

CCSA TODAY

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2025



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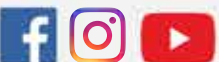


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A. Vintage Ornament (1) 5468, Vintage Ornament (2) 5469, Vintage Ornament (3) 5470 • B. 5466 Pudgy Reindeer Lantern 6"H x 5"W
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E. 5465 Pudgy Snowman Lantern 5.75"H x 4.75"W

gare



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Bonus Articles & More!

The digital edition of CCSA TODAY, available at www.ccsaonline.com, has additional bonus content.

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Welcome



As the year winds down and the holidays approach, I find myself reflecting on the incredible energy and community that came together at our recent CCSA Convention in Denton, Texas. What a memorable few days of learning, connecting, and celebrating our industry! Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make it such a success.

We're already looking ahead with excitement to our 2026 CCSA Convention in Tampa, Florida, scheduled for August 21–24, 2026. Mark your calendars now—you won't want to miss it!

This year also brought transitions within our leadership.

We said goodbye to Wendy Pettys and Cheryl Tisland, whose service on the board has been invaluable, and we are deeply grateful for their dedication and contributions. At the same time, we are thrilled to welcome Claire Bruining and Jessica Garofalo as new board members, celebrate the return of former board member Emily Rhodes, and congratulate Jamie McCabe on being reelected. Our board wasted no time after Denton, jumping straight into planning for Tampa and beyond.

To our current and past board members: thank you. Your leadership and commitment are the backbone of this association. And to our members—if you've ever considered running for the board, I encourage you to talk with a current board member and seriously think about stepping forward in 2026. It's a rewarding way to shape the future of our community and industry.

As always, I am grateful to each of you for being part of the CCSA. Together, we continue to grow, support, and inspire one another.

Dena Pearlman, Executive Director

If you were able to make it to Convention this year, I hope you're implementing at least one new idea that you were able to take away from Texas. Denton was such a great convention—full of energy, laughter, new ideas, and plenty of late-night catch-ups with old friends. I loved seeing so many of you step up to teach, share, and inspire. And once again, our generosity as a community shined bright as we came together to support Refuge for Women and the flood victims in Texas.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to welcome you to my home state of Florida and meet you in Tampa in 2026. The board is already working on fresh ideas and opportunities to keep us learning, connecting, and growing. But the real magic of CCSA will always be you—our members.

I want to encourage you to lean in. Whether it's writing for the magazine, sharing a post on Chatter, or even considering running for the board in the future, your voice matters. Our association is only as strong as the people who show up, and I know firsthand how rewarding it is to step into those roles.

So as we head into this busy holiday season, let's keep lifting each other up. Share on Chatter, jump in where you can, and keep inspiring with your creativity.

Katie Yallaly, CCSA Board President



Board of Directors

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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CONVENTION CONNECTIONS THAT LAST ALL YEAR

Back from Convention and still riding the high of being with people who understand what I do for a living. It's so great to be seen and understood.

I didn't have any big aha moments, no one particular thing that was super revolutionary that I needed to do ASAP. I'm a "seasoned studio owner" (aka I'm old and have been around a long time). Instead, it was a series of little things that reinforced that what we're doing is right, and the right thing for right now. Talking to people, just so great! Learning from each other, commiserating about all the things, problem-solving when we could, or just listening because we need to be heard when it's our turn to talk.

I've been doing this a long time, but hearing what others do—new studios or old—feeds my soul. We have our own stores and get to do things our own way, but being open to learn is still how we grow. I never leave Convention with negative thoughts about my own store, even when I have plans to improve it. I always leave admiring what others do. Tell me your processes and procedures and plans! I want to know and celebrate what you're doing.

Can I tell you about all the specific classes I took? Probably not, without prompting anyway. But I can tell you the feelings I had when I'd finally collapse into bed each night, with a smile on my

face. I can recall the quick convo before class starts, a moment at lunch, a snatch of a chat while in a vendor booth. All of these are times that I can open my mind to new ideas and share what works for me.

The key is to remember that none of us have The Only Solution. We have Our Solutions and we can learn from anyone. Even if you would never do something a certain way, learning about how and why it works for someone else is still good.

The challenge, of course, is to keep that feeling all year long. It's a utopia, being all together for a few magical days. The good news is that we have that, and the friendships we make mean we are never alone. Even when we have to explain to others what we do for a living.



PREPPING FOR THE BUSIEST SEASON

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

It's THAT time of year again—our craziest season. I imagine you all know exactly what I mean, but I'm still hesitant to actually type the word just yet. Crazy busy, crazy long hours, crazy requests, crazy customers. (I was also going to say crazy staff but I don't want to jinx us!)

I asked my colleagues about preparing for the madness to come. Eventually—after everyone rebelled at talking about Christmas so early—we realised that we're actually quietly preparing all year, in one way or another. From the moment I put my Yuletide pottery in storage in January, we're already planning for when I get it out again. We're constantly chatting about things to improve or make more slick, new designs, easier or speedier processes, and things NEVER to do, say, or offer again!



Our biggest seasonal sellers are baubles (ornaments) and Christmas Eve plates, and we can guarantee that we'll sell quite a number of these every month. All the new parents who had babies over the holiday period will get to us in the first few months of the year and many others will complete them as soon as the baby is born, no matter the month. Anyone else written "Happy Christmas" on a bauble in May and double-checked that they've put the right year?! From there, without fail, I will be delving in the storage unit throughout the summer for a nutcracker or an angel that a customer simply must paint.

In the UK, many of us do special holiday visits to nurseries and toddler groups and we aim to start those as early as possible, so from September until the first week of December we are out and about, taking prints or delivering finished pieces. This means preparations from July with hiring staff, confirming bookings, paperwork, and so on. These are some of our most popular events and have grown year on year

with the increasing popularity of baby signing, yoga, massage groups, and the like. We also do all the decorating of printed items at the groups, so this is often when the late nights begin.

The bulk of the holiday painting in my shop properly begins from September but the full-on madness starts in the second week of December. We have learnt to cope with this by the addition (from September) of lots of snacks, mainly crisps, biscuits, chocolate, and cake. I see it as my duty as the boss to ensure there is a steady supply of treats to get everyone through. (Lidl Christmas biscuits, or Marks & Spencer pretzel sticks anyone?)



We fire "guaranteed ready for Christmas" right up until 22nd December with collection on Christmas Eve, when we are open until 1 pm. We usually have a few painters as well as collectors and have become part of families' Christmas traditions, which feels very special. I really like working on Christmas Eve morning, when there's always a bit of magic and lots of excitement in the air as the last-minute shoppers pick up their gifts.

For my own preparations, as soon as pumpkin spice appears, I always have my car serviced and cleaned out, clear all hints of a late night out of the diary, bulk cook and fill my freezer, buy a really comfy pair of new shoes, find my Christmas jumper, get out the Christmas headbands, and check everyone's snack of choice.

We all somehow manage these manic times, because, let's face it, it's great making money in such a fabulous industry. We are so lucky to be able to help people make such thoughtful and special gifts. How many other businesses can elicit tears of joy so consistently!? We are blessed to do this, but it does take a whole different set of skills to get through to the 25th of December. It takes a whole lot of self-restraint to deal with the once-a-year customer who demands extra special treatment because "I'm a regular" or "I know the owner." (I spoke to them once in 2006), stoicism when recreating Twas the Night before Christmas in alternate rainbow-coloured letters, fortitude in knowing you've "ruined Christmas" because the customer has missed your firing deadlines, forbearance when customers cannot spell "Christmas" and it's your fault, composure as you watch that once-a-year customer yet again choosing the cheapest, smallest pottery to paint with the most amount of paint and leaving most of it on the table/chairs/wall. And it takes endurance to get to the last firing. But most of all it takes a bloody good sense of humour! Good luck to one and all!





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COLOR AND MOTIF TRENDS FOR 2026

By Crista Toler, Mayco, Studio Market Specialist

Each year, particular colors and motifs stand out for home decor and general design inspiration. As we approach 2026, new trends in colors and motifs are now emerging. Overall, we're seeing people move away from minimalist surroundings to more personal and expressive spaces. That's not to say that people are going overboard on design; rather, those who appreciate simple style are looking for organic, cozy, warm, and modern inspiration.

The focus on wellness and balance due to lifestyle changes—including hybrid work schedules and the desire for more flexibility in our lives—helps define how we feel about our homes and the items we use within. Warm, cozy, natural yet sophisticated, and tactile top the list of influences.

People are embracing imperfections and curated collections. They want spaces that feel lived-in and personal. Likewise, they like home goods that tell a story. Hand-painted pottery is perfect!

EARTH TONES

Embrace coffee culture with caffeine-inspired design. Pinterest shows that colors inspired by the warm neutrals of coffee and similar caffeine concoctions are on trend. Shades of mocha, cashew, caramel, and creamy warm neutrals are replacing gray and white in home decor and fashion. This includes rich, rustic terracotta and earthy clay colors.

Some Stroke & Coat® colors to inspire your earth-tone designs: SC010 Cashew Later, C014 Java Bean, SC051 Poo Bear, SC054 Vanilla Dip, SC080 Basketball, and SC092 Cafe Ole. The Elements™ glaze line offers a multitude of rich, warm colors that match the earth-tone aesthetic. Firing to Cone 6? Speckled Buff (EG002), Terracotta (EG007), and Brick Red (EG003) Engobes are an excellent way to add warmth to a stoneware project.



bold colors to create simple designs on dinnerware that will rival

those in boutiques and home decor shops.

Stroke & Coat® inspiration: SC003 Wine About It, SC029 Blue Grass, SC036 Irish Luck, SC040 Blueberry Hill, SC081 Cinnamon Stix, and SC058 501 Blues.

VIBRANT POPS OF COLOR

After years of gray and white, people are looking to brighten their homes with color again! Lemongrass, mint, cherry or candy apple red, and pinks play well together and add so much fun to a design. Use them year-round or for specific palettes such as



VINTAGE HOLIDAY OR SPRING.

Use marigold, tangerine, and butter yellows to create bright, expressive designs. Pair them with deeper colors such as cobalt and deep greens for balance. Stroke & Coat® inspiration: SC024 Dandelion, SC042 Butter Me Up, and SC075 Orange-A-Peel.



PLAID AND GINGHAM

Make it plaid but not perfect. Gingham and plaid are easy to create on pottery, especially in the softer, more organic lines. Alternating square shader brushes in different sizes along with a liner is an easy way to create these looks.

The aesthetic inspired by perfectly imperfect design works so well in a PYOP studio. Letting brushstrokes show in design lends

WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Please refer to the digital edition for more trendy photos.



a more hand-painted look that can give customers a respite in their concern to make something just right. Display a collection of simple samples that show imperfectly drawn motifs. These often mimic what people love in home decor shops.

ANIMAL PRINTS, BIRDS, AND MORE

Animal prints, especially leopard and cheetah, are everywhere. Use a round brush or script liner to create dots and lines to form the patterns. Another fun option is a design with the animals themselves. Bird motifs, whimsical and classic, provide a timeless, natural design. Look for inspiration on fabric, wallpaper, and other home decor items.

Other notable motifs include cherries, dragons, mushrooms, cowgirls, playing cards, bows, and oysters. In addition, the "perfectly imperfect" aesthetic celebrates brushstroke-forward patterns on walls, fabrics, and ceramics, celebrating a handmade, artisanal look.



CHECKERBOARD AND ABSTRACT GEOMETRICS

The popularity of the classic checkerboard pattern continues, now used in new ways, often with different colors or materials. Abstract geometrics and sculptural, modular grids are also popular, adding a modern, artful touch without being overly busy.

INCORPORATING TRENDS IN YOUR STUDIO

Create palettes of color to highlight trending or seasonal color combos. You may also want to develop your own color palettes

for local schools. Give the palettes names that help evoke a feeling, such as Twilight Dreams (deep blues and purples), Coffee House (creamy browns and warm neutrals), or Vintage Holiday



(orangey reds, teals, and pinks).

Remember that trends are about innovation, not fleeting fads. Trends can start from utilizing an existing design in a new way. The creativity involved in helping a motif evolve into a trend is more inviting and thoughtful than a fad. Taking a vintage-inspired pattern like plaid or chintz is a nod to this concept, evoking a sense of history and nostalgia.

Get your team involved in creating palettes that will resonate with your customers. Glaze simple samples with surprising techniques and motifs to inspire creativity. Visit [Mayco's Glazing Technique](#) resources for more inspiration.

Happy glazing!

2025 CONVENTION RECAP



\$250 Gift Certificate to Bisque Imports

Melissa Oremus, Bisquecuts & Grazy

Pass the Clothespin winner

Francessa Oliver, Pots of Love Uckfield

Meet the CCSA Team winner

Renee Meyer, The Ceramic and Pottery Center

Free 2026 Convention Pre-Con winners

Leah Ash, Earth Goods Studio & Boutique

Marie McClellan, Practically Picasso Waco

Free 2026 Convention Second Attendee winner

Lynn Taylor, Potsy Pamsy

Raffle winner (Ceramic boot): Charlie Reid, The Claypen

Raffle winner (Ceramic Cow Skull)

Vanessa Steele, The Art Place Studio

Raffle (Taylor Swift mug and silkscreen) winner

Kristen Gilbert, Speckled Turtle Pottery Studio

Skutt Touchscreen winner

Stephany Polokonis, Canvas & Clay Art Studio

Golden Ticket winner

Jessica Cowan, The Pottery Place of Chattanooga

This year we...

Connected with 25 incredible exhibitors

Learned from 45 game-changing classes

Explored 10+ hours in the Exhibit Hall

Raised \$17,617.35 for Refuge for Women

Raised \$2,030 for Texas Flood victims through our wine tasting

Enjoyed an unforgettable Denton food tour

Got REAL tattoos with Dark Age Tattoos

Crafted at the Hat Bar

Gained insights at an incredible Lunch & Learn

And experienced a priceless event designed to grow your business!



HAVE YOU TUNED IN YET?

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

When I asked a room full of studio owners, staff, and suppliers who listens to the *Glazed Over Podcast*, only a handful of hands went up. My first thought? *Ouch*. Those in the room definitely saw it on my face, too. But then I realized—this just means there's a whole audience out there waiting to discover our little corner of the podcasting universe.

Here's the deal. *Glazed Over* isn't just a podcast. It's where we talk shop about all the things that ACTUALLY MATTER in running a studio on the day to day. The big wins, the "wish I'd handled that differently" moments, the staff stories, the marketing hacks, and even the messy middle of studio ownership that doesn't always make it onto Instagram.

It's not some polished, corporate script. It's two experienced industry members who are right here in the trenches with you, figuring it out brushstroke by brushstroke. You'll hear us laugh,

rant, question, and share what's really working (and not working) in our spaces.

The best part? You don't have to carve out special time to listen. Tune in while you're glazing, unpacking a shipment, driving to work, or winding down with a glass of wine. It's like having a conversation with friends who just get it.

So if you've been looking for a way to stay inspired, pick up new ideas, and feel a little less alone in this wild, wonderful industry, *Glazed Over* is waiting for you. And you can find it anywhere you listen to podcasts—Apple, Spotify, Amazon, all the usual places. Just search *Glazed Over Podcast*, hit follow, and you're in.

GLAZED OVER



Glazed Over is here to provide you with support and inspiration when you're feeling glazed over and burnt out.

We'll chat with guest experts and industry friends to cover a variety of topics. Join us for business tips, painting tricks, pottery talk, and gabbing with our guests. Find us on Spotify, Audible, the Podbean app, Amazon Music and Apple Podcasts!

PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON: TIPS FOR A STRESS-FREE AND SUCCESSFUL STUDIO

Compiled from Questions Submitted by Jessie Sterling, Paint the Towne, Wichita, Kansas

The holiday season can be the busiest and most exciting time of the year in your studio. With a little extra planning, you can keep things running smoothly, your staff energized, and your customers happy. Here are some key questions to consider as you prepare.

1. How do you decide how many staff you need working the floor for walk-ins?

- Look back at last year's numbers—what were your busiest days and hours?
- Build your floor schedule around historical trends, but also factor in school breaks, local events, and weather.
- Aim for a ratio of staff to tables/customers that ensures guests are greeted quickly and supported throughout their visit.
- Always plan for an extra "floater" or backup person during peak times.

2. What's the best way to handle employee scheduling and last-minute changes?

- Post schedules early and use digital scheduling tools so staff can trade shifts when needed.
- Have a clear policy for requesting time off and swapping shifts.
- Create a "holiday standby list" of team members willing to cover last-minute changes.
- Communicate expectations in advance so everyone knows flexibility is part of the season.

3. How do you manage drying, glazing, and firing timelines so customers aren't disappointed?

- Set clear expectations at checkout—give realistic pickup dates and post them in your studio.
- Plan for extra kiln loads and create a firing schedule that maximizes capacity.
- Encourage early painting for holiday gifts with "beat the rush" campaigns.
- Use reminders (email, text, signage) to keep customers informed about deadlines for guaranteed holiday pickup.

4. How much stock do you need for glazes, brushes, bisque/canvases, and seasonal items?

- Review last year's inventory reports to forecast demand.
- Over-order seasonal favorites (ornaments, mugs, plates) since they sell quickly.
- Stock up on essentials like brushes, sponges, and paints to avoid running out midseason.
- Consider smaller, quick-turn projects for customers who need same-day gifts.

5. How do you keep your team motivated and happy?

- Celebrate small wins—recognize effort during busy shifts.
- Provide snacks, coffee, and little surprises to keep energy up.
- Encourage team bonding with a holiday outing or after-hours creative session.
- Remind staff of the impact they're making—helping families create memories and handmade gifts.

6. How far in advance should I plan my seasonal/holiday calendar?

- Ideally, start planning in late summer or early fall.
- Have your calendar of workshops, special events, and deadlines finalized at least 8 weeks before the season kicks in.
- Promote early and often—customers plan their holiday activities well in advance.
- Leave room for last-minute additions, but set your core schedule early to avoid stress.



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Tree Plate
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Securing the Spark

CREATING A CONTINUITY PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR STUDIO'S LEGACY, PART 4

By Susan Bucci, Painted Peacock, Greenville, North Carolina

You made it. This is the final edition of our Securing the Spark series. If you've stuck with me through the last three rounds, you've tackled mission statements, business plans, finances, property, insurance, vendors, utilities, programs, payroll, and even llama-parade-level surprises. That's a whole lot of powerhouse planning. So go ahead, take a bow, or at least reward yourself with your favorite latte. You've earned it.

This time, we're wrapping it all up with three final pieces: Owner Information, Security Best Practices, and the Big Finish (aka putting it all together). Let's go out strong!

OWNER INFORMATION

This section is about YOU—the person who built the dream. It's not the easiest thing to document (because no one likes to think about what happens if they aren't there), but it's essential. Your successors and loved ones will thank you. Here's what to include:

- Your full legal name and contact info
- Emergency contacts (family, spouse, trusted advisor)
- Attorney and accountant contact details
- Will, trust, or estate plan info (if applicable)
- Any succession instructions you want honored (like whether your kiddo is one day set to inherit the reins!)
- Passwords and logins to key systems (kept securely, of course)

Think of this section as your "in case of emergency, break glass". It should allow someone to step in and know exactly how to move forward with clarity.

SECURITY BEST PRACTICES

Your continuity plan is only as strong as the way you protect it. Don't let all your hard work fall into the wrong hands because of sloppy storage. A few golden rules:

- Digital security: Store your plan in password-protected, encrypted files (cloud storage or tools like LastPass work beautifully). Update passwords regularly.
- Physical security: Keep a hard copy in a fireproof, waterproof safe. Bonus points if you keep one copy at your studio and another offsite.
- Access control: Only share with your most trusted circle (successor, attorney, accountant). This is not info you want floating around the PTA meeting.
- Update schedule: Put it on your calendar to review and update your continuity plan at least once a year. (I like to tackle mine every January while enjoying a mimosa...it's tradition now!)

THE BIG FINISH Now comes the satisfying part: putting it all together. You've gathered the puzzle pieces; now assemble them

into one complete, organized, professional document:

- Pick your format: a binder, a password-protected PDF, or a specialized software system. Don't overthink this—go with a format that's easy for you to get it DONE!
- Create a clear table of contents (you already have the outline we've been working through).
- Store digital links where possible (banking sites, payroll software, vendor portals) to make life easy for anyone stepping in.
- Label sections clearly. Future-you and future leaders will be grateful.

When you're done, you will officially have a continuity plan that not only protects your legacy but gives you peace of mind. Want to take a full month off for that dream vacation? You can. Want to face the future knowing your business and your people are secure? Done.

FINAL REFLECTION

Over the past year, we've taken this journey together, step by step, and checklist by checklist. From your mission statement to your marketing, from payroll to property, from insurance to intellectual property, you've gathered the blueprint for protecting your business.

And here's the real truth: This wasn't just about forms, logins, or vendor lists. This was about you, the powerhouse who had the courage to build something from nothing. The dreamer who turned a paint-splattered idea into a thriving community hub. The leader who gives people a place to connect, create, and feel seen.

A continuity plan is more than a safety net. It's a love letter to your family, your staff, your customers, and yourself that says, "I've worked too hard to let this spark burn out. This matters. And it's going to shine long after me."

So yes, pat yourself on the back, do a little dance in your studio, and maybe pour yourself something bubbly. You've done the hard work most people put off forever. You've secured your spark. Now go enjoy the fruits of it, whether that's a quiet day off, a big adventure, or just the peace of knowing you've left a legacy, not a dumpster fire.

Here's to you. Keep shining. Keep building. And keep sparking joy in your corner of the world!



CREATING POWERFUL MOMENTS IN YOUR STUDIO

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

Reading *The Power of Moments* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath reminded me that people don't remember days—they remember the moments that linger long after the pottery has been fired. This inspired me to think about creating special moments in our studios.

We all know that customer service goes far beyond friendly smiles and clean tables. It's about crafting experiences so people say, "I can't wait to come back." But powerful moments don't require big budgets or complicated systems. With a little intentionality, creativity, and encouragement, you can empower your staff to turn everyday visits into lasting memories.

Here are some practical ways to empower your staff to create experiences that double as powerful marketing.

Train Staff to Look for "Magic Moments" Each guest interaction is an opportunity to create a highlight. Did a child just finish their very first pottery piece? Snap a quick photo and ask if you can text or email it to the parent. Did someone bring in a friend for the first time? Celebrate with a little shoutout in the studio: "We love meeting new painters—thanks for bringing a friend!"

Try a weekly team challenge. Staff all share a moment they created for a guest. The team votes on *the best Most Magical Moment* and the winner gets a small prize (like choosing the next playlist or a \$5 coffee gift card). When staff creates magic, guests naturally share those stories—with their families, on social media, and in reviews. That's customer service that markets itself.

Celebrate Milestones, Big and Small Every guest is on a journey, and *milestones are worth marking*: a child's first time painting or throwing on the wheel, a group celebrating a birthday or girls' night, a parent who finally sat down to paint after weeks of helping their kids. The recognition doesn't have to be elaborate. A cheer, a handwritten "First Timer!" note slipped into their bag, or even letting them ring a little bell at checkout can elevate the moment. When a customer feels celebrated, they're more likely to share the experience with others—a perfect example of service doubling as marketing.

Personalize the Experience People love feeling seen. Challenge your team to learn and use at least one personal detail about each guest. It could be as simple as remembering a child's favorite color or asking about the occasion for their visit. Next time that guest walks in, imagine the impact when your staff says, "Hey, Emma, we've got a new purple glaze you'll love!"

Make it fun with a *Memory Match Challenge*. Staff earn points for remembering and using guest details. Whoever racks up the most points gets recognition on a "Customer Hero" board or a special shoutout on social media. That motivates staff and also markets your culture of care to your wider community.

Create Small Surprises Simple bursts of delight can amplify your brand without costing you a dime:

- Offer a free "tiny topper" for a child's pottery piece.
- Guests spin a wheel at checkout for a perk like "Pick tomorrow's Instagram post" or "Free studio fee next time."
- Hide "golden brushes" around the studio. Whoever finds one gets a small reward.

Empower Staff with Autonomy Give your team permission to go the extra mile without always asking for approval. Guidelines help: "If it costs less than \$2 and makes a guest smile, go for it." If a customer has a broken piece, you can comp one replacement a month without manager approval."

When staff have freedom, they're more likely to seize opportunities to create memorable experiences, which often translate into positive reviews and repeat visits—organic marketing in action.

Bring Holiday Guests Back in the New Year The holiday season brings once-a-year painters. These visits are wonderful opportunities to plant seeds for loyalty and they're grassroots marketing campaigns that keep your studio top of mind long after the holiday rush. Encourage your staff to build on the moment:

- Invite them back: Hand guests a postcard with a winter special or class calendar. "We'd love to see you again after the holidays—here's a peek at what's coming up."
- Personal follow-ups: Send a "Thanks for making memories with us this holiday" note, paired with a New Year coupon.
- Commemorative traditions: Suggest starting an annual project, like painting a plate with handprints each year or adding a holiday figurine to their collection.

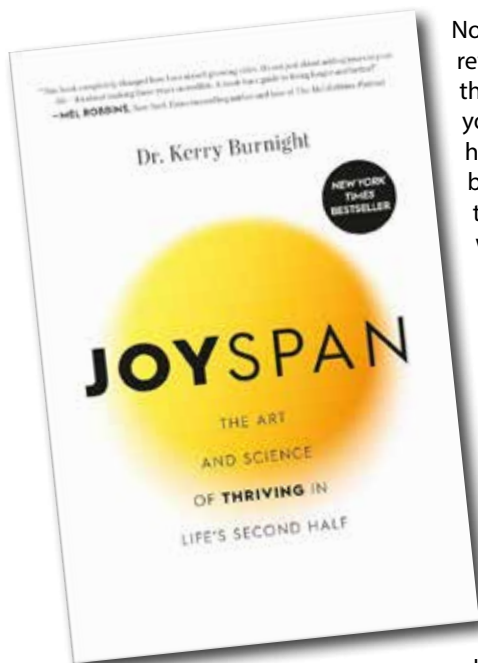
Celebrate Your Team, Too Powerful moments apply to your staff as well. Recognize their efforts in front of their peers. Celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with the same enthusiasm you show for guests. A motivated, joyful team naturally delivers better service, and that service becomes the foundation of your best marketing.

The Ripple Effect of Moments Creating powerful moments elevates customer service and fuels your marketing. Guests who feel special return again and again, bring friends, post about your studio, and become your biggest advocates. As owners, our role is to set the stage and give our staff the tools and encouragement to make those moments happen. The beauty is these moments don't require a large budget—just intention, creativity, and heart.

In the end, it's not just about painting pottery or making something. It's about creating memories. And memories are built on moments—moments that serve your customers and market your studio all at once.

JOYSPAN: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THRIVING IN LIFE'S SECOND HALF BY DR. KERRY BURNIGHT

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



Normally, this space is for reviewing books that have the primary goal to help your business. This time, however, I'm reviewing a book that I wish I could gift to every person I know. I would like to walk around handing out this book out: "Here! Read this! It will change how you look at the rest of your life!" And if a book makes your entire life better, it will also make your business better.

Joyspan is a guide to approaching the "second half" of your life with happy anticipation, not

dread. The author coined the term "Joyspan" because she knows that a happy life isn't only about length or health, but the quality of life you are living.

Burnight is a gerontologist who taught geriatric medicine for 18 years at the University of California, Irvine, but she also had a front-row view to living well and fulfilled by watching her mother, Betty. Betty is 95 and the stories Burnight tells about her will make you want to be her best friend. If you ever run across Burnight on social media or her website, TheGerontologist.com, you'll want to be her best friend, too. Living with a goal of *Joyspan* is working for them.

It's not just stories, though. The approach is a combination of mindset and practical tools, including a *Joyspan* Inventory. Before you begin, you answer questions about how you Grow, Connect, Adapt, and Give. After getting your baseline score, you examine each aspect of the *Joyspan* Matrix and how you can improve it.

The definition of "joy" in this book is simple: "the experience of contentment, gratitude and meaning, regardless of our external circumstance." For too many people, finding joy is elusive, but not because it has to be. Again and again, Burnight shows ways that people can find the joy they seek.

Burnight is no Pollyanna, however. She addresses the real-world challenges people face as they age, including isolation, caregiving, loss, health issues, financial issues, and more. But she

also provides practical exercises and strategies for cultivating internal strength as well as external health.

Burnight wants to change how we look at aging. Growing older isn't something to fear, but to embrace. Anti-aging narratives are reframed to be more about living more hopeful and intentionally. Living longer isn't as important as living well.

Our studios are such a place for joy in people's lives, and they should be in ours as well. But we need to nurture ourselves to find the *Joyspan* of our life. I think you will enjoy this book as much as I have.

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CLOSING THE BOOKS, OPENING GRATITUDE

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

How Studios Can Approach Year-End Bonuses As the holiday rush winds down and the kilns finally get a breather, many studios turn their attention from bisque and brushes to balance sheets and budgets. The end of the year isn't just about reviewing numbers; it's also about recognizing the team that made those numbers possible. A well-structured bonus system can serve as both a heartfelt thank-you and a motivator, aligning rewards with the studio's financial health.

Reviewing The Reports Strong year-end bonus programs begin with accurate financial data. Studio owners often start by pulling key reports:

- **Net sales** compared to the prior year
- **Gross profit** and margin trends
- **Labor costs** as a percentage of sales
- **Tip growth and guest satisfaction measures**

These metrics not only show overall business health but also spotlight areas where staff contributions had the greatest impact. For example, if net sales are up 10% and tips are up 5%, those gains can help guide bonus calculations. Net sales reflect business expansion, while tip growth signals guest service success. Together, they tell a fuller story of team performance.

Translating Growth into Bonuses Studios can use several models to convert performance into meaningful rewards:

- **Guest service bonuses** Some studios tie bonuses to tip growth, using either a studio-wide increase or individual performance. For instance, if tips grew 5%, that percentage might be applied to each team member's gross pay as a bonus. This method directly connects service quality with financial reward.
- **Profit-sharing contributions** Net sales growth can fund longer-term rewards such as 401(k) or SIMPLE IRA contributions, or an extra cash bonus. For example, a 10% sales increase could translate into a 1% profit-sharing contribution or a bonus equal to 3–5% of gross pay. This reinforces the idea that as the studio grows, everyone benefits.
- **Flat-rate cash bonuses** For studios still building consistent profitability, a flat-rate cash bonus based on net profit (or a set percentage of pay, such as 1–2%) may be the simplest option. This keeps the reward clear, easy to budget, and predictable for both owners and staff.

Grossing Up Bonuses for Taxes One optional practice to consider is "grossing up" bonus checks. Because bonuses are taxable, employees may feel disappointed when the amount they see promised is reduced by tax withholding. Grossing up ensures they receive the intended "net" bonus.

- Step 1: Decide the net bonus amount you want the employee to take home (e.g., \$500).

- Step 2: Estimate the combined withholding rate (federal, state, Social Security, Medicare). A conservative estimate is 20–30%.
- Step 3: Use this formula:

$$\text{Gross Bonus} = \frac{\text{Net Bonus}}{1 - \text{Tax Rate}}$$

$$\text{Net Bonus} = \text{Gross Bonus} \times (1 - \text{Tax Rate})$$
- Example: If you want an employee to receive \$500 and estimate a 25% withholding rate:

$$500 \div (1 - 0.25) = 667$$

$$667 \times (1 - 0.25) = 500$$

The studio pays \$667, the employee receives \$500, and \$167 covers taxes.

Studios often use this method for holiday or milestone bonuses where the intent is a gift rather than a performance-based payout. While it increases the employer's cost, it can go a long way in making staff feel appreciated.

Fairness and Consistency One of the best practices in bonus planning is ensuring fairness and sustainability:

- **Use percentages tied to gross pay:** This naturally accounts for role differences and prorates bonuses for those who joined mid-year.
- **Prorate blanket cash bonuses:** When issuing a set dollar amount to all staff, adjust for the percentage of the year worked to keep it equitable.
- **Differentiate by role:** It's reasonable for managers or long-term staff to earn larger bonuses tied to leadership or event performance, while part-time support staff receive smaller percentages. Transparency in how bonuses are calculated is critical for maintaining trust.

Beyond the Check Not all rewards need to be financial. Noncash recognition often strengthens culture and morale and leaves a longer-lasting impression than cash alone:

- **Holiday shopping spree:** Award \$1 for every hour worked during peak season, then enjoy a group shopping trip or studio outing.
- **Experience rewards:** Gift staff shared experiences like classes, concert tickets, or outings to build team connection.
- **Personalized gifts:** Thoughtful items, tailored to each employee's interests, show genuine appreciation.

Ending the Year on a High Note There's no one-size-fits-all formula for bonuses. But studios that review their reports carefully, align rewards with measurable growth, and apply consistent practices build stronger, more motivated teams. Whether through percentages, profit sharing, grossed-up bonuses, or creative extras, year-end rewards send the same message every employee deserves to hear: Thank you for making this year a success!

CUSTOMER SERVICE CORRAL RECAP: WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE ROLEPLAY RODEO

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

Y'all, we had ourselves a *time* in the Customer Service Corral at this year's convention. The star of the show? The Roleplay Rodeo—where customer service training got a cowboy hat and a spotlight.

HOW IT WENT DOWN

We split into posses, drew customer scenario cards, and jumped right into the kind of wild, unpredictable situations our staff face every day. Each group acted out their scene while the peanut gallery waved their bandanas to cheer, cringe, or call out what they'd do differently.

It was hilarious, a little awkward (in the best way), and surprisingly powerful. Because here's the truth: If we can't practice tough situations in a safe, playful way, how can we expect our staff to shine when the pressure's real?

WHAT WE TOOK HOME

The grand prize? A full deck of scenario cards—because the real reward is going home with new tools to train your team... and the friends we made along the way. More takeaways:

- **Practice makes brave.** The more we roleplay, the less scary it feels when things get messy in the studio.
- **Small tweaks change the whole vibe.** A pause to listen, a softer tone, or just choosing different words can turn frustration into connection.
- **Feedback is gold.** Watching the "audience" react in real

time gave us that customer's-eye view we don't always get in the moment.

Bottom line: roleplay isn't silly—it's strategic. And when you make it fun, your team will *actually* want to do it.

A FREE SCENARIO FOR YOUR STUDIO

Here's one you can try with your own posse back home. Your guest has completely covered their mug with globs of paint, stamps, and writing. They beam and ask, "It'll look just like this when it comes out, right?"

Your challenge: Keep their excitement alive *while* gently guiding them toward a result that won't turn into a kiln catastrophe.



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Table Sponges to reduce paper towel usage in your studio

Embroidered Aprons to show off your studio logo

Studio Stripes all sizes of masking tape for painting

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Colored Wire to add value to your customer's finished pieces

Glitter in colors and sizes not available in your town

Two Chicks project books for adult classes and licensed silk screens

SIX WAYS TO HANDLE ANY POT

By Maggie Fretz, The Ceramic Shop, Norristown, Pennsylvania

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a person interested in trying clay for the first time must be in want of a mug. Whether it's wheel thrown, coil, slab, or pinch pot, mugs are a great introduction to making pots. One thing that can take a mug from "You made that" to "You MADE that!?" is a good handle—arguably the most important part because it determines how functional and comfortable the mug really is. People generally have preferences, but no one way of making handles is better than another. Some tried-and-true approaches: using a handle maker, extruding, pulling, making a slab, coiling, and slip casting.

Handle makers are a simple low-tech method that takes up very little space. While they look like loop or trimming tools, the shape and size is designed to be optimal for handles. Simply pull the entire loop through a block of clay to cut out a handle shape. Some handle maker tools are for larger handles, and you can customize the thickness by inserting only part of the loop into the clay block. Remove any excess clay, clean up any seams, and voilà: a beautiful handle. It is generally recommended that you use a fresh section from a block of clay to get the cleanest handle with this method.

Extruded handles offer an easy consistency that can quickly elevate a mug with very little effort. Choose your handle die, load up the extruder barrel, and pull, then cut handles to length and let them firm up a bit before attaching. There are two types of extruders: wall mounted and handheld. Handheld extruders are much more cost effective, so you could even have a few in the studio. They also take up much less space with a 2" barrel diameter and generally a 9–15" barrel length. Larger extruders are generally thought of as wall mounted, but the Brent extruder can be mounted on their slab roller and the Steel Pottery extruder has an option for a stand, which means it doesn't need to be bolted to the wall and it can be mobile. These larger extruders often have a 4" round or square barrel diameter and can therefore hold much more clay. Not only does this allow for them to make more handle extrusions, but they can make wider extrusions in general. Both types of extruders are versatile tools that you can use for many projects with the wide variety of extruder dies available. For example, at The Ceramic Shop we make 16 different handle dies for handheld extruders.

Pulled handles are very common on handmade pottery



Bonus Video!

Check out Maggie's How To Make a Handle Video



and can often be identified by being thicker at one attachment point than the other. You hold a 2- to 4-pound clay loaf (tapered on the bottom) in your nondominant hand above a bucket of water. Using your dominant hand and a lot of water to reduce friction, pull that tapered end of the clay into a long flat rope. Repeat this motion with consistent pressure. Once the handle starts to get some length, begin shaping it by pulling it between your pointer and middle finger instead of with your fist. Rotate the clay 180 degrees regularly so that one side of the handle isn't thinner than the other. Use your thumb and pointer to compress the sides from time to time. With repeated movements this will become a handle. Once the handle is thin enough and long enough, use a needle tool to cut it off of the larger clay loaf. Lay pulled handles on a rolling pin or cardboard tube to dry them in a curve, or set them to dry in an arch on a flat surface. Pulled handles typically need a slightly longer drying time until they are ready to be attached due to all the water added while making them.

The following handle types are not demonstrated in the video, but are all great options.

Slab handles are cut from a rolled slab of clay. When making this type, it's important to create a slab thick enough. Be sure the attachment point is sturdy and that the handle itself isn't weak or uncomfortable. Use a damp sponge to round off all four corners to ensure a comfortable feel while holding the finished mug.

Coil handles are created from thick coils, often compressed or flattened for an oval shape. On canvas or a workboard, slowly roll fresh or well-wedged clay between your palm and the work surface. Once the coil is long enough, you can use both palms. For more consistent coils, focus on using your palms instead of

your fingers as fingers tend to make bumpy coils. Since the best surfaces for rolling coils are porous and you're rolling multiple times, coil rolling dries out the clay more than other methods, so keep a spray bottle nearby to lightly spray as you work. Roll a thicker coil and compress it using a ware board, piece of wood, or your fingers to create a flatter handle. Thinner coils can be combined to make twisted or braided handle. Note that the individual coils in those types may tend to crack, so take extra care so the coils remain smooth and intact. A damp paintbrush is great for this. If you are rolling a coil that keeps flattening, it means there's an air bubble, so it's best to scrap that piece and start over.

Slip-cast molds can be purchased or made. You'll generally want several handle molds since they'll need to dry between each use. Fill your molds, making sure to top them off for a solid cast. After the clay has set up, release the cast, trim off the excess, smooth out the seam, and then attach to the body of the mug. This option likely makes the most sense for studios that pour their own bisque. A variation of this is the press mold where wet clay coils (not slip) is put into the plaster mold. The two halves are compressed and then released. Remove the excess and smooth the seams. These can be used more than once before drying since they absorb less water from wet clay than slip. These molds would likely need to be made in house.

At the end of the day the very best way to make a handle is the way that works best for you! All these handle methods can be used for mugs, teapots, vases, or any object as long as the handle is securely attached to its pot.

Tune in next time read about the ins, outs, and troubleshooting for attaching clay!

Strategize for Success

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

By Madeline Riegel, Glazed Expressions, Des Moines, Iowa

In this final installment of our Branding Series, we explore the final touches that make a refreshed brand truly shine: your logo and color palette, marketing materials, and customer experience. These details might seem small compared to reworking a website or repainting your studio, but they are the threads that tie your entire brand identity together. When executed with intention, these elements strengthen your presence and make your business unmistakable to your customers.

UPDATING YOUR LOGO OR COLOR PALETTE

A business's logo is often the most recognizable part of its brand, which is why changes to it can stir strong feelings—as Cracker Barrel recently learned with their redesign. When you decide it's time to evolve your logo or colors, make sure to communicate the change to your customers. This transparency builds trust and even creates a sense of excitement and involvement in your brand's evolution.

Rather than starting from scratch, you may simply need a modern refresh. For example, if your brand uses teal, consider trying a brighter version for a more contemporary look. Updating your logo could involve refining fonts, simplifying icons, or adapting it to work better across digital and print formats. Think evolution, not revolution.

MARKETING MATERIALS

Your marketing materials are the physical (and digital) ambassadors of your brand. This includes business cards, event signage, coupons, flyers, labels, packaging, and even stickers. All of these items should reflect your updated brand identity. While customers may not consciously analyze the design of your event flyer or take-home bag, they subconsciously notice when things match. Cohesion across materials increases brand recognition and makes your business appear polished and intentional. This is especially true when your physical space and your online presence already reflect your new branding. Extending that same look and feel into marketing collateral creates a seamless brand journey.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Your brand is not just what people see—it's how they feel when they interact with your business. That's why customer experience is one of the most powerful yet often overlooked

branding tools. Take Chick-fil-A, for example. Their employees are trained to say, "My pleasure" instead of "You're welcome" in every customer interaction. It's a small phrase that has become part of their identity. You can do the same by creating brand-aligned language, gestures, or rituals that your team uses with guests.

What do you call your customers or staff? Do you have a special way to thank people for visiting? Do you have a fun way to invite them back again? Simple phrases like "See you next time, artist!" or "Thanks for making magic with us today!" create a memorable moment and reinforce your brand voice.

In your studio, even how you set a customer table can support

branding. Think about your palette cards or table tents—each can carry a touch of your visual style and brand personality. And don't forget the final impression: How do you deliver finished products to customers?

Custom bags, branded stickers to hold newsprint in place, or thoughtful bounce-back offers show that you care about presentation and want to see them again. Imagine going into a luxury store and making a purchase but then the employee puts your purchase in a plastic T-shirt bag. It may make you feel differently. Your customer has chosen to create masterpieces and memories with your studio! How we send these masterpieces out is a way for us to make them even more special. These details add value and contribute to a branded experience from start to finish.



BRANDING IS ONGOING

Branding is not a one-and-done project. It evolves as your business grows, your audience changes, and trends shift. The best brands stay connected to their identity while allowing room for refinement and innovation.

Throughout this series, we've explored many areas of your brand: identifying when it's time to refresh, auditing your online presence, revamping your physical space, and now, refining your materials and customer experience. Together, these updates create a clear, cohesive brand that your customers can recognize, trust, and love.

Hopefully, this series has inspired you to look at your brand with fresh eyes. Whether you're planning a full rebrand or just taking small steps to polish what already works, remember: Every detail contributes to the story you're telling.

TAX-FREE TIPS: WHAT THE NEW LAW MEANS FOR YOUR STUDIO

By Donna Bordeaux, PYOP Accounting

There's a brand-new tax rule coming in 2025 that could affect how you handle tips at your studio—and you need to be ready. Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), tips up to \$25,000 per year will be completely tax-free for workers in certain occupations. This applies to tips paid in cash, on credit cards, or through Venmo or other apps—basically any payment method—as long as the tip is voluntary and not part of a required service fee. For employees, that's a game-changer. But the big question for studio owners is this: Do your staff qualify?

WHO QUALIFIES UNDER THE NEW LAW?

The IRS released a preliminary list of jobs eligible for this tax-free treatment. Unfortunately, studio employees aren't specifically listed (yet). But that doesn't mean you're out of luck. Two categories in the legislation could very well apply to studio workers:

1. Recreation and Instruction: This includes self-enrichment teachers, sports instructors, and recreation workers. If your employees guide painting techniques, host birthday parties, or lead events, their roles may fall close enough to qualify.
2. Personal Services: This covers event support roles like photographers and party planners. Many studios host private events and celebrations, where staff provide hands-on assistance. Again, there's a solid argument that these activities fit the intent of this category.

One important caveat: To qualify, employees must have been customarily tipped before December 31, 2024. If tipping is rare at your studio today, you may want to encourage it now to establish a clear history.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR STUDIO OWNERS

Here's where things get tricky. While employees won't owe income tax on qualifying tips, that doesn't mean tips are completely tax-free. As the employer, you're still responsible for collecting and paying payroll taxes on every dollar reported. That includes Social Security, Medicare, and FUTA. And here's what's likely to happen:

- Employees, knowing their tips won't be taxed, will be far more likely to report every dollar.
- Instead of seeing \$20 in tips show up on payroll each week, you may suddenly see \$200 or more.
- Your payroll tax bill will increase accordingly.

This shift will surprise many business owners who assume "tax-free tips" means no employer cost. The reality is different—you'll need to budget for higher payroll taxes beginning in 2025.

THE UPSIDE FOR EMPLOYEES (AND YOU)

While higher payroll taxes may sting, there's another side to this. Employees will be reporting more income, but without giving up a portion to federal income taxes. That means:

- More take-home pay for your staff
- Stronger financial profiles when applying for mortgages, car loans, or rentals
- A greater sense of financial security

When employees feel financially stable, they're less likely to jump ship for another job that pays 50 cents more per hour. In other words, this law could become a powerful retention tool for studio owners who rely on reliable, trained staff to keep events and classes running smoothly.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

Here are a few proactive steps every PYOP studio owner should consider:

- Budget for higher payroll taxes. Run the numbers now. If tip reporting increases five- or tenfold, what will that do to your payroll costs? Build that into your 2025 projections.
- Educate your team. Make sure employees understand the new law. The more they know about how tax-free tips work, the more motivated they'll be to report accurately.
- Encourage tipping. If your studio doesn't already highlight tipping, now's the time. Add options to your point-of-sale system, display QR codes, or make Venmo/PayPal tipping easy. Here's why: The new law only applies to jobs where employees were customarily tipped before December 31, 2024. That means if the IRS ever questions whether your staff qualify, you'll need to show that tipping was already part of your business practice before the law took effect. By documenting that tipping was in place in 2024, you create a clear paper trail that protects your employees' eligibility in 2025 and beyond.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The new OBBBA tip law is a bold step in reshaping how service-based industries handle tips. For PYOP studios, it presents both challenges and opportunities:

- Yes, payroll taxes will rise.
- But employee satisfaction, retention, and transparency may increase in ways that make your business stronger long term.

Studios that prepare now—by budgeting, educating staff, and documenting tipping practices—will be in the best position to benefit.

At PYOPAccounting.com, we know that studio owners wear many hats, and tax law changes can feel overwhelming. That's why we're here: to break down what matters, show you the impact, and help you stay ahead of the curve. This law is still evolving, and we'll continue to monitor every update as it is released by the Treasury. Make sure you're subscribed to our newsletter and YouTube channel so you don't miss a beat—we'll keep you in the loop with plain-English guidance designed specifically for PYOP studios.



Clay Reindeer Luminary

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

To create a whole family of reindeer, cut the paper towel tubes into various heights. The cardboard tubes will absorb the moisture from the clay and you can gently pull them out during the drying process. They will also burn away in the kiln firing.

SUPPLIES

- White clay of choice
- Antler template
- Slab mat
- Paper towel tubes, cut to desired heights
- Needle tool
- Round sponge
- Drinking straw
- Clay tile

DIRECTIONS

1. Roll a rectangular slab of clay, $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick and 4" high. Smooth the edges.
2. Roll the slab around a cardboard tube, then angle cut the edges where the clay meets. Scratch and attach the clay into a tube and gently smooth the seam.
3. Poke holes for eyes with the straw.
4. Place the antler template on the remaining slabbed clay and use a needle tool to cut out the antlers. Scratch and attach them to the top of the tube.
5. Using leftover clay, cut out a large oval for the nose. Scratch and attach the nose to the base.
6. Move reindeer to clay tile and allow to dry slowly.
7. Glaze and fire to Cone 06 for low-fire clay or Cone 6 for mid-fire.





MUST HAVE MARKDOWNS



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Safe Drip Stoneware Mug

By Chesapeake Ceramics

SUPPLIES

- Stoneware mug (shown on CXS127)
- Fan brush
- Script liner

GLAZE COLORS

- Moody Blue (SC012)
- Cordovan (SW128)
- Black Matte (SW140), Jasper (SW222)

DIRECTIONS

1. Sponge off the piece with a dry sponge to remove any dust.
2. Paint 2 coats of vertical lines with Moody Blue. Do not go below the texture line.
3. Add 2 additional coats of vertical lines with Cordovan, but try to avoid covering up the Moody Blue. Do not go below the texture line.
4. Paint 3 coats of Black Matte on the bottom third of the piece.
5. Paint 1–2 coats of Jasper on the top two-thirds.
6. Paint the inside of the mug and the outside rim with 2 coats of Jasper. Let dry.
7. Fire to CONE 6.



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SCAN ME



This project can be found in the **2024 CCSA Story Time Project Guide.**



Little Owl's Love

CCSA's [2024 Story Time Guide](#), page 15

SUPPLIES

- Bisque: Plate
- Pattern
- Tissue paper
- Pencil Marker
- Round brush
- Liner brush

GLAZE COLORS

- Light Blue
- Light Brown
- Medium Brown
- Orange
- some favorite colors
- Black

DIRECTIONS

1. Place tissue paper over the pattern and trace the design. Position the tissue tracing on the bisque and retrace the design with a marker. (The marker will bleed through the tissue, transferring the design.)
2. Swirl 1 coat of Light Blue over the background.
3. Paint the owl's head with 2 coats of Light Brown. With the liner brush, paint radiating Light Brown lines in the eyes.

4. Paint the eyebrows with 2 coats of Medium Brown.

5. Paint the beak with 2 coats of Orange.

6. Dip the child's finger into a favorite color and press it into the body of the owl. Repeat with all your favorite colors until the body is covered with colorful "feathers".

7. Using the liner brush with Black, outline the owl's face and body. Add U shapes to the body to accentuate the feathers. Fill in the pupils with 2 coats of Black. Let dry

8. Glaze and fire to cone 06



Trend Flash

COLOR AND MOTIF TRENDS FOR 2026

By Crista Toler, Mayco, Studio Market Specialist





SUPPLIES & MATERIALS LIST

MATERIALS

Brushes & Tools



Large Flat (#16 Bright)



Small Flat (#10 Bright)



Small Round (# 6 Round)

Paper Towel

Chalk



Winter Solstice

Canvas Size

16 x 20 Canvas

11 x 14 Canvas

Colors

Black
White
Burnt Umber

Dioxazine Purple
Chrome Yellow
Burnt Sienna
Cobalt Blue

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Step 1 - Underpainting and Outline

Brushes & Tools:

16 Bright

Steps:

16 Bright or Larger Bright - Dampen brush and use burnt umber to cover the entire canvas. Chalk in the outline using the stencil or freehand.



Step 2 - Sky

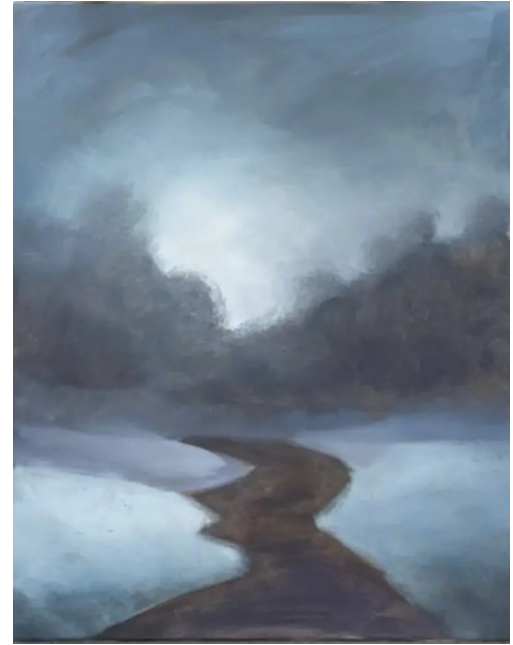
Brushes & Tools:

16 Bright, Paper Towel

Steps:

16 Bright - Mix cobalt blue with white, brown and a tiny bit of black. Paint the top third of the canvas, then use straight white where the sun will be and blend lightly into the sky.

Paper Towel - Take a piece of paper towel and scrunch. Scrub the paint around, blend to blur and tap to add texture. Turn the paper towel around and swirl around in the white, blending and tapping.



Step 3 - Snow, Distant Trees and River

Brushes & Tools:

16 Bright

Steps:

16B - Darken the sky mixture with blue, brown and a bit of black and begin painting on the bottom outer corners on either side of the river. Use white above and blend upwards, softening the edges. Use the paper towel to tap and blend to soften. Add a bit of dioxazine purple into the mixture and paint the bottom of the distant trees on either side. Add brown to the mix and paint the top of the trees, mixing a bit of white to paint the tops. Use the paper towel to swirl and blur. Blur up into the sky as well. Scrub back and forth underneath the tree line down to the snow. Swirl a bit of the darker color onto the bottom corners with the paper towel. Mix blue and purple with a bit of brown and black into the same mixture and fill in the river using horizontal strokes. Pinch the paper towel so the tip is a bit smaller and blur along the banks of the river and the river itself. Mix white with blue and a bit of the river color and swirl into the random background areas under the trees and above the river and up into the trees letting the paint wear off.



Step 4 - Sun, Glow and Highlights on River

Brushes & Tools:

10 Bright

Steps:

10 Bright and Paper Towel - Take a piece of paper towel, dip in water, squeeze out, fluff and scrunch then set aside. Using the brush, mix white with a bit of chrome yellow and a dot of brown. Use the paper towel to scrub an arc above where the sun will be. Use the paper towel to scrub and soften up into the sky, lightening the pressure on the sky and trees. Go below where the sun will be as well. Add a bit of this color randomly into the trees. Use a dot of burnt sienna and blur along the tops of the trees. With the brush, mix burnt sienna with yellow and a bit of white and paint below the sun onto the water, scribbling back and forth down the river. Use wider strokes at the bottom of the river. Mix white, a bit of yellow and burnt sienna to add bright sun highlights, using more burnt sienna towards the bottom. Wipe off brush and lightly scrub horizontally to soften. Use white to paint the sun and scrub in small circles around the outsides. Mix white with a bit of yellow and paint around the sun. Use the paper towel and scrub around to soften. Add touches of yellow and white directly under the sun onto the river. Add tiny slivers at the bottom of the river.



Step 5 - Trees

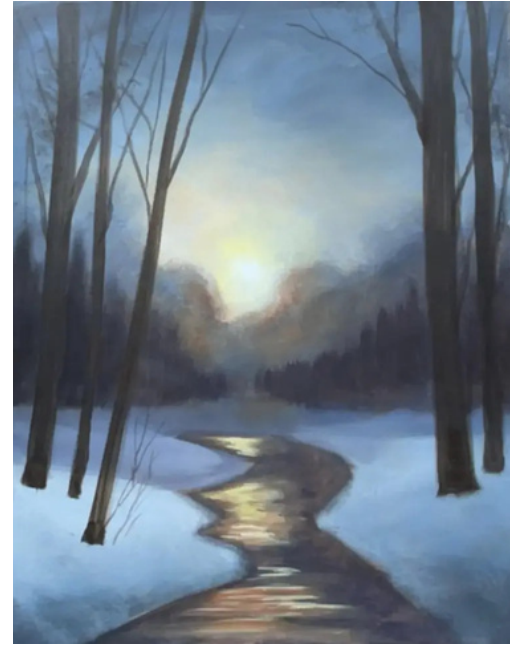
Brushes & Tools:

16 Bright, 6 Round

Steps:

16B - Mix brown with a bit of black and a bit of burnt sienna and paint the tree trunks on either side of the river. Mix purple and blue with a bit of white into a portion of the trunk color and scribble in the background pine trees on the right side. Use a dry paper towel to soften the edges. Paint larger, darker pine trees using the same steps.

6R - Thin black, brown and burnt sienna with water and paint thin branches onto the trees. It may help to turn the canvas upside down to do this. Paint a few random branches at the base of the trees if desired. Use a paper towel with a bit of the mixture and dab sparse leaves onto the trees. Swirl in a light shadow to the upper corners.



Step 6 - Snow and Highlights to Trees

Brushes & Tools:

10 Bright, 6 Round

Steps:

10B - Add extra white to the middle of the sun and yellow around the outside and soften. Add faint streaks of yellow and white onto the water. Add dashes of white onto the snow on the right and soften with a paper towel. Add dashes of white and yellow to the snow on the left and in between the trees and soften with paper towel. Add a bit of the yellow and white to the right side as well.

6R - Mix burnt sienna with white and yellow and paint highlight on the inside of the trees and branches with ragged, light strokes. Add additional small trees or bushes with watered down brown and black if desired. Use burnt sienna to dab leaves onto the tree and the snow. Add dabs of burnt sienna along the bottom of a few of the trees, adding clusters as desired. Thin a bit of black with water and add shadows to the back of the trees. Dab a bit of yellow with paper towel for brighter leaves in random areas.



Step 7 - Additional Snow and Distant Snowy Trees

Brushes & Tools:

10 Bright

Steps:

16B - Make a watery glaze with white and scrub onto the right side of the river bank and scrub to soften with a dry paper towel. Repeat for the left side. Build layers on both sides as desired. Mix white with blue and brown and dab onto the small trees and bushes that have leaves. Add snowy shrubs and branches as desired, building the layers. Mix brown with blue. Mix brown with blue to a portion of the mixture and tap a bit onto the distant pine trees and tap snow underneath. Paint distant, snowy pine trees in between the larger foreground trees with this darker mixture. Use the dry paper towel to blur. Add extra snow to the banks of the river as needed and smudge with paper towel. Use straight white and smudge, building the layers.



Step 8 - Snow on Foreground Trees

Brushes & Tools:

16 Bright, Liner

Steps:

16B - Use white to tap and drag snow onto the right sides of the tree trunks and larger branches.

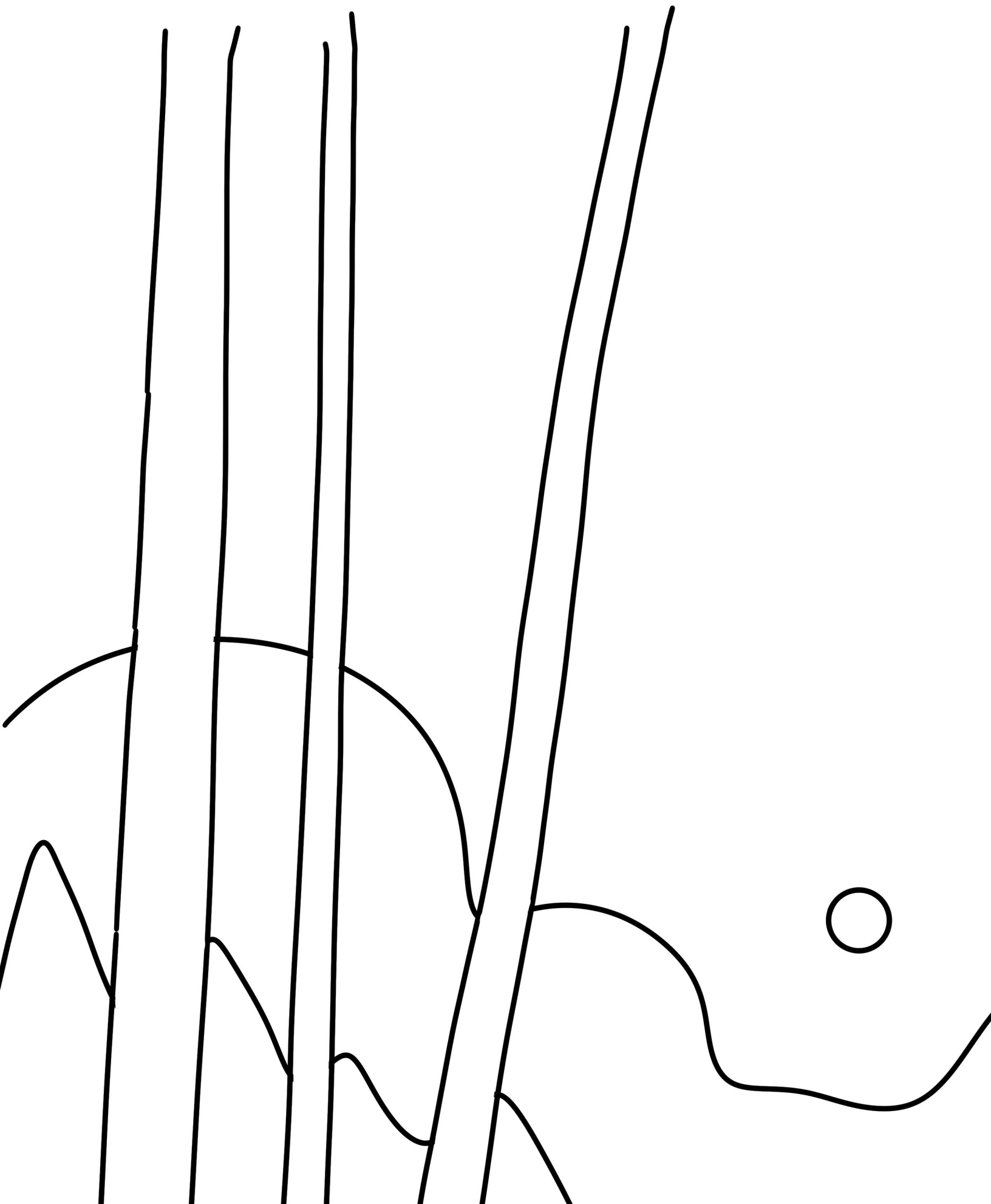
Liner - Thin black and brown with water to paint additional branches.

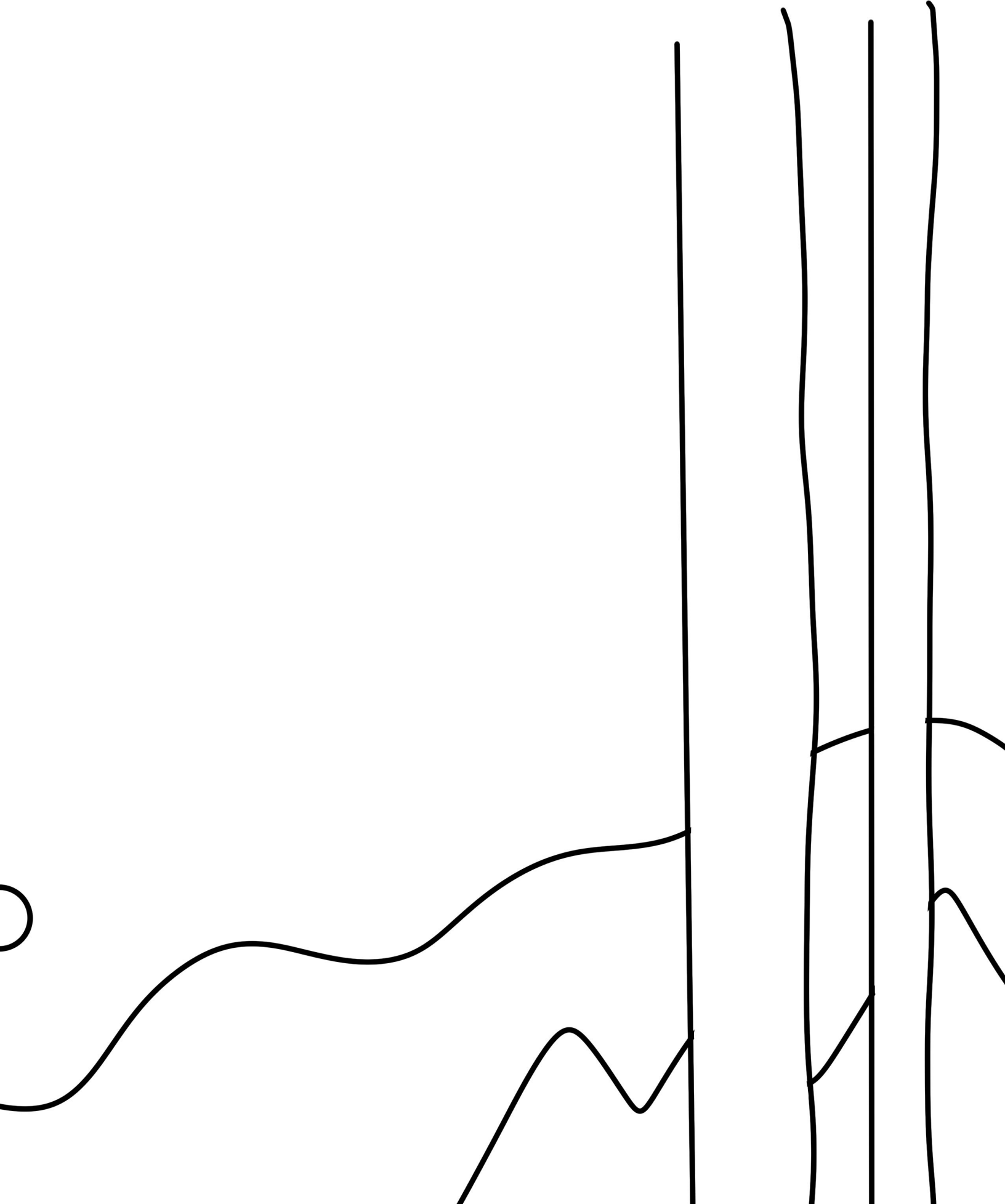
16B - Mix blue with brown, white and a tiny bit of purple. Take a dampened paper towel and lightly tap and dab textured snow onto the branches. Add this snow where desired. Add a bit more white to the mix and lighten some of the snow on the branches. Add a bit of white to the smaller trees and dab heavy textured snow onto the river bank snow and soften. Tap thicker white onto the tops of the trees.

Liner - Thin water with white and add light snow to the tops of each of the branches. Add additional white branches, varying the size and thickness, as well. Add extra coats of snow where desired. Make a very thin glaze with white. Hold brush horizontal to the canvas and tap to add snow wherever desired. Add snowy details on the river and brighten the sun, blurring the edges. Scrub in any additional snow as desired and soften with a dry paper towel.

















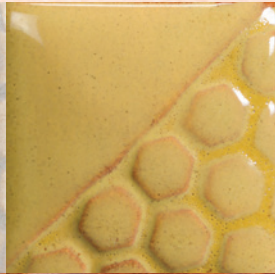
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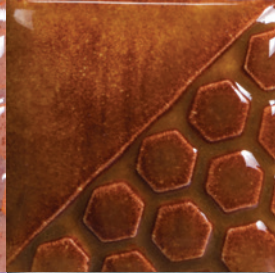
EL128
Wheat



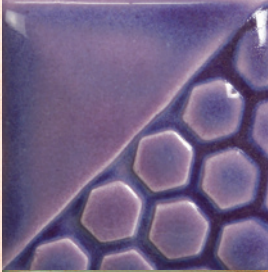
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Granite



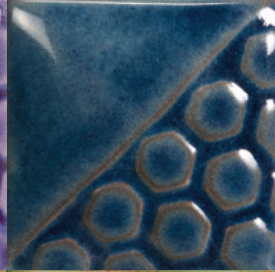
EL133
Autumn



EL149
Lavender
Flower



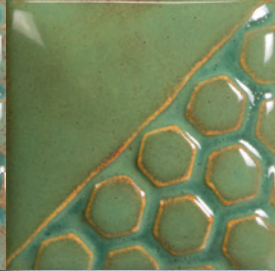
EL118
Blue
Grotto



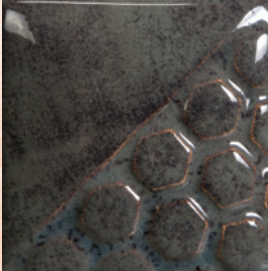
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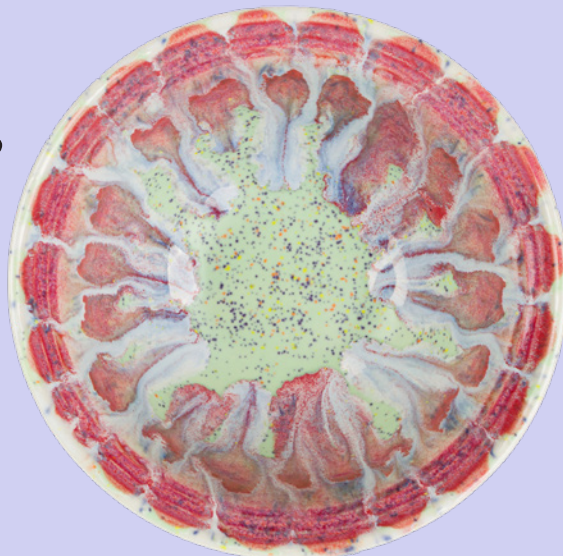
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