

# test-tile board

by Nicole Gugliotti

Having an organized studio and classroom can greatly improve productivity. Every studio could benefit from an easy-to-read test-tile board that functions well and clearly communicates the information needed.



1–2 The completed test-tile board at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington, has 144 test tiles and represents 3 clay bodies, 24 glazes, and 2 firing atmospheres. **1** Photo: Dan Meuse. **3** The labels on the test-tile board are laminated with packing tape and attached to the board with Blu-Tack and each tile is attached to the board with Velcro.

This fall, during my first quarter as a studio technician at South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) I created a fully comprehensive test-tile board for the glaze room. With extensive labor from our dedicated work-study employee, Mandy Hsieh, we created 144 tiles to represent results from 3 clay bodies and 24 glazes, all fired to cone 6 in both neutral/electric and gas reduction (1).

At SPSCC we are a foundation program, so many students often take only one or two clay classes and only have a chance to do 1–2 reduction firings per quarter. I prioritized the board communicating the most essential information as clearly and quickly as possible. To this end we created partially textured hexagonal cylindrical test tiles in each shop clay body (we stock a white stoneware and a warm brown stoneware from Clay Art Center in Tacoma, Washington, as well as offering shop-pugged reclaim), carefully coded them (for our own reference as we moved through the process) and dipped different two sets of the tiles into each glaze to be fired in neutral/electric and reduction/gas.

We wanted the boards to be easy to read and interpret as well as impart some basic vocabulary and glaze information. Showing all of the glazes in both atmospheres meant that some glazes (i.e. a carbon-trap shino)

didn't do much of anything in one of the atmospheres. Also, some glazes that we use mainly in oxidation bubbled and blistered in reduction. At the same time, some results were surprising. (The white shino is really interesting in the electric firing!) The side-by-side comparison allows students to make judgement and aesthetic calls about each glaze.

It also visually communicates the difference between electric and reduction. One of the most striking examples of that is the Panama Red glaze, which is a bright blue in electric firing and almost brick red in reduction. The partially textured, cylindrical shape of tiles allows students to see if the glaze will pool or break, if there is any difference in the glaze from the interior to the exterior, and allows them to judge the transparency and viscosity of each glaze before they make their choices.

Lastly, the labels are all laminated with packing tape and attached to the board with Blu-Tack and each test tile is attached to the board with Velcro, which allows students to remove it for closer inspection. That way, should the glaze room palette shift or a clay body be discontinued over the years, it's easy to alter the board without having to start from scratch.

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