

three great pottery throwing techniques



tips on throwing
complex pottery forms
using basic throwing skills

Three Great Pottery Throwing Techniques

Tips on Throwing Complex Pottery Forms Using Basic Throwing Skills

Full of great throwing tips, as well as ideas you can apply to any pottery project, these step-by-step instructions will help you improve your pottery skills from concept through completion. Whether you're interested in throwing complete pots on the wheel, like Dannon Rhudy's citrus juicer; throwing textured parts for alteration and assembly, like in Jake Allee's stilted bucket, or if you're simply interested in throwing larger pots right on the wheel, like Mark Issenberg's tall vases, then wedge up some good throwing clay, pull up your throwing stool, and get that pottery wheel spinning!

Throwing Clay to Achieve Texture and Interest on Assembled Pots

by Jake Allee

This project consists of throwing clay pieces and parts on the wheel, adding texture, cutting them up, altering them, then combining them into a beautifully assembled pot.



Throwing Tips for Making Tall Forms

by Andrea Perisho

Veteran potter Mark Issenberg creates his beautiful signature vases in three parts. When breaking down a big wheel-throwing project into smaller pieces, the impossible becomes possible. You'll love the challenge and the results with this magnificent thrown Vase.



Throwing Ceramic Juicers: Simple Wheel-Throwing Techniques Produce a Complex Form

by Dannon Rhudy

Dannon Rhudy has been a potter and teacher for many years, which probably explains why her demonstration on how to make a ceramic juicer is so clear and easy to follow. With very basic wheel-throwing experience, you can make these useful kitchen juicers for all your friends and family.



Throwing Clay to Achieve Texture and Interest on Assembled Pots

by Jake Allee



"Stilted Bucket," 9 inches in height. This elegant raised form makes it possible to carry it securely in one hand.

Presentation is everything! Imagine yourself arriving at a party with a six pack of your favorite Mexican beverage hanging from one hand and the belly of a stilted bucket loaded with limes in the palm of the other. Grasping the ceramic piece on the underside enables you to give your host a hearty hug with hands full!

The stilted bucket is a product of several elements within my creative process. One of the primary elements is historical inspiration, and, after looking at many examples of Chinese Chou period bronzes, I began to think about how I could change the orientation of my forms to construct new work. Many bronze pieces have a combination of geometric and organic elements with an angular qual-

ity that creates interest within the form, and I wanted to inject this into my repertoire.

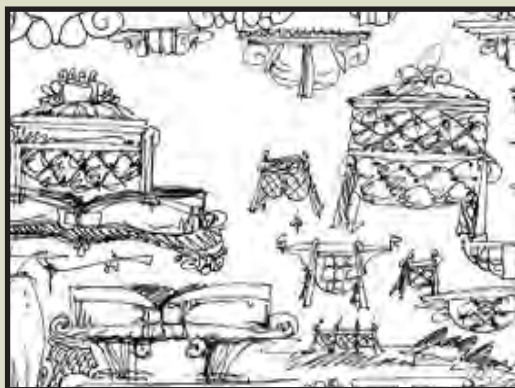
Deconstructing Chinese forms in my sketch book, I realized that many of these pieces stand on tripods that lift the forms in a manner that makes me want to put my hand under them and lift them up. I also realized that most of the textures created from altering clay appear on the sides of my pieces, and the light bulb in my

head turned on. How could I create a form that would make the viewer want to interact with it in the same way that I wanted to handle an ancient Chinese bronze on a tripod.

The Stilted Bucket is composed of three basic thrown forms. The first is a bulbous cylinder that is marked, altered and sprigged. The second is a thick disc stretched into an oval. The last is a bottomless, wide cylinder with a clean lip and attention given to the base. After creating these pieces, they're cut apart and reused for assembly. Do all the throwing at the same time to ensure even moisture content in the components.

Sketching it out

I always begin a new piece by sketching because it allows me to change and rearrange proportions within the form before I produce the actual clay piece. This is an important step because time making clay objects is very valuable to me and I want to be as efficient as possible



with this time. A composite form relies on all the parts fitting correctly, and, although clay can be quite forgiving at times, too many components in the final piece can make a piece look overworked. After several sketches, I'm mentally clear on how to approach the piece, so I take to the clay.



1

Throw a basic cylinder without a bottom. Pay extra attention to centering because any flaw is reflected in the final form.



2

After creating the profile, carefully mark an evenly spaced grid around the exterior. The next step exaggerates the form and the end result is larger in volume.



3

Starting from the bottom and working to the top, press out the form with your finger using the marks as a guideline.



4

Make small balls of clay and press them into the clay at the intersections of the grid. This pushes back in and emphasizes the alteration. Trim excess clay from the bottom. Set aside and allow it to become leather hard.



5 Throw a 1-inch thick disc and compress it, but end the compression about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch from the edge. This creates a line that later relates to the pot's design elements. Keep the outer edge profile smooth then undercut the disc (inset).



6 Immediately remove the disc from the wheel and stretch it into an oval by throwing it onto a canvas surface. Make sure the piece hits the table at an angle so the disc stretches. The clay should make a "wisp" sound instead of a "WHAM!" when it hits the table.



7 After stretching the disc, roll the edges over to eliminate any sharpness. This also creates a relationship between the curled area and the handles that will be attached later.



8 Throw a wide bottomless cylinder. Mimic the curve created by the side of the bulbous altered cylinder. Shape and compress the lip. Finish the base with an old credit card with a curved notch cut into it. This creates a line that relates to the profile of the other edges. Set aside to stiffen up.



9 Trim excess clay from the bottom of the bulbous form. The piece should be symmetrical top to bottom and left to right.



10 Cut the leather-hard bulbous form and stretched disc in half. These become the belly and the stilts respectively. Prepare for assembly by scoring the pieces.



11

Place the bulbous underbelly on a piece of foam and attach it to the stilts. Reinforce the connection on the interior with a small coil that is blended in. Attach the other stilt.



12

Cut away a section of the wide cylinder, and attach it to the rim of the bowl. Remember to always leave more clay than you think you will need when cutting this piece.



13

Blend in small coils to reinforce all joints on both the inside and outside of the piece. Continue to rest the piece on a block of foam to protect the stilts and bowl.



14

Cut a curve in the base of each stilt, but pay attention to the relationship of these curves to the established composite form.



15

After addressing the details on the underside, pull two short handles and attach them to the top of the stilts. Curl the handles to mimic the top of the stilt. Dry the piece under plastic for several days.



"Triple Stilted Bucket," 6½ inches in height, thrown and altered composite form, soda fired to cone 10. An architectural piece designed to elevate food in the extravagance of the standard smorgasbord spread. This piece operates under the assumption that not everyone likes chocolate pudding mixed in with their creamed corn.

Wheel Throwing Tips for Making Tall Forms

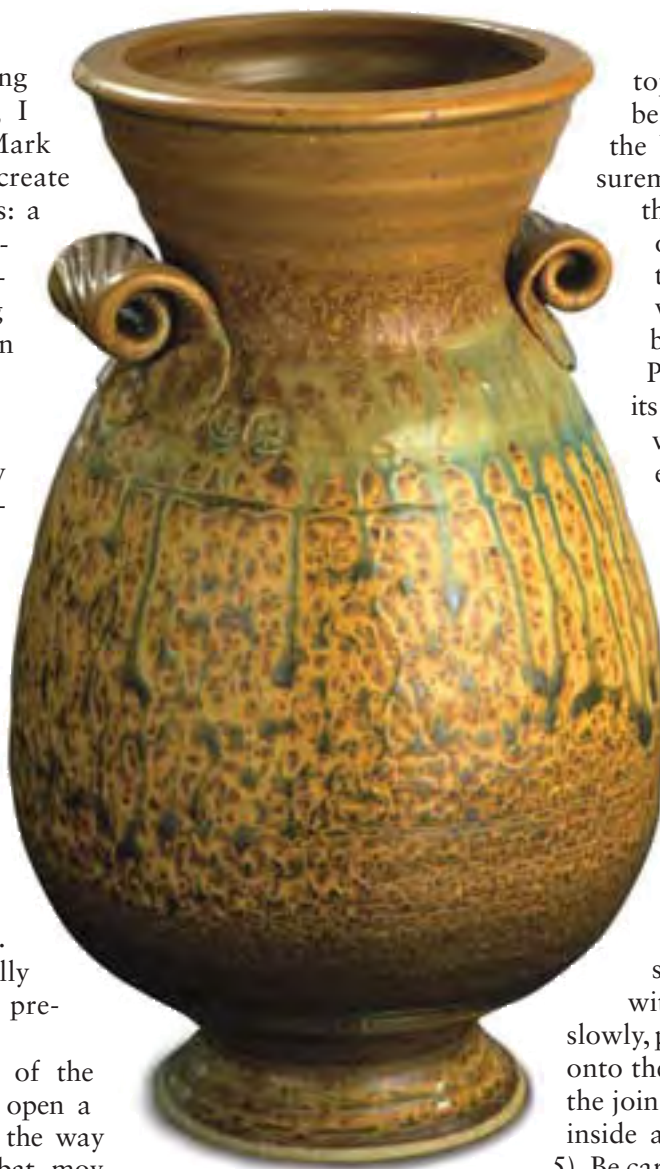
by Andrea Perisho

While attending a workshop, I watched Mark Issenberg create one of his signature pieces: a vase, thrown in three pieces, embellished with decorative handles. The making of the vase is described in the following process.

Process

For the main body, throw 4 pounds of clay into a bulbous shape about 9 inches tall with a bowl-shaped bottom (figure 1). Leave enough room to comfortably get your hand inside the pot. Leave the piece attached to the bat and set aside to stiffen to soft leather hard. The piece should be dry enough to support the top section, but still soft enough to manipulate. Monitor the drying carefully (avoid areas with drafts to prevent uneven drying).

When the body section of the vase is appropriately stiff, open a 1-½-pound ball of clay all the way down to the surface of the bat, moving outward to form a solid ring (figure 2). This piece will form the top of the vase and is thrown upside down. Use a rib to scrape away any excess clay that remains on the bat inside the ring. Bring up the wall, but leave the base fairly thick to strengthen and emphasize the top rim (figure 3). Use calipers to measure the



top of this piece, which will be turned upside down over the body of the vase. This measurement should be slightly larger than the opening in the top of the vase body previously thrown. Cut off the piece with a braided cut-off wire, but leave on the bat.

Place the body of the vase and its still-attached bat onto the wheel head. Score and moisten the rim using slip. Turn the second bat, with the top section on it, upside down, and very carefully (since it has already been cut loose from the bat) place onto the top of the body. Remove the bat from the top section (figure 4). Adjust the alignment between the two sections, carefully moving the top piece as close to center as possible.

Use your fingers both inside and outside the vase and, with the wheel turning very slowly, pull the top section downward onto the rim of the body, smoothing the join between the two pieces both inside and outside the piece (figure 5). Be careful not to touch the top rim, so there is no damage to the design from

the braided cutting wire. The body and top section are now joined together.

Cut the piece off the bat, cover in plastic and set aside to dry to medium leather hard—generally overnight. The piece should be dry enough to be turned upside



1
Form body: Throw a 4-pound ball of clay into a bulbous shape about 9 inches tall. Measure the opening with calipers. Set aside until leather hard.



2
Open a 1½-pound ball of clay down to the bat, moving outward to form a solid ring. When inverted, this will be the top of the vase.



3
Bring up the wall until the top is slightly larger than the opening in the body. Cut the top loose from the bat using a braided wire.



4
Attach top and body: With its bat still attached, place the body on the wheel head. Score and slip the rim. Turn the top piece upside down and place onto the body.

down without damaging the design on the top rim, but moist enough to trim the bottom of the vase.

Center, fasten securely, and trim the bottom of the pot to match the bowl-shaped interior. Score a 2–3-inch circle at the center of the bottom of the piece and wet with slip. Place a ¾-pound ball of clay onto the center of the bottom of the piece and carefully press into place (figure 6). With the wheel turning very slowly, center the clay using as little water as possible so you do not soften the pot's base (figure 7). This step takes concentration, skill and practice. Alternatively, you can throw a separate ring for the base in the same way you made the top.

After centering, open the clay in the same manner as if you are throwing a new pot. Pull up a wall and shape into the foot. Again, don't use a lot of water or the surface of the pot will be damaged from the excess moisture. Set aside and allow this area to become



5
Turn the wheel slowly and use your fingers to attach the top to the body, then smooth the joint (bottom). Dry to leather hard. Place upside down on a bat and trim the bottom to match the bowl-shaped interior.

leather hard. After the foot has stiffened, turn the piece right side up.

You can now add the decorative handles. One way to do this is to roll out a 3×4-inch slab of clay. Roll a drill bit over the clay to create texture. Then roll the clay around a pencil or small dowel rod with the texture on the outside (figure 8). Slide the clay off the pencil and attach the handle to the vase (figure 9) by scoring and using slip. You also can add more texture around the shoulder of the vase, using stamps and/or a sewing tracing wheel (figure 10). Clean up any unwanted marks or bits of clay with a sponge.

Wrap the vase in several layers of plastic and set aside for several days to allow the moisture content of each section to equalize. Then remove the plastic and allow the piece to dry completely before firing.



6

Attach foot: Score, slip and center a ¾-pound ball of clay in the middle of the upended body. Turn the wheel slowly and center the clay on the foot.



7

When centered, open the clay using as little water as possible. Pull the clay up and shape the foot.



8

Decoration: For decorative handles, roll out a 3- × 4-inch slab of clay and wrap it around a pencil or dowel.



9

Attach with slip.



10

Use stamps or other wooden tools to add decorations.

Throwing Ceramic Juicers: Simple Wheel-Throwing Tech- niques Produce a Complex Form

by Dannon Rhudy



Juicer, 6 inches in diameter. The perfect addition to your kitchen and also a great gift!

Citrus juicers are quick and simple items to make in the studio or classroom. They're constructed like double-walled bowls, and are both easy and fun to make.

To make a finished juicer approximately 6 inches in diameter, start with about 1½ pounds of clay, or a bit more. Center the clay and flatten to approximately a 7–8-inch circle on a bat (figure 1). Next, open the center to the bat, making the opening 2–2½ inches wide at the bottom (figure 2). Raise the wall

of the opening slightly (an inch or two) and use your needle tool to trim the inside of the opening (figure 3). Bevel the opening about 45°, leaving the trimmed part in place. (It will pop off later when the piece is removed from the bat.) Finish pulling up the center wall (figure 4) and completely close it. Leave a barely blunted point on the tip of the closed part (figure 5). The walls of this closed form will be slightly thick; but you will need this thickness later.



1

Throw a 7-inch disk of clay.



2

Open center of clay to wheel head.



3 Trim the inside opening with a needle tool.



4 Pull up wall of center opening.



5 Close opening completely, leaving a slightly blunted point.



6 Throw outside wall, leaving a flat inside bottom.

Move to the outside edge of the piece. Pull up the outside wall to a height of about 3 inches (figure 6). Keep the space between the inner closed portion and the outer wall flat and smooth. Using a 45° stick or metal tool, trim the outer bottom edge of the form (figure 7). Trimming the inside of the closed form and the outside of the piece while it is still on the wheel prevents having to invert the form later for trimming—a great time savings—plus, it's also much easier to trim this way.

Next, set the rim of the outer wall. I often indent this edge because it makes a great place for glazes to pool, which can give a more interesting finished surface (figure 8). However, a simple curved edge also works well. Be sure to make a good thick rim, no matter the shape. Thin rims chip, and items such as juicers get a lot of use and are prone to getting banged around in the kitchen. Once your rim is set, pull a nice

spout, just as you might pull a spout on a pitcher (figure 9). It can be simple or elaborate. Whatever spout type you like is the one that will work on your piece, but keep in mind the end use of the juicer.

Now you need to flute the closed form in the center of your juicer. The rounded end of a small loop tool is ideal. Start at the bottom of the closed center form and pull up steadily (figure 10). Go all the way around the form, spacing the grooves evenly. When you reach the top of each groove, the loop tool naturally ends the groove as it comes away from the clay. Practice a couple of times. It is not very difficult.

When you have fluted the entire closed portion, pull a wire under the whole piece. Lift the bat off the wheel. Set aside to reach a soft-leather-hard stage. When the piece is stiff enough, attach any handle you like, opposite the spout (figure 11). If the handle is made of thin clay, you might want to brush it with



7 Trim outer bottom edge with a stick or metal tool.



8 Finish rim of piece with an indent or curve.



9 Form a simple or complex spout.



10 Flute center with small loop tool.

wax to keep it from drying faster than the body of the piece.

After the whole piece has dried enough to handle without distorting, remove it from the bat. Extract any bits of clay remaining on the inside bottom edge and on the outer edge. Smooth with a damp sponge. Use a plastic kitchen scrubber to remove any bits stuck to the fluted part of the piece. Do not round the edges of the fluting because those edges are what make the juicer work.

Choose glazes that break well over edges, and avoid thick glazes that might dull the edges of the fluting and the tip too much.

Keep in mind that juicers are mainly used for juicing citrus and other acidic foods. Choose stable glazes for this project, and your juicer will both work well and look good for a long time to come.



11 Attach desired handle, let dry and sand lightly if needed.