



Technique Sheet #48

Printing & Embossing with Clay & Underglazes using AMACO® Balsa-Foam®

by Diana Faris



Printing is a very popular art form that is perfect for creating repeating patterns, images and designs. Printmaking techniques can easily be transferred into working with clay with the help of AMACO® Balsa-Foam® and AMACO® Underglazes, along with the many tools you already have in your classroom. In this lesson we show three different techniques for transferring an image to clay.

Tools & Materials:

- AMACO® Balsa-Foam® & Velvet Underglazes Printing Class Pack (43023A)
- Ceramic Clay, AMACO® 25-M Low-Fire White Art Clay (45015Y) recommended
- Bisque Ceramic Tiles (11333L)
- Paint Brushes
- Scrap Paper for sketching
- Brent® Slab Roller or rolling pin for making slabs
- Pony Roller for impressing designs into clay (11198T)

Technique #1

Block Printing with Underglazes on Moist Clay



1. Lightly sketch a design or image onto the Balsa-Foam® block using a soft pencil. Carve the design into the Balsa-Foam® along the pencil lines by using wooden or carving tools. Varying the lines depths and widths will help make a more unique and interesting block. Be sure not to carve completely through the Balsa-Foam® block.



2. Using a sponge stippling tool, apply AMACO® Velvets or LUG Underglazes to the decorated side of your Balsa-Foam® block. Multiple colors can be applied during the same printing using a detail brush.

Glossary

Bisque: Unglazed ceramic after the first firing.

Clay Slab: Clay rolled out flat.

Fire: To heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is hard and it becomes ceramic.

Glaze: A special clear or colored liquid mixture applied to ceramic surfaces which becomes hard and glass-like when fired to the right temperature in a kiln.

Underglaze: A colored decoration applied to bisque or greenware and usually covered with a glaze before firing.



3. While the underglazes are still wet, stamp the Balsa-Foam® into your clay then carefully pull them apart. Additional colors or underglaze highlights may be painted onto the design.



4. Continue to shape the clay as desired, then allow to completely dry before firing.

Technique #2

Block Printing with Underglazes on Bisque Tile



1. Lightly sketch a design or image onto the Balsa-Foam® block using a soft pencil. Carve the design into the Balsa-Foam® along the pencil lines by using wooden or carving tools. Varying the lines depths and widths will help make a more unique and interesting block. Be sure not to carve completely through the Balsa-Foam® block.



4. Re-apply colors for additional prints or to create a repeating pattern.



2. Using a sponge stippling tool, apply AMACO® Velvets or LUG Underglazes only to the high points of the decorated side of your Balsa-Foam® block. Multiple colors could be applied during the same printing.



5. Once the underglazes are dry, clear glaze may be brushed on before glaze firing.

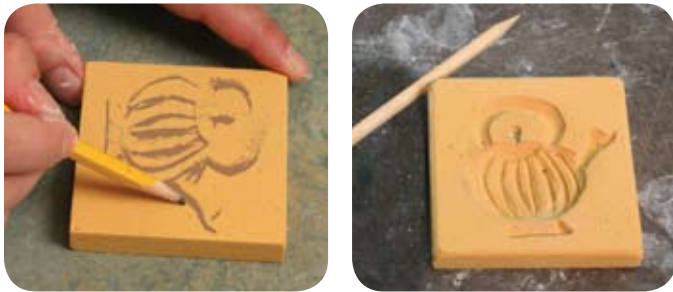


3. Lightly press the block onto a bisque tile or flat section of a plate or bowl. Additional colors or underglaze highlights may be painted onto the design.



Technique #3

Printing Texture onto Moist Clay



1. Lightly sketch a design or image onto the Balsa-Foam® block using a soft pencil. Carve the design into the Balsa-Foam® along the pencil lines by using wooden or carving tools. Carve different levels for more interest. Be sure not to carve any undercuts.



2. Roll out a slab of clay about 1/4" thick and press the Balsa-Foam® texture block into it. If using the more fragile Balsa-Foam® Soft Density for stamping, lay the block texture-side-up on the table, and then gently press the clay into the Balsa-Foam® with the palm or by using a small roller.

Firing Information:

Bisque fire dried clay pieces with or without underglaze to cone 04.

Glaze fire with AMACO LG-10 Clear glaze to cone 05.

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3. Apply equal pressure to the edges of the block before gently pulling it away from the clay.



4. Continue to shape the clay as desired, then allow to completely dry before firing.

Re-using the Balsa-Foam Blocks:

The printing blocks may be reused but will stick to the clay as they become saturated with water during use. After use, each block should be rinsed with water and a soft brush and allowed to completely dry. Molds will eventually deteriorate after multiple uses.

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