



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2005 Volume II: Art and Identity in Mexico, from Olmec Times to the Present

The Ceramic History of the Olmec Culture

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Introduction

I was born to parents who were determined to reinforce the significance of self value to their children. I'm not sure if they felt unappreciated as adults, or if they felt their parents failed to recognize accomplishments during their own childhood, but I can't remember a time during my childhood that my mother or father went without telling me how special and unique I was. The acknowledgement of an accomplishment of any kind never went unnoticed. Drawing a picture, allowing my sister to wear my favorite jeans, or doing well in school were acts in my life that my parents glorified as having superior value. These were traits that their daughter had that made her special. And as parents go I suppose this is not unusual. This said, I hardly grew-up with an overactive ego, my three siblings made sure of that. They were my reality. My sister and I talked, and still talk, at great length about our parents, and the role all parents play in a child's concept of self. The reality is that I should share with my sister and I should do well in school. These are not accomplishments as much as they are simple and appropriate behaviors. But in some way I felt as if these things made me unique and made me different. I was the proverbial small fish but in a little pond. I did not realize the size of the ocean.

Enter my freshman year art class. I was far from unique, I was in fact quite ordinary. My portfolio was limited to only drawings, my dress was (gasp) conservative, and my desire to be a great artist was met with similar power from the others in my class. I was no longer that little girl. We had all crammed as many studio classes into our schedule as possible, and were dropped from what was inevitably our favorite to be enrolled in a newly adopted, Art History course. It was at this point, my perceptions of the world shifted. It was in this class I learned that in 800 B.C. the Greeks took from the Egyptians the technique of geometric vase painting and incorporating figure drawings which dealt with the difficult challenge of foreshortening. I learned that architects of the 18th century Neoclassical period rejected the canon of the time and revived classical forms. And that when French painters looked East, they were influenced by the Japanese wood block prints, with their flat shapes, bright colors, and asymmetrical compositions. It was at this time in my life that not only the idea of cultural influences and identities impacted my perception of art, but when I realized that the world was connected in an important way through art. Suddenly the little fish lost any fear of jumping into the deepest ocean.

My high school students are no different than I was. Their perceptions of themselves through any given self portrait assignment is a classic example of this. The image of a solitary dark figure, usually with a single tear

falling slowly down their cheek reflecting the utter misery that is life as a teenager (or something sincerely melodramatic). We all have the propensity to look at works of art with an appreciation for the human experience. One of my goals as a teacher is to help my students recognize that human experience is a shared phenomenon. I want them to recognize that they are not alone in the pond. This is important because it connects them to the work, their world, and themselves. When placed in a natural humanistic and/or cultural context, art can reveal a range of ever-changing images and attitudes as artists express opinions of themselves, their social surroundings, and their place in the spiritual world. Each on a quest to interpret the world they live in. My overarching goal in this unit of study on the Ceramic History of the Olmec Culture is that students are able to understand how these ideas are revealed through their art and how throughout the history of art, we find similar patterns that can be useful in helping us develop relevant perceptions of people in their specific historical context. Also, I believe that in as much as this may be true, it allows my students the opportunity to connect themselves to history, as humans repeatedly show an inclination toward this behavior. Because I believe this is applicable to every moment in human existence these topics and the questions I pose here will be revisited on a number of occasions throughout the course of the year.

Background Information

I teach in a Visual and Performing Arts magnet school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public school system, the 6th largest district in the nation. Needless to say, the population of roughly 1300 students grades 6-12, is extremely diverse socially and economically. The students are selected through a lottery, but must additionally attend an audition process before they are allowed to enroll. These students make a choice to attend this school because of its specialty programs in the arts. They select a major of study and their elective arts courses become more specific and comprehensive as they progress. The result is a very positive environment to teach students who are enthusiastic about learning.

This said, I have found the students I teach who have chosen the visual arts as their major, pose a unique set of teaching challenges. Apparently, a majority have come to the conclusion that because they major in the visual arts, they are artists. Not a student of art, but an artist. In this regard they often anticipate their success before they begin working. This is true on any number of assignments and studio projects. In this desire to be the next great artist of their time, they often fail to recognize some basic skills that are needed. I believe that is part of my role as an educator to help them down from their self-constructed pedestals.

I teach a number of level I ceramic courses (which this unit is written for). I also teach the level II and III of the ceramics courses. Additionally, I teach both Advanced Placement Art History, a regular Art History, and a number of introduction to studio courses. This information provided in this unit is applicable for all of these classes, a similar version of Lesson I will be used in each studio course I teach as it deals with the most fundamental question about art.

Rationale

The ceramics classes in my school have a unique set of teaching challenges. There is no textbook, no curriculum guide and comparably fewer resources available for students. This has traditionally limited the amount of investigative study and historical reference that have been applied to the class. As a result, the course has developed into one with a strong emphasis on technique. Working in a school system which places a great deal of importance on standardized testing, I am compelled to use strategies that will not only improve the meaning in their artwork but enhance other skills that are appropriate to their academic classes. In as much, I see myself not specifically as an art teacher but rather as a teacher whose incumbent responsibility is to improve the quality of student in our school as a whole. As I continue to develop more structure and historical content to the class, I find myself considering a number of questions about the nature of ceramics and how this study can achieve the goals I listed above. Naturally, I prefer to start at the beginning. How does art evolve in the world? How do we understand art? Once we address these questions, we can begin to look at specific questions related to pottery. How did people learn to make pottery and why? What function did these early works serve? What techniques did the ancient potters use to create their wares? When was the concept of a kiln introduced and how did early kilns function?

Each of these questions are addressed below with some indications how they will be used in a studio art class. Materials other than what would be in a standard ceramics studio would include art history prints / books and also handouts related to writing skills.

How does art evolve in the world?

Of course one could select any number of ancient cultures in which to address these questions. I suggest looking at what is generally considered to be the first civilization in America, the Olmec, because my students seem to have little knowledge of prehistoric influence on Western art. For example the art history course I teach, the curriculum emphasizes the prehistoric times in Europe. I will use the familiar images of ancient Egyptian and Greek pottery as a link to my overarching goal of finding parallels in our world. As we look at these parallels in different cultures I can begin questioning my students about the nature of art as a vehicle to interpret the world we live in.

What is generally considered to be the first civilization in America, the Olmec "moved a veritable mountain of earth to create a plateau above the plain, and there they planted a city, the ruins of which today are known as San Lorenzo" (Wilford 2005). The pottery that exists from the Olmec dates from as early as 900BC. They inhabited Mexico's south Gulf coast lowlands during the period of 1500-400 BC, along the Rio Coatzacoalcas river where human settlements are still favored. What is known about the Olmec is based on a relatively small amount of art and architectural complexes that appear to the outsider as unformed mounds of earth. High acidity and humidity have "wrought havoc and archaeological deposits, destroying not only the ancient bones remains but even ceramics" (Coe 131). Incredibly, anthropologists and archeologists are still able to recreate for us a thriving culture which developed social, political, economic, and religious factions. (Diehl, 2)

It is because of the development of these factions that the art of the Olmec in and of itself significant to that specific time. In order for these people to become proficient in carving the small yet elaborate jadeite figures, create complex patterns on the surface of their pottery, and carve large stone monuments — the most famous being the colossal heads, they needed time. I would not expect students to be able to create a complex relief carving without practice and in order to do that you need time! So the idea that this culture was developing

specific roles for people thus allowing artists to develop their skills, helps us understand how art begins to develop in early civilizations.

How do we come to understand and learn from art?

The Olmec colossal heads range in size from 6 to 10 ft and are carved from basalt boulders quarried from distant mountains. Basalt is a fine-grained rock of volcanic origin and difficult to carve because of its density. Scholars believe that at one point all the colossal monuments were on the plateau of San Lorenzo facing out towards the lowland river valleys. They are considered to be portraits of individual rulers. Each of the portraits are adorned with headdresses which sit low on the forehead and carry an insignia particular to the individual portrayed. (Coe 293) On Monument 5 in particular, the headdress carries an interwoven design as well as the design of two flattened jaguar paws which appear to wrap around the head.

The seated Khafre sculpture from Dynasty IV of ancient Egypt shares many characteristics with the colossal heads in regard to subject matter, material, and form. The Khafre sculpture depicts the ruler of the Old Dynasty from 2520-2494 B.C. The work is made of diorite, like basalt, a volcanic material which was costly and rare. Egyptian scribes used basalt in medium sized statues and carvings, since it is very hard to carve large pieces. The Rosetta Stone was carved from basalt. The representation of form is where the connections to the Olmec colossal heads are most compelling and what will our focus for examining parallels. The artists interpretation of these men leaves little doubt that they are in fact, very powerful men who are connected to the spirit world in a very personal way. Both Monument 5 and Khafre have their respective symbols (their link to the spirit world), the jaguar and the falcon, protecting them in a close, intimate fashion. Strong, geometric lines create a sense of authority and dignity that would certainly be reassuring to the people of each respective culture. The obvious lack of negative space in both sculptures subtly reinforces the physical strength of the ruler and at the same time creates a heavy, solid form which would be difficult for an enemy to break or disfigure.

These cultures did not exist in locations anywhere near each other, nor were the works made at the same time. There is no evidence to suggest that Olmec people were influenced by any other culture; in fact European influences in the New World don't appear until the Spanish invasion in 1519. What does this tell us about cultures and human inclination towards art making? Helping students reveal similar patterns in which the world is connected through art in order to develop relevant perceptions of people in their specific historical context directly relates to my overarching goal for this unit. Additionally, the colossal heads will be used in our first comparative analysis with a work from Western art. We will examine the parallels that exist between them in an attempt to make some connections within students own work, their world, and themselves.

How did people learn to make pottery and why?

Last year I developed a unit of study on the types of clay bodies used in ceramic production today. Students analyze various components in clay, and how those ingredients affect the clay body. They are able to manipulate and handful of different type's clay bodies such as porcelain, stoneware and raku in order to understand and reinforce what they read. It was during the first quarter of the school year when I covered this topic and I suppose it makes sense that it is here where we will consider the question, how pottery was invented.

The very first ceramic vessel may well have been made by accident. A corded design appears on much of the ancient ceramic ware that has been discovered. This has led to a theory about the origins of ceramics. The theory holds that unfired clay may have first been used by ancient peoples to coat baskets designed to hold

small seeds or grain. One day, such a basket was accidentally thrown into the fire. The basket itself burned, but its clay coating emerged as a hard and useful vessel. (Wormer 14) Clays vitrify at various temperatures depending upon their composition. It is interesting to note that in a study of over 100 pieces of prehistoric ceramics, over half the wares showed no evidence of vitrification. Simply stated, this is when the heat converts the clay glass. The fact that the wares discovered that showed no signs vitrification does not mean they were not functional, but it would have significantly shortened the life of the ware.

I must add that in the many years I have been firing kilns owned by the public school, non-vitrified ware is not exclusive to prehistoric ceramics! There are inevitably problems with old kilns and the result is a number of works, at various stages, sitting around the ceramics studio that can be used as samples in such class discussions. Students are able to understand and use the term vitrify in its proper context, once they have handled works and see the it at its various stages.

Most scholars believe the invention of pottery to have occurred in a number of places independently. As early societies were beginning to cultivate crops, it is assumed the greater the need, in fact perhaps a necessity, arose for the use of pottery. Of course the migrant tribes would have had difficulty transporting pottery. In general, basic utilitarian pottery is relatively large, heavy, and breaks easily. It also makes sense then why basketry predates pottery. The earliest settled societies that were agrarian were those that settled along the sea coast and rivers. The earliest known pottery vessels used for cooking, storing, serving food, and carrying water were found on the southern coast of Japan and roughly dates 12,000 to 13, 000 years ago. There is a notable impression of a cord rolled around a stick.

What function did these early works serve?

It is from this knowledge that a fair assumption could be made that most ancient pottery served a utilitarian role in societies, namely food preparation and storage. This is not always the case. The proposition that utility was the dominate role of pottery is bit shaky if we consider 30,000 years ago the manufacturing of figurines and other ritual objects have been discovered.

A small, figure made from clay and bone ash was found intact at a Czechoslovakian kiln site dates from 27,000 BC. It is one of the earliest "Venus" figures, with large breasts, angular shoulders, and legs tapering down to small, rounded points. The top of the head has four holes made to hold flowers, leaves or feathers, symbolizing the successful changing of the seasons, which were attributed to the goddesses' fertility. (Shatz) Other "Venus" figures appear at this time, each personifies a sense of magical charm of the survival of the race.

At the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan archeological site, over 700 ceramic figurines and their fragments were discovered. (Coe 259) They are more difficult to categorize than the Venus figures because they are each so stylistically unique. Ballplayers, one-eyed Gods, and what appear to be individual portraits are reoccurring themes in the effigies found. The information of where these figures were originally placed is unknown; the function of them was probably for use in household rituals. "The One-eyed Gods and ballplayers in particular are suspiciously cultish and may in fact be associated with the ballgame ritual." (Coe 260)

What techniques did the ancient potters use to create their wares?

These ritual objects as well as the utilitarian ware will be the principle objects in the studio component of the unit. Students will create these objects using the same primitive methods and raw materials as the Olmec. It is this type of recreation and practice that ceramic students are able to get a real sense of how and why

techniques used in the construction of pottery has changed so little over time.

The traditions that exist today in San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan can give us a good indication of the formation of the utilitarian wares from the Olmec. Clay analysis tells us the wares were made from clay brought from deposits near the river. Sand from the river banks was then added to break up the texture of the clay — allowing it to be more pliable. Water was slowly reintroduced into the clay body until it became even more pliable. The shape, a conical form would be left to sit for a day — to be reworked (wedged) again before construction could begin. This method allows the potter to obtain an even consistency and ensure all the air pockets are released from this solid body of clay.

The clay was molded by hand, shells from the river bank, and corn cobs which were dipped into water to smooth out the ware. (Coe 127) Typical utilitarian wares would have been (as we know them today to be called) the cantaro — water storage vessel with a small rim, the olla — a wide mouthed storage jar for beans or stews, and the cazuela — a wide, shallow bowl. The Olmec potters used coils to build most of their ware. This process involves rolling out long coils of clay and building one on top of the other until the desired size is obtained.

To create the taller wares described above the following process, which is still used today by the few remaining women potters of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan would have probably been used. The construction of these forms begins with the conical form (made from the wedging process explained earlier). The potter pushes a hollow into the end of the solid clay form — creating a cone shape where it is then placed on the small, tapered end. This becomes the bottom of the vessel. The top portion of the walls are then pinched and pulled to create both form and height. The lower half of the vessel remains thicker and more roughly finished at this early stage. The resulting weight at the bottom of the vessel allows the form to remain sturdy as the work is left out for a day or so to partially dry. In the humid climate of the Olmec region, this drying time varies. The second day the lower half, still plastic enough to be stretched with a clam shell, is manipulated to the same thinness as the top. A third day of working the vessel allows the thin vessel time to become leatherhard. At this stage, the potter can cut and scrape the remaining thick base to create a uniform wall thickness.

Prehistoric potters did not apply glaze to create a seal, but polished it to a high sheen using a large round seed. There are very few stones in this region, so the seeds of legume called, *tecalate real*, were used. (Coe and Diehl 130) This constant polishing or burnishing, brought the siliceous particles to the surface so it became nonporous. After the burnishing process, the ware is still leatherhard, the surface can be cut away. During the Olmec period, an obsidian blade was likely used. (Coe 162)

Much of the utilitarian ware found in a typical Olmec home had no surface design (Benson 1996: 31), the works found that were painted or incised with symbolism and designs (composite Zoomorphic design) are thought to be used in ritual and ceremony. They serve as documents of Olmec religious belief. The composite Zoomorphic design is based on the principle image of a reptile. Characteristics include "serrated brows, and a band-like mouth with dropping corners" (de la Fuente 1996:124). The iconographic message represented by such imagery offers an abstract hint of a hybrid creature. The designs are applied in what is referred to as a wrap-around design. The imagery is only visible when the vessel is 'unfolded' into a two-dimensional surface. The result on a three-dimensional form is an abstraction of line and shape.

When was the concept of a kiln introduced and how did early kilns function?

In conjunction with the unit I developed on the various types of clay bodies, I wrote a unit introducing the various types of kilns that are in production today. This practical knowledge helps students recognize the

variety of applications ceramics has had in the past and in fact, how little it has really changed. Generally, I find the majority of my students absorb information when I can apply a variety of teaching methods to the situation. The recreation of an early open-fire pit kiln is a perfect model. The conclusion of the studio portion of this unit will culminate with an outdoor firing of the ceramic ware the student will have made with the traditional techniques and materials of the ancient Olmec. The students will be directly involved in the planning, building (digging) of the pit and will over see the firing process in its entirety.

As we now know, the 'accident' of pottery occurred in an open fire. The earliest kilns date 27,000 B.C. Archaeologists can only determine what was once a kiln site by the recovered debris or "surface indicators". (Rice 151) This debris consists of cracked, warped, or partially vitrified shards. In the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico they a recently excavated pit kiln from the Classical period (Rice 141) It seems likely that open-pit fires existed earlier than this since analysis of the wares and comparison with other cultures of similar origin indicate their use. What these open-pit fire kilns did provide was a semi- permanent structure where control over heat and protection from the wind and rain, a big improvement from the open fire 'accident'. It appears many of these pit fires were located in the homes of the potters and their families.

There are four factors in producing useful wares, with sufficient verification. 1. heat must be generated — a hot, fast burning fuel 2. heat must be transferred to the ware — convection and radiation from hot burning fuel occurs. 3. heat must be contained — maintained by piling the fuel above, below, and in-between the ware. 4. a stable setting for the ware. In Tonala, Mexico it is noted that because of deforestation, the traditional use of wool for fuel expanded into available materials such as dry brushes, cow dung, and sawdust. (Arnold 54) This of course would effect the was as seen through various surface marks.

It would be relatively ineffective to list the specifics involved for firing in an open pit today. As it would have been in 27,000 B.C., there are too many variables. I have provided a number of web sites that give very specific directions for such an activity. Because this is one of the culminating activates for this unit, I will provide a general overview of the actual firing process.

The pit itself may be circular or trench-like. The depth of the pit would vary depending on the amount of pieces you are firing and the shape of the trench. The fuel that can be used in practical operations today include such options as wood, wood ash, leaves, twigs, and kindling. The work is covered with this fuel which acts as a blanket, creating a layer or insulation with the ash. This would create mound over the pieces. The mound is lit and left to smolder for several hours, if not until the next day. The pit should not be disturbed and must be allowed to cool naturally, until the pots can be comfortably handled.

Lesson and strategies

To help students gain a perspective on the influence art has on our interpretation of the world we live in, as well as our ability to connect to the past through art is a goal of this unit which applies to all the lessons listed here. It is applicable in an number of lesson throughout the year and will be revisited as we study other cultures and their art. We will continually look for patterns that can be useful in helping us develop relevant perceptions of people in their specific historical context.

1. On being a curator: Learning to understand history and culture through art.

This lesson explores ways to look at artwork to get clues to how they were used in the past and provide insight into the ideology of the culture that created it. Students will examine a variety of objects, discuss the potential meaning, function, and context of the work. They will formulate opinions, write critically, and develop criteria for the value of selected works. Students will also seek parallels in the art from this period as a way to make connections with the world. This will help my students gain the critical writing skills needed to succeed in any number of disciplines. Class discussions and group activities based on artworks from various cultures will be used to raise awareness of various points of view and interpretations of works of art. Students will have a voice in the selection of these works. This allows students to have a sense of ownership about their judgments and develops social skills necessary to be able to deal with constructive criticism and offer criticism.

Objectives

Understand the role of a museum curator and apply that knowledge to create a museum show based on the theme: *The Best of the Olmec Culture*

Identify how artwork reflects specific concerns and intentions of a artist and their culture by creating museum type description cards on selected works.

Form opinions about value, meaning, form, and function based on group discussions on selected works.

Identify three other cultures and corresponding works that existed at the same time as the Olmec through independent research.

Materials

Printed works from text and web based resources. These can be smaller in size as they will be used in small group discussions.

Journals for note taking and sketching.

Note cards to serve as description cards for final museum show.

Hand out on writing a descriptive formal analysis.

Steps:

Divide students into groups of four or five. Provide each group a set of 10-12 prints (two per student) of various artwork from the Olmec culture. Students are assigned to select half of the prints to be chosen for *The Best of the Olmec Culture* show. The class will need to generate a set of criteria to establish why the objects selected are museum quality. The teacher should lead this discussion towards one or more of the concepts listed below and have the class expand on the list. Record the answers on the board for reference.

- quality craftsmanship
- rarity
- beauty
- sacredness

- historical significance

Students are not expected to know the factual information on the objects, rather they will speculate as a means to understand the critical thinking process. Later they will be asked to research the selected works to generate the description card for the museum show. Once all groups have come to a consensus about which works are of museum quality, each will share with the class an explanation of how and why the piece shown, has met the criteria established for the show. Expand on the reference board any new findings in relation to this pre-established criteria. Students will be given a basic fact sheet about the works they selected and will utilize the research library to write a museum description card which will contain a formal description paragraph, a historical context paragraph, and a personal judgment analysis. In addition to the historical context research, students will be asked to find three comparable works of art from another culture to begin a second study on parallels in art history.

North Carolina Standards for Arts Education Grade 9-12 (listed in full below)

Competency Goals

1: 1.01, 1.03

3: 3.04, 3.05

4: 4.01, 4.04

5: 5.01, 5.02, 5.03, 5.04, 5.05, 5.06

6: 6.01, 6.02, 6.05, 6.06

8: 8.03

National Standards for Visual Arts Education Grades 9—12 3.Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas a. Reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture. 4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures c. Analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making.

2. Taking away: revealing your image.

Students will examine a variety of subtractive sculptures from the Olmec and other cultures and discuss their meanings, purposes, and original contexts. They will explore the ways symbols and forms can reveal and influence how we interpret the image. They will then design, sketch, and carve their own symbolic self portrait sculpture in the style of the colossal Olmec heads and participate in a class critique of their work. By creating a symbolic sculpture, students will develop an understanding of the possibilities for symbolic representation and artistic interpretation in three dimensions. Students will consider the ways artists have represented ideals as symbolic forms, in three dimensional works. (See the reference to the Olmec colossal heads and seated statue of Khafre in rational.)

Objectives

Students will identify and discuss symbolic concepts or ideals represented in works of art by studying a

number of representations of the human figure and portrait.

Understand and apply the process of reduction/subtractive carving by creating a self portrait from a solid block of clay.

Through their use of symbols and choice of form for their sculpture, students will create a self portrait which reflects aspect(s) of their personality that they wish to be interpreted by others.

Materials

Reproductions of various portraits and figures. Suggestions include: The Olmec colossal heads, the statue of Khafre (both are referenced in the rationale), some jade figures from the Olmec culture will work very well as will works from early Africa, southeast Asia, and India.

Journals for note taking and sketching.

A 3-5 lb. block of clay.

Ceramic carving tools. Variety.

Newspaper, plastic bags.

A digital image of students face $\frac{3}{4}$ view. (Optional, but is really helpful!)

Steps

Show a number reproductions of works selected and have students respond to questions in their journal. This will show how individual responses to the same work of art can vary. What idea, concept, or characteristic would you guess is represented in this sculpture? Point out two symbolic details represented in this work that supports this conclusion. How do you think this sculpture was constructed? What material do you think the artist used? What leads you to this conclusion? Lead a class discussion where students share their answers while providing specific information on symbolism, history and use, technique and material of works. What kind of symbols are represented? Can you tell what it is just by looking at it? Discuss the representation of form through some guided questions. How do we view the work? Does it have movement? How does a work convey movement? How does the movement or lack of movement help convey a message about the figure? Discuss the technique and material. Why do you think they chose that material and how does it help convey the symbolic message of the artwork?

Connect this discussion to the students' lives. As a class brainstorm contemporary symbols of ideas and values. Examples to begin: Olympic rings (five regions of the world), advertisement logos (U.S. post office — eagle represents speed), religious symbols (cross or star of David — ideals), etc...Students will develop sketches of personal symbols, which will be incorporated in their portrait. They can include such things as their families, the community, any personal trait that they value and which reflects aspect(s) of their personality that they wish to be interpreted by others. Because this lesson is within the Olmec unit, and because this will be their first introduction to subtractive sculpture, they will be asked to conform their portraits to the general form of the colossal Olmec heads used in the group discussion. This will aid in the overall success of the individual sculptures as they help each other understand and visualize the sculpture within the block of clay. Demonstrate the technique of shaping and carving. Remind students the process of working with a solid block of clay; first obtain the initial form desired (head/face), then hollow out the form to

an even thickness and to ensure no cracking, and allow time to dry. Work can not be detailed until clay is leatherhard. Continue to carve details and symbols into the portraits until work is complete. Newspaper can be stuffed inside the hollow form to support the shape and aid in drying out the work. The process of burnishing parts of the portrait can be done when all details are complete and work is just past the leatherhard state. This polishing can add an interesting contrast to the sculpture. Allow 2-3 days to dry and then fire in kiln. Works could remain unglazed or a glazing lesson/component could be added.

North Carolina Standards for Arts Education Grade 9-12 (listed in full below)

Competency Goals:

1: 1.01, 1.02, 1.03

2: 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.04

3: 3.01, 3.02, 3.04

4: 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 4.04

5: 5.01, 5.02, 5.03, 5.05, 5.06

6: 6.01, 6.02, 6.03, 6.05, 6.06

National Standards for Visual Arts Education Grades 9—12

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- a. Conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.
2. Using knowledge of structures and functions
- a. Demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art.
- b. Evaluate the effectiveness of artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions.
- c. Create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- b. Apply subjects, symbols, and ideas in their artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life.
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
- a. Identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works.

3. Wrap around designs: coil, coil, coil.

Students will examine a number of functional vessel forms from the Olmec culture and understand the techniques used in construction and surface design of the works. They will create a vessel that has a specific use and meaning in their contemporary culture, which could be determined by future archeologists and art historians.

Objectives

Identify techniques ceramic artists use in designing works which reflect intentions to interpret the world in which they live by examining a variety of functional ware create by the Olmec culture.

Identify the roles of art historians and archaeologists through class discussions and critiques.

Create a functional vessel made from clay coils with incised wrap around designs like that of the Olmec vessels studied.

Identify images and designs of contemporary culture and utilize them in the wrap around surface design of the vessel.

Materials

Reproductions of Olmec vessels with wrap around designs.

Journals for note taking and sketching.

A 3-5 lb. of clay.

Ceramic tools. Variety.

Newspaper, plastic bags.

Steps

Using the reproductions, discuss the role of the art historian and archaeologist. Who studies these works? What is art history? What is archaeology? Record this information. Use one reproduction and challenge students to list aspects of the vessel that provides clues about the culture. Function, technique, shape, and surface design (wrap around design) are areas of focus. Pose the following problem to students: future art historians and archaeologists will find objects in the future which can give them clues to the culture in which we live; create a vessel that expresses meaning for our contemporary culture. Consider the following; function, technique, shape, and surface design (utilizing the wrap around design technique studied). Using sketchbooks and student design resources, sketch possible solutions. Demonstrate coiling technique and monitor student progress. Hint: thicker coils will enable students to build more quickly, they can use traditional Olmec tools (shells and stones) to think out the walls of the vessel and add height (see rationale: .. techniques did the ancient potters use to create their wares?). Once form is constructed, allow piece to dry slightly. Students can 'trace' their wrap around design onto the clay by laying the drawing on top of the ware and re-drawing the design with a dull pencil, creating a shallow relief on the ware. Students can then go back over the design with a sharper object/ ceramic tools. Newspaper can be stuffed inside the hollow form to support the shape and aid in drying out the work. The process of burnishing parts of the vessel can be done when all details are complete and work is just past the leatherhard state. This polishing can add an interesting contrast to the vessel. Allow 2-3 days to dry and then fire in kiln. Works could remain unglazed or a glazing lesson/component could be added.

North Carolina Standards for Arts Education Grade 9-12

Competency Goals

1: 1.01, 1.02, 1.03

2: 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.04

3: 3.01, 3.02, 3.04

4: 4.01, 4.02, 4.03, 4.04

5: 5.01, 5.02, 5.03, 5.05, 5.06

6: 6.01, 6.02, 6.03, 6.05, 6.06

National Standards for Visual Arts Education Grades 9—12

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes a. Apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks. b. Conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use. 2. Using knowledge of structures and functions c. Create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems. 3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas a. Reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture. 4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures c. Analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making. 5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others b. Describe meanings of artworks by analyzing how specific works are created and how they relate to historical and cultural contexts

I have provided the North Carolina course of study Standards for the Visual Arts 9-12 in full below:

GOAL 1: The learner will develop critical and creative thinking skills and perceptual awareness necessary for understanding and producing art.

Objectives

1.01 Plan and organize for creating art.

1.02 Develop strategies for imagining and implementing images.

1.03 Recognize in a world of imagination there is no right or wrong, but some solutions are better than others.

1.04 Recognize that images from reality and from fantasy may be used to create original art.

1.05 Show development of ideas across time.

1.06 Develop perceptual awareness through the use of all senses.

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will develop skills necessary for understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes. (National Standard 1)

Objectives

2.01 Explore unique properties and potential of materials.

2.02 Learn techniques and processes for working with each material.

2.03 Use different media and techniques expressively.

2.04 Use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.

COMPETENCY GOAL 3: The learner will organize the components of a work into a cohesive whole through knowledge of organizational principles of design and art elements. (National Standard 2)

Objectives

3.01 Recognize and apply the elements of art in an aesthetic composition.

3.02 Recognize and apply the design principles used in composition.

3.03 Recognize that diverse solutions are preferable to predetermined visual solutions.

3.04 Recognize the value of intuitive perceptions in the problem-solving process.

3.05 Recognize the value of experimentation in the problem-solving process.

COMPETENCY GOAL 4: The learner will choose and evaluate a range of subject matter and ideas to communicate intended meaning in artworks. (National Standard 3)

Objectives

4.01 Demonstrate the use of life surroundings and personal experiences to express ideas and feelings visually.

4.02 Interpret the environment through art.

4.03 Invent original and personal imagery to convey meaning and not rely on copying, tracing, patterns or duplicated materials.

4.04 Explore how artists develop personal imagery and style.

COMPETENCY GOAL 5: The learner will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures. (National Standard 4)

Objectives

5.01 Know that the visual arts have a history, purpose and function in all cultures.

5.02 Identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

5.03 Compare relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and cultural/ethnic groups.

5.04 Recognize the existence of art movements, periods, and styles.

5.05 Recognize the existence of universal theme in art throughout history.

5.06 Recognize that cultures have different aesthetics and each individual is a product of his or her culture.

COMPETENCY GOAL 6: The learner will reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others. (National Standard 5)

Objectives

6.01 Understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art.

6.02 Describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks.

6.03 Accept other's work and ideas as unique expression of themselves.

6.04 Recognize the constructive role of failure as a part of the creative process.

6.05 Critique artwork through the use of: proper vocabulary, art elements and design principles, meaning, feeling, mood and ideas, oral and written expression.

6.06 Understand there are varied responses to specific artworks.

COMPETENCY GOAL 7: The learner will perceive connections between visual arts and other disciplines. (National Standard 6)

Objectives

7.01 Identify connections, similarities and differences between the visual arts and other disciplines.

7.02 Describe ways the art elements and design principles interrelate within all arts disciplines.

7.03 Compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes in other disciplines.

7.04 Recognize how current technology affects visual arts and other disciplines.

COMPETENCY GOAL 8: The learner will develop an awareness of art as an avocation and profession.

Objectives

8.01 Develop an awareness of art as an avocation.

8.02 Develop an awareness of art as a profession.

8.03 Discover that art provides an opportunity for lifelong learning, both vocationally and avocationally

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