

Houses Made of Clay

Cheryl Suitor

By the time students enter fifth grade at my school their knowledge and skills associated with creating forms in clay have evolved into sophisticated mastering of several techniques including pulling, pinching, squeezing, rolling, coiling, slab building, and modeling with tools. I wanted to combine all of the above skills in one long-term sculpture project to challenge and inspire my fifth-grade students.

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Motivation and Discussion

I discussed with students the difference between a painting and a sculpture of a house. I introduced the idea by displaying watercolor paintings by artists Edward Hopper and Henry Gasser. Each artist often included at least one large building or group of buildings in his compositions.

We compared these paintings with two teacher-made ceramic sculptures of houses and the work of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. We also discussed the architectural necessities of colonial America and the materials available during that time.

Next, I asked students to think about what their dream house might look like. Does it have a chimney, a front porch, a deck, mailbox, front and back doors, windows and shutters, or satellite antennae? Is the house made of brick, stone, wood, or some other material? How can you show this in a clay sculpture?

Studio Sessions

I asked students to define terms listed on the board: greenware, slab, coil, pinch, texture, kiln, slip, score, and glaze. Each day of four class sessions, students read the step-by-step directions posted on the board before I demonstrated the process. They completed the steps for that day and sealed their work in plastic zipper bags between classes.

Day One

Objectives:

Explain how a painting is different from a sculpture. Explain how to build a sculpture with a slab of clay.

Activity:

1. Roll out a slab of clay. Be sure the clay is an even thickness.
2. Trace the pattern page. Use the plastic knife to cut out the shapes.
3. Score the edges and rub slip on each piece.
4. Press the shapes together.
5. Knit the seams together.

Days Two and Three

Objective:

Explain the difference between actual and visual texture.

Activity:

1. Score, rub on slip, and complete building the parts of your house.
2. Use tools to knit the seams together. Rub them smooth with your finger.
3. Add details such as a porch, windows, shutters, or a chimney.
4. Use tools to carve textures.



Angie Frank, grade five.

When the sculptures are complete, check to see that each student carved his or her name on the bottom. Allow a week for the sculptures to dry slowly and then bisque fire them to cone 05.

Day Four

Objectives:

Describe the process for glazing a clay sculpture.

Activity:

1. Think about what colors you want for your sculpture.
2. Use a flat brush for large areas.
3. Use a small pointed brush for details.
4. Paint three coats of glaze.
5. Be sure to wash your brush often.

Evaluation

Ask students to self-critique their work to see if these objectives have been met:

- Did you roll out thick, even slabs of clay?
- Does the house look balanced and stable?
- Have you shown decorative and/or textural elements on all four sides?
- Did you add personal elements and personality to your house?

- Have you applied two or three even coats of glaze to add color and shine?
- Are you proud of what you created?
- If you could change something, what would it be and why? 🐾

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NATIONAL STANDARDS

Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks.

WEB LINK

cmsweb2.loudoun.k12va.us/512125423164648/site/default.asp

Materials

- pre-cut blocks of low-fire clay
- canvas placemats
- cups filled with clay slip
- clay tools
- rolling pins
- wooden paint stirrers
- gallon-size plastic zipper bags
- black permanent markers



Dillon Owens, grade five.