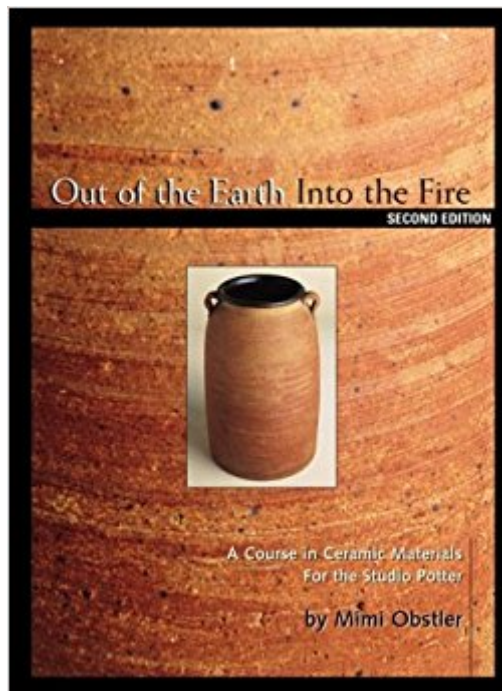




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# **Out Of The Earth, Into The Fire: A Course In Ceramic Materials For The Studio Potter**



## Synopsis

A Course in Ceramic Materials for the Studio Potter Mimi Obstler's *Out of the Earth, Into the Fire* studies glazes by examining the connection between the ceramic raw materials and the surface of a ceramic form. This book presents a twofold approach to the study of claybodies and glazes that is both empirical and historical in nature. It is empirical because it seeks to create and understand ceramic surfaces in terms of a hands-on experience with the primary minerals of our earth. It follows a historical approach in its focus on a single mineral as the core of the glaze or the claybody. Since only hands-on testing produces the information needed to really understand ceramic materials, this book is one of the most valuable resources for potters who want to develop a true mastery of their materials. The approach used in the book does not deny the validity of more technologically advanced methods. Obstler maintains that computer glaze software provides valuable information after the potter is familiar with the working properties of the ceramic materials of her or his glaze. In *Out of the Earth, Into the Fire*, glaze calculation techniques are viewed as useful diagnostic tools for the solution of glaze and claybody problems or substitutions, rather than as an essential means for the creation or understanding of ceramic surfaces. There are only four chapters in the book, but they exhaustively cover the materials you need for a good understanding of each topic. Chapter 1 discusses glaze cores such as feldspars and rocks, and also includes lithium glaze cores, volcanic ash glaze cores and rotten stone. Obstler concludes this and subsequent chapters with labs delineating specific tests you can run and what to observe. This testing is key to understanding how all these materials react when fired. In Chapter 2, *Clays and Claybodies*, you'll discover the unique characteristics of different types of clays: kaolins, ball clays, stoneware, fireclays, and iron-rich clays. Obstler here maintains that if pottery is to thrive, we must understand the nature of clays, and she provides ample information. Each type of clay is discussed including the characteristics, its claybody function, and its glaze function. Chapter 3 discusses auxiliary melter - materials added to the glaze-core to help it achieve a greater melt and fusion. There are many different kinds of melters, but at stoneware temperatures, it is the limestone or calcium-based melters that are most important for the stoneware glaze. The internal oxide structure of limestone is mostly calcium carbonate, which turns into calcium oxide during the firing process. For this reason, whiting, wollastonite, dolomite, gerstley borate and colemanite receive primary attention in this chapter. Rounding out the critical components are the auxiliary silica and alumina minerals discussed in Chapter 4. In discussing silica, Obstler touches on the qualities it lends to a glaze: hardness, glassmaker, crystalline formation and the effect on fluidity and melt. Alumina possesses many unique properties as well and these are covered in depth. In addition to detailed descriptions

of the components of glazes and claybodies, Obstler includes scores of recipes and images of fired examples in low, mid-range and high fire work. The emphasis of Out of the Earth, Into the Fire is on what makes a glaze and how all the components work together. The book can be used as a course book and followed systematically from beginning to end, or as an invaluable reference book to explore any single element. A must have for any studio.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm not exaggerating when I say this is the best book on glazing I've ever read. It's extremely good whether you're just getting into glazing or an advanced potter who calculates matrixes in your sleep. Hell, it's even good for people who are interested in geology. It's a shame that it is no longer in print. Get a copy, share it, if you have the resources reprint it. Glazes are my specialty and this is an excellent book in every way. It gives you a complete understanding of the materials, the geological processes that created them, and how everything we do mimics those geological processes. It's worth every cent.

Best book on fundamental glaze materials I've found.

"Out of the Earth Into the Fire" is a necessary book for any potter, and is especially useful for any potter doing their own glazes. It details in its four chapters, although very long and comprehensive chapters, all of the glaze and clay making ingredients that you will need. The first chapter deals with

the glaze cores. It talks of both the historical and the empirical aspects of all the necessary substances in use. A substance that I can't wait to get my hands on is Rotton Stone. I'll let you read the book to find out why. The second chapter is about clays and clay bodies. Although most of us buy prepared clay this gives us reason to make our own. The next chapter concerns auxiliary melters. We find here about glaze surfaces; how to best utilize a substance to make a glossy, a matt, or an opaque surface. Finally the last chapter reveals all we want to know about silica and alumina. The appendices are full of useful material. There are even some good pictures in this book. An unexpected surprise.

There is a lot of comprehensive information here to absorb. This is a great book for anyone to keep in their studio as a reference guide.

Being responsible as the studio tech for a community ceramic studio and providing the glaze set has been a challenging experience. I have been reading multiple books and articles on the subject of glaze for the studio potter. There are many books available and "Out of the Earth, into the Fire" was one of the books on ceramic materials that has been recommended by potters on the Clayart forum. It is a valuable addition to my library and I think it would be valuable for the intermediate or advanced student, professional potter or teacher. The information is directed to the potter and provides material science insight into the ceramic materials used by the studio potter, both for clay and glaze. The book provides ceramic material information providing geological reference and ceramic materials engineering data that has been written directly to the studio potter or ceramic student. It is a reference I'll return to many times in the future.

When the product arrived, it was in the promised new condition and wrapped to preserve the book. It was in excellent condition. The book itself is very helpful and breaks down Ceramics techniques that range from the basic to the advanced in a very comprehensive fashion. This is an excellent book for any anyone who is or wants to become a ceramist. This book covers techniques from glazing to firing and almost everything in between. Overall, this is a must have book for anyones collection. Excellent.

If you are thinking about experimenting with your glazes, this is the book for you. Very insightful and detailed. Lots of info to digest. I find myself going back to this book time after time.

This is probably... no. ABSOLUTELY the best and most wonderful book I have ever run across. Obstler does an amazing job of showing (and explaining) the true process of ceramics. This is not a technique or coffee table book although it is easily better at both categories than most books of that sort. This IS a book more about the materials of ceramics than the finished product. Mimi lovingly portrays the full cycle of the process which produces a pot. Something all true potters should know is that the actual end result, the pot, is the smallest and most insignificant part of ceramics. In this book, the reader is introduced to the whole life of the materials which we use. In a mish mash of history, formula, chemistry and geology, Mimi Obstler creates a unique and awe-inspiring story not just of the pot or potter, but of the earth from which both are born. This book is beautifully crafted, and you can tell, that a lot of love, work and knowledge have gone into it's creation. This is a must have for anyone who truly loves pottery OR geology. I have never seen a book this amazing before. I highly recommend it. This book is worth every cent and so much more. I can honestly say that I am stunned. Thank you Mimi Obstler, this is a treasure.

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