

Gemma Smale
Ceramics
2025

CERAMIC
DESIGN
PRODUCT
CATALOGUE

Ash Glazed and Wood Fired Ceramics

Wood firing is a traditional Japanese technique where at high temperatures the wood ash from fuelling the kiln is pulled through the kiln landing on the pieces melting into a glaze.

The firing technique results in unique and often unpredictable surfaces, each vessel with variation across the surface as the flame has flowed around it. The natural glaze effects are created from different types of wood as well as the length of the firing and the position of the piece within the kiln.

Wood kilns take long hours to fuel, collaborative efforts from teams of artists working together to stoke the kiln throughout the day and night. Embodying the beauty of teamwork and a shared responsibility for the kiln.

DECORATIVE WARES (DW)

Profile

Gemma Smale is an Essex based ceramic artist, a recent graduate of Ceramic Design at Central Saint Martins. Trained in wheel throwing her work includes ongoing material research with focus on hand sourced materials and continuous explorations into utilizing collected materials to create a deeper connection between consumers and ceramic art through material narratives.

Through research in ceramic traditions and regional wares she has gained insight into how to begin playing with collected waste materials and local materials. Current experiments include the use of waste materials such as ash, iron scraps from local black smiths and clays. Focusing now on traditional methods of firing with wood to create depth of surface and one-off pieces. With the objective of gradually reducing reliance on mined materials within her surface decoration.



Tall Bottle Vessel

Stoneware, wood fired and ash glazed.

Medium 30×18cm
Large 43×20cm



Square Rimmed Vessel

Ash and salt glazed, thrown in a single piece. Entering the kiln unglazed, decorated by the fire inside of the kiln alone.

Small 22×15cm
Large 30×30cm

Collection of vessels



Small square rimmed vessel





Folded Vessel

Stoneware, wood fired and wood ash glazed with pine and oak on a white clay.

Joined in two parts and collapsed on the wheel, each piece completely unique.

Small 25×12cm
Large 32×22cm

Glaze detail



Collection of vessels





Small angular vessel

Angular Vessel

Stoneware, wood fired and wood ash glazed with pine and oak on a white clay.

Small 30×16cm
Large 44×13cm

Large angular vessel



Glaze detail



FUNCTIONAL WARES (FW)



Wine cup

Wheel thrown, stoneware, wood fired
with wood ash and nuka white glaze.

10×10cm



Collection of wine cups



Collection of wine cups

Tulip Cup

Wheel thrown, stoneware, wood fired with wood ash and nuka white glaze.

10×10cm



Collection of handled Tulip cups





Rounded bowl

Wheel thrown stoneware, wood fired with wood ash and nuka white glaze.

18×10cm

Collection of rounded bowls



Mini dish

Wheel thrown stoneware,
wood fired.

5×10cm



Collection of mini dishes

Collection of mini dishes



Ongoing research

My current work is an exploration into utilizing hand sourced materials and wood firing techniques to create a deeper connection between consumers and ceramic art through *placemaking*. It is a personal and material exploration that aims to establish a link to ceramic art through the land that we share. Working to build a limited material palette with the objective of gradually reducing my reliance on mined materials in surface design in working towards a more sustainable practice.

By questioning the material origins of industrially refined materials and the concealment of source as well as its ethical nature. I wondered whether there has been a potential lost of emotional value in what we consume through this elimination of material source narratives. Through my research into traditional processes and firing techniques I have begun to explore how we can reconnect with ceramics through the world around us.



Gemma Smale

gemmasmale@hotmail.com

gemmasmale.co.uk

@gemma_smale

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