

Student Comments on this week's blog post:

1. Elizabeth Winkelhoff says:

April 1, 2015 at 12:03 am

Great post! I didn't even realize the parallels we made unintentionally to the original process.

Working with the linear haar wasn't as difficult as I thought it was going to be, but it took some serious adjusting and switching between different types of hairs to get the right feel for it. We also ended up using slip that had some sort of mold in it since it had a practically perfect consistency. It makes me wonder about the sorts of things that the ancient potters put into their slip and if there were similar things going on.

2. Anna Soifer says:

April 1, 2015 at 8:25 am

I was intrigued by Dr. Cianchetta's proposal of a multiple firing process for the vessels because, while similar to Dr. Walton's (to whom we spoke earlier in the semester) in that it calls for more than one firing, it differs in the sequence of painting and firing from the process he suggests (Walton, Marc, et al. "Material Evidence for Multiple Firings of Ancient Athenian Red-Figure Pottery," *Journal of the American Ceramic Society*, 96, 7, 2013:2031-2035.) When we asked her about this, Dr. Cianchetta responded that it is possible that there were different firing sequences used and that it may even be presumptuous to assume that we can make a single definitive statement about Greek firing processes. This is interesting to think about because it could mean that the difficulty generations of scholars have had characterizing the firing process may be because they have actually been looking at different firing processes and trying to combine all their characteristics into one.

3. Haley Huang says:

April 1, 2015 at 2:31 pm

Thanks for the post Gianna!

While my team was working on our cup, we realized that having a thicker slip really helped when it came to getting the slip to stick onto our brushes. (I had brought in some slip that had been mostly evaporated.) We used some brushes made of feather tips that I brought in from my personal experiments and quickly realized how difficult it was to draw a long, continuous line without showing an obvious beginning and end to each stroke when we had to redip our brushes. This thick slip and feather brushing seems to work well for our relief lines, but I believe we will have to approach contour and background lines in a very different way with different slip consistency and tools. I feel like it'll simply be a matter of practice, practice practice, although we don't have that much time left at all.

4. Hana Chop says:

April 1, 2015 at 4:33 pm

As we continue to hear from these various experts on firings and painting technique, it strikes me that we are trying to make broad generalizations about an art practiced over thousands of years and hundreds of miles! It is entirely plausible that different workshops employed different methods at different times to execute their final product. However, getting to hear from these different scientists is truly enlightening because, at this point, we have no idea if methods were standardized. Ultimately, we are developing our own methods based on the culmination of readings and practice! This is really exciting because it is the first time I have been exposed to such freedom in an academic setting.

My group (Savannah, Arthur, and I) is trying to quickly finish the painting in the limited amount of time we have left before firing. Unfortunately, we have not struck the right balance of slip viscosity and brush thinness to exactly apply the technique of linierhaar, but I am confident in our ability to produce a design that recalls the themes of the vessels we have looked at!

5. Ashley Fallon says:

April 1, 2015 at 7:21 pm

I agree with Elizabeth that the linearhaar wasn't as difficult to work with as I thought it would be, especially with a thicker slip, but it was extremely time consuming. It became easier as I got the hang of it, but it still seemed inefficient to lay each line down individually. Despite the fact that my group had three people working at once, we didn't finish all of the relief lines and they still weren't as thin as the ones I looked at later on the cups in the museum. With the precision and skill needed to apply such lines I can easily imagine up to four people painting the slip in separate stages, this would also ensure greater productivity.

6. Lauren Aldoroty says:

April 1, 2015 at 7:53 pm

The biggest difference between painting our cups last week and past experience we've had with using slip is that Professor Balachandran brought in slip with a creamy consistency (it also smelled like old parmesan cheese, so it was probably moldy), rather than a watery one. This changed everything! Brushes worked differently and it was easy to create a raised relief line. I think that the most important improvement with the creamy slip is that the linierhaar brushes became usable. They seem completely unable to retain watery slip. My group used linierhaar brushes on the meander pattern around the tondo, and a small paint brush on the outline of our figure. It was incredibly difficult to use the linierhaar brushes made with stiff horse hair on a long, curved line! The slip seemed reluctant to transfer from the brush to the pot when I tried using

the brush this way. The hairs (1-2 cm) may have been too short for producing long, curved lines. They were excellent at producing laid lines (we read about these in Artal-Isbrand, Paula and Philip Klausmeyer. "Evaluation of the relief line and the contour line on Greek red-figure vases," *Studies in conservation* 58, 4, 2013: 338-359), which made for a very clean meander pattern. I think that using a longer, more flexible hair in the linierhaar brush would produce controllable curved lines (with a bit of practice, of course).

7. Maddy Brancati says:

April 1, 2015 at 10:12 pm

Great post Gianna!

Over the past couple of weeks an issue that has been brought up repeatedly is how the ancient painters could see what they were painting on the pots, since the slip tends to quickly dry once applied and becomes hard to see. For this reason it was very interesting to note that, when my group applied the slip, we could see where the slip covered our charcoal sketch, thereby seeing what we've already painted. Assuming the charcoal will burn off in the kiln, this could be a valid solution to the visibility question.

8. Kelly McBride says:

April 1, 2015 at 10:16 pm

Great post! This class was really the time when our connection to the ancients was most poignant. As I applied the slip to the tondo of the cup, I really felt like I was stepping backwards in time and into a workshop of old. It made me feel like I was accomplishing what this course is about, understanding the Ancient Greek world in a real-life, personal way. With such a strong connection to the past, it put perspective on all of my other knowledge of the Greco-Roman period.

9. Arthur Zhang says:

April 1, 2015 at 11:39 pm

Great post! The painting was not as difficult as it seemed to be the first time I tried it probably because we are using a thicker slip that evaporates slower and thus allows us to see where it was painted on. My group has yet to paint the image in the bowl of the cup and I would expect that to be the most challenging part to come.

10. Dane Clark says:

April 1, 2015 at 11:48 pm

I totally agree with Ashley, the linierhaar worked far more with the thicker slip than I had originally anticipated. It worked really well with the lay-line method of laying the hair with the slip on the pot and then directly lifting it back up. But, like Maddy mentioned, slip tends to dry up very fast, even the significantly thicker version. The slip was definitely unforgiving when it came to mistakes,

and if you accidentally laid the linierhaar in the wrong place, the slip dried too fast for any real corrections to be made. This was definitely frustrating to say the very least. It will certainly be an interesting experience to see how cooperative the slip will be as we begin to work on the contour lines and the background.

11. Travis Schmauss says:

April 1, 2015 at 11:54 pm

Gianna, thank you for the post, and especially for the large image of me in profile. I wish I had taken a step back that day and observed the class as you did for this post. I want to point out here that we found success in using the tip of a small feather to paint relief lines, as hard as that is to imagine.

I liked learning about the new techniques we hadn't seen before from Dr. Cianchetta.

In the image I'm getting ready to create the outer band of the tondo. It was thrilling attempting to make a circle centered as perfectly as did the ancients. There isn't a whole lot of room for error, and all of the mistakes we've seen from the artifacts come to mind.

I think tomorrow will be just as much fun as last Thursday, with us doing the contour and background painting.