

Blooming O'Keeffe Bowls

Christine Kernan



Each year I try to develop projects that not only teach the master artists, but also encompass as many important aspects of art learning as possible. I came up with an idea that turned out to be a success for my students of every ability. It relates to the exploration of hand-building with clay, and is influenced by the work of artist Georgia O'Keeffe.

Inspiration

The studio activity is a blooming ceramic flower bowl, completed by my fifth-graders. The process began

with a discussion of Georgia O'Keeffe, her artwork, and her very interesting life. We looked particularly closely at her paintings of seashells, bones, rocks, and flowers. The children learned that objects as insignificant as these could become influences for powerful works of art. I explained that we would make a simple flower drawing and turn it into a functional and beautiful piece of art.

Drawing

The next step was to hand out pictures of flowers that I saved from old seed catalogs and calendars. After students each chose one to their liking, they used a tag-board circle as a template and drew inside it a bird's eye, radially symmetrical, view of

their flower. Students used colored pencil to complete the flowers, and then cut them out. This drawing served as a template to use on the clay.

Template to Clay

The following class period, each student was given a chunk of white bisque clay (about 1/4-1/2 lb). I showed them how to roll a slab of clay

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to about the thickness of cookie dough and then place the tag-board template on top to serve as a guide. Students traced around the edge of the template with a potter's needle, then used a pencil to trace the inside details.

The template was then removed and students retraced their lines

5. Students place the tag-board sketches on top to serve as a guide, and trace around the edge of the template.

1. Students use a tag-board circle to draw a simple sketch of the flower.



2. Students roll a slab of clay to the thickness of cookie dough.



4. To ensure the student's details are included, use a pencil to trace the inside details.



After a few days of drying, I removed the flowers from the bowls and bisque

Clay to Mold

I then passed out shallow Styrofoam soup bowls to serve as molds for the flowers. I emphasized to students that they needed to gently press the flower in to conform to the shape of the bowl in order to get an even bottom that wouldn't be unbalanced or rock when completed.

once again with a pencil to enhance the detail. I advised the students to not press too deeply into the clay to avoid cracking while drying.

5. Remove template and retrace lines to enhance detail. Avoid pressing too deeply to ensure the clay does not crack while drying.



6. After the bowls have been bisque fired, the students glaze the flower bowls in bright colors.



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WISCONSIN STANDARD

Students will explore nature and designs by artists as sources for ideas in their artwork.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand prospective content for art.

WEB LINK

www.okeeffemuseum.org

fired them. During the final class, we glazed the flowers in gorgeous bright colors. I made sure students used three coats of glaze for each color. The results would have made Georgia O'Keeffe proud! The children gave them as gifts on Mother's Day.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- observe and examine organic shapes as a source for creating art.
- recognize radial symmetry.
- effectively explore slab clay hand building techniques.
- effectively explore glazing techniques.
- utilize basic vocabulary associated with slabbing and glazing.
- study the art and life of Georgia O'Keeffe.

Materials

- reproductions of artworks by Georgia O'Keeffe
- photographs of a variety of types of flowers (from calendars and other sources)
- white earthenware or stoneware clay (could substitute self-hardening clay)
- potter's needles or straightened paper clips
- small shallow Styrofoam bowls
- variety of colored glazes for clay
- tag board for templates
- canvas or paper mats
- rolling pins
- pencils
- scissors

