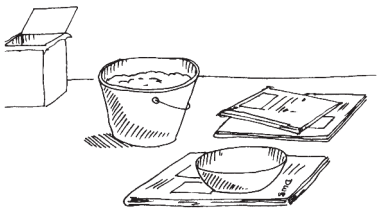
African Art
Illustrated Art Lessons

LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

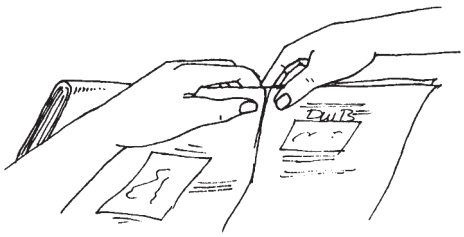
Making Papier-Mâché Masks

Materials: papier-mâché paste • 8" balloons • corrugated cardboard squares • brown paper towels • scissors • glue • bucket • bowls • newspaper

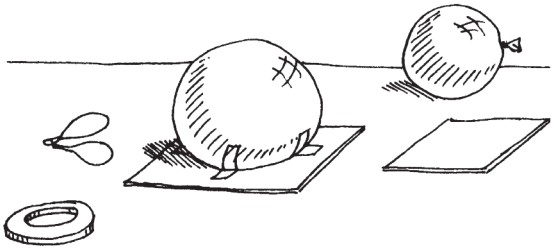
Note: Several hours before beginning this project, mix papier-mâché paste according to directions. This advance preparation allows the paste to reach the correct consistency.



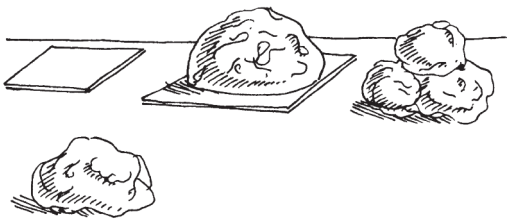
1. Cover tables with newspaper. Distribute small bowls of paste to the students.



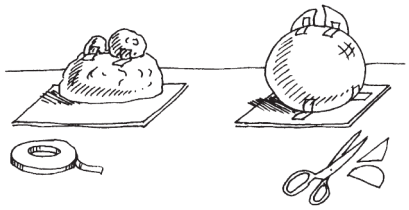
2. Tear newspaper into 1" strips by ripping it along the grain.



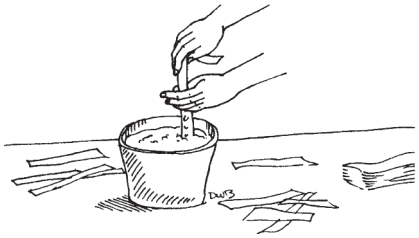
3. To create an armature, blow up a balloon, tie it firmly, and tape it securely to a corrugated cardboard square.



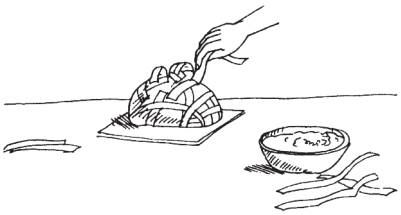
4. As an alternative, an armature can also be made by wadding newspaper into a half ball and placing it on a cardboard base.



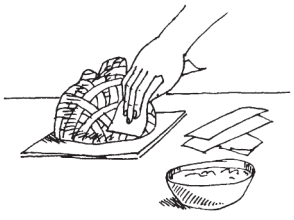
5. Add features by cutting shapes from cardboard and taping them to the balloon, or by wadding dry newspaper into the desired shapes and taping these to the newspaper ball.



6. Soak the strips of newspaper in the paste. Wipe off excess paste by gently pulling the strips between the fingers.



7. Apply the strips to the armature so that they overlap. Apply four or five layers of strips. To keep track of the layers, apply the first layer in one direction, the second in another, and so forth.



8. For added strength, apply brown paper towels as the final layer. The mask will seem soft and fragile while being assembled, but will become hard and firm when dry.

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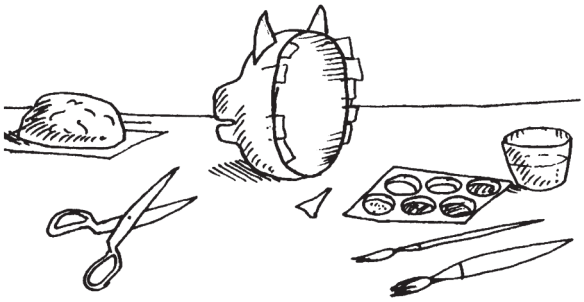
African Art
Illustrated Art Lessons

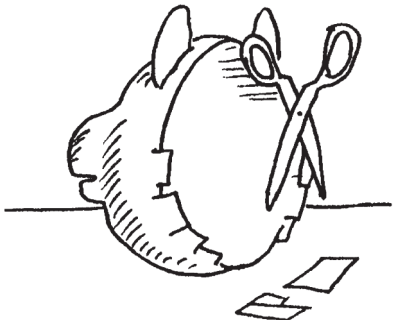
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Painting Papier-Mâché Masks

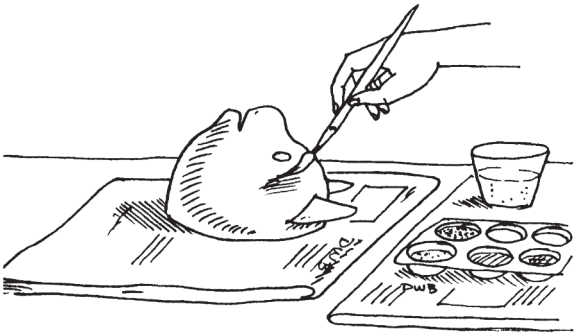
Materials: paints • assorted paintbrushes • egg cartons • jars of water • scissors • acrylic medium • feathers, yarn, string, or similar materials



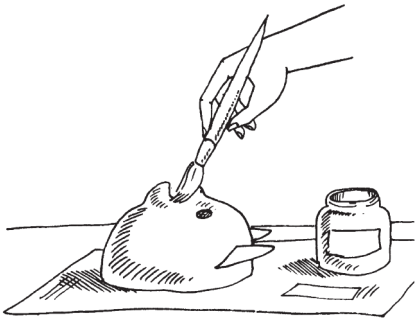
1. When the papier-mâché is completely dry (see "Making Papier-Mâché Masks"), break the balloons or remove the wadded newspaper, leaving the thin, hard shell of the papier-mâché.



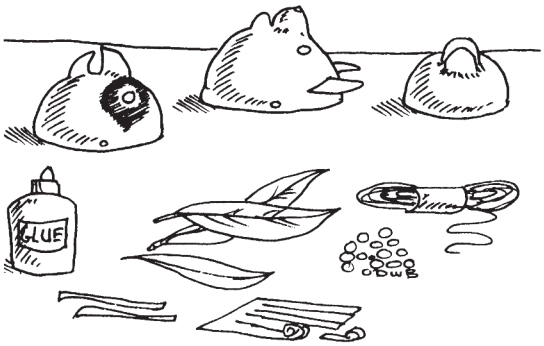
2. Trim the edges of the mask with scissors to make it neat. Cut eye holes.



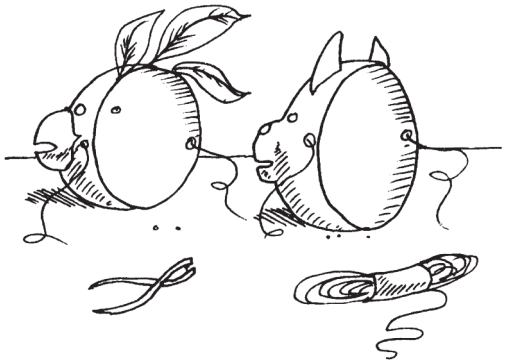
3. Apply a coat of paint, then paint details of the animal features.



4. When the paint has dried, apply several coats of acrylic medium to ensure that the mask is waterproof and permanent.



5. Add expression and characteristics to the mask by gluing on feathers, yarn, and other materials.



6. Punch a hole in each side of the mask and insert string or yarn so that it can be worn.

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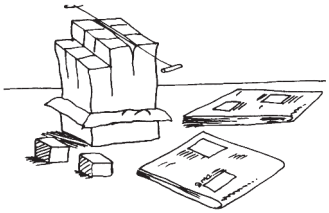
African Art
Illustrated Art Lessons

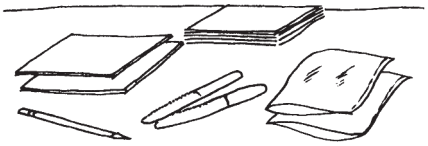
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Studying African Animals: *Making Clay Animals*

Materials: 25-pound bag of clay • wire cutter • small squares of cardboard • newspaper • plastic knives or sharpened pencils • water • paintbrushes • plastic bags

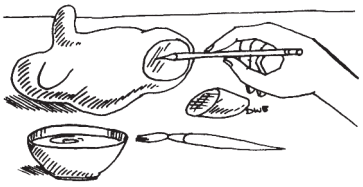


1. Cover tables with newspaper. Divide the clay so that each student has approximately one pound.

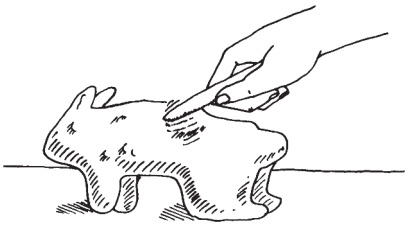


2. Give each student a small square of cardboard on which to work the sculpture, a plastic knife as a carving tool, and a plastic bag large enough to store the cardboard and clay so as to keep the clay moist during the project.

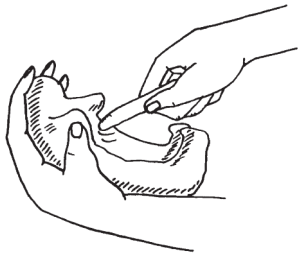
3. Have students think about the animal they will portray. What is its body structure? How is the head attached? How long are the legs? Consider a pose for the animal that will support the weight of the clay. After thinking through the structure of the animal, begin forming it from a solid piece of clay by pulling out clay for the head and legs.



4. Add features by scoring and moistening both surfaces of the clay before joining them. This step makes a firm bond and keeps parts from separating during the drying process.



5. Use the plastic knife or a pencil point to carve in details such as hair and facial features.



6. If the sculpture will be fired, hollow out the animal by holding it upside down and gently scooping out the clay inside the body. This step keeps the sculpture from exploding in the kiln.

7. Dry the sculpture slowly by leaving it in an open plastic bag. Turn the sculpture occasionally until it is completely dry. Clay shrinks as it dries, and this method allows the thin and thick parts to dry at the same speed and shrink together. If a kiln is available, fire the piece when it is completely dry.

For information on physical changes in clay, see the lesson "Experimenting with Clay: *Physical Changes in Clay*."

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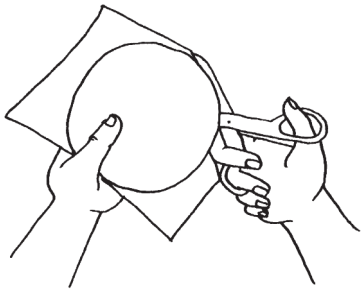
Reliving the Renaissance
Illustrated Art Lessons

LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

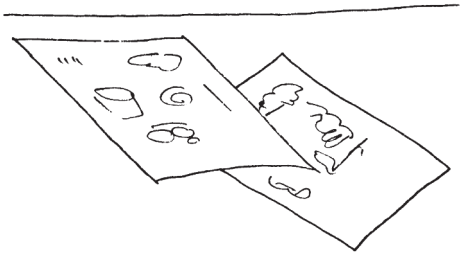
Renaissance Painting: *Creating a Tondo*

Materials: heavy white paper, cut into circles (17" in diameter) • paintbrushes of different sizes • nontoxic powder paint • eggs • water • egg cartons • newsprint • newspaper • pencils • nontoxic gold paint

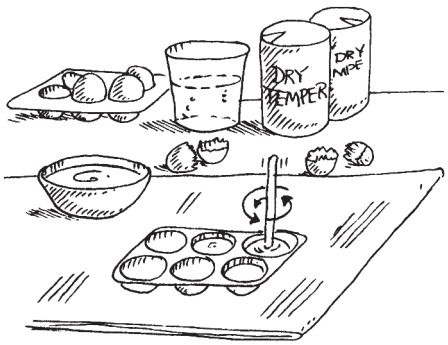
1. Select an event from the travel journal (see "Writing a Travel Journal") as a subject for a painting. Using pencil on newsprint, make sketches of the event.



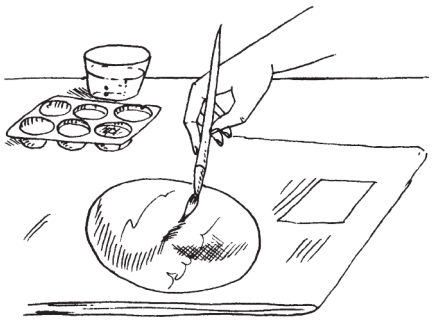
2. Cut pieces of newsprint into 17" circles. Have each student sketch the travel scene to fit the round format (tondo), carefully differentiating elements in the foreground, middle ground, and background. Copy the sketch onto heavy white paper.



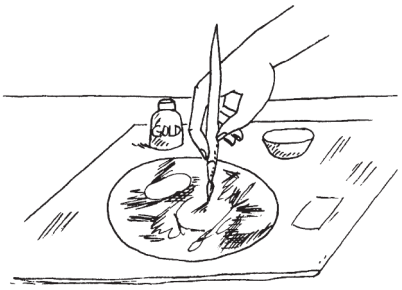
3. Review painting techniques and prepare the classroom (see "Preparing to Paint").



4. Mix dry paint with egg yolks and water. Adjust the amount of water to produce a smooth paint. Experiment with different paint consistencies and brushes. If eggs are not available, mix the paint with water.



5. When students are comfortable with the egg tempera medium, they are ready to paint. After they mix their own paints, have them first paint the backgrounds of their compositions, then the foregrounds and details.



6. To create the effect of gilding in Renaissance paintings, use nontoxic gold paint.

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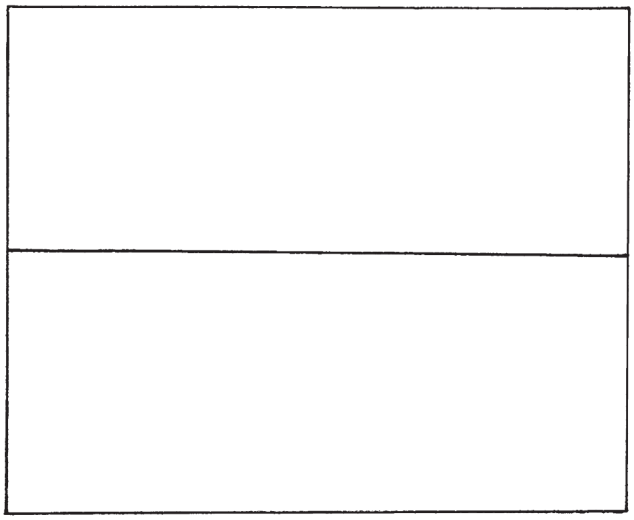
Reliving the Renaissance
Illustrated Art Lessons

LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

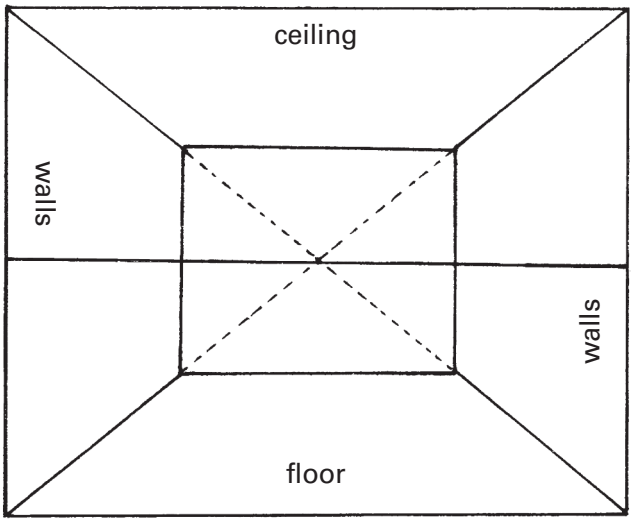
One-Point Perspective

Materials: 12" x 18" paper • pencils • rulers

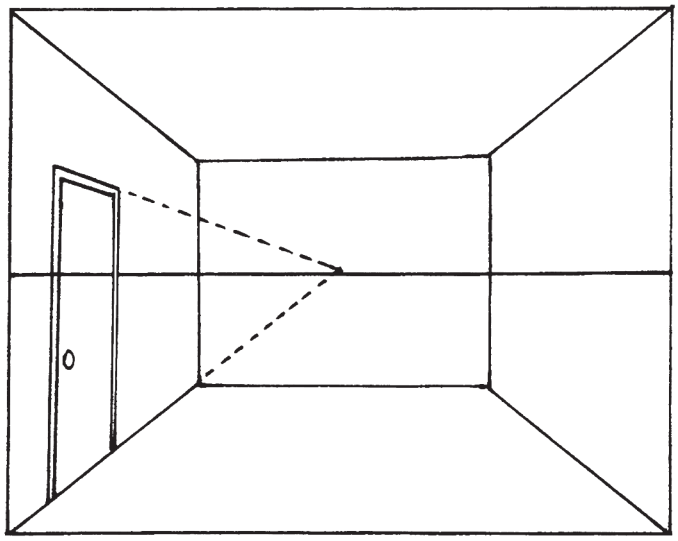
1. Stand in the middle of the front wall of the classroom. Observe the lines of the walls and ceiling and where they meet the back wall. Look at the back wall and note the horizon line, at eye level. Look at the doors, windows, desks, and other objects in relation to the horizon line.



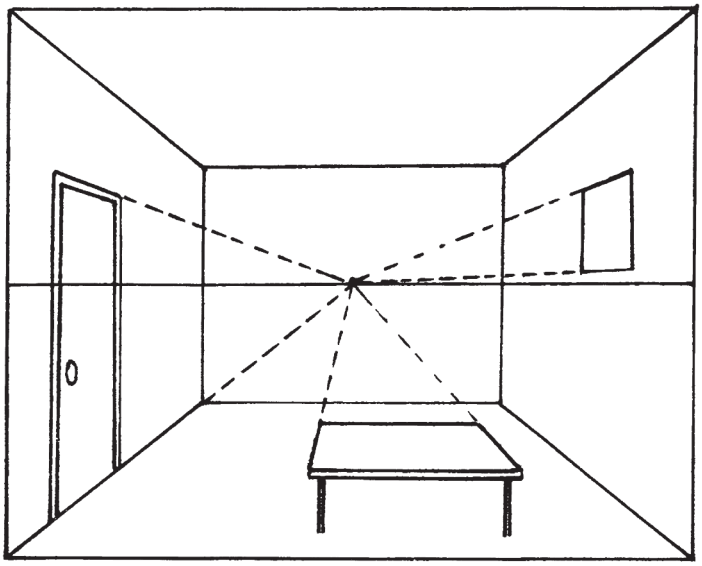
2. Orient a piece of paper so that the sides of the paper correspond to the ceiling, floor, and walls of the room. Draw a horizon line that divides the paper in two. Place a vanishing point at the center of the horizon line.



3. Draw the back wall of the room as a rectangle or square centered on the page. Draw the lines of the side walls to meet at the back wall and form the ceiling and floor.



4. To draw windows, doors, or blackboards in perspective, first draw the top and bottom edges. Then draw dotted projection lines to the vanishing point. Complete by drawing the vertical edges.



5. To draw tables, chairs, and desks in the room, first draw a line for the horizontal edge of the table nearest to the viewer. Draw dotted projection lines to the vanishing point. Draw in the lines for the sides and far edge of the table.

6. Experiment by drawing a variety of objects in the room in perspective.

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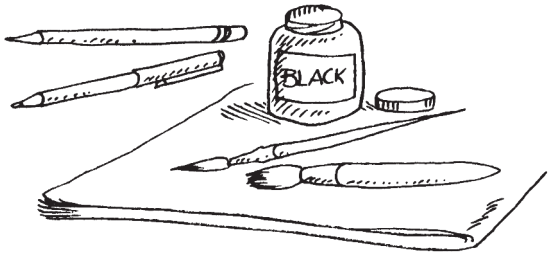
Exploring Trees
Illustrated Art Lessons

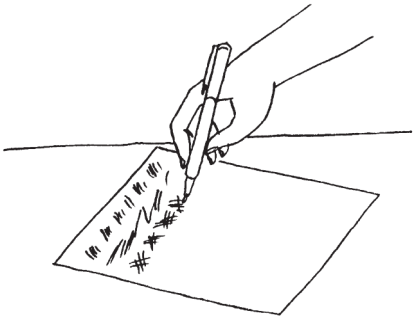
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Observing Trees: *Mixed-Media Drawings*

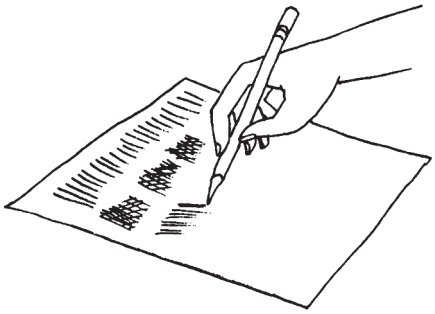
Materials: 12" x 18" gray drawing paper • newsprint • black ink pens • drawing pencils • black tempera paint • water • paintbrushes • cups • newspaper



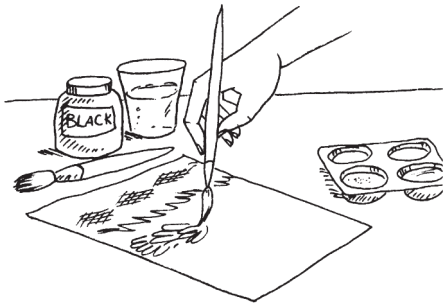
1. Cover tables or desks with newspaper. Give each student a black ink pen, a drawing pencil, black tempera paint, and paintbrushes of various sizes.



2. Demonstrate the proper way to hold drawing materials. Be sure students do not rest their hands on the paper, or they will smudge the drawing. Using black ink on newsprint, experiment with different kinds of lines, such as broken, unbroken, thick, thin, short, long, parallel, and crosshatched lines. Try creating values and textures with the ink.



3. Experiment with the drawing pencil on newsprint, using the pencil to create different textures, lines, tones, and values.



4. Dilute the paint until it is thin. The diluted paint is called a "wash." Using brushes of various sizes, apply wash to the paper, combining it with the black ink and pencil to create a variety of values.

5. Using ink or pencil, sketch trees from different points of view. Select one sketch as the basis for a mixed-media drawing. Determine which medium to use for each different area of the drawing.

6. Create a drawing of trees using black ink, pencil, and washes to suggest volumes, textures, and shapes, and to create a specific mood. Display the finished drawings.

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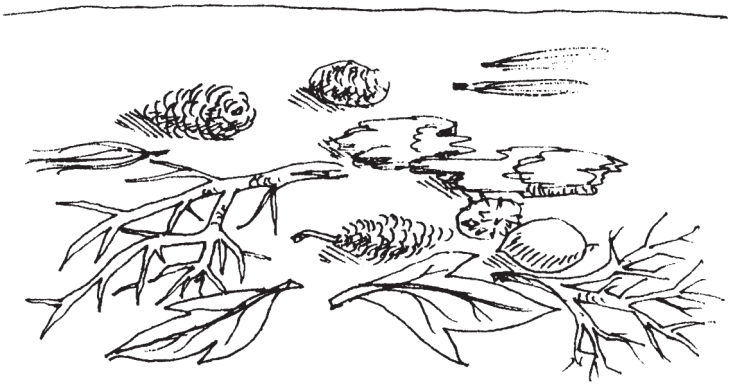
Exploring Trees
Illustrated Art Lessons

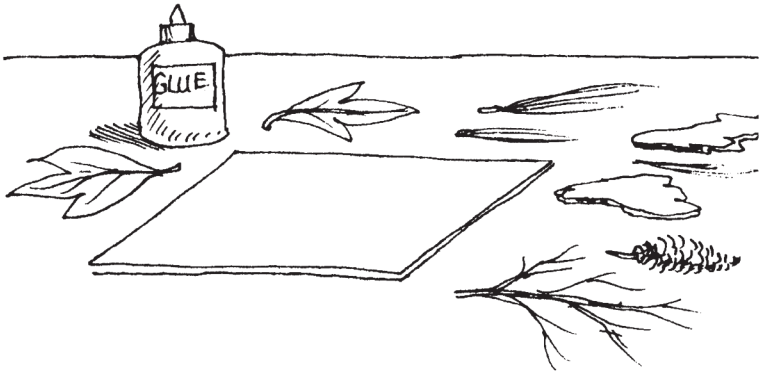
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Classifying Trees: *Collage*

Materials: 9" x 12" heavy cardboard • glue • collage materials from trees (leaves, branches, twigs, bark, needles, cones, etc.) • markers, paint, or pencils

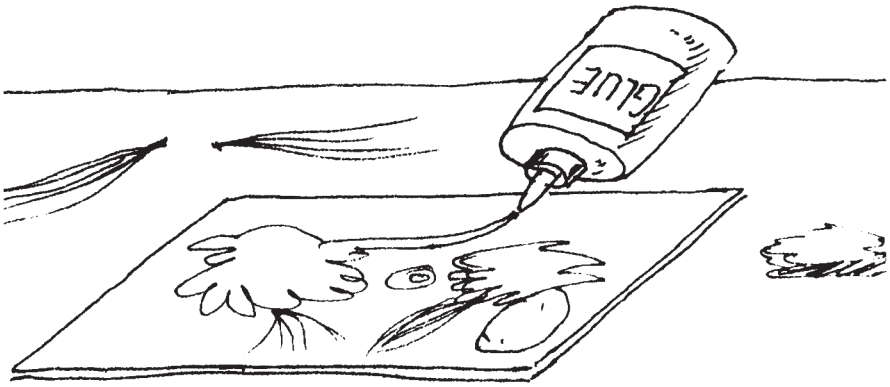


1. Use materials collected from trees during the science lesson (see "Classifying Trees" in the Exploring Trees Lesson Chart) to create a collage. Select dried materials that will not shrivel after gluing. Flat objects will be easier to glue.

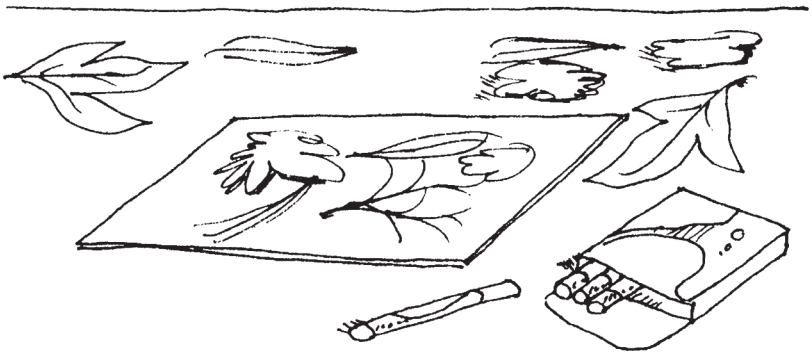


2. Explain that a collage is a composition created by pasting objects on a surface. Give each student a 9" x 12" piece of cardboard for the collage background.

3. Arrange the objects on the cardboard to create an expressive composition about trees. Experiment with different arrangements before gluing.



4. Glue the objects to the cardboard and allow the collage to dry overnight.



5. When the glue has dried, add detail and color to the composition using markers, paint, or pencils.

6. Display the tree collages with the three focus works of art. Compare and contrast color, shape, line, texture, and mood.

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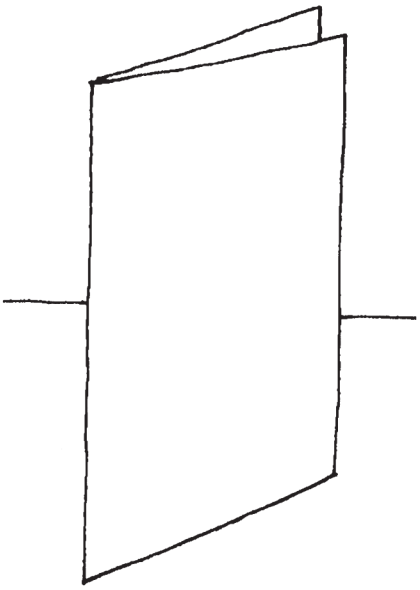
Vessels of Culture
Illustrated Art Lessons

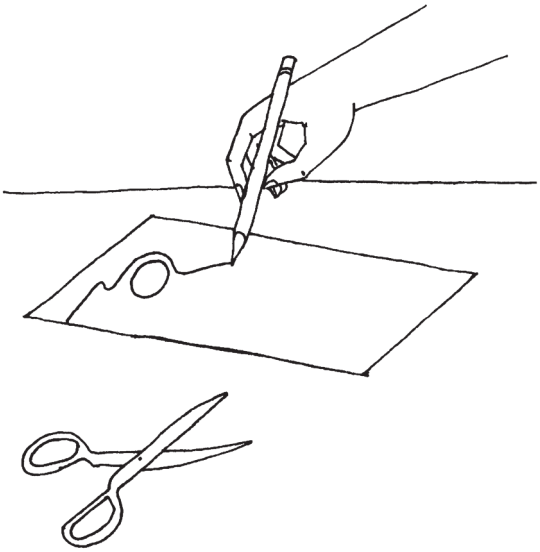
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Making Symmetrical Pots: *Planning*

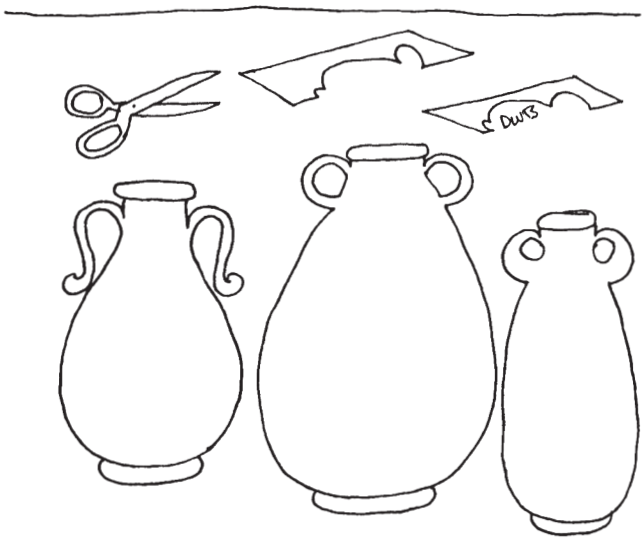
Materials: construction paper • scissors • markers



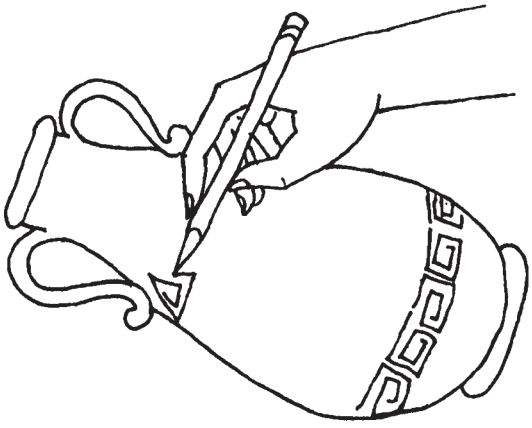
1. Review the concept of symmetry. Give each student several pieces of construction paper. Fold one sheet in half lengthwise.



2. Starting at the folded edge, draw one side of a piece of pottery, thinking about the shapes of the lip, shoulder, body, and foot of the pot as well as relationships between the different areas.



3. Cut out the shape, unfold it, and critique the design. Is the shape symmetrical? Are the shapes and sizes of the lip, shoulder, body, and foot formed as the student wished? After critiquing this first design, create four or five more pottery shapes.



4. Choose the best pottery shape. Using a pencil, draw the surface design for the piece of pottery. Refer back to the focus works of art to see how the potters placed scenes and patterns.

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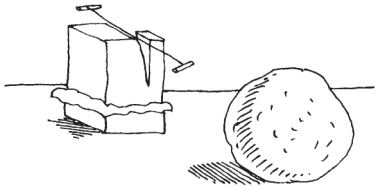
Vessels of Culture
Illustrated Art Lessons

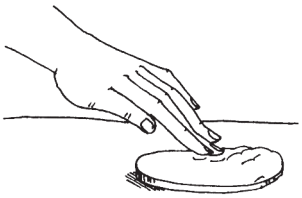
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Making Symmetrical Pots: *Coiling*

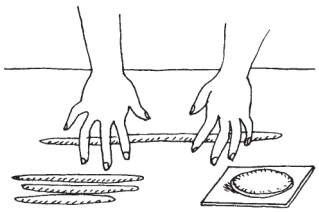
Materials: clay • wire cutter • tongue depressors • sponges • newspaper • toothpicks or pencils • 12" x 12" cardboard squares • acrylic medium • paint • paintbrushes • plastic bags



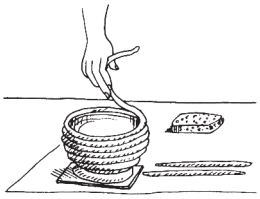
1. Cover tables with newspaper. Use cutting wire to divide the clay into one-pound pieces. Give each student one piece of clay and a cardboard square.



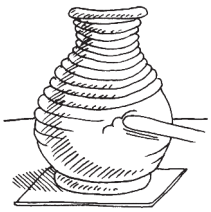
2. To form the base of the pot, flatten a small ball of clay into a patty shape, about ½" thick. Place it in the center of the cardboard square, keeping it moist by patting with a damp sponge.



3. Make coils by forming small balls of clay and rolling them on the table until the coils are 9" to 12" long. Keep coils moist by patting with a damp sponge or by covering them with damp paper towels.



4. Moisten the edge of the base and use the toothpick or pencil to score it. Stack a coil on the base by winding it in a circle and pressing down firmly to attach it to the clay below.



5. Build up the sides of the pot with the coils, following the design created on paper (see "Making Symmetrical Pots: Planning"). Use fingers and tongue depressors to blend the coils into a smooth surface on the inside and outside of the pot. If this lesson takes several days, store clay pieces in airtight plastic bags.

6. To make handles, roll two short coils. Moisten and score the ends of each coil, as well as the places on the pot where they will be attached. Firmly press the ends of the coils into the pot until the clay sticks.

7. Air-dry the pot slowly until it is completely dry. To avoid breakage, be sure the pot is totally dry before firing. Fire the pot in a kiln, or if a kiln is not available, apply several coats of acrylic medium to the dry pottery.

8. Paint the pottery as planned on the paper design. Coat the painted pottery with an acrylic medium to seal the surface. Display the pots. Compare and contrast them with the focus works of art.

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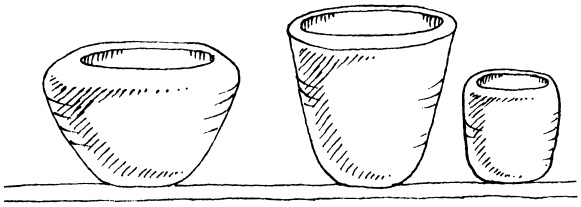
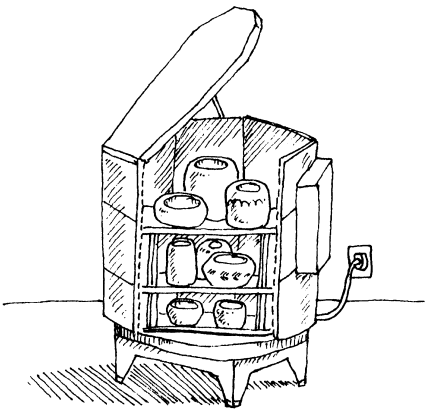
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Experimenting with Clay: *Physical Changes in Clay*

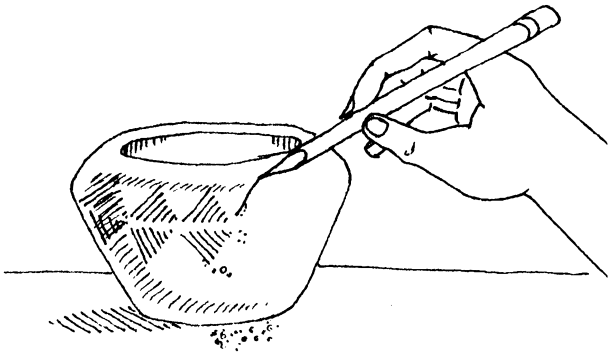
Materials: coil pottery completed in the art lesson "Making Symmetrical Pots: *Coiling*"



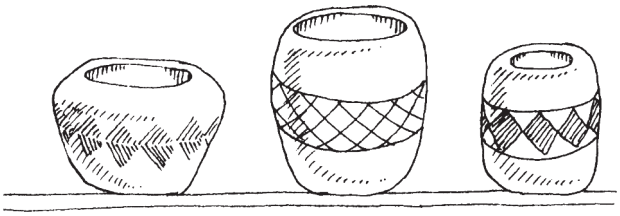
Soft Clay Clay, when purchased, should be moist and malleable.



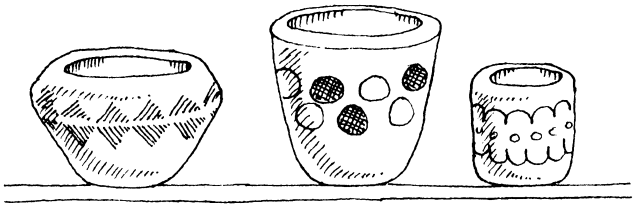
Kiln An oven for firing clay pieces is called a kiln. In most schools, the kiln is electric. Refer to the kiln instruction manual for procedures for stacking the kiln and firing.



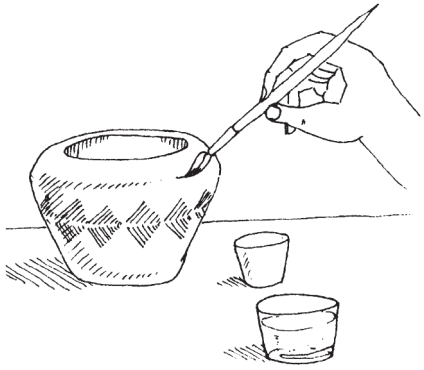
Leather-Hard Clay After clay sits out for a while, it becomes stiff and unworkable. This stage is called leather hard because the clay feels cold and moist to the touch, like cold leather. Clay can still be carved but can no longer be reshaped.



Bisqueware Clay pieces that have been fired in the kiln are called bisqueware.



Greenware Exposure to air causes clay to dry and shrink. At this stage the clay is called bone dry. The pieces will feel room temperature.



Glazed Ware Bisqueware can be coated with prepared glazes and refired, giving pieces a hard surface that is either matte or gloss, depending on the type of glaze.

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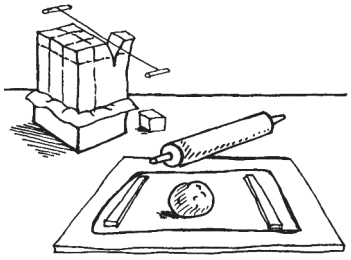
LEARNING THROUGH ART at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

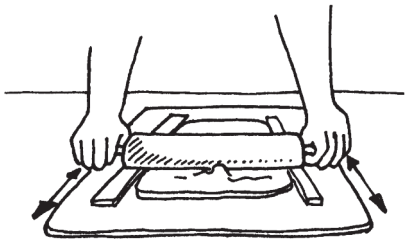
Experimenting with Clay: *Tiles with Red Iron-Oxide Slip*

Materials: For tiles: buff or white clay (do not use red clay for this lesson) • cutting wire • rolling pin • 1" x 12" x 3/8" strips of wood • newspaper • large plastic bags • 12" x 12" cardboard or Masonite • 6" x 6" pieces of cardboard • plastic knives • nails
For slip: scraps of buff or white clay • water • pans • red iron oxide • paintbrushes • soda ash (or baking soda) • paper cups

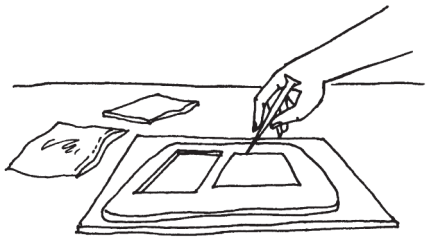
Forming the Tiles



1. Cut a pound of clay for each student. Roll the clay into a ball. Place the clay on the cardboard or Masonite. Place the wooden strips on either side of the ball of clay. These boards will ensure an even thickness of the clay slab.

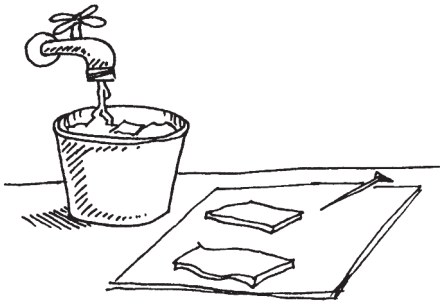


2. Using the rolling pin, roll the ball into a slab, making sure that the rolling pin remains on the wooden strips throughout the process.

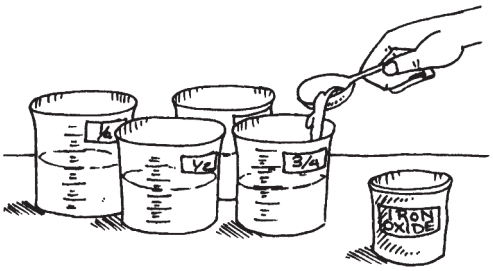


3. Place the 6" x 6" piece of cardboard on the slab. Trace around the cardboard with a nail, applying enough pressure to cut through the clay. Repeat. Place the two tiles in an open plastic bag, allowing them to dry slowly to the leather-hard stage (see "Physical Changes in Clay"). Save the excess clay.

Making Slip

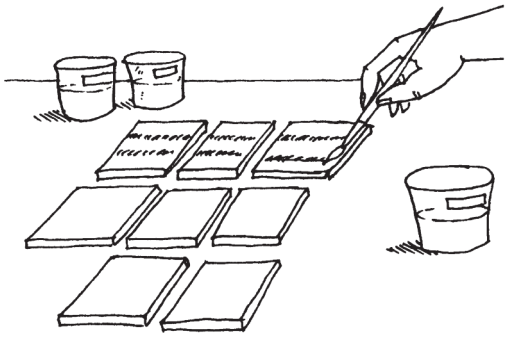


4. Place the clay scraps in a bucket of water and soak them overnight to soften. Stir the mixture and add enough water to create liquefied clay the consistency of thin cream. This mixture is called "slip."

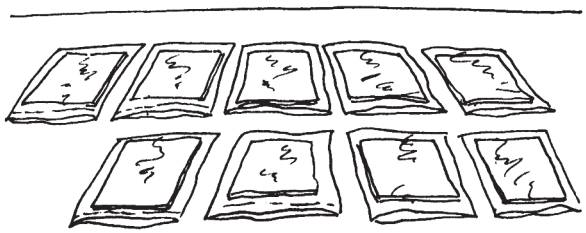


5. Working in groups, measure ¼ cup of slip into each of four cups. Add ⅛ teaspoon soda ash or baking soda to each cup. Mix ¼ teaspoon of iron oxide into cup 1; ½ teaspoon into cup 2; ¾ teaspoon into cup 3; and 1 teaspoon into cup 4. Carefully label each cup with the amount of red iron oxide.

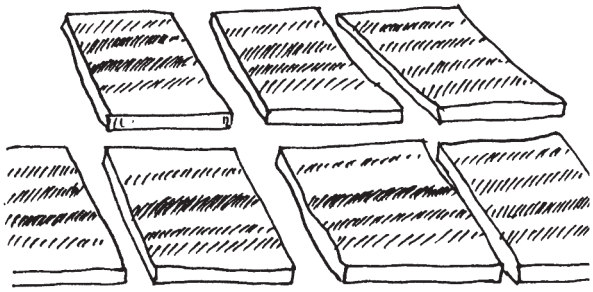
Painting and Firing the Tiles



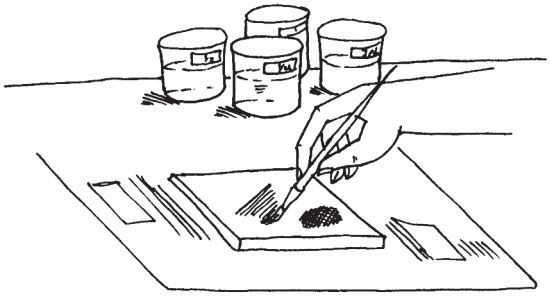
6. When the tiles have reached the leather-hard stage, paint stripes of each of the four slip mixtures across one tile. Be sure the stripes are of equal thickness. Identify the slip mixture by scratching a label into the clay with a nail. Predict which slip mixtures, when fired, will produce the darkest and lightest colors. Explain why. Predict the value of color from each cup of slip.



7. Place the tiles in open plastic bags and allow them to dry slowly to the leather-hard stage. Fire in the kiln to cone .05. If your school does not have a kiln, check with the local middle school, high school, or college art department. Commercial ceramics studios will often fire clay pieces made by students.



8. Study the stripes of slip in the fired tiles. Describe the value of each stripe. Compare it to the predictions. Discuss the impact of heat on the oxides.



9. Paint designs on the second tiles, using the slip mixtures to create variety and rhythm in color. Students may want to emulate the geometric and other designs seen on the focus works of art. Fire and display the second tiles.

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