

# WHIMSICAL FIGURES

by Dee Schaad

*Chairman of the Department of Art & Design—University of Indianapolis*



Dee Schaad was born and raised in Nebraska and has a MFA from the University of Nebraska Lincoln, has taught ceramics at the University of Indianapolis for more than 30 years. He has been chairman of the Department of Art and Design since 1994. His work is included in a number of public and private collections and has exhibited nationally. His writing has appeared in a number of National publications. As a ceramist, his work covers a broad spectrum of ceramic processes. He works in both stoneware and earthenware. His work consists of large and small sculptural pieces and traditional, more functional vessel formatted objects. Dee Schaad was named University of Indianapolis' Teacher of the year for 2006. During the summer of 2007 he was awarded a Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship from the Arts Council of Indianapolis.

## Lesson Plan Goals and Objectives

- Students learn to make whimsical figures using simple materials and common ceramic processes
  - Introduces content and the artistic process
  - Can integrate history and literature in this art lesson
  - Incorporate aesthetics, symbolism and personal expression
- This lesson is suitable for 4th grade through adults.

## Background and Preparation

Basic instruction on clay processes and ceramic terminology.

To illustrate literature, understand the work and its place in history and its impact. Videos, prints and photographs are helpful. For young artists, keep it simple and choose topics which will keep their interest.

To present humor in the fine arts, show artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Keith Haring, Stuart Davis and Red Grooms.

Give all students a canvas covered board as their work surface.

*Clay figures can be inspired by history, literature or current events.*

*Examples in step-out photos were made by Tim Martin.*

## Tools & Materials

- AMACO® White Art Clay No. 25 (45015Y)–Low Fire Cone 05 2-3 lbs. for each figure
- AMACO® Velvet Underglazes 8-12 colors in pints or Velvet Underglazes Sets of 2 oz. jars
- AMACO® Velvet Underglaze V-361 Jet Black (37438X)
- AMACO® Gloss Glaze LG 10 Clear (39143R)–1 or 2 pints
- Hardwood Rolling Pin (11196M) and Hardwood Thickness Strips (11190F)
- Canvas Covered Board (32349G)
- Sharp bladed knife
- Paper towels
- Assorted brushes
- Containers for slip and water
- AMACO® Clay Texture Molds TM-2 Triabal Diamond (32219V) TM-3 Geo/Floral 6-Pattern Design (32220W) TM-4 Sandwaves (32225X) MCTM-1 Pre-Columbian (32228C)
- Toothbrush to scratch surface of clay
- Garlic press (for making hair)

Use your own imagination for additional tools

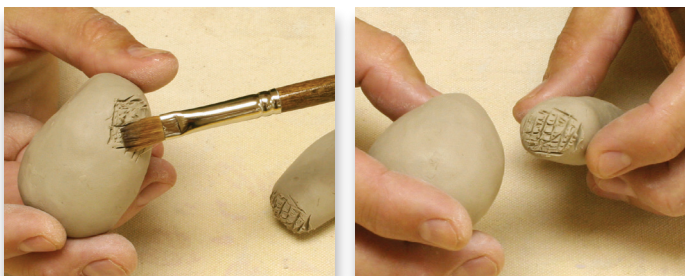
## Create the Head and Neck



**1.** For head, roll a piece of AMACO® White Art Clay No. 25 into a small golf ball sized egg shape.



**2.** For neck, roll out another piece of clay into a carrot shape that is 1½" to 2" long.



**3.** Think of the head as a clock with the narrow part being the bottom. Make a mark at 7 o'clock. Score and slip the marked area along with the fat end of the carrot.



**4.** Attach the neck to the head at an angle where you have slipped and scored.



**5.** Make a horizontal cut for the mouth, then small vertical cuts to create the teeth.



**6.** Roll two pea-sized pieces of clay into small coils. Lay them along the teeth to create the impression of lips, one above the teeth and one below. Smooth outside edges of lips into the head.





**7.** Smooth two small pea-sized balls along each side of the mouth to create cheeks. Form another piece of clay into a nose and attach above the mouth. Use needle tool to create nostrils.



**8.** Push depressions into the clay for eyes. Roll out two pea-sized clay balls and two more slightly smaller. Moisten sockets then place one pea-sized ball into the depression and cut it in half horizontally.



**9.** Next, push one of the smaller clay balls into the slit to create the eyeball with an upper and lower eyelid. Repeat for the second eye. Use a needle tool to define details within the eyes.



**10.** Roll two pea-sized clay balls into an egg shape. Squeeze slightly then attach to sides of head for ears. Use a clay tool to add detail. Wrap finished head in plastic and set aside.

## Create the Body



**11.** Roll out a tapered slab of clay 6" x 10" and 1/4" thick. Texture slab with AMACO® clay texture molds. Form slab into robe by rolling the outer edges underneath itself. The robe should be narrower at the top.



**12.** Once robe is formed, leave it on the work-board to prevent over-handling. Move the robe by handling the board and not the actual textured clay.

## Attach the Head to the Body

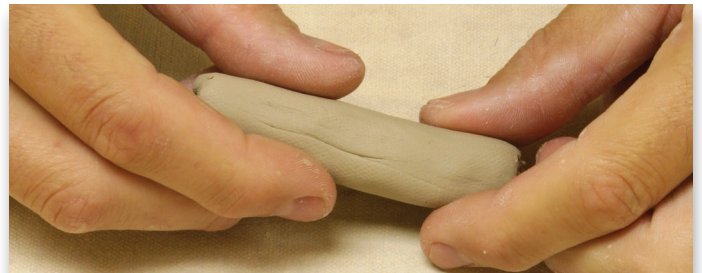


**13.** Score and slip back of robe and front of neck then attach. Attaching the head allows the artist to create personality by having the figure looking in any direction.

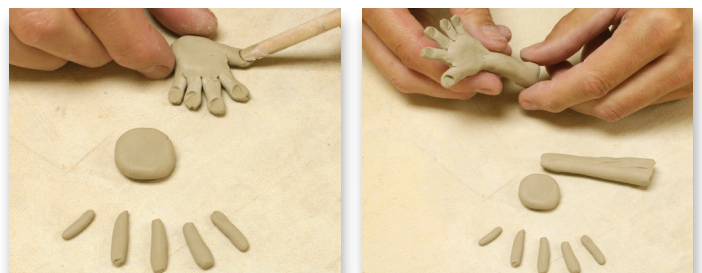


**14.** A small ball of clay may be needed as support to prevent head from drooping. Place a small piece of paper towel between head and support and leave during the firing process.

## Create the Arms and Hands

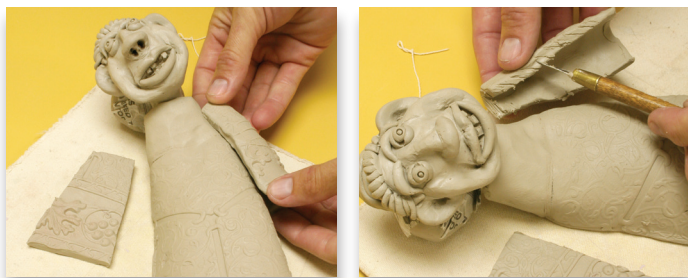


**15.** Roll out two carrot-shaped pieces of clay approximately 1 1/2" long for the arms



**16.** Roll two clay balls the size of small grapes. Squish flat. Roll out small coils for each finger. Attach fingers to hand, then attach hand to arm. Add details such as fingernails and jewelry if desired. Set aside.





**17.** Cut out two textured slabs about 2" x 1½". Attach one end of sleeve to robe near neck and taper it down toward waist. Repeat for other sleeve.



**18.** Score and slip the bottom of the sleeve to the top of the arm and attach.

## Glossary

**Bisque:** Unglazed ceramic after the first firing.

**Fire:** To heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is hard and it becomes ceramic.

**Glaze:** A mixture of ceramic materials including clay, silica and fluxes that forms the protective and decorative coating on the surface of pottery when subjected to high temperatures in a kiln.

**Kiln:** An oven or furnace that can achieve very high temperatures (2000 to 2300) and is used for firing bisque and glazed ceramic ware.

**Sculpture:** A three-dimensional work of art that is intended to be viewed from all sides.

**Slab:** A rolled out piece of clay of a certain thickness.

**Slip and Score:** Process of joining 2 pieces of clay by texturing each piece slightly with little cuts where they will be joined then applying slip (watered down clay) or vinegar and pressing together to form a strong bond.

**Underglaze:** A special type of color that is put on a ceramic piece before the glaze. It has no flux (glass former) in it so it stays where it is put when fired and is good for detail work. It is used for painting and decorating.

## Create the Feet



**19.** Create the feet like the hands. Roll two egg-shaped balls of clay the size of a grape. Squish flat. Roll out small fat eggs of various sizes and attach them to the feet to create toes.



**20.** Score and slip the bottom of the robe and the top of the foot and attach.

## Finishing Touches

**21.** Add details to further the figure's personality. Use a garlic press to create hair. Create jewelry or top your figure off with a hat. The possibilities are endless.

## Firing

**22.** Allow the figure to completely dry then bisque fire to witness Cone 04.

## Decoration

Coat entire figure with a wash solution of 50% AMACO® black underglaze and 50% water to enhance the texture. Once applied, use damp sponge to wipe the underglaze off the high spots. Color any remaining areas you choose with AMACO® Velvet underglazes and fire again to Cone 05. Apply AMACO® LG-10 Clear Gloss if a gloss finish is desired on certain areas.

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