

## Studio Objectives

Students will:

- design a sequential narrative to wrap around a vessel.
- include a human figure and two or more decorative elements in classical style.

## Materials

- examples of narrative pottery

Decide whether students will actually make clay objects or simply design them. If they are designing only, then provide them with:

- sketch paper, 9 x 12", and pencils

If they are to make the plates or vessels, you will need:

- clay
- colored slip that contrasts with the clay body color
- brushes for applying slip
- tools for carving or incising

## Setup

Show students examples of narrative pottery. Guide them in creating a plate, bowl, or other vessel.

## Create It

- When students have completed their narrative sketch and vessel, have them paint a band of slip that is wide enough to contain their narrative.
- Have them transfer their drawing to the dry slip-painted band.
- Encourage students to carve and incise the major shapes first, then focus on details. They may paint additional lines on the surface using slip.
- Bisque fire, apply clear glaze, and glaze fire.

## Studio Experience

# Superhero Narratives

You will tell a story in a slip-painted format similar to that of a classical narrative work. In ceramics, classical style uses figurative imagery to tell a story. The artist uses line drawings for the wraparound design and also writes on the piece.

The ceramic artists of the Greek, Moche, and Mayan classical periods decorated their pots with narrative (storytelling) themes that often featured superheroes or mythological creatures. Pots also were used to record special events such as weddings, funerals, festivals, and battles. Often, these classical works were high-status serving vessels used for rituals or awarded as regal gifts. They signified political power and social prestige.

## Before You Begin

- Consider the narrative form as it exists today. What artistic devices do we use to visually tell our stories?
- Think about a story you would like to tell. This could be inspired by a superhero in popular culture, a story passed down through your family or culture, or an incident in the life of someone you admire. You might also choose to show a special event that has affected your life.
- Develop a narrative design that dramatizes the story.
- Sketch the story in sequence. Make a few sketches and choose the ones that best show the story.
- Use the human figure in your narrative. Your figures can be realistic, cartoonish, or stylized.
- In your design, include at least two decorative elements that follow the classical style: line drawings, face and body shown in profile, and pictorial field balanced by writing and/or symbols.

- Decide whether you want to portray the narrative on a plate, bowl, or other vessel. Contour lines can be incised or slip-painted.

You will need:

- sketches of your narrative design
- plate, bowl, or vessel (damp but fairly stiff)
- colored slip
- paintbrush to apply slip
- tools for carving or incising

## Create It

- 1 Paint a band of slip around the surface of your piece. It should be wide enough to contain your narrative.
- 2 Working from your sketches, plan and draw your narrative on the slip-painted clay.
- 3 Incise (carve) contour lines through the band of slip. Slip-paint additional lines on the surface, as desired.
- 4 Use writing or symbols to balance each segment of your design.
- 5 Sign your work.
- 6 Bisque fire.
- 7 Apply clear glaze.
- 8 Complete final glaze firing.

**Check It** Were you able to tell a story in the available space? Who do the figures represent? Explain why you chose them. Do they correspond to mythological figures, such as monsters or superheroes? Why or why not? Did you make your figures look real? Or did you make them look exaggerated or cartoonish? How successful were you? Point out at least two characteristics of your composition that



**Fig. 1-26.** Use a pencil to transfer your design onto the pot.

represent the classical style. Explain how you balanced the design. Why did you choose the design elements you did? How does each fit with the story? Can you think of other ways you could use this narrative theme in clay?

## Sketchbook Connection

Think of your sketchbook as a companion on your creative journey. Make one section for writing thoughts and ideas about your dreams, experiences, interests, and feelings. Draw to expand upon those themes. Make another section where you document the different stages of your creative process. Explain the decorative techniques you experimented with, and include glazing and firing information. Note the results and why you consider them successful or not. Finally, keep a section for notes, pictures, or articles about historical images and various clay artists whose works appeal to you.



**Fig. 1-27.** Notice how the incised design stands out in contrast to the black slip.

Student work, Candice Cuchetti, *Greek Vessel* (detail). Red earthenware, black underglaze, coil-built, black and red figure carving technique.

**Fig. 1-28.** “The woman on my pottery represents Sioned with her royal circlet on. The large crests are my interpretation of what a family crest for Sioned’s family would look like.”

Jen Hansen, *Heroic Greek*, 2002. 7½" (19 cm) high.



## Sketchbook Connection

Help students to understand that a sketchbook is much like a journal—a place to document thoughts and ideas. Encourage them to include both images and text in their sketchbook to demonstrate their involvement with ceramic art.

## Rubric: Studio Assessment

4	3	2	1
<b>Idea Communication</b> • Sequential treatment of narrative • Additional symbols/writing • Realistic, cartoonish, or stylized			
Figurative narrative is highly detailed and sequentially readable. Meaningful symbolic designs/figures help tell story. Stylistic approach beneficial. <i>Detailed, meaningful story</i>	Figurative narrative is detailed and sequentially readable, combines symbols and designs. Stylistic approach appropriate. <i>Satisfying story</i>	1 of these: Narrative lacks figurative emphasis; sequential readability needs development; stylistic approach inappropriate or inconsistent. <i>Developing story</i>	2–3 of these: Narrative lacks figurative emphasis; sequential readability lacks development; stylistic approach inappropriate or inconsistent. <i>Underdeveloped story</i>
<b>Decorative Elements</b> • Elements: line and color • Profile view • Balanced pictorial field • Location of narrative band			
Lively use of line/color add variety, continuity. Figures in profile view; interact and flow with other elements. Balanced action on entire pictorial field. Location works with clay form. <i>Unusual, engaging, integrated</i>	Line/color add variety to narrative band. Some profile views; figures interact with other elements to balance majority of pictorial field. Location works with clay form. <i>Effective, complete</i>	1–2 of these: lack of variety in line use and color; few figures in profile view; pictorial field neglected in some areas; location needs much more consideration. <i>Needs additions or edits</i>	3–4 of these: lack of variety in line use and color; few figures in profile view; pictorial field neglected in significant areas; location needs much more consideration. <i>Significant gaps, awkward</i>
<b>Media Use</b> • Symmetrical clay form • Painted slip band • Incised lines • Clear glaze			
No apparent mistakes in symmetry of clay form, slip or glaze application; incised lines do not puncture form. <i>Skillful, controlled</i>	Few apparent mistakes in symmetry of clay form, slip or glaze application; incised lines do not puncture form. <i>Competent</i>	Some noticeable mistakes in symmetry of clay form, slip or glaze application; incised lines may have punctured form. <i>More practice indicated</i>	Many noticeable mistakes in media use; detracts significantly from effect OR work very incomplete. <i>Rudimentary difficulties</i>
<b>Work Process</b> • Brainstorming • Sketches • Reflection/Evaluation			
Thorough documentation; goes above and beyond assignment expectations. <i>Thoughtful, thorough, independent</i>	Complete documentation; meets assignment expectations. <i>Meets expectations</i>	Documentation is somewhat haphazard or incomplete. <i>Incomplete, hit and miss</i>	Documentation is minimal or very disorganized. <i>Very incomplete</i>