

tools of the trade

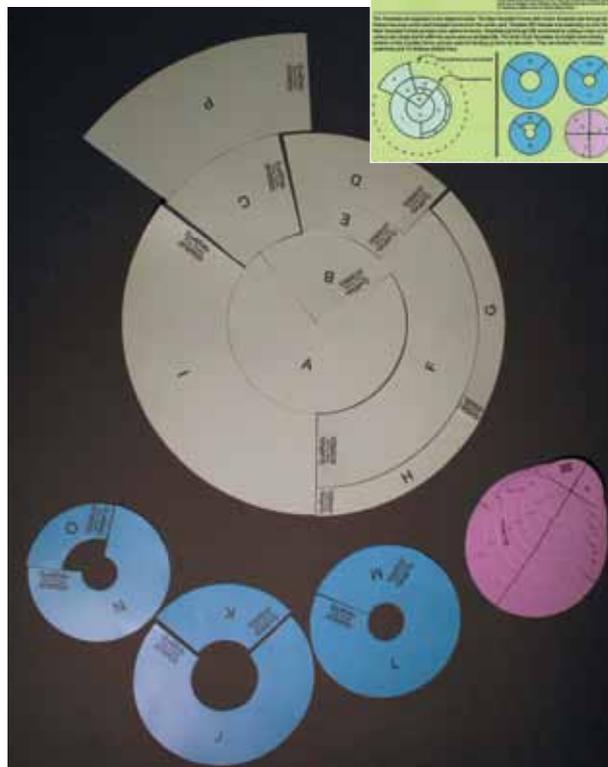
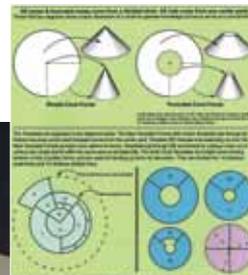
CircleMatic Form Finder

by Jessica Knapp

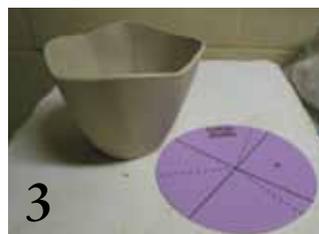
Handbuilding with slabs and templates can help you understand how flat shapes translate into three-dimensional form, make repeating forms, or find entirely new forms by combining differently shaped components. Sandi Pierantozzi has designed a pack of 24 circle-based templates that are designed to help potters find their own forms using conical shapes as building blocks.

The templates are organized into sets by color. The light green templates form one large circle and show complete and truncated cone shapes that can be created by dividing this circle in different ways using radius lines from the center. The blue templates show different truncated conical shapes that can be made from circles that fit within the area of template A from the green set just by altering the size of the center cutout. The purple set is useful for creating bottoms and lids for truncated conical forms. The lines that divide the purple circles into quarters and thirds can also be used to section the surfaces for alterations or decorating.

All of the templates are made from a mid-weight laminated styrene. They can withstand being used many times and wiped clean using a sponge. Each one is labeled with a letter to show how it fits with the rest of the templates (see image at right). The letters are also useful when keeping notes on how a form was made. For example, I made a bowl with steep sides using template I (*figure 1 and 2*), then altered the rim and walls to be more angular using the dividing lines on the 5-inch circular template to create puffy scallops (*figure 3*). Next, I placed a cone formed with template L and another formed with template K together to create a tall footed bowl



(*figure 4*). After recording this possibility, I inverted the smaller footed bowl and placed it on top of the scalloped bowl shape, to create a vase. Finally, I added a foot made with template H to complete the model for a vase (*figure 5*). In my sketchbook, I drew the profile of each of the forms, and wrote down which templates I used to make them. From here I can further tweak and customize the vase as well as the bowls and add related forms made using other templates to create a series of work.



Getting Started

There are several ways that the individual templates in the set can be used. The templates that make truncated cones can be used with the solid circle templates to create vessels like cups, tumblers, bowls, and serving dishes, and the conical and truncated cone templates can be used in combination to create footed vessels, teapots, coffee pots, vases, cap and inset lidded containers, salt and pepper shakers, cruets, compound curved bowls and cups, rimmed bowls or plates, etc.

Sandi provides one extension for the green set, section P, shows that you can expand the radius of the circle and make more templates to create larger truncated cones, or to create a section with exactly the angle and height you want for a particular project, like a large serving bowl. If you find you need larger customized templates often, you could have them laminated at an office supply store.

The templates are also useful in sketching and planning. I found that connecting the ends of a template together with painters tape to create a model of a form was helpful for sketching three dimensionally. The taped together templates become building blocks that can be stacked and rearranged until you find an interesting form. I did not curve and tape the smaller templates as I did not want to crease them. Instead, I cut out a copy of the template in printer paper, which was more flexible since it is thinner. I made various combinations, then either drew them in my sketchbook, noting the template letters alongside the drawing, or documented them with a digital camera before disassembling the model and reassembling the components into other forms.

Ideas to Try

Sets and stackables are made easier using the templates. Easier to initially figure out proportions and relationships between different pieces, to scale up surface decoration, and to make uniform multiples.

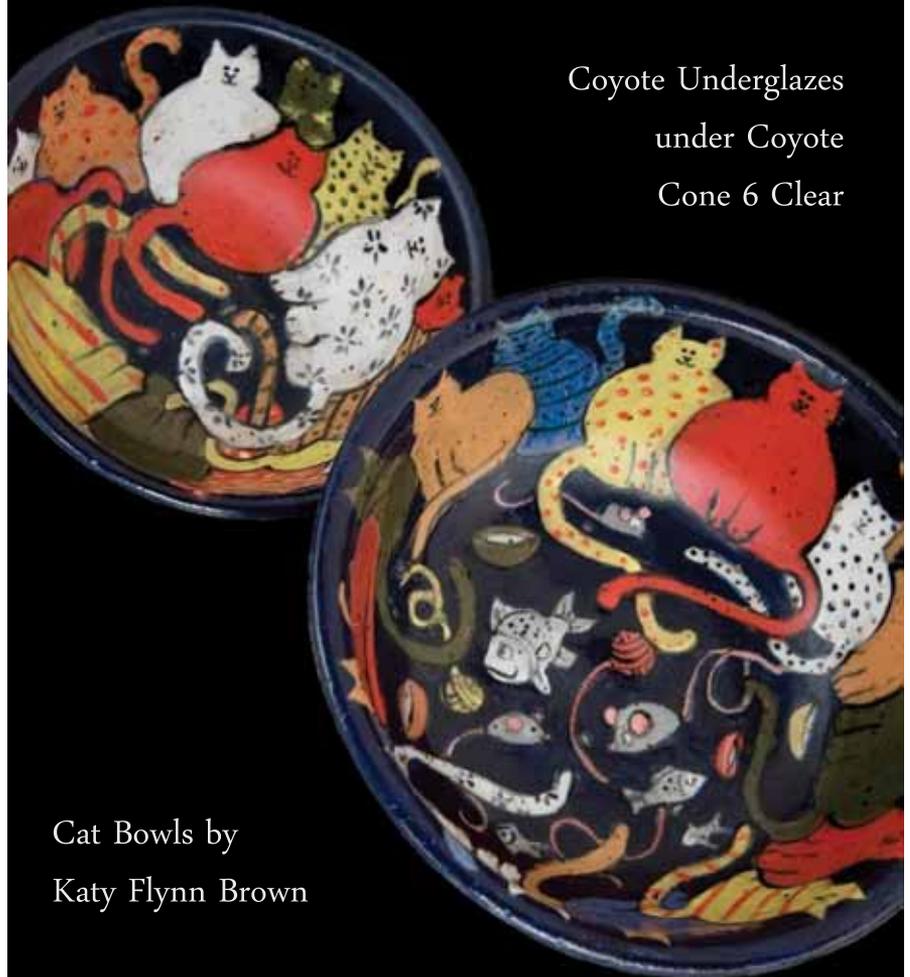
Severe and gradual tapered cylinders may be the first forms you see in these templates, but soft, rounded forms are also possible. Varying the softness of the slab you start with will allow for pushing the form out from inside to create a gradual curve.

Starting with the basic cone or truncated cone, oval, and even squared off forms can be made. I used the section lines on the purple circle templates as guides for creating small squared off bowls, tumblers, and boxes, as well as for creating oval forms.

More angular shapes can be made by shaping a cut slab into a cone or tapered cylinder then altering it once it is a soft, leather hard. Use the dividing lines on the purple circles to mark off sections, then paddle the form or define the sections using a dowel, or rubber and metal ribs. Refine using a rasp tool to create sharp transitions. ■

Thank you to Sandi Pierantozzi for providing a CircleMatic Form Finder pattern set for us to experiment with. For more information on the templates, visit <http://circlematic.com>.

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