture poured in a capped jar or bottle is shaken until

*Left: Application of Shellac Resist.
Right: Sponging to Remove Clay.
Below: Detail.*





*Left: Detail.
Right: Architectural Sculpture.*



shellac flakes are dissolved. The solution should be kept for one day to have a homogenous structure.

THE APPLICATION OF DESIGN

In this sample, the décor to be done with the shellac resist technique was applied on a slipcast piece. After the thoroughly dried body is retouched with thin emery, it is cleaned until there is no dust on the surface. Even a thin layer of powder left on the surface can prevent shellac from sticking on the body.

The decoration can be drawn on the retouched surface with a pencil. The solution is applied by brush, considering the fact that shellac will coat the surface and other areas will be deep-seated. Since shellac is fluid, a watercolour brush whose fluid retention is high should be used. The thickness of brush is determined according to the width of the area. In order to prevent the solution from flowing towards an unexpected area, the surface shall be painted parallel to ground, the brush should not absorb too much solution.

A single layer is enough for a décor applied with a solution prepared in ideal density. If it is thought that the shellac is too thin, a second or third layer can be coated after the décor dries up. Depending on the thickness of the shellac applied to the surface, it can dry completely in 15 to 20 minutes.

After this process, a soft sponge and a bucket of water will be required. Soaking the sponge too much would cause the body to lose its resistance by absorbing too much water. With the damp sponge, the surface with shellac is slightly wiped and the sponge is rinsed after each process. During wiping, the damp raw surface sticks to the sponge while the areas protected by shellac are not disturbed. It will be observed as the surface is wiped that etched areas will become hollow. This process is repeated under control according to the thickness of the clay and depth desired. If it is observed that a specific area is damped too much, the area should not be wiped until it is thoroughly dry.

Since the resistance of the piece would decrease due to observation of etched areas, large-scaled studies should be handled with care against



Right and left above:
Architectural Sculptures.
Below: *Detail.*

the risk of cleavage and rupture. Moreover, steadying the piece on a soft surface would enable the pressure applied on the surface to be tolerable. If it is designed to create more gaps on the etched surfaces, dried pieces are applied with shellac again and reliefs in different depths can be created by wiping the surface.

The use of shellac as resist on ceramic surfaces is possible not only on a raw body but also on bisque and even glazed surfaces. The solution on areas on which glaze and paint are not wanted on a bisque surface prevents body from absorbing the paint and enables painting this area easily with a different glaze. Similarly, this application can be applied on sinter bodies with glaze and metal salt. In every kind of usage, shellac will function as mould-release.

OUTLINES

In the work series that I began with the theme of *Memory of Earth*, shellac resist provided convenience in the process of stratification of the ceramic body. In the architectural structures that I have produced, I placed the stories on ceramic bodies for them to be 'silent witnesses of what happened' and shellac resist revealed these non-materialistic treasures. I have titled my approach as "Non-materialistic Treasures" and comments which I have based on a reflection theme in the 3rd Conference of ICMEA (International Ceramics Magazine Editors Association) in Fuping, China. In this paper, my designs in which I have collected the non-materialistic traces of shadow reflections are explained technically. I must confess that this technique enabling three-dimensional shaping on surface and contributing to my artistic expression changed my aloofness towards the approach of decorating ceramic surfaces.



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