

Keeping Art Functional

Annemarie Baldauf

In your school's art program, does the art students create have a function? Do some students throw away their art when it is returned?

When I see students throw away their sketchbooks full of their beautiful one-of-a-kind drawings, it strikes me as such a loss. I wish students held on to them, or at least shared them with their parents before they threw them away. In response to this, my goal is to both keep art functional and teach the functions of art.

Art needs to be functional, in that it is valuable to the student, school, and community and is worth keeping in the curriculum. It's up to the art teacher to support this function by integrating art into the school-wide curriculum and displaying art in, around, and outside the school.

For a first clay project, a slab plate decorated with drawing is easy, successful, and serves a function. Students proudly take their plate home, share it, and eat from it, too.

Making a drawing on a paper plate and painting it offers a different approach. A blank piece of paper might give students pause, but give them a paper plate and their attitudes change. There is something about drawing on a circle or an oval versus a rectangle that expands students' art experiences. With this in mind, my students made both decorated clay platters and heavy-duty paper

plates. If students make these around a holiday, the plates can function as gifts.

Painted Clay Plate

Have students sketch designs for their clay plates, including a border design. Use a slab roller or have students roll their own slabs, then press the clay carefully into a heavy-duty paper plate that serves as a mold. Have students trim and smooth the edges and then transfer their drawings onto the clay. Fire them when they are dry, glaze them with food-safe glazes, and fire them again.

Painted Paper Plate

Have students begin with sketches for the top and bottom of a paper plate, encouraging them to include the outer rim in the design. When the sketches have been approved, students can draw them on heavy-duty round or oval paper plates.

Materials

- heavy-duty paper plates, two per student
- white earthenware clay
- sponges and other clay tools
- low-fire, lead-free glazes (food safe) in assorted colors
- black permanent markers
- watercolor paints and brushes

They can then outline their drawings with black permanent marker and paint them with watercolors. You can spray the finished plates with an acrylic gloss sealer. (Remind students these are not to be used for eating.)

Annemarie Baldauf is an art teacher at Riverview Middle School in Bay Point, California. annemariebaldauf@sbcglobal.net

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

WEB LINK

www.photoshopshowcase.com/View-FlashMedia.aspx?AID=337482&AT=3

