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Welcome



As we step into the second half of the year, excitement is building for what promises to be one of the most memorable events in CCSA history—our 2025 Convention in Denton, Texas! The energy is electric, and we cannot wait to welcome you for an experience that will inspire, educate, and connect our incredible community.

This year marks the launch of our very first Day of Clay, and we're confident it's going to sell out quickly! Scheduled for the Thursday before Convention officially begins, this brand-new event will feature an outstanding lineup of instructors ready to help you deepen your skills, explore new

techniques, and bring fresh ideas back to your studio. If you've been thinking about diving into clay—or expanding your clay offerings—this is the perfect place to start.

Keep a close eye on your email inbox for updates and registration details, and be sure to follow the latest posts on Chatter and visit the CCSA website for the most current information. This is your chance to be part of something new and exciting!

Meanwhile, our supplier members are hard at work preparing for another fantastic show. They're bringing the newest products, hottest trends, and loads of inspiration to share. As always, they're looking forward to connecting with you, answering your questions, and helping your studio thrive.

This convention is shaping up to be one of our best yet, and we don't want you to miss it. Mark your calendar, plan your travel, and get ready to join us in Denton for an unforgettable few days of learning, laughter, and community.

With Excitement,

Dena Pearlman, Executive Director

Hey CCSA friends,

Summer is in full swing, and I know your studios are buzzing with campers, parties, and walk-ins! Before we all blink and it's fall, I want to encourage you to make time for something that can really recharge you and your business—our annual CCSA Convention, this year in Denton, Texas!

This year's theme is "Saddle Up for Success," and it's shaping up to be an incredible few days of learning, sharing, and connecting. You'll gain fresh business ideas, new techniques, and real inspiration from people who truly get what we do.

I also want to gently remind you to take care of yourself—whether that means a spa day, a day off once school starts, or (hint, hint) joining us at Convention. You deserve it.

Can't wait to see you in Denton!

Warmly,

Katie Yallaly, CCSA Board President



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The Board of Directors listed below would like to welcome you to contact them regularly regarding ideas and concerns.

We are YOUR Board and, while volunteers, are working for you!

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ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES (AND THE UNEXPECTED TUESDAY WAITLIST)

I was talking to a fellow studio-owner friend recently, and we started laughing about something that happened at a past convention. We started playing the “what year was that?” game—the one where we try to remember what year we went to different cities.

We are terrible at this game, because we have been to a lot of conventions and we also have terrible memories. But it's so much fun to play. So many fun things have happened over the years. I'm really looking forward to convention this year because I feel like I need my pottery friends more than ever. The challenges have been ... challenging. I know we are all dealing with some version of something, and it feels like I need to spend some quality time with people who get the issues we deal with. I may start in the lobby. Or the airport.

Challenges aren't always bad things, of course. We're seeing a shift in how customers visit us. My crystal ball isn't working lately, so I'm not always able to predict when we need to be staffed

for a crowd. Even though we encourage reservations, I feel like people aren't letting us know they're coming, because I'm not sure they're making plans ahead of time either. But the random Tuesday morning where I was on a wait list? Wasn't expecting that.



Speaking of crystal balls, does anyone know what I should order for the holidays? I keep looking at past performances and then decide I need to look at something else instead. Like videos of cats being cute. Love a silly cat, especially when everything else seems like a puzzle I can't solve.

(Also, if you could use that crystal ball to do my weekly schedule and pick what my family is eating for dinner every night, I'd really appreciate it. Especially the dinner thing. That makes me crazy.)

In the meanwhile, I'm trying to roll with the punches, and control the things I can. If I can't control it, I may or may not give it my attention. If it isn't serving me AND I can't control it? I'm better off watching cute cat videos. They at least give me some joy.



THE EBB AND FLOW OF BUSY TIMES

By Rachel Garnier, Paint It Yourself Pottery Co., Cheltenham, UK

I have a guilty secret. It's what we call our Harry Potter cupboard. Whenever I can't find something or need a new place for to keep or hide something—the yet unused silkscreen machine, receipts I need to save for seven years, all the other acquisitions I refuse to part with...just in case. Is now the time to tackle the mammoth yearly tidying?

As with all the sorting jobs that we inevitably come across in our studios, this is yet another that will get assigned as a "January job." In fact, for pretty much all of my studio ownership life (23 years) I have had an ever growing list of January jobs. The concept came about because January was always the quietest month of the year, closely followed by September. Over the years, though, the ebb and flow of busier and quieter months has changed and for the past few years, May and June are often the months when we can get extra jobs done.

When I started, most of our customers were children, so our busy times were guided by the school holidays. In the UK, the state school year is generally divided into three terms, each consisting of 10 to 12 weeks: Autumn (September to December), Spring (January to April/Easter), and Summer (April/May to July), with a week-long half term break within each term. Most schools now also have a standard of five inset days for professional development for teachers, often on Mondays following a half term. (Public and private schools—the paid-for schooling system—generally have longer holidays.)

This meant that we were always busier in the school holidays, particularly the six-week Summer break, and quieter when children first went back for the start of a new term in January, May, and September. This was when I used to try and do all the sorting jobs I couldn't get done the rest of the year and if possible fit in a holiday for myself. Our busiest weeks have always been February and October half term, because all parents are looking for activities for their children within the same week off school, and the weather is usually terrible. The weather has often perked up by May half term so that stretch can be totally weather dependent. You'll always hear UK studio owners praying for rain for a school holidays.

Post-Covid our customer base in general has changed and whilst children do still attend during holidays and half terms, for the rest of the time our customers are adults. It is now a rarity to see a child painting in my studio on a Saturday afternoon. Instead,



The cupboard under the stairs

the 18- to 35-year-olds have become our regulars. With growing Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest trends like Girl Dinners and birthday plates, we're seeing more and more customers choosing to mark an occasion or a feeling by painting pottery or simply choosing it as an activity to spend time with friends.

We're also benefiting in the baby market. The Christmas Eve plate has become an extremely fast-growing trend and we now help people create them all year. I've always visited nurseries and baby groups to create gifts—in May for Father's Day presents and in the runup to Christmas. It used to be just in November but more recently, high demand means we now begin Christmas visits in September. The growing number of sensory baby groups has had a lot to do with this. Quite often mothers who have painted at a baby group will then come to the shop to make more, items so it is extremely worthwhile going to as many as we can.

So, luckily for us, our quieter times have shrunk to a minimum. Not so lucky for the Harry Potter cupboard or any of the other countless behind-the-scenes jobs I really need to do. I now like to call them May jobs, as in "May they just get done?!" I said I had one guilty secret, but if I'm honest, there are way too many hidden disorganized areas within my shop, desperate for a sort. I'll show you mine, and if you feel like getting it off your chest, you can show me yours too.



happy Halloween



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



F.



G.



H.

A. 7523 Grim Reaper Party Animal 4.75"H x 4.5"W • B. 4247 Franken-Stein 24oz 6"H x 7"W x 4.25"D
 C. 5457 Tombstone Lantern 8"H x 5.75"W • D. 7524 Zombie Party Animal 5"H x 3.5"H
 E. 5459 Big Frankie 8.75"H x 5"W • F. 5460 Cat with Jack -O- Lantern 7"H x 6.75"W
 G. 7522 Day of the Dead Mariachi Man 5.25"H x 4"D • H. 5462 Witch Hat Ring Holder 3.25"H X 4"W

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USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO TAP INTO TRENDS

By Crista Toler, Mayco, Studio Market Specialist

Staying on top of trends is essential for providing your customers with fresh samples and inspiration. This makes it easier for customers to decorate pottery in the styles that they see online and in the world around them.

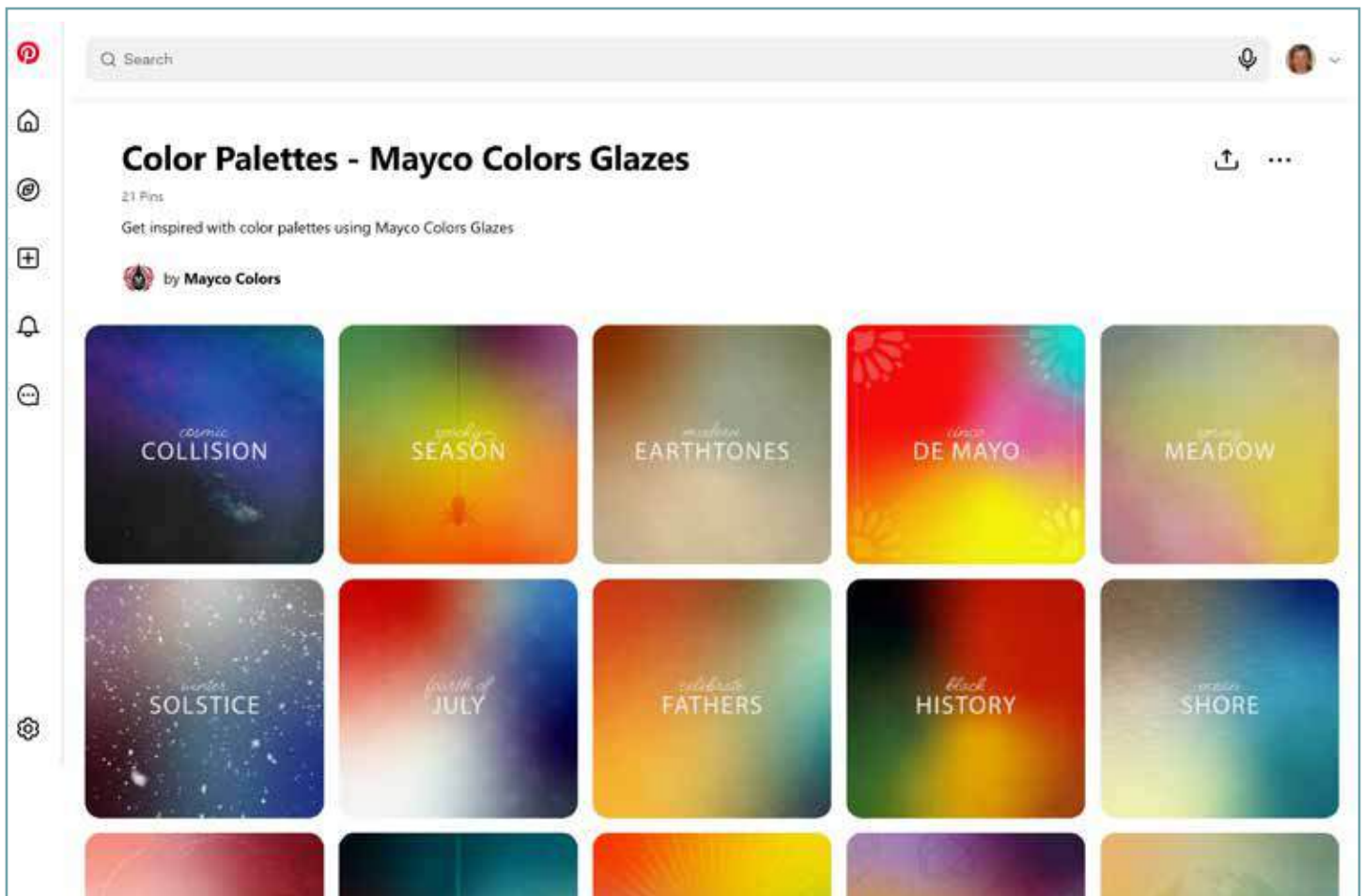
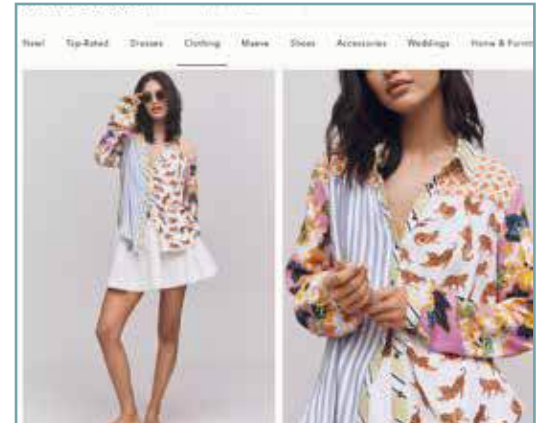
Social media platforms provide a trove of resources for staying in tune with trends in design, pop culture, and home decor. Using these tools with intention can help guide ideas for events, samples, workshops, camps, and content for your business.

SCHEDULE TIME FOR TRENDSPOTTING

I have lists of all kinds: home tasks, restaurants to try, places to visit, people to call. Those lists continue to grow until I assign a time to the items. While it seems a little counterintuitive, you must be diligent in trendspotting to keep up! Schedule time each day to browse. Mix up the platforms you visit during your trend-hunting sessions to expand your search, since information is presented in different ways.

DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

When looking online, keep your eyes open for colors, palettes, patterns, shapes, music, motifs, and designs. Make notes about what you're seeing by creating a virtual scrapbook, pin board, folder, or sketchbook. Review your notes each week to see what trends are evolving. If certain types of events keep popping up, think about how you can tie that into a PYOP-related activity.



CONSIDER WHO YOU FOLLOW

Inspiration can come from a variety of sources. Consider the following types of accounts to expand your trendspotting:

- **Home decor and interior design:** Noticing wall and furniture colors, motifs, and patterns can inform us of trends. Home and garden magazines such as *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Decor*, *House Beautiful*, *Apartment Therapy*, and regional magazines offer great places to click when searching for social media accounts.
- **Apparel shops and boutiques:** Clothing is a great resource for popular colors, patterns, and styles. Find inspiration in magazines such as *InStyle*, *Marie Claire*, *Vogue*, and *Elle*, and by following local boutiques and national stores. Stylists and fashion influencers are also good options.
- **Graphic designers and illustrators:** Talk about innovation! People in these fields are often ahead of the game when it comes to design. They provide inspiration in a variety of styles, particularly along the lines of typography, patterns, and color palettes.
- **Design trend forecasters:** Seek out companies such as Pantone and Shutterstock. Bonus—they also release annual or seasonal trend reports.



- **Greeting cards and stationery accounts:** These are a great source of timely inspiration. These often feature on-trend illustrations, colors, and typography.
- **Fabric and wallpaper companies:** Sites like Spoonflower are loaded with materials that run the gamut from



whimsical illustrations to elegant designs.

- **Crafters and makers accounts:** Follow accounts that focus on general crafting and DIY home decor. They often feature color palettes or creative techniques that can be adapted to painting pottery.
- **PYOP studios:** What better way to see what's working in the PYOP industry than from your peers? Follow other studios to see what's trending in their shops.

USE PLATFORM TOOLS

Each social media platform has built-in tools to help you find what you're seeking. Here are a few to check out:

- **Pinterest:** Try the Trends Tool for trend forecasting and Secret Boards for collecting your ideas before creating samples. Use the search bar for specific keywords and the Explore tab for trending ideas and personalized suggestions based on your activity. While scrolling, keep your trend hunting in mind and think about which things you see can be adapted to your studio offerings. Also check out the annual Pinterest Predicts Report.
- **Instagram:** Reels help you keep up with pop culture and the Explore tab shows accounts that may be of interest based on content you already enjoy. Use Polls and Questions to get feedback from your followers about trends/themes that may be of interest.
- **TikTok:** The "For You Page" (FYP) offers personalized suggestions for popular content. The more you engage, the more the site serves up relevant content. Use the search bar to find what's "trending now," and filter by a specific period, such as this week or today.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

Remember to be inspired by what you see and create samples and projects that go along with the trends. Translate the inspiration into your design—don't copy. Think about how you can incorporate some elements of designs you find into a display or content that you share on your own social media accounts.

STAY ACTIVE

Be consistent in your trend hunting, which will help you spot trends and also begin to forecast ideas to encourage people to visit your studio, and how to inspire them when they're in the studio.

GET READY, Y'ALL!

MAKING THE MOST OF CONVENTION IN DENTON, TX

By Terri Welch, Paint 'n Fun Ceramics, Christiansburg, Virginia

The countdown is on for our 2025 CCSA Convention, and this year we're heading to Denton, Texas, for five unforgettable days of connection, creativity, and cowboy boots! Whether it's your first rodeo or you're a seasoned convention-goer, here's your ultimate guide to planning ahead, knowing what to expect, and making every moment count at Convention.

First things first—book your room! The official Convention hotel is **Embassy Suites by Hilton Denton Convention Center**, and rooms at the special CCSA rate of **\$162/night** are going fast. (Note: With the city's TPID fee, you'll see \$166/night.) **Reserve by August 13.** Call (940) 243-3799 or book online through our official link on the Convention website.

Plan your Convention experience like a pro Download the **Class Selection Worksheet** to organize your sessions and add-on events before registration opens. Classes range from business development and social media to hands-on workshops like Intro to Throwing on the Wheel, Customer Journey Audits, Stoneware Sessions, and Walk-in Clay Programs. Want to boost your studio's offerings? Don't miss:

- **A Day of Clay** (Thursday, Sept. 4): A Pre-Con event packed with clay project inspiration and revenue-boosting tips
- **Friday's Pre-Con Classes:** Featuring everything from Excel tools to strategic marketing and canvas bootcamps

Explore the Exhibit Hall Meet your favorite suppliers, check out the latest in studio tools, and get hands-on demos. It's your chance to ask questions, try new products, and stock up for the season ahead during Exhibit Hall hours:

- Opening Night - Member Mixer on Friday
- Saturday afternoon shopping
- Sunday morning supplier meetings

Raffle tickets, the Golden Ticket, and big wins! One of Convention's most exciting features is the annual raffle! Tickets can be purchased online during registration or at the CCSA booth onsite. Here's how it works:

- Tickets are \$10 each. For every 10 you buy, you get a FREE Golden Ticket!
- Drop your tickets into the individual prize boxes of your choice.
- Raffle prizes include goodies like free pre-con classes for the next year, free hotel nights, and select auction items.
- The Golden Ticket Prize is worth over \$5,000—and yes, you must be present to win!
- Just remember, this is a CASHLESS event, so bring your credit card!

Gala Auction and Boots and Bling Bash The CCSA Gala Auction is where community and creativity collide for a cause. Thanks to Expo Auctions, bidding is easier than ever—on-site and online! Bid on handcrafted studio art, gift cards, vacation stays,

and more starting Friday night. Final bids go down during the Boots and Bling Gala on Sunday, September 7 at 7 PM.

In 2024, we raised over \$26,000 for charity—let's top that in Texas! This year, the money raised will go to Refuge for Women. Want to donate an item? Email Taylor at taylor@ccsaonline.com and be prepared to ship items August 6–22.



What to expect at the Gala Put on your rhinestones and cowboy hats—it's time for a good ol' fashioned Texas celebration! The Boots and Bling Gala features:

- Live DJ and dancing
- Line dancing fun
- Auction excitement
- Prize drawings
- Rodeo-worthy photo ops

It's more than a party—it's a celebration of YOU and the incredible PYOP community.

Extra Fun: Taste of Denton Food Tour Extend the fun with an optional Taste of Denton Food Tour on Monday, September 8, 1–5 PM. Seats are limited, so grab yours early (\$65). Buses will take attendees downtown for a delicious afternoon.

Final tips before you saddle up Have a plan to get your make-and-take creations back with you—whether you pack them safely in your suitcase or ship them home from Texas. And remember:

- Register early to get your top class picks.
- Organize your session choices and raffle ticket needs in advance.
- Pack comfy shoes, business cards, and your best Western wear.
- Bring sweaters or jackets because the air-conditioning can get chilly.
- Follow CCSA Facebook Chatter for updates and inspiration.

We can't wait to see you in Denton—where creativity meets community in the heart of Texas.

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I BECAME A STUDIO OWNER

By Jessica Cowan, The Pottery Place of Chattanooga; Glazed Over Co-Host



I've been putting off this article for weeks. Not because I don't know what to say, but because saying it feels more raw than I expected. Talking about customer service? Easy. Holiday signage? Sign me up. But this? This is personal. Because becoming the owner of a studio, especially after managing it, isn't just a job shift. It's a full identity expansion. And writing honestly about that means pulling back

the curtain, not just on my success, but on the quiet moments of doubt, fear, and becoming that still catch me off guard.

Here's what I want you to know before we go any further: Acknowledging that I had room to grow didn't mean I wasn't ready. And reflecting on what I didn't know yet isn't a critique of the people who helped me get here—it's a celebration of the reality that leadership is lived, not taught. This is for anyone standing in that strange in-between place: already leading but still finding your feet. If that's you, you're not alone.

Let's talk about what really happens when the manager becomes the owner, and what I wish I'd known on day one.

I thought I knew the studio inside and out. I'd opened it, closed it, trained staff, ran events, solved customer issues, and knew every backroom bin by heart. But the moment the ownership papers were signed and the keys hit my palm, everything shifted. There's something extremely humbling about realizing you've stepped into a role no one can fully prepare you for. You go from doing the job to being the business. And that shift, while exciting, is loaded with weight you don't feel until it's yours to carry.

You think, "I'm already basically running things."

Let me lovingly correct that: You're running part of the machine. Ownership is the whole factory.

Suddenly you're making payroll decisions, not just schedules. You're writing policies with legal implications. You're signing leases, negotiating contracts, filing taxes. You're holding the vision, managing the culture, forecasting the future, and cleaning the bathroom when it's gross—the decisions just hit differently when your name is on the LLC. Everything costs more—not just money, but energy. And every yes means a hundred tiny no's

you'll have to live with later.

One of the most surprising shifts? Who you can talk to—and how.

As a manager, I had work friends. We vented, celebrated, griped, and joked through it all. But when you become the boss, those relationships change. They have to. You can't always share your worries sideways anymore. You're tasked with setting the tone even when you don't feel steady. That can be isolating. What saved me was finding other owners. People outside my studio who knew the dance. CCSA helped me find a tribe who could handle the mess and the wins without needing me to have it all figured out.

At first, I tried to be a version of every leader I'd admired. But none of those boots quite fit. I had to find my voice—not the one that made everyone comfortable, but the one that made the studio stable. I learned to speak calmly when I was panicking inside. I learned to hold boundaries with kindness. I learned to decide fast and apologize when needed. I learned to trust my gut more than the group chat. I also had to learn that some people wouldn't like me in this new role. And that's okay. It still stings. But it doesn't derail me anymore.

In the beginning, I was the system. If something needed doing, I did it. If someone had a question, I answered it. I lived in a constant loop of putting out fires and wondering why I couldn't move forward. Then I realized: I didn't need to do more. I needed to build better systems.

The moment I started putting my knowledge on paper, everything shifted. My staff handbook became my sanity. My checklists became my freedom. My backroom workflow became my break.

When you build a system, you're not giving up control—you're creating consistency. And that's what gives you room to breathe. If I could sit down with the bright-eyed, 28-year-old who'd just signed the papers, I'd say:

- You are allowed to not know yet. Learn as you go.
- Get a bookkeeper, a therapist, and a coffee habit.
- Hire slow. Train even slower. Let people grow.
- Don't wait to create a brand—your voice matters now.
- You can change your mind later. And you will.

Becoming the owner changed me. It gave me a canvas far bigger than I expected—and a responsibility to hold space for creativity, community, and growth. Not just for my customers, but for my team. For myself. This studio? It's not just where I work. It's part of my legacy. If you're reading this as a new owner, or a maybe-someday one, I hope you know this:

You don't have to be perfect to be ready. You just have to care enough to keep growing.

And that's exactly what makes you the right person to lead.

WHY COMMUNITY CONNECTION IS THE SECRET INGREDIENT TO SUCCESS

By Lisa Feltz, Bisque Imports

In today's fast-paced, digital world, running a PYOP studio is about so much more than selling ceramics—it's about creating fun, meaningful experiences and fostering real human connection. One of the most powerful ways to get noticed for doing just that? Support your community.

More than ever, people are looking for places where they feel like they belong—spaces where they can relax, be creative, and connect with others. PYOP studios are environments where families, friends, and coworkers come together over shared moments and memories. That sense of belonging sparks something powerful: When guests feel emotionally connected to your studio, they come back, they bring others, and they share their experiences far and wide.

It's not just good karma—it's a good strategy. Community involvement helps your business stand out from competitors, boosts brand reputation, and drives long-term growth. When people walk into your studio and see more than products—when they see experiences, stories, and reasons to connect—they're far more likely to engage.

And here's a tip. When sharing pictures of customers' pieces or lifestyle shots from your studio, don't just post *what* your customers made—share *why* they made it. Was it a birthday celebration? A mother-daughter day? A team outing? Sharing these stories inspires others to come in and create their own memories.

Ultimately, a business that supports its community isn't just offering a product. It's offering a sense of home, connection, and belonging—and that's what keeps people coming back. Explore opportunities for your business to support your community to decide which are a good fit.

What about all those donation requests that come your way? Do you have to say yes to every single one just to be seen as community-minded? Absolutely not. Supporting your community doesn't mean stretching yourself thin—it means giving with intention. By setting clear, thoughtful boundaries, you can ensure your studio is supporting causes that truly align with



your values *and* your business goals.

Here's a smart, sustainable way to approach donation requests. Rather than responding yes or no immediately, adopt a consistent and professional process. A simple "Thanks for reaching out! Please leave your request and we'll be in touch soon," gives your team the time needed to evaluate each request properly.

Here are some key considerations when answering requests:

Require Key Information. Before committing, ask for:

- An official request letter on the organization's letterhead, outlining their mission, the event or initiative, how the donation will be used, and what they are requesting.
- Tax ID Number (EIN) to confirm the organization is a legitimate 501(c)(3) nonprofit. You can verify this on the IRS website.
- A point of contact who can answer any follow-up questions and provide accountability.

Do Your Research. Take time to understand:

- The organization's mission and whether it aligns with your brand values.
- Their audience and reach: Is this a group your customer base is connected to?
- Location: Is the organization local, and does it directly impact your community?
- Any political or religious affiliations, and how those align with your brand identity.

Evaluate the visibility offered. Consider whether the partnership will also help build awareness for your business. Ask about:

- Mentions in social media or email marketing
- Placement on event websites or signage
- Opportunities for in-kind partnerships or product exposure

By creating a clear, respectful process for managing donations, you protect your business from overcommitting while still supporting causes that reflect your values. It's not about saying no—it's about saying yes to the right opportunities.





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CREATING A CONTINUITY PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR STUDIO'S LEGACY, PART 3

By Susan Bucci, Painted Peacock, Greenville, North Carolina

Hey again, rockstar! If you're reading this, it means you've stuck with me through the nitty-gritty of business plans, finances, and llama-parade-level surprises. (If that makes no sense, go read the previous issue because you're missing some pretty solid continuity planning information!)

You're doing the work most people avoid, the kind that actually keeps a business running when life decides to throw a monkey wrench your way. So give yourself a fist bump, grab a snack, and let's keep going!

This round, we're tackling programs and events, scheduling and payroll, and intellectual property such as your logo—aka "How does this place run and can we legally protect it?" Let's dive in.

Programs and Events Think about all the creative programming that makes your studio unique: seasonal events, birthday parties, summer camps, paint and sip nights, baby handprint days, you name it. Now ask yourself, "If I had to hand over the reins tomorrow, would someone else know how to run these?" Document things like:

- Recurring events (how often they happen and any seasonality)
- Age groups and pricing
- Supplies and prep checklists
- Marketing strategies or promos you use to boost attendance
- Any vendors or external partners involved (like instructors or entertainers)

Include photos or examples from past events to help make this the smoothest process possible for future leaders.

Scheduling and Payroll Ah yes, everyone's favorite topic: time cards and taxes. Not glamorous, but absolutely vital. Here's what you'll want to include:

- Payroll provider info (QuickBooks, Gusto, ADP, etc.)
- How staff hours are tracked (digital system? handwritten logbook? Magic 8 Ball?)
- Pay schedule and tax documentation needs
- Employee list: names, roles, pay rates, contact info
- Time-off policy (even if it's "text me and we'll figure it out")
- Emergency backup plan: If YOU are the one who normally runs payroll, who else can do it?
- If you use software or apps for scheduling, add the login info and a quick-start guide.

Intellectual Property This is the stuff that makes your studio yours: your logo, your designs, your slogans, your templates—basically your creative fingerprint. Include:

- Your logo files (different versions: transparent background,

hi-res, etc.)

- Any registered trademarks or copyrights
- Original designs, templates, or patterns
- Slogans, taglines, or unique product names
- Where these assets are stored (Google Drive folder? Dropbox?)
- Terms of use or licensing agreements if you've shared your designs with anyone else

Even if you haven't officially trademarked anything yet, it's worth keeping a record of what you consider to be proprietary. It'll make future steps easier if or when you decide to file, sell, or license your magic.



You did it again! Another three big sections checked off the list! You're building something that doesn't just survive chaos but thrives through it. Whether it's a family emergency, sabbatical, or just a long-overdue vacation, you're creating a business that can stand strong even if you're temporarily out of the picture. I'm completing this article as I'm preparing to leave for my first-ever two-week vacation...and guess what? I'm not worried about the business! My systems are all in place and I'm ready to unplug and enjoy two solid weeks with my husband and daughter!

So, here's your homework before the final edition:

- Document your programs.
- Outline scheduling/payroll.
- Protect your intellectual property.

Remember, this doesn't have to be a marathon; it can be a slow jog. Just keep going. I'll see you in the final edition of this series, where we wrap it all up with your owner info, some security best practices, and the *pièce de résistance*: putting your continuity plan all in one tidy, glorious place.

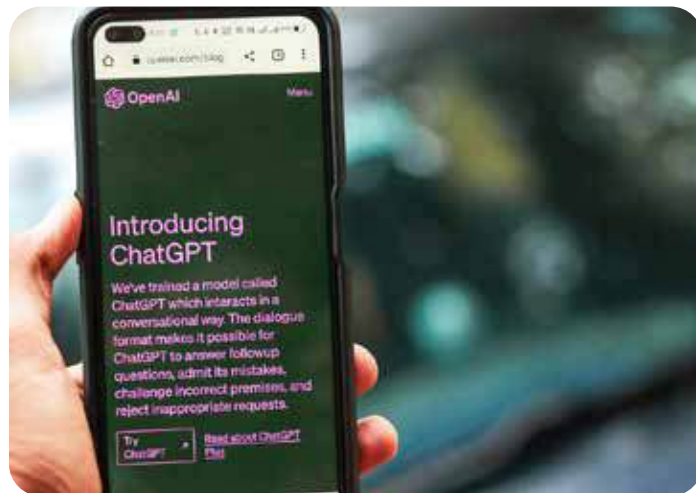
Until next time, keep being unstoppable!

WHAT AI CAN (AND CAN'T) DO FOR YOUR STUDIO MARKETING

By Terri J. Welch, Paint 'n Fun Ceramics, Christiansburg, Virginia

AI is everywhere—from auto-generated emails to predictive text on your phone—and now it's making waves in the way small businesses approach marketing. Tools like ChatGPT, Canva Magic, and automated ad generators promise to save time, boost creativity, and keep content consistent. And for many studio owners, that sounds like a dream.

While these tools are helpful, they'll never replace what makes your studio truly shine: your voice, your community, and your heart. This article offers a real-world look at how studio owners can use AI to lighten the marketing load without losing the magic that makes their space feel like home.



WHAT AI CAN DO FOR YOUR MARKETING

Speed up the “blank page” struggle: AI can help you write the first draft of Facebook and Instagram captions, event or class descriptions, and monthly newsletters or email reminders.

Try this prompt in ChatGPT: “Write a friendly, upbeat Facebook post about our Christmas in July pottery painting event for families.”

Brainstorm creative ideas: Feeling stuck? AI can offer themed event ideas, colorful project names, caption starters, or poll ideas.

Ask it: “Give me 10 fun names for a new summer glaze combo class for adults.”

Repurpose Existing Content: Upload a blog post and ask AI to turn it into a three-part Instagram series, create email subject lines, or write a one-liner caption for a reel. It's like having a junior marketer on your team—without the extra payroll cost.

WHAT AI CAN'T REPLACE

Your personality: People come to your studio because of *you*. Your warmth, your humor, and your personal connection with

customers are what keep them coming back. AI can sound “on brand,” but it can't replicate your charm or the inside jokes your regulars love.

Your artistic eye: AI doesn't know which glaze pops in person or why one project flopped in your market but went viral somewhere else. Your artistic instincts and studio experience will always beat the algorithm.

Real community engagement: AI can respond to a review, but it won't recognize when a loyal customer has been absent—or know to check in with the local PTO about a school fundraiser. Real connection still needs real people.

Your story: The heart behind your studio—why you started, how you've grown, and who you serve—can't be faked. That human element is what makes your marketing stick.

THE SWEET SPOT: USE AI AS YOUR ASSISTANT, NOT YOUR ARTIST

Think of AI like a helpful intern: It can organize your thoughts, offer a rough draft, and spark new ideas. But your job is to shape the final message, add your tone, and hit “post” with confidence. Use it to amplify your voice—not replace it.

The best marketing tool you'll ever have isn't free software—it's your passion. AI can help you show up more consistently and with a little less stress, but it's your love for what you do—and your ability to make people feel seen and celebrated—that keeps customers coming back. Let AI help you save time. But never forget: *You are the secret sauce.*

Studio-Friendly Prompts to Try with AI

1. Write a caption for a pottery class for moms and kids this summer.
2. Give me five Instagram post ideas to promote gift cards for Father's Day.
3. Help me write a thank-you email to customers who attended our glaze workshop.
4. Turn this blog post into three Instagram captions. [Paste blog text]
5. Suggest names for a new line of speckled mugs.

REDEFINING SUCCESS AND STUDIO SPACE

by Julia McNair, Do*It*Yourself Crafts, Birmingham, Alabama



The stack continues to grow! Like having a bunch of ideas I want to try on pottery, I have several books that I am looking at for inspiration. I'm really excited about two right now, and they are very different from each other.

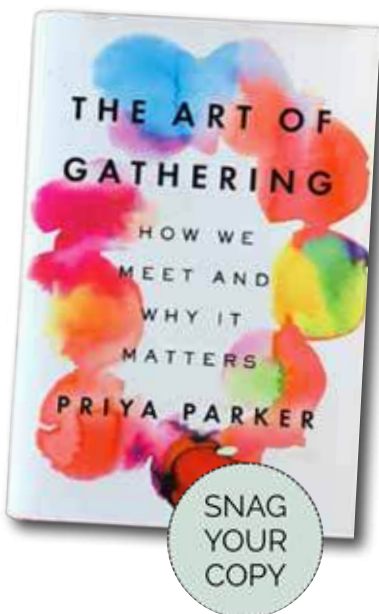
The first is *Company of One: Why Staying Small is the Next Big Thing for Business* by Paul Jarvis. The pressure in owning a business is often to grow, grow, GROW! But, at what cost? This book examines what it means to be successful and gives you permission

to revolve your work around your life. You can grow intentionally, not exponentially, and make the growth sustainable.

If you feel like you are "supposed" to scale, but it's going against what you want out of owning your studio, this might be the book to help you decide what direction to go in. Jarvis reframes what "better" means. For some, staying small is the right move. You can place value on your time, and it will help you prioritize how your business fits within your life.

This book was recommended to me as being especially good for a small business that is active in the community, and a creative studio where meaningful connections with customers is just as important as making money.

Next is *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters* by Priya Parker. This is not a business book, but hear me out. We are a place where people gather, for parties or to take a class



or to try something new. What if we help our customers with more intentional experiences?

I think that often pottery studios are more like families than small businesses, which is why I started thinking about using this book about entertaining to help think about how I run classes and camps, but also how we invite customers in to have an amazing new experience. We give them the permission to try something new, and to maybe not be successful when they try—but the experience is what we are curating, even more than the outcome.

Of course, we want to help them have a great outcome, too! Think about throwing on the pottery wheel—it's the journey for a try-it class, not necessarily the final bowl they make.

Happy reading!

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GET CONVENTION-READY: A STUDIO OWNER'S GUIDE TO STRATEGIC BUYING

By Ferne Benson, Mr. Toad's Pottery and Excelerated Solutions, LaVale, Maryland



Every September, the CCSA Convention rolls around like Christmas for studio owners. It's a whirlwind of creative energy, fresh ideas, and tempting new products. But with so many amazing suppliers and show specials in one place, it's easy to fall into the trap of overbuying, or buying without a clear plan.

This year, I want to help you prepare with purpose. By doing a bit of strategic planning, you can arrive in Denton, Texas (September 5–8, 2025) feeling financially confident and ready to stock your studio with exactly what your customers are excited to paint. Here's how to do just that—using a combination of simple sales analysis, budgeting, and a little spreadsheet magic.

Step 1: Look Back Before You Buy Forward Start by comparing your Q4 sales from the previous two years (for example, October–December of 2023 and 2024). This is key for two reasons:

1. **You'll spot patterns.** What sold well both years? What was newly introduced that performed great?
2. **You'll avoid repeat mistakes.** Which items sat on the shelf and collected dust?

Where to pull the data: In your POS system (like Square), download an Item Sales Report or a COGS report filtered to Q4 for each year. Export both to Excel or Google Sheets. Then create a side-by-side comparison that shows:

- Item Name
- Units Sold in 2023 Q4
- Units Sold in 2024 Q4
- Year-over-Year Change (a simple formula: $=(2024 \text{ Qty} - 2023 \text{ Qty})/2023 \text{ Qty}$)
- % Change in Sales (to see what's growing or slowing)

Pro tip: Color-code your spreadsheet—green for growth, red for decline, and yellow for new items without 2023 data.

Step 2: Evaluate Categories, Not Just Items Once you see which individual items performed well, zoom out and look at the broader categories:

- Kitchen (mugs, plates, bowls, etc.)
- Home decor
- Banks
- Boxes
- Figurines
- Seasonal and holiday (Fall, Christmas, Halloween, etc.)
- Thematic collections (Animals, Ocean, Woodland, Mythical)

Tally how much of your total Q4 sales in each category accounted for, and compare it to how much of your inventory purchases were made in those same categories last year. This helps ensure that you're investing in what your customers are actually painting—not just what looks good on a shelf.

Step 3: Budget-Based on Reality If you use a system like Profit First, this step will feel especially satisfying. I set aside 29%

of every weekly deposit into an income account designated for expenses like inventory. By convention time, that account has built up enough cushion to allow me to take advantage of supplier discounts and show specials without dipping into my operating funds. From there, I break my buying budget down by:

- Category (e.g., Kitchen, Home decor)
- Collection/Thematic Groupings (e.g., Animals, Woodland)
- New inventory (set aside a percentage for brand-new product lines)

Pro tip: Keep your year-end inventory lean to reduce taxable stock on hand and improve solvency. Strategic convention buying helps you plan for what will move—not what will sit.

Step 4: Create a Smart Shopping List With your category breakdown and historical sales data, you're ready to build your convention wish list—not based simply on what's new and exciting, but what you already know your customers love. Your spreadsheet should now include:

- Item Name
- Category
- 2023 Units Sold
- 2024 Units Sold
- % Change
- Desired Quantity to Purchase
- Estimated Cost
- Assigned Budget Category (for totals)

If you want to take it a step further, add a "New & Wishlist" tab for items you're interested in but want to prioritize only after your core inventory is ordered.

Bonus: Use the Tool I'm Sharing with You! To make this process even easier, I've created a Convention Buying Planner spreadsheet that helps you to:

- Import your Q4 sales data from 2023 and 2024
- See which items and categories grew or declined
- Assign quantities and estimated costs to items for reordering
- Generate a category-based shopping list and compare it to your available budget

Final Thoughts: Buy Smarter, Not Bigger Convention is inspiring—it's supposed to be! But walking in with a plan gives you the power to buy with confidence and clarity. Your studio deserves an inventory strategy that reflects what your customers love *and* what your budget allows.

So take a little time to prep. Use your data. Set aside your buying budget. And get ready to say yes to the pieces that are going to sell like hotcakes when you return home. Happy buying—and I'll see you in Denton!

THE WAY WE MAKE PEOPLE FEEL: STUDIO TONE AND TOUCHPOINTS THAT STICK

By Jessica Cowan, The Pottery Place, Chattanooga, Tennessee

There's a little moment I live for in the studio. It's not the big birthday cheers or the perfectly printed silkscreen. It's when a guest pauses, looks around, and says, "It just feels good in here." That moment isn't luck; it's tone. And in our world, tone is everything. Even if they don't realize it, your guests feel your studio tone before you ever open your mouth. It's in your playlist and your lighting, sure. But it's also in your posture, your phrasing, your problem-solving energy. It's the difference between a transaction and a transformation.

Let's bust a myth right now. Tone isn't about being peppy or putting on a customer service smile. It's about emotional clarity. It's the way your studio says, "You belong here," before anyone ever speaks. Studio tone shows up in:

- The way you welcome people (From behind the counter? Halfway to the door? At the door?)
- The way your signage speaks (Are your posters yelling? Inviting?)
- The way your team offers help (Do they say things like "Do you need anything?" or "How's it going over here?")

Tone is a full-body experience for your guests. When done right, it disarms anxiety, builds trust, and creates a backdrop of belonging. But tone is also about your processes and micro-interactions. Think about your studio flow. Every visit is a series of touchpoints—those tiny but mighty moments where a guest either feels connected or dismissed. Let's break down a few that matter most:

- **The Greet:** We meet guests halfway to the door—literally and energetically. Rather than "Welcome in!" shouted across the counter, it's "Hey y'all! What brings you in today?" said with open body language and a friendly smile.
- **The Orientation:** We don't just explain how it works—we tell a story. We paint the picture of what happens next, from choosing their piece to seeing that magical glaze transformation. We call it "managing guest expectations." They need to know what's going on in order to have a great, stress-free experience.
- **The Check-in:** Every 10–15 minutes, we float back through, not to hover but to say, "Y'all doing okay?" or "This color combo is killer." Guests often won't ask for help, so you've got to beat them to the moment.
- **The Checkout:** When they bring up their piece, we treat it like the masterpiece it is. "I love this little guy! You did such a great job with that ombré!" Validation lingers long after firing.
- **And later, the Pickup:** Invite them to marvel with you. "Your pet portrait mug turned out amazing—do you want to open it here?" It turns pickup into one more moment of delight.

Good tone isn't about hiring naturally bubbly people and

hoping for the best. It's a system. We train it. We model it. We write it into our scripts and signage and even our studio playlists. It looks like:

- Having intentional, welcoming scripts that sound conversational, not robotic.
- Printing materials that reflect the vibe (friendly fonts, warm phrasing, calm colors).
- Making sure the back-of-house team holds the same tone standards; firing a piece with care is just as important as welcoming someone through the door.
- Consistency makes your tone feel real to the guest. They're not just experiencing a happy accident—they're entering a reliable ecosystem.

That said, your tone isn't static; it breathes with the calendar. One of the most powerful tools to refresh your studio's energy is the rhythm of the year. As fall rolls in and the holidays creep closer, your studio tone can shift from everyday creativity to cozy celebrations. The key is being intentional without being overwhelming. Here's how we do it:

- Swap the soundtrack. Our playlist goes from sunshine and Americana to hipster/indie vibes to jazzy jingles to holiday classics. It's subtle, warm, and never stuck on a loop.
- Dress the space for the season: mini pumpkins in October, felt garlands in November, twinkle lights and snowflakes in December.
- Staff scripts adjust too. "You getting a jump on holiday gifts?" or "This'll make the sweetest stocking stuffer!" lets your team flow with the seasons.
- Update signage. A warm, handwritten "Paint now, pick up before Dec. 23!" feels helpful, not salesy.

Your studio tone in fall and winter should feel like a soft sweater. Guests are overstimulated everywhere else, so be their cozy corner (unless it's, ya know, party time). But tone isn't just for the customer; it's also how we teach. Your studio's energy trains your team by osmosis. The way you respond to a tough guest, the way you celebrate a staff win, the way you handle feedback—all of it sets a tone. At our studio, we had a new staff member solve a party policy issue like a pro—not because she had memorized a flowchart, but because she'd absorbed how we talk through things. Your tone gives staff a roadmap they can follow, even when the GPS glitches.

If you don't set the tone, the loudest energy in the room will do it. That might be the toddler tantrum, the frazzled parent, or your own fatigue. But when you do set it? You create a container—a safe, imaginative, inspiring little world where people can relax into the moment and connect with their creativity—and each other.

So next time you walk into your studio, pause. What does it feel like in here today? And would you want to stay?



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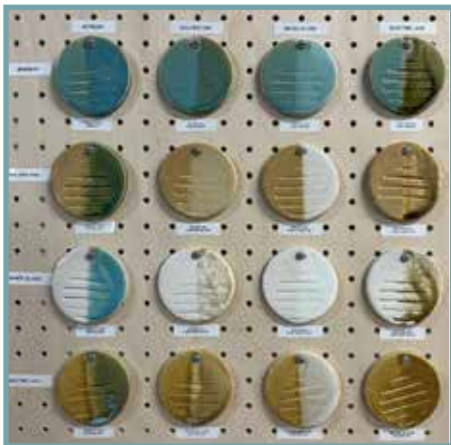
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TESTING, TESTING 1, 2: MAKING TEST TILES

By Maggie Fretz, The Ceramic Shop, Norristown, Pennsylvania



In the PYOP studio, tiles are often used to show customers what glazes will look like once fired, or to show different techniques, or interesting ways to layer stoneware glazes, which essentially create a new glaze where they mix. Wet clay studios generally have glaze layering

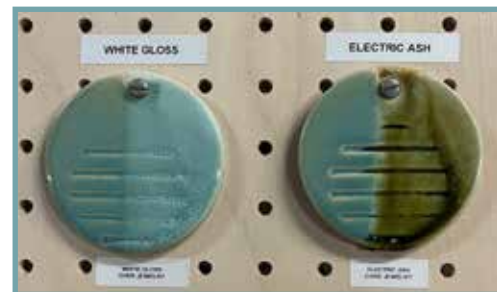
test tiles displayed as a chart so the combinations can be easily referenced by students and staff. Test tiles are a great way both to give inspiration and guidance to customers and also to show honest results that not every glaze combination is a winner. Test tiles can also be used to display how glazes can look different on different clay bodies.

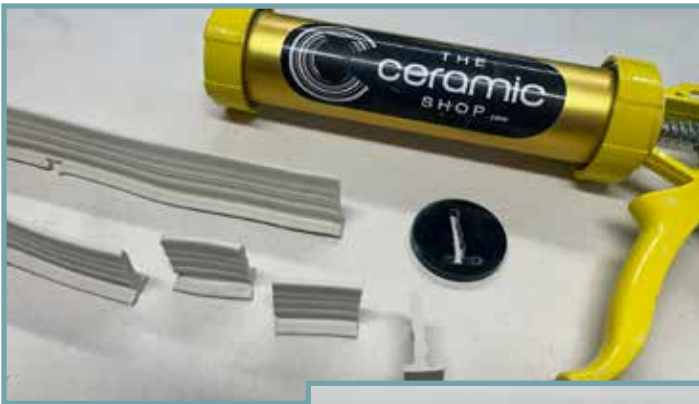
Test tiles are most effective when easily accessible to staff and customers, so it's important to think about how they will be displayed or stored, which will dictate which tile method makes

the most sense for your studio. The most common types of test tiles are slab, extruded, pinch, and wheel thrown. Keep a stock of bisque test tiles ready to go for testing new glaze combinations. Be sure to label the glazes

on each test tile with an underglaze pencil or writer bottle. **Slab tiles** of any shape are easy to display by punching a small hole in the top. Adding texture to a portion of the tile will show how glazes break and pool. These are phenomenal options for low-fire glazes because they generally don't have much movement, so the glaze outcome isn't really affected whether pieces are fired either horizontally or vertically. They're also a great option for stoneware because it's easy to make a large quantity of them. They store compactly and are extremely easy to hang up.

When making flat test tiles for mid-range glazes, we recommend firing at an angle to properly showcase any movement. This can be done by resting the backs of the tiles on horizontal kiln posts and putting a cookie underneath to catch



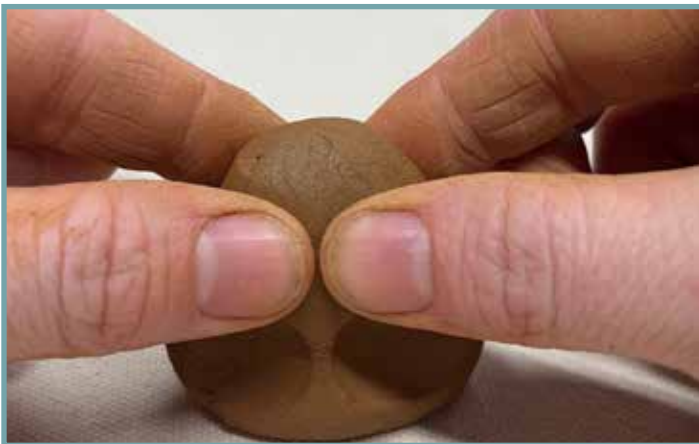


any drips. Or suspend them on ornament/jewelry rods.

Extruded tiles stand up on their own and it's easy to make a lot of them very quickly. Their base makes them self-supporting, so glaze firing is extremely simple. The size of the extruder barrel determines the size of the extruded tile. Wall-mounted extruders have a larger barrel size and can make larger test tiles. Handheld extruders have smaller barrels but are more affordable, and The Ceramic Shop extruder comes with its own test tile die. By adding a hole at the top you can also hang these up; the nail will just need to stick out a bit to account for the base.



Pinch tiles are also self-supporting and are easy to make with no equipment. Roll out small similar-sized oblong balls of clay, or make thick coils and cut them into similar sizes. Stand the clay vertically and use your pointer finger and thumb on both hands to press down to create the base. Move up and press again, repeating a third or fourth time, depending on how much clay you have. These can be displayed on shallow shelves but look a bit clunky hanging from a nail, so I usually keep them in a drawer or a box.



Thrown tiles are relatively easy to make with a pottery wheel. The amount of clay depends on how large you want the tiles, but 2–3 pounds of clay should yield functional tiles. The goal is to throw a ring as wide as your bat. Pull up the clay, leaving a deep base 1–2 inches thick. The center of the bat will be bare of clay. Pull the clay up and toward the center slightly. The cross section



of the clay should look like an upside down 7. Add some texture to the outside of the ring. Allow it to set up and wire it off the bat, or use a hydrobat so the ring will pop off with no wiring. Divide the ring into 1–3 inch wide sections based on preference. These self-supporting tiles are easy to fire as long as they have a sturdy enough base. They can be displayed on a shelf, or add a hole to hang them up.

A piece of bisque can be used to display different layering combinations or techniques by using tape to divide it into sections. This technique is great for low-fire and stoneware glazes.

You can display test tiles in a grid that shows many possible glaze layering combinations. In the photo showing combos of four different glazes, the x axis is the first layer of glaze and the y axis is the second layer of glaze (which is applied only to the right side). The diagonal from top left to bottom right displays each glaze layered on itself in a thin and thick coat. By having the x and y axis glazes in the same order, it's easy to find what any one glaze will look like over the other.

Test tiles can be a bit tedious to make but result in a phenomenal tool that will help give your employees and customers a wealth of information.



Strategize for Success

REFRESHING YOUR PHYSICAL SPACE

By Madeline Riegel, Glazed Expressions, Des Moines, Iowa

In the third installment of our branding series, we're shifting the focus from the digital realm to your physical studio. Your physical space should do more than just function—it should tell your brand's story the moment someone walks through the door. From the colors on the walls to the way signage speaks, every detail in your studio is a chance to reinforce your identity and values. A clean, cohesive, and thoughtfully designed environment not only makes a strong first impression but builds trust, encourages repeat visits, and inspires word-of-mouth buzz. When your physical space feels like a natural extension of your online presence, you create a seamless experience that deepens customer connection and turns casual browsers into loyal fans. Refreshing your studio with intentional branding elements is one of the most impactful ways to make your business feel alive, aligned, and unforgettable.

STEP 1: DECLUTTER

Start by clearing out the clutter and saying goodbye to anything that's broken, worn out, or no longer aligned with your brand. A clean, organized space instantly feels more professional and welcoming, while outdated or damaged items—like wobbly tables, faded signage, worn-out paintbrushes, or discontinued samples all silently communicate neglect. Encourage your team to view the studio with fresh eyes and remove anything that doesn't enhance the customer experience. Replacing or refreshing a few key pieces can make a big impact without requiring a major investment, setting the stage for a space that feels intentional, functional, and brand-aligned. Prioritize comfort and function while ensuring everything supports your updated aesthetic.



STEP 2: DEEP CLEAN AND ORGANIZE

Before reorganizing, start with a thorough deep clean—top to bottom. Set aside time during a slower season to tackle neglected corners,

high-touch surfaces, restrooms, and studio tables. A sparkling clean space doesn't just look better; it sends a clear message that you care about quality and take pride in your environment. Once everything is fresh and clean, move on to organizing for function and flow. Consider how guests and staff move through



the space—from the entrance to the check-in counter, studio tables, and checkout area. Are supplies easy to find and access? Is the layout intuitive and welcoming? Thoughtful organization goes beyond tidiness; it supports efficiency, enhances the customer experience, and makes your studio feel purposeful and brand-aligned.

STEP 3: THE POWER OF PAINT

There is perhaps no tool more powerful in transforming a space for so little cost than paint. A fresh coat of paint can completely refresh the atmosphere, brighten dim corners, and tie everything together visually. It's also one of the most budget-friendly upgrades—all it takes is some elbow grease and a weekend.

Choose paint colors that reflect your brand identity. Are you bold and vibrant? Choose saturated hues or colorful accents. More relaxed and calming? Opt for soft neutrals or earthtones. Don't forget the details: Painting trim, doors, and baseboards gives a finished, professional look.

You don't need to be a muralist to make an impact. A simple brand-colored accent wall can go a long way. Want something more visual? Use a projector to trace custom designs, logos, or illustrations directly onto the wall. This is a fun and easy way to add artistic branding to your space without hiring a pro. It's especially great for feature walls or Instagrammable corners.

Paint changes how a space feels. Customers notice when a space looks fresh and intentional—and that adds perceived value to your entire experience.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Refreshing your physical space doesn't have to mean a full renovation or major expense. With a logical sequence and a few strategic updates, you can dramatically elevate your studio's atmosphere. The goal is to align your physical environment with your brand identity in a way that feels natural, thoughtful, and welcoming. The result? A memorable experience that builds trust, loyalty, and excitement.

In the next issue (the final installment of this series), we'll focus on the small but powerful details that shape your customer experience—both in your studio and within your team—to ensure your brand feels consistent from the inside out.



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Capy Halloween

By Jessie Sterling, Paint the Towne, Wichita, Kansas

Use big flat brush for larger areas. Use small detail brush for small lines and tight corners. Mix colors on your plate before brushing on your canvas. If you mess up, use a wet paper towel to gently wipe or wash the paint off and start again. For paint on clothes, wash with soap and water immediately.

SUPPLIES

- Canvas
- Pattern
- Carbon paper
- Pen or pencil
- Medium flat brush
- Small round brush

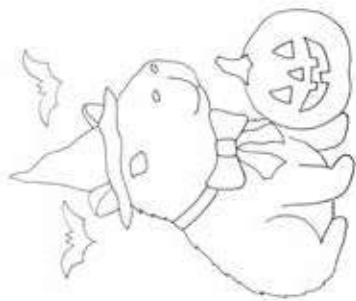
ACRYLIC COLORS

Raw Sienna, White, Brown, Black, Orange

Project time: 60 minutes

DIRECTIONS

1. Place carbon paper on the canvas with the pattern on top and trace the design.



2. Mix Raw Sienna with some White. With a large flat brush, paint the whole background in circular strokes for a textured look. While the paint is still wet, blend in a tiny bit of Brown around the edges for depth.
3. With a medium brush, paint the capybara's body and top of ears Brown. While still wet, mix in some Black to add a rough furry outline down the back, and around the leg creases, the feet, the inner ears, nostrils, and mouth, and to add shading around the nose. Clean the brush and use Raw Sienna with a little Brown to lightly brush over all the fur to add highlights.
4. With a small brush, paint the witch hat and the bats Black. Add a little White and highlight the crease where the brim meets the seam of the hat.
5. With Orange, paint the bow at the capybara's neck. Add shadow and texture with a bit of Brown. With Black, outline the bow and paint the band around the neck.
6. Mix Orange with a little Brown and paint the pumpkin. Add more Brown to the mix and make darker sections along the pumpkin's ridges and paint the stem.
7. With Black, paint the pumpkin face and the capybara's eye. Add a white dot to the eye. If desired, use a touch of white on the bow and pumpkin for highlights.

Clay Thumbprint Ornaments

By Lynn Webb, Practically Picasso, St. Petersburg, Florida

SUPPLIES

- Low-fire white clay
- Slab mat
- 4" circle cutter
- Straw
- Letter stamps
- Needle tool
- Round sponge
- Clay tile

DIRECTIONS

1. Roll a 3/8" clay slab and cut out a 4" circle for the ornament.
2. Use a straw to poke a hole for hanging.
3. Use the letter stamps to stamp the child's name and year into the back of the ornament.
4. For the wreath design, have the child make thumbprint indentations around the circle, leaving space between them for leaves and berries.



5. For the snowman design, make thumbprint indentations for the eyes. Smaller children can also use a pinky finger to imprint the coal mouth.
6. Using leftover clay from cutting out the base, shape a carrot nose. Use a needle tool to add details. Score and attach to the face.
7. Smooth all the edges and move ornaments to clay tile and allow to dry slowly.
8. Fire to Cone 04, then paint as desired.
9. Clear glaze and fire to Cone 06.

WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Please refer to the digital edition for the **Geometric Glass Dish Project**.



Pumpkin Pie Jar

[CCSA Clay Project Guide 2025](#), Page 11

SUPPLIES

- 2 lbs clay
- Needle tool or wooden skewer
- Small ribbon tool
- Medium round brush
- Sponge

Project Time: 120 Minutes

DIRECTIONS

1. Provide a 2-lb clay wedge. Twist the wedge into approximately two equal parts.
2. Create a pinch pot with one of the wedge parts, pinching around to create a short, wide pinch pot.
3. Use a small ribbon tool to cut indentations into sections of the side of the pinch pot to create the pumpkin look. Use wet fingers and/or wet brush to smooth these indentations.
4. Twist off about a golf-ball-size piece of clay from the remaining wedge and roll a fat coil. Tap the top and sides of this coil to press into a more flattened, wide coil about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick.
5. Score, slip, and attach this flattened coil to the top rim of the pinch pot. Use wet fingers and/or wet brush to smooth the edges and seam both underneath and inside.
6. Using fingers, begin to lift up and press down, alternating, all the way around this pie rim to create a waved look.
7. To create the lid, twist off a golf-ball-size piece (or slightly bigger) from the remaining clay. Roll into a ball and then press and flip and press to create a pancake shape the size of the opening of the pie dish. Continue to press, press, flip until it is the right size and is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick.
8. Create the top handle of whip cream by rolling a ball and then rolling it into a cone. Press the cone on the table to flatten the bottom. Use the needle tool to create a spiral indentation to suggest a whip cream swirl. Score, slip, and attach this to the center of the lid. Use wet fingers and/or wet brush to slightly smooth around the seam, leaving it looking like a dollop of whipped cream on top. Let dry.
9. Fire to cone 04.
10. Glaze as desired, then fire to cone 06.

This project can be
found in the **2025 CCSA**
Clay Project Guide.

GET SPOOKY IN 2025



CCX3230 Flora Skull-6-1/4"L X 4-1/4"W x 5"H



CCX3227 Horntail Dragon-7-1/4"L X 6-3/4"W x 8-1/2"H



CCX3231 Bat Bowl--4-1/4"L X 7"W x 2-1/4"H

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Rustic Harvest Pumpkins

By Tammy Gacek, Gare

Directions are for the large orange pumpkin, but all pumpkins follow the same plan. The small one is shown on Party Animal (item 7493) with Robin's Egg (color: 9532) and the medium one is Small Round Pumpkin (item 5404) with Plum Island (color 9538).

SUPPLIES

- Squatty Pumpkin (item 5382)
- Fan brush

GLAZE COLORS

Prairie Gold (9511)
Midnight Stone (9516)
Darlin' Clementine (9542)
Magic Flow (9555)
Chocolate Moose (2366)

DIRECTIONS

1. With a fan brush apply 3 coats of Prairie Gold to the entire pumpkin, excluding the stem.
2. Apply 2 coats of Midnight Stone to the bottom half of the pumpkin.

3. Apply 2 coats of Darlin' Clementine to the top half of the pumpkin.

4. Dab on 1 thin coat of Magic Flow over the Darlin' Clementine.

5. Apply 3 coats of Chocolate Moose to the stem. Let dry.

6. Fire to cone 06.



Geometric Glass Dish

By: Teresa Spencer, Soul Fire Art Studio, Ltd.

This project creates dynamic results with minimal effort and is great for using up clear scrap. It's simple enough for kids (you can cut squares and let them make patterns) and satisfying enough for adults. Plus it's a great lesson in mastering how to cut even shapes.

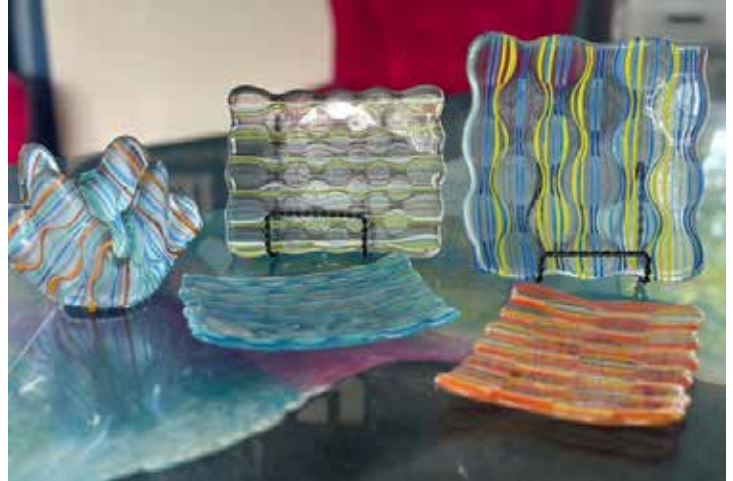
The samples shown use ½"x½", ½"x1" and 1"x1" squares.

SUPPLIES

- Clear glass base
- Assorted stringers
- Double-thick clear squares or rectangles, or double up on single-layer glass
- Glue

DIRECTIONS

1. Before diving in, sketch out your layout. A little planning goes a long way, especially if you're aiming for clean corners and balanced results.
2. Arrange the stringers across the clear base as desired. Neat, evenly spaced parallel lines are effective, but you can absolutely mix it up—alternate colors, or break up the rhythm by playing with spacing.
3. Glue as you go—once you've figured out your basic pattern, dot a little glue on each stringer as you place it.
4. Place your double-thick clear squares or rectangles over the base in a checkerboard pattern. Corners don't have to touch, but placement should be consistent. The idea is to alternate spots with and without the double-clear layer. Make sure every corner of your base glass ends up covered with a double-thick piece so you don't have any wimpy corners.
5. Fire to a full fuse.



TIPS FOR A KILLER FUSE

Firing is where the magic happens with this project. The surface tension on any liquid determines the spread of a puddle (including puddles of melted glass in your kiln). Glass likes to be 6 mm thick (about ¼", or two layers of glass). With only one layer, it pulls in. With three, it spreads out. So all those clear checkerboard pieces will puff out slightly, pressing the glass down and around, while the uncovered stringers get pulled in. The result: your stringer lines get deliciously wavy, flowing in and out across the surface like they're dancing under water.

- **Corner coverage is key.** Plan your base size so the checkerboard pattern reaches the edges, especially the corners.
- **Consistent square sizes equals consistent results.** That said, perfection isn't required. I was pleasantly surprised by how forgiving the layout turned out to be.
- **Color choices matter.** Translucent stringers can get a bit washed out with this much clear on top. If that bothers you, stick with opaques or bolder colors that can hold their own.



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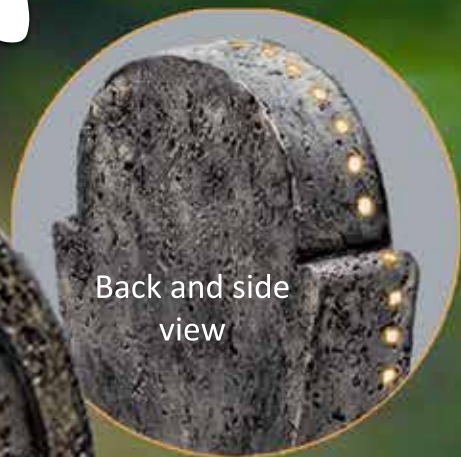
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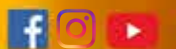
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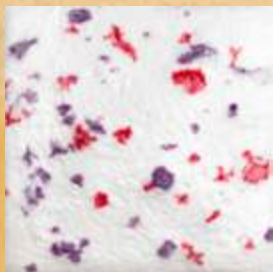


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