

Art Appreciation, Spring Project 2012

Ancient Greek Pottery



Amphora

The amphora is a two-handled pot with a neck narrower than the body and was one of the most common vessels used throughout ancient Greece. Characteristics include balance, symmetry, and classic lines.

For this art project we have demonstrated how to make a Greek amphora. The following instructions are for making an amphora, but the students should not be restricted to making a pot in this shape. Encourage the students to make a shape that is pleasing to them. Do encourage the children to think about important ideas of symmetry and balance. For the younger grades they may choose to do a simple pinch pot or thumb pot without handles or a base.

Note: We recommend informing the class of the date you are going to do the project and encouraging them to wear clothes that can get messy.

Materials Required

- One 25lb container of clay for each classroom. Each student will use approximately 1lb. of clay.
- Black acrylic paint
- Paint brushes (enough for each student)
- Small paper cups to hold paint, two or three students can share cups of paint
- Toothpicks
- Plastic containers for holding water to clean brushes, enough for each table in the classroom
- Paper plates (one per student)
- Paper towels (in classroom)
- Wipes (in classroom)
- Newspapers

Note: Volunteers are responsible for bringing old newspapers to the classroom to cover desks/tables.

How to sculpt amphora:

1. Distribute approximately 1lb of clay to each student. The student should roll the clay around in their hands to warm up the clay and make it more malleable. While they are rolling the clay they can think about the shape they want to make. Ask the children to reserve small amounts of clay for the base, the handles and rim.
2. Base/foot: roll a small amount of clay into a ball and pat it down. Using a toothpick, make incisions at the center of the base and add a little water. Taking another slightly smaller piece of clay, repeat process to create a double base. Press the two disks together, incised sides facing each other. The base will be added after the rest of the pot is completed.
3. Body: use the largest amount of clay and roll into a conical shape, so that it is narrower at the base. Push into the top of the conical shape piece of clay and turn at the same time so that the walls become thinner. This process is similar to making a pinch pot.
4. Neck: push in the sides at the top and remove some clay to make it narrower.
5. Pat the clay and smooth it out to make sure the pot is symmetrical.
6. Lip/top: Roll small amount of clay into a coil. Flatten the coil into a strip. Score the top of the pot. Score the coil. Add a little water to the top of the pot and to the incised side of the coil and press the two incised surfaces together.
7. Handles: Roll small amount of clay into a coil. Divide the coil into two equal lengths so that the handles will be the same size and balanced. The children can make standard handles with the rounded coil or they can flatten the coil and roll it up to make a volute. Mark the pot for placing the handle. Score the handle in crisscross pattern at top and bottom and score the pot for placement. Put a little water on the pot and on the handle. Press handles onto the pot and smooth. Repeat for other side.
8. To attach the base, score the top of the base and the bottom of the pot. Add a little water to the base and to the pot. Attach together.

Painting the amphora:

- While students are creating their pots, you can discuss different ideas with them for patterns and designs. For example, the students can choose to paint geometric shapes, a plant motif, shapes symbolizing a seafaring culture, or figures of people or animals. Students may also want to paint a picture that represents them, such as a musical instrument or favorite team logo.
- Make sure the students clean their hands after making the pots and before painting.
- Distribute about 2 tablespoons of black acrylic paint in small cups to each table. Two or three students can share a cup. Using a small amount of black acrylic paint, the students can paint a design onto the amphora.
- The pots should be left to dry on paper plates for at least 24 hours

