



Design And Production Of Customised Decorative Flower Vases For Modex Oil Company Shopping Centres In Ghana

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Abstract:

Design and production of flower vases in a form of clay art has been in existence for so many years. Currently, they are practiced with much improvement and modern technology as compared to the ancient times. Flower vases are said to be for decorative purposes. Today, flower vases serve many purposes such as decorations, pen and pencil holders in the offices. Modex Oil Company, dealers of petroleum products and shopping centres does not have customized flower vases for decoration and beautification of the shopping centres. This study seeks to display and subsequent production of customized decorative flower vases for the company's shopping centres to enhance the beautification of the centres and solve some related problems. The technique used for the production is "throw and join" method. Washed clay was the main material used for the production. The "throw and pin" technique of production was very effective and efficient in the production of the flower vases. Experimental and Descriptive research approaches were employed. It is recommended that ceramists and other clay artists as well as students experiment with other materials and techniques in the production of flower vases to bring variety in the field of flower vases production.

Keywords: Flower Vases, Clay, Decorative, Washed Clay, Shopping Centres.

1.Introduction

Bryan Sentence (2004) contends that flower vases play an important role in decorating special places such as hotels, restaurants, banking halls, offices and auditoria. The need for flower vases to decorate places cannot be overemphasized. As far as decorations in the hotels, halls, offices and others are concerned, flower vases appear to be inevitable.

According to Speight and Toki (1999), ceramic containers do not disintegrate as do those made of wood. It is not surprising that ancient people frequently buried their dead in fired clay vessels. They also buried with them small containers of oils and perfumes and clay reproductions of servants and objects they believed the deceased might need in the afterlife. The oldest ceramic raw material is undoubtedly clay. Clay has been defined as an earth that forms a coherent, sticky mass when mixed with water; when wet, this mass is readily mouldable, but if dried, it becomes hard and brittle and retains its shape. Moreover, if heated to redness, it becomes still harder and is no longer susceptible to the action of water. Such a material clearly tends itself to the making of articles of all shapes (Worrall,1986).

In the view of Norton (1956), a good flower vase should be stable. That is, it should be able to stand firm on the ground without falling while flowers are inside or not. It must also be able to serve its purpose, hollow and lighter for easy conveying and attractive to its viewers. An initial survey conducted in various banking halls, hotels, restaurants, offices and shopping centres in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis revealed that flower vases for decorations were bought from the open market, and had no inscriptions of the institutions and hence were not identifiable with the institutions. The purpose of this project is therefore to identify, describe and assess the types and quality of flower vases available at the market and to design and produce customized decorative flower vases that are unique to Modex Oil Company shopping centres to enhance the beautification of the centres.

2.Methodology

Descriptive and Experimental research methods based on the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed. The descriptive method of research is essential because flower vases existing at the market had to be documented, described and analyzed before coming out with a design that would in the long run solve problems existing ones could not. This method was also used to describe the various materials, tools and equipment used in the project. It was also used to describe the design and

production processes and the appreciation of the outcomes. The experimental research was used to assess the suitability of available materials, tools and equipment used in the project (Best, 1981). Experiments were also conducted to find out the suitability of the use either washed or unwashed clay for the production of the flower vases. Experiments were also conducted to find the relevant and suitable method of production and the “throw and join” method was finally agreed on. The population for the study of this project involved ceramic students, ceramic lecturers in Takoradi Polytechnic and flower vases sellers at Takoradi and its environs. Since it is practically impossible to reach every member of the target population, the purposive sampling method was employed to select 3 lecturers of Ceramics Department of Takoradi Polytechnic, 10 students of ceramics and 5 sellers of flower vases for interviews. These formed the sample population. This method of sampling makes it possible to randomly select people with similar characteristics from the target population to be studied. To triangulate data obtained through the interviews, observations were also made (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). According to Amenuke (1991), observation as a research tool was necessary because information provided by respondents through interviews could be inadequate, biased or untrue. Observation techniques of data collection make it possible for the researcher to obtain first hand information. The researchers thus visited the market place, banking halls, hotels, and restaurants to observe critically the available flower vases there. This specifically was done to test the validity of data gathered through the interviews conducted. Photographs were taken where necessary for authenticity and confirmation. Flower vases found were observed critically to serve as the bases for the design and production of customized decorative flower vases for Modex Oil Company shopping centres

2.1. Preliminary Sketches

The researchers made several sketches before selecting the final one. Plates 1 - 8 show the stages of sketches that the researchers made before the selection and execution of the final sketch.



Figure 1: Plate 1 The Sketch With The Company's Logo And Motto



Figure 2: Plate 2 The Sketch With The Company's Logo And Motto Arranged In Different Form



Figure3: Plate 3 The Sketch With The Company's Logo And Kangaroo Drawn From The Logo



Figure 4: Plate 4 The Sketch With The Company's Logo



Figure 5: Plate 5the Sketch With The Company's Logo And Motto Arranged In Oval Form



Figure 6: Plate 6The Sketch With The Company's Logo And Motto Arranged In Triangular Form.



Figure 7: Plate 7 The Sketch With The Company's Logo And Motto Arranged In Vertical Form

2.2.The Selection Of The Final Sketch Design

After the several sketches and consultation with the management of the company, the final design was selected and prototyped before executing the final work.



Figure 8: Plate 8 The Final Design Of The Flower Vase.

2.3. Tools And Equipment

In producing the work, the researchers used some tools and equipment. These were

2.3.1. Washing Basins

These were containers in which clay was soaked and stirred for washing.



Figure 9: Washing Basins

2.3.2. Potter's Wheel

The potter's wheel is a machine with a revolving disk which is used by potters to produce wares. The researcher used the potter's wheel to throw the vase in five pieces before joining them together.



Figure 10: Potter's Wheel

2.3.3. Foam

This is a tool which was used by the researcher to pull when throwing. It was also used to clean excess water from the ware when throwing and also used to clean excess slip while joining the pieces together to form the vase.



Figure 11: Foam

2.3.4. Cutting Wire

This is a tool made of wire tied against two sticks which was used by the researcher to trim the rim of the ware when throwing. It was also used to cut clay in to slice when the researcher was wedging and kneading the clay.

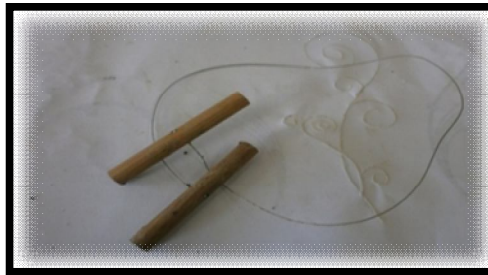


Figure 12: Cutting Wire

2.3.5. A Bowl

An empty container in which water was poured for throwing. Also slip was poured in for joining.



Figure 13: A Bowl

2.3.6. Pricker

This is a tool that the researcher used to measure the thickness of the walls of the ware when throwing



Figure 14: Pricker

2.3.7.Rule

This tool was used to measure the height and size of the ware to see to it that the required measurement was achieved.

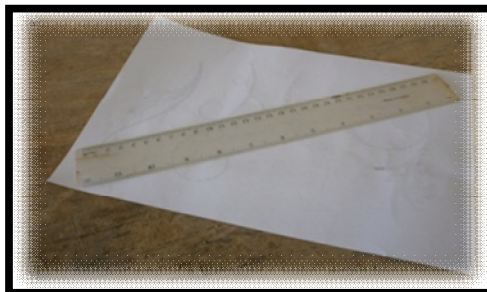


Figure 15: A Rule

2.3.8.Turning Tools

These tools were used to remove excess clay from the thrown pieces to give them shape and also to make them lighter.



Figure 16: Turning Tools

2.3.9.Kidney

This is a tool that was used to burnish the surface of the pieces to make it smooth.



Figure 18: Metal Kidney



Figure 17: Wooden Kidney

2.3.10. Modeling Tool

This is a wooden tool which was used to produce the inscriptions and the logo on the vase.



Figure 19: Modeling Tool

2.3.11. Fork

This tool was used for scoring during the production of the ware.



Figure 20: Fork

2.3.12. Wooden Beater

It is a wooden tool that was used to beat the ware when producing to make sure that the required shape was achieved.



Figure 21: Wooden Beater

2.3.13. Slip

It is fluid clay that was used to join the pieces together.



Figure 22: Slip

2.3.14. Kiln

This is a fire wood kiln (furnace) that was used to fire the vases to bisque form.



Figure 23: Firewood Kiln

2.4. *Materials*

The main materials that the researchers used were clay, grog and sand. The clay was the major quantity of the material and it was obtained from Abonko in the Central region of Ghana. It is also one of the finest clay that is used by most Ghanaian ceramist and potters. The grog was produced from bisque fired ware made in to powdered form and sieved. The sand was also obtained from the normal sand and sieved.

2.5. Composition And Preparation Of The Materials

The materials were composed of 80% of clay, 10% of grog and 10% of sand. The clay was the main component of the materials. . The 80% of clay was soaked in washing basin for a week. After that, the researchers washed it and sieved it in to a drying pit for it to dry. After it dried a bit, it was taken from the pit. Unwashed clay contains materials such as pebbles, roots of plans and sometimes broken pieces of bottles which can wound the researcher so it was washed for all those materials to be removed. The washed clay was then kneaded and wedged together with the sand and grog with a little water and stored in a polythene bag for it to age for some weeks. The 10% of grog was added to the composition in order to increase the strength of the clay so that during firing it might not crack. It was also added to reduce the plasticity of the clay and also to reduce excessive shrinkage. The sand was also added to it for it to reduce the plasticity of the clay and also to increase the strength of the clay.



Figure 24: Loaded Clay In Washing Basin



Figure 25: Clay Soaked With Water In Washing Basin



Figure 26: The Stirring Of The Soaked Clay In To Slip



Figure 27: Sieving The Stirred Slip In To The Washing Pit



Figure 28: Kneading Clay To Remove Air Pockets



Figure 29: Wedging Of Clay



Figure 30: Kneading Of The Wedged Clay



Figure 31: Kneaded Balls Of Clay Ready To Be Used For Throwing

2.6.Procedures For Producing Thrown Flower Vase

The method used to produce the vases was “throw and join” method of production. The researchers threw the vase in to five pieces and allowed them to be a little bit leather hard before they were turned. After turning, the pieces were scored and joined together with the help of clay slip.

The under listed stages of throwing were employed;

2.6.1.Centering

This is the first stage in throwing. It is the method of forcing a ball of clay to position itself at the centre of the wheel head. At this stage of throwing constant water was poured on to the ball of clay and on the hand which prevented friction. During this stage, there was force applied to the hand which prevented the clay from controlling the hand and for easy centering. Figures 23 and 24 examine the centering of the clay.



Figure 32: Centering A Ball Of Clay



Figure 33: Centered Ball Of Clay

2.6.2. Opening

This is the second stage of throwing where the centered ball of clay was opened and ready for pulling and shaping. Figures 25 and 26 show the opening of the centered clay.



Figure 34: Opening The Centered Ball Of Clay



Figure 35: Opening Process Of Centered Ball Clay

2.6.3. Pulling

Pulling is the third stage in throwing where the centered opened clay was pulled upper from the wall to make it lighter and thinner and also to get the actual height needed by the researcher. Figures 27 and 28 depict the pulling processes of the centered clay.



Figure 36: Pulling Of The Opened Centered Clay



Figure 37: Pulling Of Clay To The Required Height

2.6.4. Shaping

Is the final stage in throwing where the actual shape of the ware producing was done by the researcher. It is at this stage that the researcher shaped the base, belly and the neck of the vase to get the required shape that he wanted. Figures 29 and 30 below explain the shaping of the wares into the required shapes.



Figure 38: Shaping The Pulled Clay To The Desired Shape



Figure 39: Cleaning Of The Shaped Clay With Foam To Prevent Cracking When Drying

2.7.The Thrown Pieces

The pieces were left to make leather hard before joining. Figures 31 and 32 show the thrown pieces.



Figure 40: The Thrown Pieces At Leather Hard Stage



Figure 41: Dressing The Leather Hard Pieces Before Joining

2.8. Scoring And Joining Of The Thrown Pieces

After the pieces were left to be a little bit harder, they were scored and joined together by the researchers. The scoring processes are shown in figures 42 and 43 below, while the methods of joining the pieces are also shown in figures 44 and 45.



Figure 42



Figure 43

Figures 42 And 43 Show The Process Of Scoring Before Joining



Figure 44



Figure 45

Figure 44 And 45 Show The Joining Of The Pieces Together



Figure 46: Cleaning Of Excess Slip After Joining With Foam

2.9. Decorating Stages Of The Vases

There are a lot of decorations for decorating ceramic wares but the researchers used the pushing and embossing method of decoration to design the logo of the company on to the vases. Ropelike clay was used to decorate the neck of the vases. Finally, spring small balls of clay were also used to decorate the waste of the vases.



Figure 47: Sketching The Logo Of The Company On The Joined Piece



Figure 48: Pushing Of The Logo Of The Company On The Joined Piece



Figure 49: Dressing Of The Pushed Logo On The Vase



Figure 50: The Finished Vases Ready For Firing

2.10. Drying And Firing Of The Flower Vases

After the vases were decorated, they were left in room temperature for it to dry slowly to prevent the wares from developing cracks. The drying process is shown in figure 50. After drying, they were packed in the kiln for firing the next day. The packing process is shown in figure 51. The wares were pre- heated and it lasted for almost nine hours to make sure that all the remaining chemical water in the wares were driven out to prevent the wares from cracking and breaking during the full blast. Right after the pre- heating, full blast was started by gradually increasing the temperature. The full blast lasted for eight hours to make sure that the pieces were properly fired and well matured. Figure 52 below shows the firing of the wares. When the wares had been matured at the right temperature, all the entrances to the kiln were closed to retain the heat. The kiln was left for two days for the wares to cool down before it was opened to remove the products. Figure 53 below also shows the fired flower vase.



Figure 51: Packing Of Vases In Kiln



Figure 52: Firing Of The Vases



Figure 53: Fired Flower Vase

2.11. Painting Of The Flower Vases

Finally, the vases were painted with Red, Blue, Yellow, Black and White which were the colours of the company. The final painted vases are shown in figures 54 and 55.



Figure 54: Painting Of The Vase



Figure 55: The Finished Vase In The Company's Colours

3.Results And Discussion

The results of this project have been grouped into four categories based on the use of tools, materials, equipment and technique for the flower vases.

3.1.Tools

Problems encountered and how they were solved. For example, some throwing tools created some problems because they were not available and therefore had to be improvised.

3.2.Materials

It was observed that the use of washed clay was very effective and smooth and the use of unwashed clay was causing the ware to spoil and gave rough surfaces.

3.3.Equipment

The firewood kiln was difficult to use as compared to Gas or Electric kiln since it had no pyrometer to read the maturing temperature of the vases during firing and that normally could affect the heating process.

3.4.Technique

Due to the nature of the flower vases the “throw and join” method was suitable for this type of wares. It is recommended that this technique should be adopted when producing big flower vases.

4.Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the study have shown that the available resources at the Ceramics Department of School of Applied Arts, Takoradi Polytechnic could be used to produce customized decorative flower vases. Also, the vases were basically produced to beautify the Modex Oil Company’s shopping centres. Furthermore, the project revealed the possibility of advertising on vases and not always in the media, billboards, posters and the others. The success of this project would give room for all ceramists and students, art educators and designers in this area to create a variety of flower vases for other institutions such as banks, hotels, restaurants and others. Thus, the wares provide knowledge in the making of customized flower vases for institutions.

5.Recommendations

The following recommendations had therefore been made;

The department should speed up to install a gas kiln for firing of ceramic wares in order to get the appropriate maturing temperature of wares to avoid cracking of wares.

The Modex Oil Company should take good care of the vase and also place it at vantage point where customers could appreciate it.

There could be further research on the project with application of glazes for decoration instead of paints. This could enhance the beauty of the flower vases.

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