

CLAY PITCHERS

Handbuild with Textured Slabs and Sprig Molds

by Tracy P. Gamble

I love the pitchers in this lesson plan because there are so many possibilities in design for shape, style, texture, decoration and technique. This plan is designed for 4th grade to adult, all skill levels.

Create these pitchers from scratch. Students individually design their pitcher shape on paper, cut out templates from their design and then start handbuilding in clay. So many textures to choose from for this project including: texture rollers, texture molds, handmade stamps, found object textures, etc. Students have additional choices for handles and feet for pitchers with the handle and feet sprig molds. There are also many decorative sprig molds to choose from.

Cross curriculum possibilities exist for science or biology themes with frogs, fish, etc. and/or social studies with cultural textures and sprig attachments, and/or history themes with Mimbres, Islamic and fossil textures and sprigs.

Let your imagination and your curriculum be your guide.



Lesson Plan Goals and Objectives

- Students will create a functional or purely decorative pitcher using design skills, slabs, textures, sprigs.
- Students will learn to create and decorate with sprigs
- This lesson integrates the history of many cultures and art.
- This lesson is suitable for 4th graders to adult.

National Visual Arts Standards

- Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.
- Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.
- Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.
- Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making.



Sara Hawkings

Planning

- 5 pounds of clay per student
- Roll slab $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick and 10-12" x 15" slabs (approximately 3-4 pounds for slab)
- Keep some fresh clay (two pounds per student), not rolled into slabs, to use for making sprig attachments used for feet, handles and decoration



Scott Kelley

Tools & Materials

- AMACO® Terra Cotta Clay No. 77 (45143N) – Cone 05-5
- AMACO® Off White Sculpture, Raku Clay No. 27 (45029P) – Low Fire (Cone 05)
- AMACO® Warm Brown Stoneware Clay No. 58 (45007R) – Mid/High Fire (Cone 5)
- AMACO® White Stoneware Clay No. 38 (45047J) – Mid/High Fire (Cone 5)
- AMACO® Velvet Underglazes
- AMACO® Glazes (Cone 05 - 5/6)
- AMACO® Underglaze 18 gauge 2 oz. Applicator (11261G)
- AMACO® Sprig Molds
 - Handle (32244S)
 - Decorative Foot (32249D)
 - Dragonfly and Salamander (32251G)
 - Turtle and Frog (32250E)
 - Day of the Dead (32242P)
 - Fossil (32247W)
 - Leaf (32245T)
 - Koi (32246V)
 - Mimbres (32243R)
- AMACO® Texture Molds
 - Tribal Diamond (32219V)
 - Geo/Floral 6-Pattern Design (32220W)
 - MCTM-1 Pre-Columbian (32228C)
 - MCTM-2 East Asian (32229D)
 - MCTM-3 Islamic (32238M)
 - MCTM-4 Aboriginal (32239L)
- AMACO® Wire Clay Cutter (11017N)
- Slab rolling device
 - brent® Mini SRC slab roller (22683B)
 - Hardwood Rolling Pin (11196M) and Hardwood Thickness Strips (11190F)
- Double-Ended Clay Shaper™ No. 6 (11126L)
- Fettling Knife (11192H)
- Scoring Tool (11199R)
- Texture tools
 - Textured Clay Rollers—8 different designs (16005F or 16008G)
 - Stamps
- Various Glaze Brushes
- Sketch Book and paper
- Scissors
- Chamois
- Vinegar
- Rubber rib
- Newspaper
- Stiff cardboard

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTION

Pre-Work

- Design and sketch pitchers: 3 to 4 inches tall (including spout and feet)
x 4 to 5 inches wide (including handle)
- Cut templates from sketches on paper



1. Roll slab, smooth and compress with plastic rib.



4. Score sides at the ends to join, using a scratch tool, fork, etc. where the parts of the pitcher connect.



2. Apply texture. Press texture into slab using a texture roller, stamps, or press slab into texture molds.



5. Paint on small amount of vinegar (used instead of slip for the glue) on scored places and attach.



3. There are four parts to a basic pitcher: two sides (squares), one base (oval), and one spout (rectangle).



6. Reinforce seams with coils of clay, press and smooth gently.



7. Score, paint on vinegar, and attach base to sides of pitcher. Press base to sides.



10. Cut along mark.



8. Seal both inside and out to secure attached areas for a functional pitcher.



11. Score, paint on vinegar, and attach spout. Smooth interior of spout carefully to connect and enhance pouring capabilities.



9. Size up the spout and decide exactly where to place. Mark outside where spout goes.



12. If desired for design, cut corners off top of spout.



13. Smooth end of spout for pourability.



16. Roll a small clay coil and then flatten one end. Wet flat end with a bit of water, attach to clay at one end.



14. Press the amount of clay needed into the handle sprig mold. Press and repress clay into mold.



17. Lift up and quickly remove small clay coil. Shape 'handle' into a "C" for attaching after feet are attached.



15. Smooth to flatten, from the center out, with a rubber rib.



18. Make feet from sprig mold using same technique.



19. Attach feet with larger half of foot wrapped gently around and up the outside of the base. Point bottom of feet up and smooth connections using wood smoothing tool.



21. Smooth rim and spout with chamois and fingers.



20. Attach handle and if desired, more decorative sprigs.



22. Slow dry with plastic draped over pitcher for 24 hours. Remove drape of plastic and continue drying until bone dry. Bisque fire pitcher to Cone 04 and finish by applying final glaze decoration. Glaze fire.

Pitchers can be made with low fire (Cone 04) clay or mid/high fire (Cone 5/6) clay. Match glaze to clay type, Cone 04 clay with Cone 04 glaze, etc. Decoration on wet and leather hard clay can be done with Velvet underglazes before the bisque fire.

Glossary

Bone-dry: Final stage of greenware, completely dry and ready to be fired. Clay is very fragile, non-plastic and porous within this state.

Chamois: A soft, pliable cotton cloth finished to simulate the leather from any of various skins dressed with oil.

Leather-hard Clay: Stage between wet and dry clay. The clay is stiff enough to support its own weight, but pliable enough to be bent and worked with.

Score: to scratch or "rough up" surfaces of clay that are to be joined together.

Sprigging: Decorating technique in which small clay coils, balls, or molded pieces are affixed to the damp or leather-hard surface.

Template: A positive pattern used to trace a shape or design.



Lesson plan by Tracy Gamble.
Photography by David Gamble.

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