

Marcia Selsor

Raku-fired Slabs

by Louana Lackey



PHOTOS: LOUANA LACKEY, MARCIA SELSOR

"Mustangs of the Pryors," 40 inches in length, raku-fired diptych.

Marcia Selsor paints large raku plaques with cattle or horses. She started making the slabs after she saw "Black Angus against fresh green grass" while driving home one bright spring day in Montana. "I immediately thought 'raku!' Somewhat later, we took two carloads of students up to the Pryor Mountains to dig for clay. As we drove across the top in a cloud, a herd of mustangs came from behind us, surrounded the cars and ran down into a coulee. That was when I started the horse series."

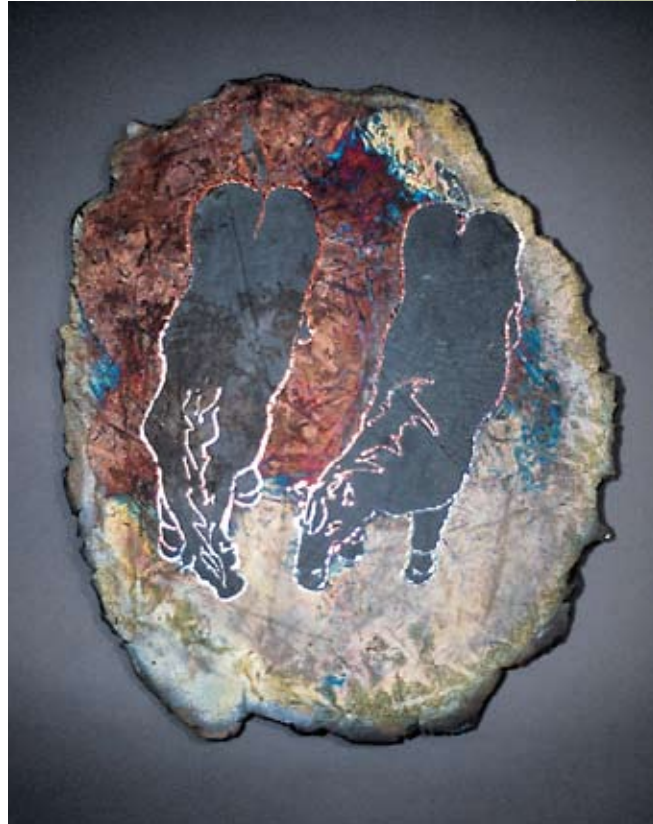
Process

Irregularly shaped slabs for the plaques are prepared on a slab roller. Selsor then adds four nubbins to the backs of each—two to be pierced for the hanging wire, two to keep the slab an even distance from the wall. After the plaques have been dried and bisqued, she sketches the horse designs using a 6B or 8B drawing pencil (figure 1). Latex resist is then brushed over the whole design (figure 2). She has found two thin coats of latex to be easier to remove than one thick coat. Finally, a light coat

of a copper matt glaze called Dry Alligator is sprayed over the entire surface (figure 3).

After about an hour, Selsor uses a needle tool to lift off the latex covering the designs (figure 4). She then redraws the lines with a slip trailer (an ear syringe tipped with a hypodermic needle) filled with a red/bronze copper luster glaze (strained before use) (figure 5). She first used this technique to outline designs in 1995, when she “visualized horses, seen from above, shimmering like ghosts in the night.”

Selsor waits a day, sometimes two, before firing. She arranges the pieces on their sides in the raku kiln (figure 6) and fires them to cone 05. On removing them from the kiln, she waits a few seconds before inverting them onto beds of straw and covering them with galvanized tubs (figure 7). A very short wait gives the background brighter color (figure 8).



“Seekers,” 24 inches in height, with latex-resisted and trailed raku glazes, smoked in straw.



Sketching designs, using a 6B or 8B drawing pencil, on bisque slabs.



Applying liquid latex to the pencil drawing as a glaze resist.

Recipes

Red/Bronze Raku Glaze

Colemanite	50.0 %
Ferro Frit 3134	50.0
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	100.0 %
Add: Tin Oxide	5.1 %
Copper Carbonate	5.6 %

Dry Alligator Raku Glaze

Bone Ash	20 grams
Colemanite	40
Nepheline Syenite	10
Copper Carbonate	10
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	80 grams



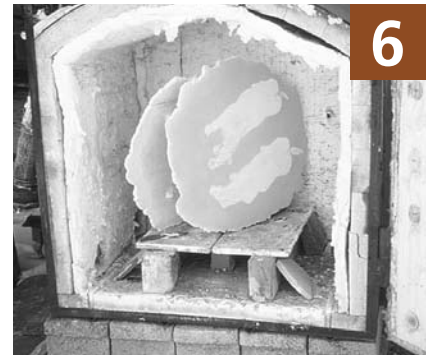
3 Spraying Dry Alligator Raku Glaze over the entire slab surface.



4 Lifting the latex resist from the dry glazed surface.



5 Defining the drawing lines with trailed Red/Bronze Raku Glaze.



6 Glazed slabs loaded on edge in the raku kiln.



7 After firing to cone 05, the slabs are removed from the kiln, laid face down on a bed of straw, then covered with a galvanized washtub.



8 A short smoking period yields carbon-impregnated surfaces wherever the liquid latex had been used to resist the sprayed glaze.