

# CREATING WITH CLAY

## FUNCTIONAL VESSELS

CLASS EXPERIENCE

**VISUAL ARTS**

**GRADE LEVEL: 6–8**

### BASED ON

Cordelia A. Plimpton, decorator; Lucien F. Plympton, designer; Frederick Dallas Hamilton Road Pottery; *Alhambra Vase*; 1881; Gift of the Women's Art Museum Association, 1881.61

### OBJECTIVE

- Students will be introduced to the Art Museum's Alhambra Vase.
- Students will learn the difference between throwing on the pottery wheel and hand building.
- Students will learn hand-building techniques: pinch, coil, and slab.
- Students will create a functional vessel using two of the three hand-building techniques.
- Students will learn about and apply glazing techniques.
- Students will learn how artists are inspired by architecture: the Alhambra Palace.
- Students will find inspiration in the palace using designs and patterns similar in the creation of their vessel.

### BACKGROUND

The *Alhambra Vase* was designed by Lucien F. Plympton and decorated by Cordelia A. Plimpton. This piece of pottery is a wonderful example of ceramic techniques of throwing on the wheel and hand building. The inspiration for this vase came from the Alhambra Palace in Spain, begun in 1238. Many Muslim rulers contributed to the final outcome of the palace. The palace is rich with textures and patterns that reflect the Moorish (Islamic) culture.

*"The carrying idea behind several of the buildings of Alhambra is nothing less than an attempt to create a duplicate of Paradise on earth. The romantic design is made up of a mixture of slender columnar arcades, fountains, and light reflecting water basins."*

<http://lexicorient.com/spain/alhambra.htm>- Alhambra Palace

### VOCABULARY

Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online ([www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com))

**architect:** a person who designs buildings and advises in their construction

**Alhambra Palace:** palace of the Moorish monarchs of Granada, Spain, built 1238–1358

**pattern:** an artistic, musical, literary, or mechanical design or form

**texture:** the visual or tactile surface characteristics and appearance of something

**clay:** an earthy material that is plastic when moist but hard when fired

**pinch:** a pottery technique where the clay is drawn out into a pot by repeatedly squeezing the clay between the thumb and fingers

**coil:** a pottery technique in which a form is built up by joining shapes cut from thick sheets of damp clay

**slab:** throwing: a pottery technique of making a pot from a piece of clay on a potter's wheel

See the clay notes for more or less vocabulary you want to use.



## MATERIALS | PROCEDURES

- clay and slip
- cylinders
- rolling pins
- newspaper
- clay tools
- Handout or paper for students to create designs
- Examples of functional vessels
- Images of the Alhambra Palace and details of patterns
- pencils
- containers of water
- lay sticks
- plastic bags and ties
- items to use for textures

1. Introduce students to the Art Museum's *Alhambra Vase*, and discuss its form and function.
2. The students will learn about the history of the Alhambra Palace. They will see visuals of the palace and close-up details of patterns. (1 day)
3. The students will take notes on the clay lecture. See below for my notes. This is an outline, and I add to it. (1 day)
4. After the notes, the students are ready for the clay demonstration. In this demonstration, have students answer questions from the lecture the day before. The demonstration consists of pinch, coil, and slab techniques. (Give the students a copy of the notes on how to make a coil and slab.) Then attach the examples together with slip, scoring, and welding. (This can take 2 days.)
5. Students will then create three designs using the handout or sketching them on paper.
6. The students will get the design approved and begin working on their clay project.
7. After the bisque firing, we discuss glazing and they proceed with that stage.

## NATIONAL STANDARDS

### VISUAL ARTS

- 1: Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts
- 2: Knows how to use structures (for example: sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art

## RESOURCES

Alhambra Palace at <http://lexicorient.com/spain/alhambra.htm>

Alhambra Palace at [www.greatbuildings.com](http://www.greatbuildings.com)

John Julius Norwich, ed. *Great Architecture of the World*. New York: Random House, 1975. color photo of the interior of the Hall of Judgement, p139. Reprint edition: Da Capo Press, April 1991.

## ASSESSMENT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

### Evaluation For Ceramic Vessel

Using your journal and the word bank explain how to create your clay vessel from the beginning to placing the work on the kiln shelf. You might not use every word in the bank. If you use a word make sure you use it correctly and define what it means.

Word Bank: clay, wedge, pinch, coil, slab, score, slip, weld, pattern, texture, leather hard, bone dry, greenware, kiln, bisqueware, glaze, research, sketch

## NOTES FROM CLAY LECTURE

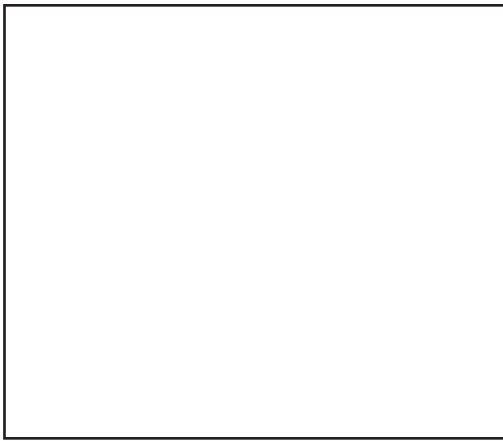
Clay= Earth

Primary Clay- pure, unmoved, porcelain

Secondary Clay- moved, altered by the elements, we are using

Wedge- Makes clay Plastic= Workable

Makes clay "one", Air bubbles are BAD



Sketch and Color in your ceramic vessel.

Self evaluation	10 points maximum
Craftsmanship	
Fun lip or foot	
Creativity with clay	
Craftsmanship of glaze	
Creativity with glaze	

Total  
Your Grade x2=

### 3 WAYS OF MANIPULATING CLAY

- 1) Pinch- first way, pinch pots, create a mold if needed
- 2) Coil-fun lip(rim) or a fun foot(bottom)
- Welding=one, Slip and Score
- 3) Slab- 1 finger thickness

### 3 STAGES IN DRYING

- 1) Plastic- workable
  - 2) Leather hard- strongest, carve, join
  - 3) Bone Dry- weakest
- Called Greenware in these stages

Kiln- Firing process

Bisque- 1st firing

Glaze

2nd firing, maturity

Vitrification= glass like

### COILING

- Make sure your clay has been wedged to remove air bubbles trapped in your clay.
- Take your clay and squeeze a "hot dog" ...long and lumpy.
- On newspaper or a board lay the hot dog down and roll it out with your palms...start in the middle with your thumbs touching. As you roll, your hands move to the outer portions of the clay. Your clay will become longer and skinnier, this becomes your COIL.
- Add your coil to the SLAB bottom. Continue adding coils to your work. As a new begins, remember to SLIP and SCORE and WELD!!!

### SLAB

- Make sure your clay has been wedged to remove air bubbles trapped in your clay.
- Place clay on a board and newspaper. Take the palm of your hand and push the down and out. The clay will only move so much in each direction so remember to turn and flip over. Repeat .
- After using your palm, take a rolling pin and (lay sticks if you have them) roll the clay smooth and even. BE SURE YOU ARE NOT TOO THIN...FINGER THICKNESS.
- Once the slab is created you are ready to add coils, texture, or BOTH!
- Be creative and push yourself. Slab is an awesome vehicle for creating virtually anything in clay.

**GLAZE**

- Color in Designs and write names of glazes in journal.
- Put Newspaper down.
- Get paint brushes and a bucket filled half way with water.
- 3 colors max- 1 inside and 2 outside
- Start on the inside!
- Shake glaze: Put hand on the lid and on the jar!
- Clean Brush!!!! *Before and After*
- 2 to 3 coats depending on the thickness.
- Alternate directions
- Edges must touch! Overlap if you need too!
- Clean up Spills!
- Never glaze bottom!

