

# Emily Reason: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CARVING



Tableware, large plate, 11 in. (28 cm)  
in diameter, porcelain, fired to cone 10 reduction.

Dinnerware is a challenge to make because it demands specific qualities. It must be consistent in design, size and shape if it's to be a set. I find that if I don't make all the plates or all the bowls for a set in one sitting, they'll vary from one series to the next. Dinnerware pieces should also nest and stack well, and be durable, yet lightweight. In addition to the challenges of making dinnerware, there's the logistical challenge of efficiently loading a kiln with mostly broad and flat wares. The variables in reduction firing present further challenges in attaining consistent glaze surface. I therefore try to fire entire sets at once. Dinnerware needs to fit in well with daily lifestyle, including the ability to go in the dishwasher.

**Right: Carved plate, 11 in. (28 cm) in diameter, porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction.**

**Below: Candlestick holders, 6 in. (15 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2010.**



### Know When to Say When

I'm currently obsessed with carving. Very few pieces I make aren't carved. Clay is truly the ideal material for creating texture; especially since clay objects are so often meant to be touched. Making functional ceramics with texture is therefore fitting for me. Creating beauty, while maintaining a standard of usefulness, is my major goal. It's important that my carved and slip trailed surfaces don't deter from the function of the piece. My dinnerware design has a scalloped service rim that is carved. The food surface itself has no texture and a glossy glaze for easy cleaning. It's easy to get carried away with making texture, so I try to leave quiet areas on each piece where there is none.

I use a homemade carving tool, which was modeled after a tool used to create carved patterns on Chinese Yaoware pottery (see page 49). The L-shaped blade, set in a bamboo handle, is used to create a pleated pattern of lines. For me, carving lines is a rhythmic motion that achieves even, consistent marks. The corner of the L, carves into the leather-hard clay, making the deepest part of the

recessed line. The tool is effective in achieving a line with depth, allowing the glaze to vary as it pools in the deepest part of the line.

### Marketing

The dinnerware I make is pretty labor intensive, so I have to price it accordingly. My customer demographic for it tends to be folks with disposable income. They also seem to be people with knowledge of and an appreciation for fine handmade craft. I'm still learning as I go about marketing strategies for selling my work. I know for certain that professional quality photographs are where good marketing begins.

*Emily Reason lives and works in Marshall, North Carolina. To see more of her work, visit [www.emilyreason.com](http://www.emilyreason.com) or <http://emilyreason.blogspot.com>. Her tableware was included in "Table Manners," on view at Lark & Key Gallery ([www.larkandkey.com](http://www.larkandkey.com)) in Charlotte, North Carolina.*

Carved serving bowls, to 14 in. (36 cm) in diameter, thrown and altered porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction.





Above: To make the scalloped rim on my dinnerware pieces, I first cut through the leather-hard rim with a fine-blade knife. I soften the cut edge by compressing a damp sponge between my fingers and repeatedly run it over the edge of the rim. The result is a refined edge that is still adequately thick for durability.

Below: My homemade carving tool was modeled after a tool used to create carved patterns on Chinese Yaoware pottery. The L-shaped blade, set in a bamboo handle, is used to create a pleated pattern of lines that will catch pooling glaze.

