

The Global Seed Vault Project



Karen J. Larson

On February 26, 2008, seeds from around the world were gathered together on Svalbard Island, Norway, as the start of the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The seeds were put into a vault dug deep into a mountainside where permafrost and the rock itself ensure that the seeds remain frozen for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. It is a place of safety for plant life into the future; a way to protect the world's seeds from threats such as drought,

disease, and other catastrophes.

With this in mind, I created a lesson plan for seventh-grade students that included a monotype print for a door into the vault and a fired clay seed. The hollow seed holds a slip of paper with a "seed of hope" written by each student.

Motivation and Discussion

I began the discussion by asking students to name their favorite foods. It was no surprise that chocolate and pizza topped the list! I asked them: What do animals eat?

From where does chocolate come? We could not think of any living thing

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that was not connected to plants in some way.

I asked students to think about what seeds represent. To some they were simply plants; to others they symbolized hope, dreams, and new life. I showed them how a small lump of clay could be held in their hands and take the form of the space created by two hands together. I asked them to think about their own hopes and dreams that could be held within their own seed.



Creating Seeds

Each table of students had a bowl of beans and seeds I had gathered: navy beans, green bean seeds, kidney beans, lima beans, etc.

Using a lump of clay about the size of a lemon, I showed students how to hold the clay in two hands, making sure there was pressure from both palms to create the height of the seed, and showed them how to form the ends so the seed could be pointed or rounded.

A clay fettling knife or potter's needle was used to slice the seed through the middle, creating two halves. Each half was scooped out, revealing a space. Seeds were then left to dry with a loose piece of plastic covering, and were later fired at cone 05.

Once the seeds were bisque fired students glazed the outside. They glazed both halves on the outer parts and I fired them with openings facing the floor of the kiln so the glazes would not stick. After the seeds were

vault was carved into. We noticed the door seemed to be made of metal with no decoration on its surface.

I told students they were to design a door with surface embellishments that represented what was inside, without using words. We talked about the fact that someone from the future might find the door and wonder what was inside.

Creating Doors

Students sketched doors to the scale of the 6 x 9" print plates. Using embossing sticks, students drew line details into foam-printing plates. They could tape the original drawing on top of the plate or draw directly on it.

Using water-based printing inks, students rolled color on with a brayer or hand-painted the colors with a brush, then printed the images onto printmaking or sketch paper. An alternative method was to color on the plate with water-based colored markers and press the plate onto dampened printmaking or sketch paper.

The plate was used to make more than one print per student until they found one print they liked best. This print was then glued to a railroad board background. The bottom of the stand was decorated with sand, left natural, or colored, as a base for the clay seed.

Conclusion

Students placed their finished seeds on the base with the door print behind on the board. All were placed on display with a briefly written introduction about the World Seed Vault and a map showing Svalbard Island. We received many compliments and expressions of wonder as many people had not heard about this wonderful depository for the world's seeds. 🌱

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

WEB LINKS

www.croptrust.org

Materials for the Seeds

- 25 lb. bag of white clay, enough for thirty students
- lead-free crystallite glaze in greens, earth tones, and black tones
- cones: 05 for bisque and 04 for glazes

Materials for the Doors

- 14 x 6" (36 x 15 cm) railroad board, scored and folded at 5" (13 cm)
- colored and natural tones of sand
- white glue
- 6 x 9" (15 x 23 cm) printing paper cut to fit the "door" part of the board
- printing inks, markers, watercolors
- brayers

fired with the final glaze, students wrote messages on slips of colorful paper that were then placed inside the seeds. Some students wanted the seeds wrapped with yarn to make sure the messages were private.

Discussing the Vault Door

We discussed the information from the Global Crop Diversity Trust. We talked about the site physically: the temperature, distance from civilization, the weather, and the rocks the