

# Engobes

**hobby COLOROBBIAS** Engobes are a superb line of quality clay based colors designed for solid coverage of large or small areas, generally used on greenware. The application to greenware is usually understood, but the wonder of this series is that they perform on bisque just as well. In hobby ceramic terms Engobe is described as an opaque underglaze and the colors perform exactly as this name implies...under-a-glaze. Engobes with their intense color pigments can as easily be used for design work and brushstrokes. Any of the colors in this series, including black and white, may be intermixed to form additional Engobe (opaque underglaze) shades.

An even application is necessary for good results, as Engobes do not move or shift in the firing and will appear exactly as applied. When Engobes are used on greenware they require bisque firing, and at this stage, they are totally matte by nature, and can be left this way for decorative items, such as lamps, wall hangings or figurines, otherwise the Engobe would be glazed and re-fired to seal the porous surface and bring out their true color.

When Engobes are applied one over another, (three coat application) the last color applied will totally block out the underneath color. Remember, Engobes are a clay based color series, when clay sets it becomes congealed (semi-jelly-like) and when mixed it returns to its liquid state, and so do the Engobes, always thoroughly shake well before using or adding water to thin.

**PREPARATION:** Shake bottle well. Check for correct consistency. Engobes should be the consistency of medium cream. Engobe should drip off the end of the brush freely, when the brush is fully loaded. If thinning of Engobes is necessary, add a few drops of water and stir to mix thoroughly.

## Methods of Application and Use

**WARE PREPARATION:** Working on cleaned greenware or bisque lightly wipe piece (s) down with a damp sponge to remove dust, and to add a bit of moisture so the color will flow on smoothly. Application methods as follows:

**BRUSHING:** It is usually recommended to thin a small amount of color with water to create a wash. This mixture is then applied over the surface of the ware prior to applying the 3 coats, recommended for solid coverage. This mixture should be about 50-50. By mixing the color to this thin consistency the color actually penetrates the surface of the clay, and especially the bisque and allows a better bond with the surface. Do not rub or polish greenware, as such a polished surface will reject the application of color. Use good quality natural hairbrushes for best results. Load brush in the following manner: Work off a palette, dip the water-moistened brush into the Engobe color completely, color should cover the hair to the ferrule of the brush. Do not wipe off the brush since this action depletes the color from the brush. Hold the brush in a vertical position and work back and forth to properly saturate the hair in the brush. Do not work with a stared brush or scrub color into ware. Keep the brush fully loaded, permitting the color to flow onto the greenware or bisque.

Working in this manner, apply 3 coats as smoothly as possible. Apply each coat in the same direction. Apply sufficient pressure on the bristles so they bend about halfway. Wait until the water sheen has disappeared from the first coat before applying the second and third coats.

**SPONGING:** Squeeze color onto a palette (glazed tile) or into a shallow container. For solid coverage: dip a slightly dampened sponge into the color and pounce three even coats onto the surface of the ware using a pouncing method. Allowing the water sheen to disappear between coats. For veiling: Dip slightly dampened sponge into the color and then lightly pounce sponge onto a clean section of the palette to remove some of the color, which will open the pores of the sponge. Then lightly pounce the sponge to the surface of the ware leaving a veiling of color only one application is used for veiling unless a two-tone effect is desired.

**SGRAFFITOING:** Apply Engobe color to greenware as directed using either the sponge or brush method. While the color is still damp Sketch or trace design onto piece. Use a clean-up tool or Sgraffito tool to cut (scratch) through color to reveal clay body or color underneath. Working while color is damp, sgraffito the entire outline and details of design. Dust particles of color and clay off with a soft dry brush. Keep the surface dampened to prevent chipping of color.

This can be done by lightly misting with water from a spray bottle. Bisque fire to witness cone 04 and glaze as desired.

**POLISHING:** This technique produces a decorative smooth surface. Apply Engobe to greenware or bisque using brush or sponge method. It is recommended to apply a fourth coat of engobe when using this technique. The piece must be polished as soon as the last coat of color has lost its sheen, but still damp. Use a soft, lint-free cloth and polish in a circular motion. Buff lightly until a soft sheen develops, and then bisque fire piece to witness cone 04. Polished engobes are ideal for backgrounds for spot glazing decorative pieces. This technique is not recommended for utility items.

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