

WINTER *Blues*

by Chris Lively

Slip decoration has been a favorite surface decoration method for many years and, over time, gravity, began to play a large role in the way I would apply my slip. My slip technique mimics the valley and mountain landscape I find at home in southwestern Virginia. In every work, I see peaks and ridges of far off mountains cut by wide rivers. I see my glaze design as another element to my landscape story. The glaze runs and pools over the surface of my work mimicking the way water rushes over the rocks in the river.

I use a variety of slip consistencies for multiple effects; in combination with a wide range of tools, I'm able to achieve exciting slip designs. Each work is unique because working with slip always has an element of unpredictability. With slip, each work becomes unique because no two slip marks are the same. The more dramatic and unexpected a mark, the more I like the work. I find small variations and exciting textures highly desirable. Use of tools, slip consistency, and gravity all work together with lines and textures to produce a creative, fluid form.



Mixing Slip

Any slip can be used for this technique, but I find porcelain or white stoneware work best. This preference is attributed to the finer particles in these clays leaving a smooth, clean texture. I make slip from my trimmings to ensure I'm using the same clay body to reduce shrinkage issues. The trimmings are slaked down and mixed using a jiffy mixer. Once mixed, I check the slip for any lumps. If the slip is lumpy, I pour it through a 30 mesh sieve; this process will create a fine finish to your slip. I take care not to add too much water and keep it at a pudding-like consistency. I like my slip to be fluid enough to flow off my hand (A). Having different slip consistencies will yield different results. Thin slip leaves faint smooth lines, whereas thick slip leaves thicker marks and texture.

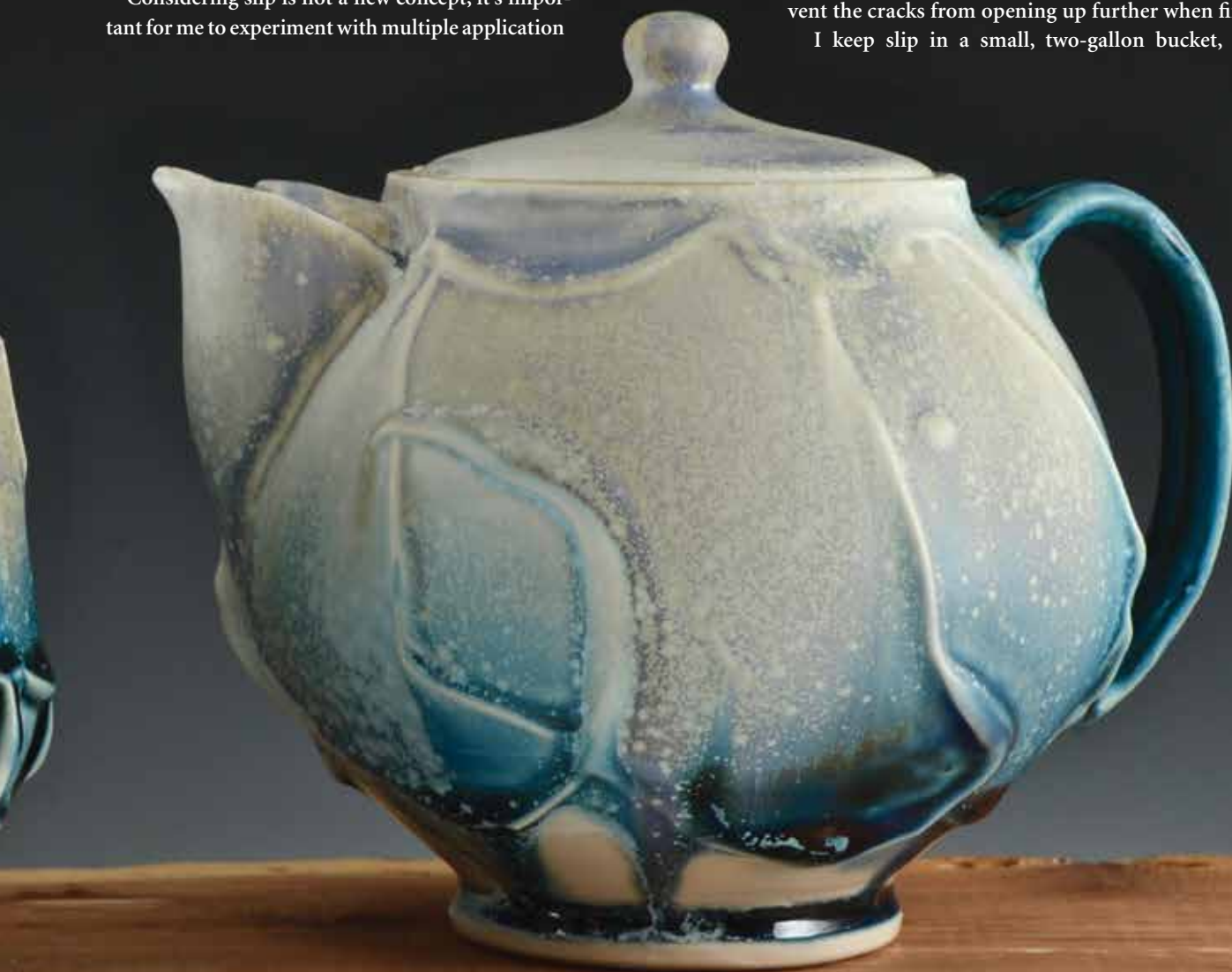
Considering slip is not a new concept, it's important for me to experiment with multiple application

techniques. It's not uncommon for me to shift or tilt my forms to achieve more exciting and dramatic slip designs. My favorite mode of application is applying slip to an inverted pot. Gravity pulls the slip down, creating ridge-like marks. I use a number of different methods and tools to create a variety of marks on each pot (B). I love the combination of textures and lines the tools form with one another.

First Slip Application Method

Slip can be applied to wet or to leather-hard clay. I prefer to apply slip at the leather-hard stage, because it allows me to trim the pot without disturbing the slip. I add slip directly after trimming; if the pot is too dry, the slip will crack. If cracks form around thick to thin areas, take a pencil or rubber clay shaper and compress the cracks. This method helps prevent the cracks from opening up further when fired.

I keep slip in a small, two-gallon bucket, which





Different slip consistencies yield different results: thinner leaves faint smooth lines, thicker leaves bold marks.



A variety of tools will create interesting marks, varying depths, and a variety of raised lines. From left to right: silicon basting brush, hard silicon contour rib, chip brush, soft red Mudtools rib, and an orange Kemper texture comb.

allows it to be easily stirred by hand. If you find your slip has thickened since you last used it, add a bit of water to get the right consistency and stir it again. Up-end the form and center it on the wheel before applying slip. My first method of application is to scoop the slip out with my hand and apply it to the spinning pot (1). Start at the top (which is actually the bottom) and cover the surface until about halfway down. Once slip is applied to the desired thickness (no more than $\frac{3}{8}$ inch), you can begin decorating. **Note:** From this point on, the wheel is stopped and only moved by hand.

Using a chip brush and starting on the pot just below the slip, swipe up while turning the wheel counter clockwise. Each swipe will cause the slip to drip (2). Continue this all the way around the pot (3). Clean off any slip that remains on the foot (4). Leave the pot to dry for about an hour, then flip it right-side up (5). Press down or wipe away any sharp drips that

are still malleable. Once the slip is dry enough, cover the pot loosely with plastic or a bucket.

Second Slip Application Method

The second slip application method is applied to a pot while it's right-side up. Adding the slip as before and using a similar brush, hold the brush horizontally as the wheel spins. Move the brush up and down, starting at the top and slowly descending to the bottom (6). This motion pushes the slip down, creating thin and thick horizontal lines (7).

Third Slip Application Method

The last method is, again, done with the work right-side up. This application uses a flexible rubber rib and thicker slip consistency. Swipe the rib up from the bottom to the top, repeating the strokes around the entire pot (8). The thicker slip creates a denser line which doesn't drip in comparison with the previous methods (9).



Scoop the slip and apply it to the spinning pot. Start at the top and cover halfway down the surface.



Use a chip brush and swipe up while turning the wheel counter clockwise. Each swipe will cause the slip to drip.



Continue swiping around the pot until you're satisfied with the thickness of the lines and the overall design.



4 Before turning the pot over or removing it from the wheel, clear the exterior foot ring of any dripped slip.



5 Allow the pot to dry for about an hour, or until the thicker slip lines stiffen up, then flip it right-side up.



6 Holding the brush horizontally at the top, spin the wheel while moving the brush up and down in a continuous stroke.



7 Pushing the slip up and down as the wheel turns creates exciting drips and movement on the surface.



8 Use a flexible Mudtools rubber rib to scrape the slip away. Swipe from bottom to top as you move around the form.

WATERCOLOR LAVENDER Cone 6–10 Oxidation

Lithium Carbonate	4.2 %
Strontium Carbonate	7.7
Whiting	16.4
Ferro Frit 3124	5.1
Custer Feldspar	49.2
Silica	17.4
	<hr/>
	100.0 %

Add:

Cobalt Carbonate	0.5 %
Manganese Dioxide	1.0 %
Bentonite	2.0 %



9 A thicker slip creates a dense mark or raised line. The thicker consistency also allows you to build up intriguing surface patterns because the slip can hold its form better.



10 I spray my pots with a matte, micro-crystalline glaze. Hold your spray gun 8–10 inches away from the pot, moving it in a circular motion as you turn the banding wheel.