

BACKGROUNDS

A background is a very important part of a design. Although it usually occupies a secondary role, it can give vitality and life to a decoration.

The type of background to use should always be given careful thought. In fact, very often Marc Bellaire will put in a background, using one of his favorite techniques, and allow it to "tell him" what kind of design to make. For example, a background

with a net pattern might suggest fish; a swirling background, dancing figures.

Whether you choose a background to compliment a specific motif or *vice versa*, always remember that the color and texture can make or break a design. Learn as many background-making techniques as you can. Practice them until they become second nature so that you can use the right one at the right time with freedom and spontaneity.

ASSORTED PAGES.....fom the book 'UNDERGLAZE DECORATIONS'

Spraying Through

One way to obtain interesting backgrounds is to spray underglaze through different fabrics. This makes possible a variety of patterns with practically no effort. Any fabric with a wide enough weave to allow the underglaze to get through will work.

The procedure is quite simple. First, the fabric is thoroughly dampened so that it sticks to the surface without fluttering under the pressure of the air brush. (Fluttering will distort the pattern.) Damp fabric will stick equally well to green ware or dry bisque ware.

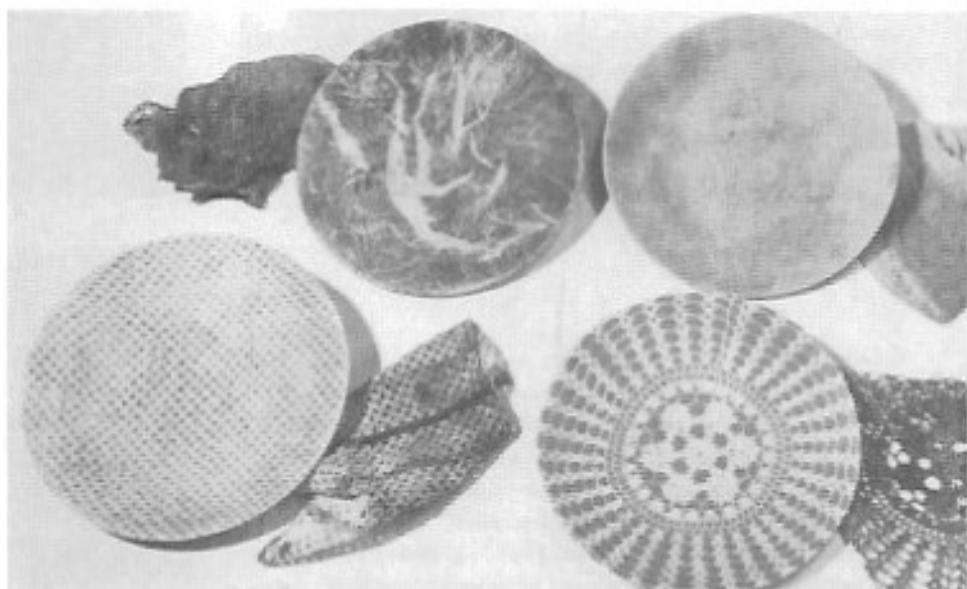
Next, the plate is set on a banding wheel so that it can be turned, enabling all sides to receive an even application of spray. A heavy or light application can be sprayed on, depending on the needs of the decoration.

Variations are limitless. All kinds of textured cloths, such as onion sacking, burlap, crocheting, etc., can be tried. Moreover, a variety of effects is possible from each

cloth, if you alter the way the cloth is laid on the surface to be decorated. For example, different results can be had with a piece of cheesecloth by roughly folding or pleating it. New cheesecloth can be distorted by pulling it between the fingers so all the openings will not be identical in size and shape.

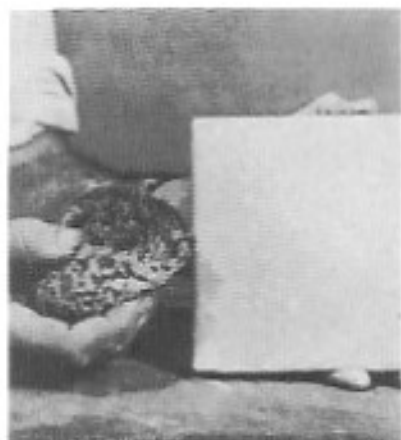
The air brush needn't be relied on entirely. For a variety of effects, other methods of spraying or spattering underglaze through fabrics should be tried. A hand-operated "Flit" gun, for example, will give a rougher and more varied texture. Spattering from a toothbrush will give still another result. Once you begin, you will find that each idea leads to another.

Shown below is a sampling of spray backgrounds. Starting at top left: Cheesecloth (wrinkled), cotton tulle, a dishcloth, a cotton doily.



Shown below is a group of general, basic background techniques. Requiring no special equipment, they are

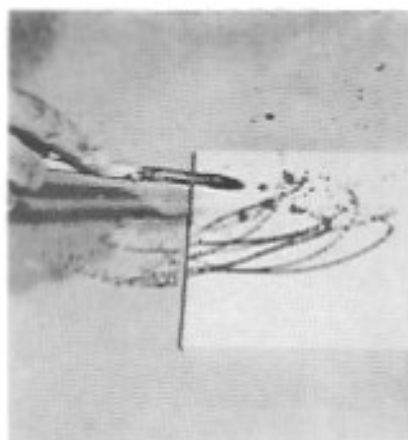
easily mastered and can be used individually or in combinations for added interest.



Sponging (coarse): Patting strokes from a coarse sponge.



Spattering: Finger raked across the bristles of a tooth brush.



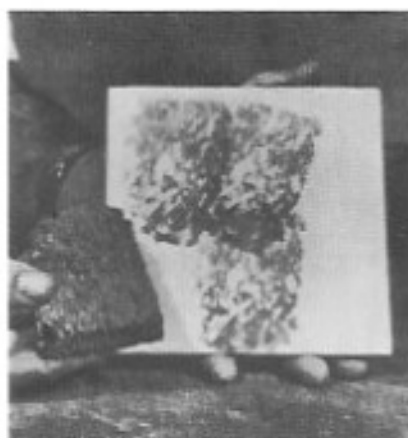
Splattering: Throwing color from the end of a loaded brush.



Sponging (fine): A fine-textured pattern from a foam rubber sponge.



Cloth Printing: Rolling, printing technique; sponge inside for resiliency.



Sponge Printing: Artificial sponge gives block-like pattern.



Sponge Spinning: Round shape turned on banding wheel; sponge feeds color.



Brush Spinning: Same as sponge spinning except brush feeds color.



Plaid: Watered-down color, in straight lines, with extra-large brush.

Water-Color Effect



1



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A true water-color effect can be achieved by using the glycerin-wash technique. By using glycerin, several underglaze colors can be made to flow, intermingle, and produce a soft blended effect.

1. A liberal coating of glycerin (available from any drug store) is painted on the green-ware surface.

2. While the glycerin is still wet, pour on three or four underglaze colors. Swirl the colors with a brush to start the blending.

3. To obtain flowing patterns, hold the piece vertically, tilting and turning it.

This particular piece eventually was used for the "Ballerina" demonstrated on page 33.



Cloth Printing



2



3

Printing from a cloth will work best on flat shapes. Rarely will any two patterns be identical, even if the same piece of cloth is used several times.

1. A damp, wide-mesh cloth is soaked in underglaze color.

2. Excess color is squeezed out and the cloth laid flat on a clean, non-absorbing surface.

3. A dampened tile (green ware or bisque) is gently laid on the color-saturated cloth and pressed firmly.

4. After a few seconds, the tile is picked up carefully—so as not to smudge the pattern. Or the tile and cloth may be picked up together and the cloth gently peeled back.



4

Rubber Stamps



1 A horned goat-like animal is cut from foam rubber with scissors (see preceding page). Areas, like the eye and the space between the legs, that should not print are cut back or gouged out. This produces a sturdy stamp which is easier to use than one which has each of the thin legs carefully cut out, resulting in a flimsy, hard-to-control stamp. Once the stamp is cut out, the procedure is simple.

1. One side is painted with an underglaze color.
2. A fairly flat piece of green ware is well dampened;

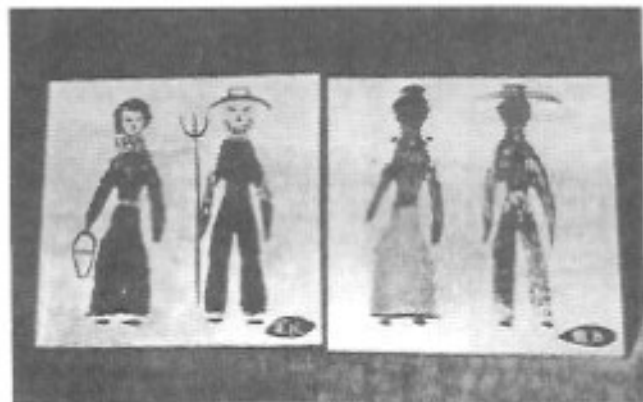
then the stamp, painted side down, is set in place. It is pressed down to make good contact at all points.

3. In a few seconds it can be picked up. The underglaze color no longer is on the stamp, but on the piece of green ware.

Details may be put on with a liner brush, although the final motif should be kept quite simple. Remember that this is a "rough" technique.



Many motifs are possible. The human figure can be fun because you can "dress" the figures as you please. Even flowers and leaves are possible—if you don't try to introduce fuzzy details.





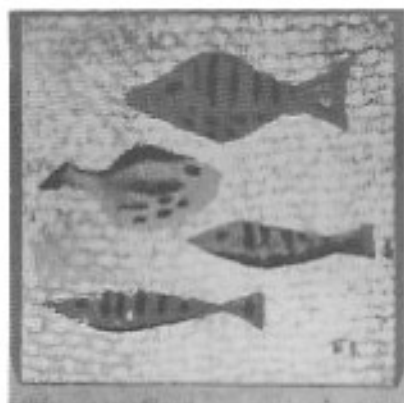
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One interesting variation of the foam-rubber-stamp technique is to paint more than one color on the stamp. The ware will pull all color from the stamp, giving you "self decorated" motifs in one quick motion.

1. Details are put on first since they will be on top when the design is transferred to the green ware.

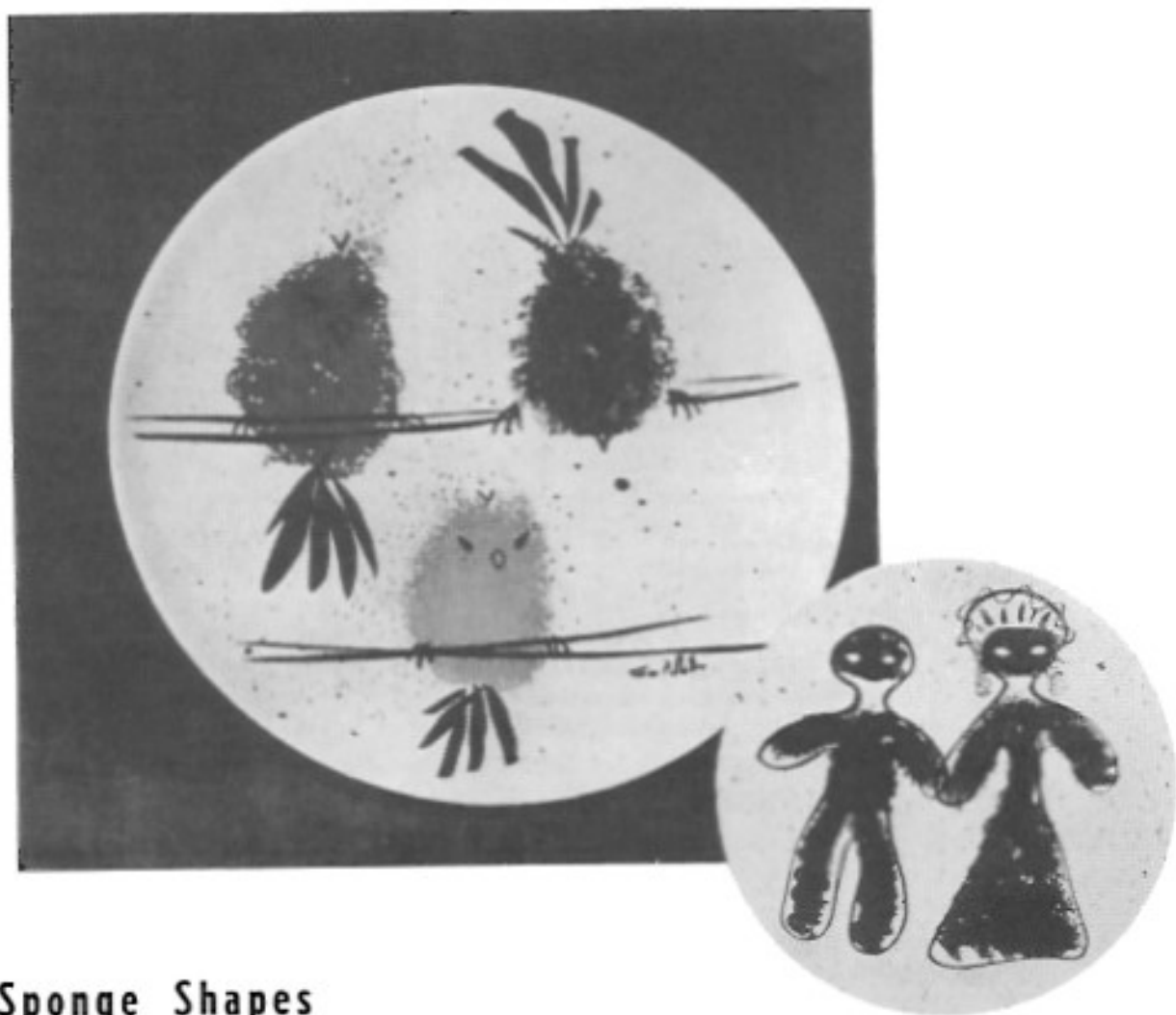
2. After the first color has dried, the over-all color of the fish is painted on. This procedure also is followed with the other fish shapes.

3. Each painted stamp is pressed, painted-side down, on a tile which has a net background.

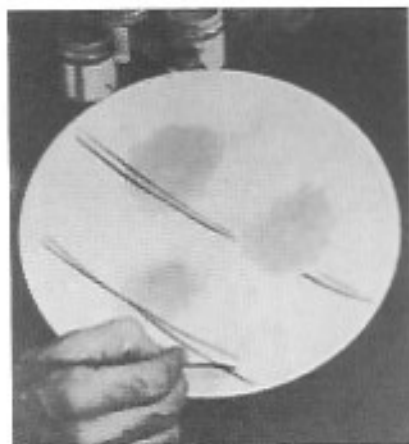
4. After a few seconds, the stamps are removed and the already-decorated fish remain—waiting to be glazed and fired.

Another variation is made by cutting only a portion of a motif from foam rubber, completing the design with a brush. Here only the body of a bird is printed at various angles on the plate. Heads, wings, tails and feet are brushed in; eyes sgraffitoed.





Sponge Shapes



1

A sponge is another handy tool. It is similar to foam rubber since it, too, does not permit delicate detail. So for sponge shapes, use furry or woolly animals, or flowers that can be represented with blobs of color.

1. "Chicks-on-wires" begin as rough shapes, dabbed on with a sponge. Different textures can be obtained by varying the amount of color on the sponge and the number of coats applied.

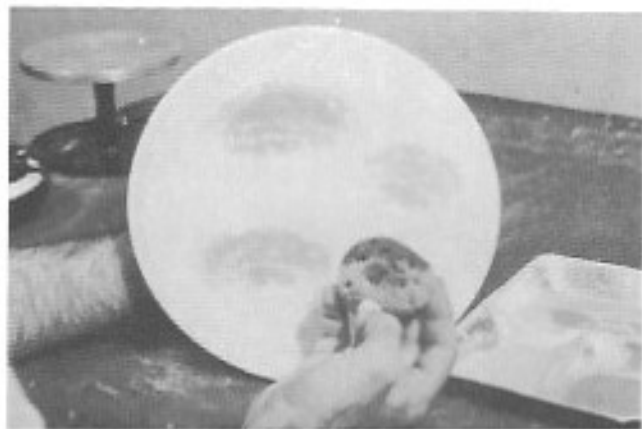
2

2. Wires are simple strokes in black.

3. Beaks, eyes and tails are brushed and printed in, completing the motif.

3

The "Gingerbread Children," above, represent another idea—roughly-dabbed sponge shapes completely out-lined in black.

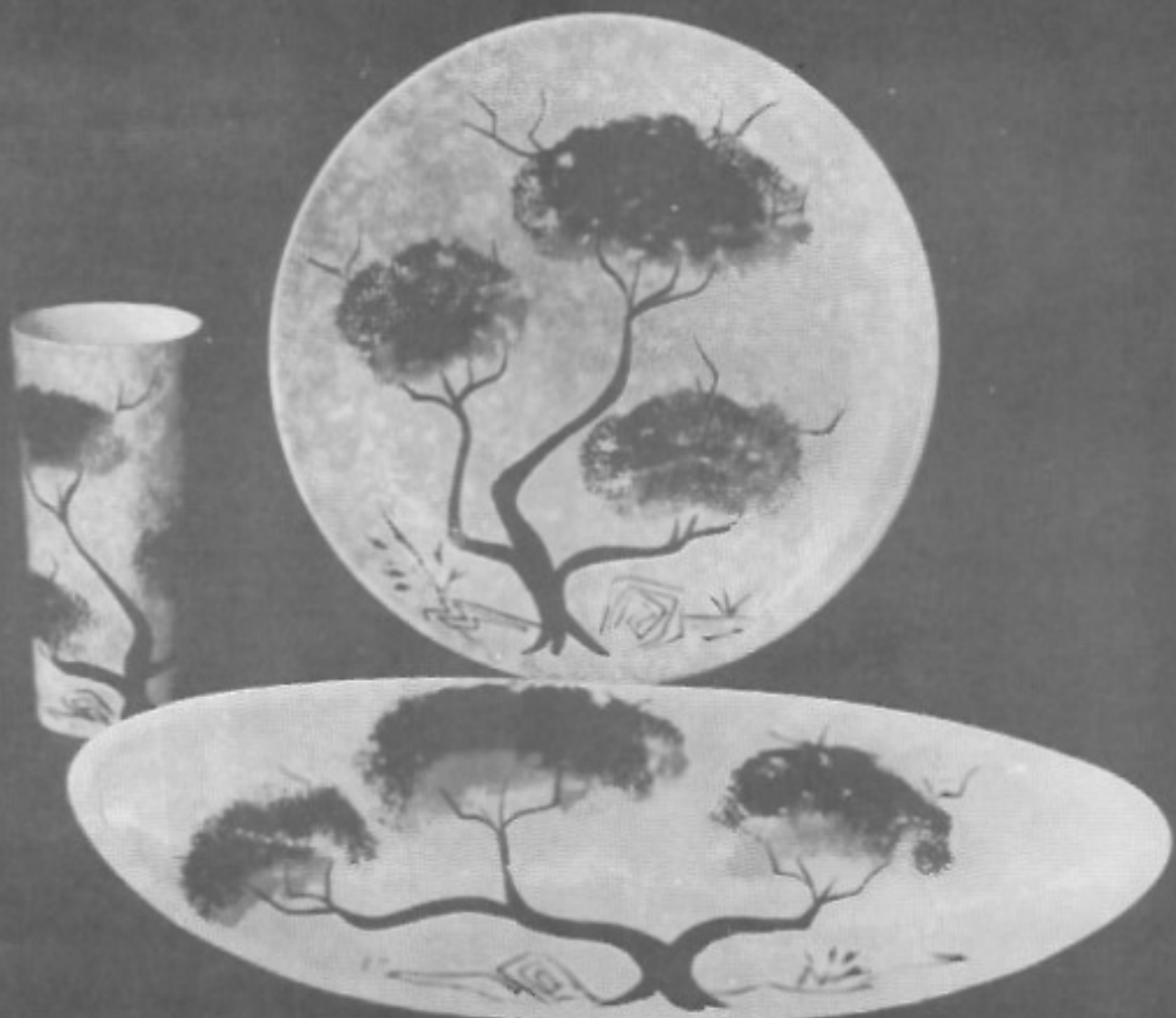


Sometimes a sponge provides the only (or at least the best) means to represent a motif. The Ming tree, for example, is ideally made with a sponge.

1. Foliage on the Ming tree is in two colors—green and yellow. Both colors are applied at the same time by dipping the upper portion of the sponge in green and the lower portion in yellow. With a twist of the wrist, the sponge shape is rolled on, not dabbed or patted. Re-

touching or reworking is avoided because it destroys the original sponge texture.

2. To carry out the oriental feeling, angular and twisting shapes, in black, are used for branches and other decorative elements. The complete piece and two companion shapes are shown below after glazing and firing. Note how the "round" motif was adjusted to fit the other shapes.



ABSTRACTS

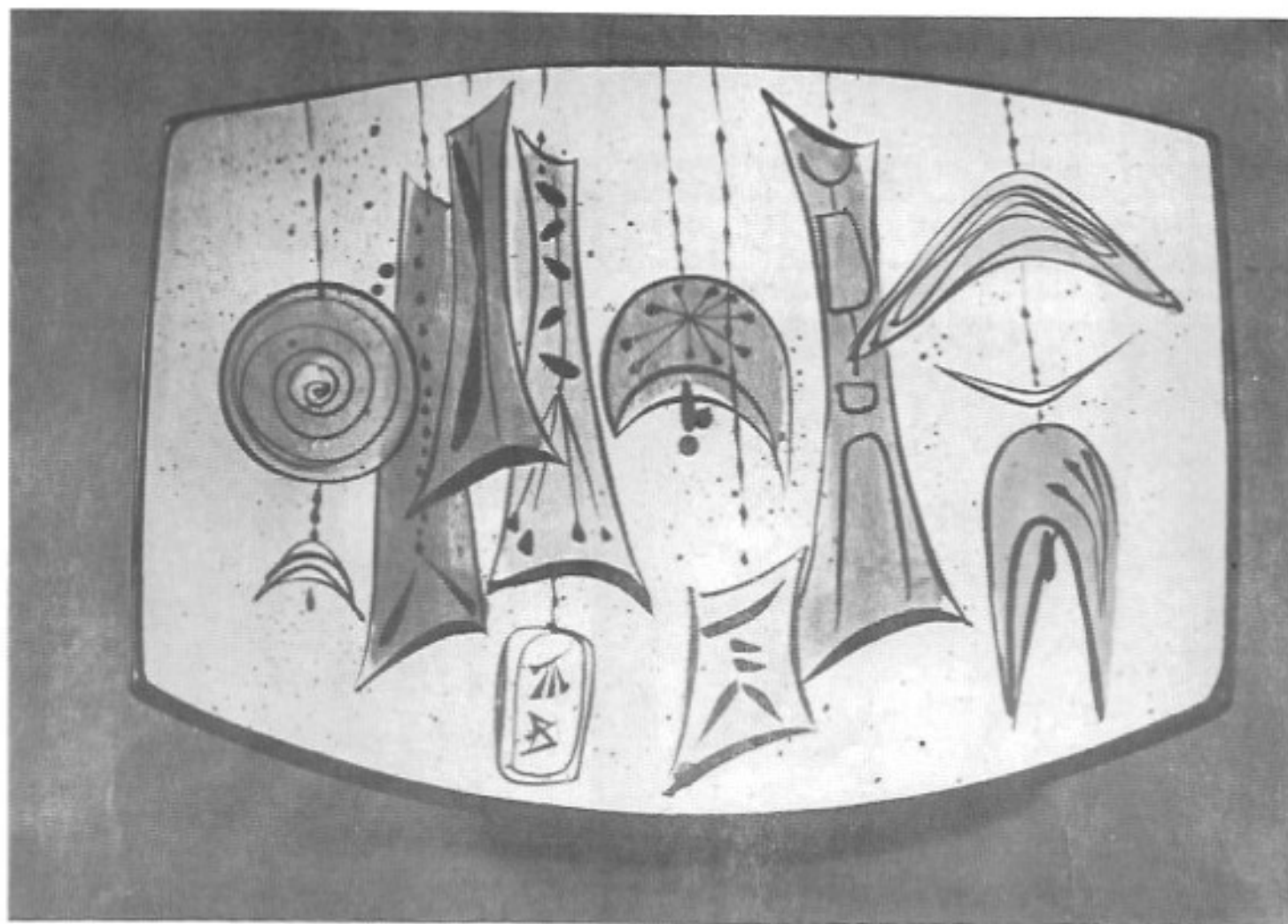
In the world of arts and crafts, an abstract design means one that is "characterized by little or no reference to the appearance of objects in nature." You can be assured, however, that everyone has his *own* interpretation of what "abstract" means.

From the definition, a series of geometric shapes which bear absolutely no resemblance to anything recognizable in nature, would be considered an abstract design. On the other hand, small ovals with tails, actually recognizable as fish, can also be considered abstracts. You will find that it's fun to work in all degrees of abstraction.

Creating abstract designs is an excellent test

of your artistic and designing ability. If you can express your feelings about a subject, without being conventional or naturalistic, and still have your design understood by others, you will find it is a tremendous source of satisfaction. For example, Marc Bellaire expresses his feelings about "The Four Seasons" (pages 48-49) using a middle-of-the-road approach. Yet there is no question that these designs represent *spring, summer, fall, and winter*, although you would never find these specific shapes in nature.

Practice making abstract designs, and don't forget that you can abstract with color as well as with shapes.



"Wind Bells" is the name given to this abstract design. Angular, geometric shapes and oriental-type markings were used to generate an oriental flavor. This particular design seems to work best in three colors. Here are

some of the color combinations which Marc Bellaire finds pleasing—rose, soft blue and chartreuse; dark brown, medium brown, and tan; orange, bittersweet, and pale yellow. The design is most effective on a large piece.

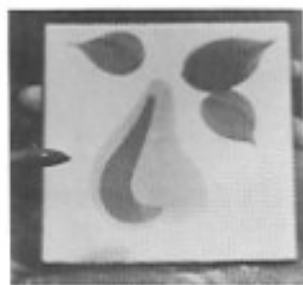
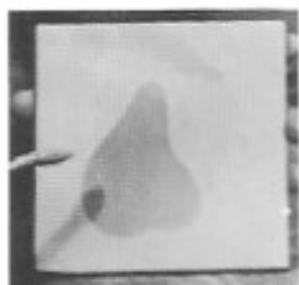
FRUIT VOCABULARY

Fruit motifs make interesting decorations by themselves. They also can be used as a decorative element, as part of a larger motif.

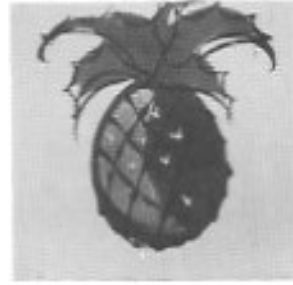
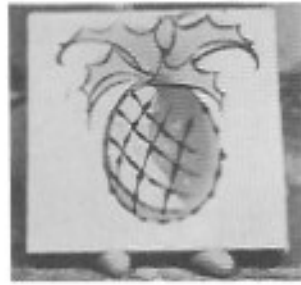
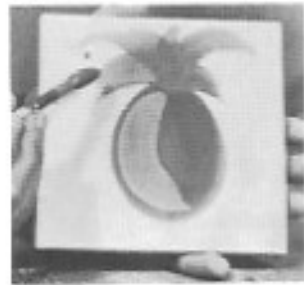
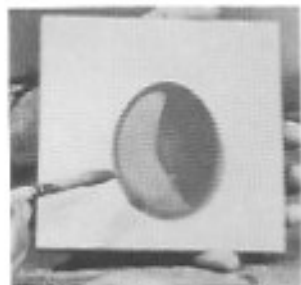
Either way, they are colorful and fun to work with. And the more fluent you become with the

various motifs, the more fun you will have.

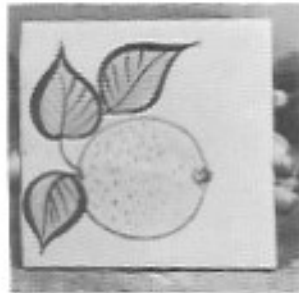
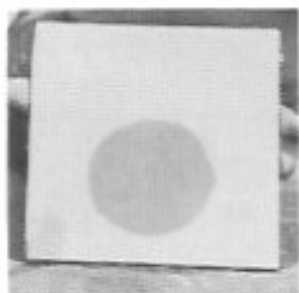
In the illustrations in this section, Marc Bellaire demonstrates the basic approach to painting seven common fruits. Note that only the *essence* of each fruit is depicted.



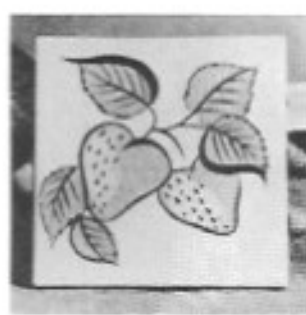
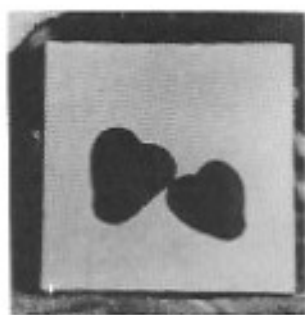
PEAR: Basic shape—yellow. Accent—cherry red. Detail—black and sgraffito. Leaves—deep blue-green.



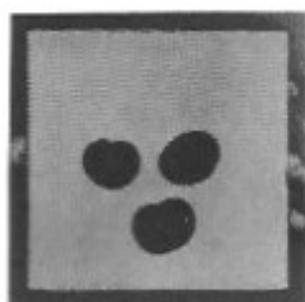
PINEAPPLE: Basic shape—red-brown. Accent—beige or cocoa. Detail—black and sgraffito. Leaves—deep blue-green.



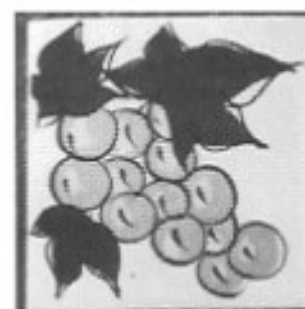
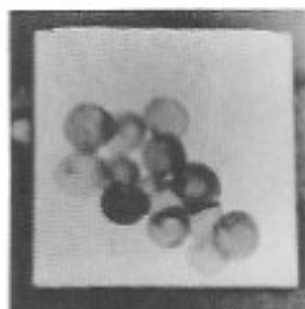
ORANGE: Basic shape—orange. Accent—pale yellow. Detail—black and sgraffito. Leaves—deep blue-green.



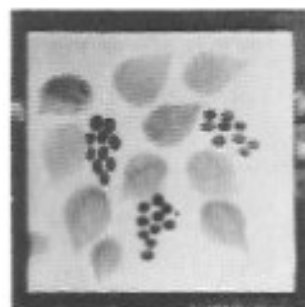
STRAWBERRIES: Basic shape—cherry red. Accent—rose. Detail—black and sgraffito. Leaves—blue-green.



CHERRIES: Basic shape—cherry red. Accent—old rose. Detail—black. Leaves—blue-green.



GRAPES: Basic shape—turquoise. Accent—white. Detail—black. Leaves—deep blue-green.



BLACK RASPBERRIES: Basic shape—purple. Accent—none. Detail—black. Leaves—aqua.