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Simon Leach's Pottery Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide To Throwing Beautiful, Functional Pots



Synopsis

At one time or another, every potter gets frustrated at the wheel. Whether struggling to center the clay or attach a handle with precision, potters of all levels crave advice and answers, and world-renowned ceramicist and YouTube sensation Simon Leach has plenty to give. In Simon Leach's Pottery Handbook—a book-and-DVD package—he presents clear tutorials and loads of original instruction on all of the core techniques, from studio setup to basic throwing, to applying appendages, trimming, glazing, and firing. For each technique, detailed step-by-step photography captures the subtle, intricate movements that typically fly by too fast to be learned when watching a video lesson; callouts then lead readers to the relevant video on the DVD so they can see the technique demonstrated in real time—an ideal combination that makes learning from the master easy. Praise for Simon Leach's Pottery Handbook: "A definitive guide for every step of pottery making."—Publishers Weekly "Third-generation potter Leach, with technical and photographic assistance from Bruce Dehnert and Jared Flood, capitalizes on his celebrity with an amazingly detailed, step-by-step text for all major processes in ceramics. The in-depth perspective starts with his directions for making simple tools (a wire tool and a sponge stick) and is bolstered by charts and information-packed sidebars (e.g., for removing air bubbles and troubleshooting your first pull). Every topic that novices must master is covered, such as working basic shapes (cylinder and variations dishes) trimming, decorating and glazing, and firing."—Booklist "This book has some of the most gorgeous photography I've seen";—Susan B. Anderson blog "Among how-to books, this volume stands out. This gem is as carefully honed as the skills it seeks to share."—American Craft "For those of us who learn best with a combo of text and demonstrations, Simon Leach's new book is the perfect fit."—Ceramics Monthly

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Customer Reviews

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Simon Leach is an internationally celebrated third-generation ceramicist, descended from the renowned Leach family of Cornwall, England. He can be seen online, demystifying techniques at his pottery's wheel in his more than 800 YouTube videos (simonleachpottery.com). He also teaches hands-on workshops throughout the country. He lives in Williamsburg, Pennsylvania. Bruce Dehnert is the head of the ceramics program at Peters Valley Craft Center in New Jersey.

I am a self taught potter, and have done so mostly on my own by reading books and practicing. One thing I found frustrating when I was learning was that often times books would assume I knew things that I didn't. This book is very good at describing the basics of the craft, and covers more than most books do. It is very much how Simon does things, and doesn't try to present every way of doing things, so it is a good place to start and doesn't get overwhelming. The book excels at describing most of what one needs to do to make pottery as well as explaining many of aspects of the craft. For example, I appreciate the page describing basic glaze types (celadon, tenmoku, shino, etc.) because things like that are often left out, the books assuming the reader already knows such basics, (like how to make a plaster slab and why you need one). Simon does well not to make such assumptions. Most of the book is step by step projects, like how to throw a pitcher or how to throw a bowl, but there are many other sections covering things like decorating, tool making, glazing, and kilns and firing. Some things are only covered in a very brief overview, like glaze faults. It is less of a technical manual and more of a how-to handbook (focused on forming the pots primarily). The book is very visually designed, great for visual learners (as artists often are). Many books seem to forget

this fact, so I appreciate how visual this book is (it even has DVD videos). The spiral binding is also a very nice detail, something more books should do. Many of my other favorite pottery books are falling apart due to cheap bindings. My primary criticism would be that I would have liked a little more detail on the technical side of things throughout the book. I had hoped for more clay and glaze recipes, more tool construction like how to make a trimming tool or even a throwing stick. How to exactly do a reduction firing. More kiln types and techniques for firing them. A section on marketing would have been nice simply because the book covers so many other aspects of the craft often left out in beginner handbooks. I'd have liked to see more than one technique for several things mentioned, like forming handles or trimming. That said, no book can have it all and there are other books that cover these aspects in great detail. The videos accompanying the book are very helpful, though the resolution is a bit poor (it is good enough though). For the price of the book it is an excellent value, a bargain really. I've paid twice the price for books that were much less thorough. If you are a beginner or student, perhaps overwhelmed or confused by where to start or how to do certain things, this would be a very helpful addition to your library. For others who are more experienced the book can still offer new ways to do things or be used to help teach others. This book is thorough, well designed, well structured, and quite succinct. The merits far outweigh the flaws, and it would be a valuable addition to your pottery library. ~Trenton

It's one thing to be born to pottery but a natural-born teacher, too?! Anyone coming to this book having not first encountered Simon Leach through his videos, get thee to the Internet. This guy is a gift and such a charming and talented videographer of himself in flagrante. A labor of love, really to so painstakingly and thoroughly dispense the fine points of every grunt and lunge, every subtle apropos of the thumbs and hands and fingers, every aspect of kneading, wheel throwing, pot decorating, glazing and glaze making, and so much more even a bit of philosophy to boot. And if all that were not enough, how simply delightful a man is this. I'm convinced he could read the phone book and make it fun. (I wouldn't mind watching paint dry with him!) It's not just what he knows about pottery and how he knows it and how he talks about it and more importantly, shows it (up close! bringing the camera in tight on the wheel head!), the man himself is kind, funny, down to earth, humble, unpretentious, disciplined yet wild. And oh the book! The book is beautifully and abundantly photographed bearing the same riveting and effective blend of showing and telling that comes through in the videos. It's hard to better what is available on Simon's youtube site, but the book is a wonderful complement to the 900 plus videos. The spiral binding is great for using the

book in the studio and is a great resource for anyone trying to figure out the how and what of this very primal, this humble, this exhilarating stuff called clay.

Simon has done it again. I appreciate that this book is not "high brow" It is written for the regular person. Not to mention the spiral binding which allows the book to lay flat on the table. Simon and friends have done a wonderful job for the new as well as seasoned potter. You can't help but like the guy.

This book has 2 discs included with great videos. The photos in the book are excellent. They show what a vessel should look like and what you need to strive for. The descriptions are also wonderful. Simon Leach is an awesome teacher through his videos.

I just love Simon Leach. Hes a great teacher of his craft. There are two types of crafters, those who want to spread the wealth of knowledge about their art, and those who prefer to keep their secrets to their own toolboxes. Simon Leach cant share enough and he knows his stuff. Great book of knowledge for the beginner potter, some of its common knowledge for the professional potter but he is a great source of info. Great hardcover binder type book so easy to lie flat for reference and beautiful images.

First, it is spiral bound meaning that it lays flat on a table. This should be the format for all 'How To...' books! Thank you, Simon Leach! Next, it is laid out in an organized, beautiful design filled with very practical and easy to understand instruction, tips and facts every potter should know. The accompanying photos are all but self explanatory and a pleasure to look at. The book has more than a generous amount of photos of sample ware produced by the author which illustrate his instructions in the book and the included DVDs. I found the book rather humorous in places, possibly not where the author might expect, however. For instance, two-thirds of the page where he describes making an ash glaze is actually a description of how to build a fire to collect the ash. If you purchase the book and read that section, I hope you will understand. Simon Leach, as anyone who has watched his many YouTube videos can testify to, is a character that is at times funny, irreverent, and very talented. While his videos can end up going off in several directions, but this book is put together very well and moves from beginning tasks to finishing touches without deviation. My only desire for the book would have been to include more videos, but that would entail more expense, I suspect. Get the book, you won't regret it!

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