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Pablo
Picasso

Working
With Clay



COVER: Pablo Picasso (1881-1973).
Woman with an Amphora, 1947-48.
17 3/4 in. high. Musée Picasso, Paris.

SCHOLASTIC ART

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Artist of the Century



"I do not seek,
I find." —Pablo Picasso

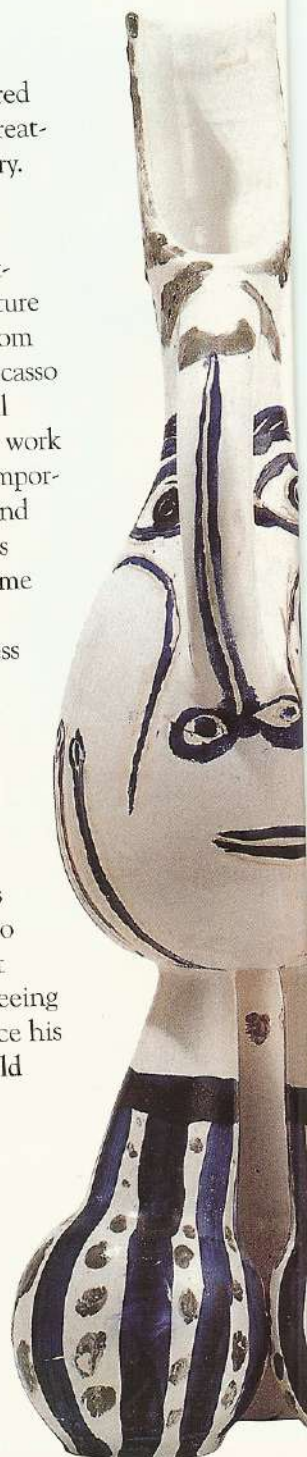
Picasso, *Self-Portrait*, 1907. Oil
on canvas, 19 3/4 x 18 1/8 in.
National Gallery, Prague.

Pablo Picasso is considered
by most people to be the great-
est artist of the 20th century.
During a career that lasted
more than 75 years, this
painter, sculptor, and print-
maker transformed the nature
of modern art. Working from
the 1890s to the 1970s, Picasso
developed new and radical
styles every few years. His work
was not only artistically impor-
tant, it was also popular and
sought after. Gradually his
name and his image became
known worldwide. And unlike many other great
artists before him, Picasso was able to enjoy success
and wealth during his lifetime.

Born in Spain in 1881, Pablo Picasso was the
son of an art teacher. Enormously talented, at
the age of 14 it took Picasso one day to com-
plete the monthlong qualifying examination of
the Academy of Fine Arts in Barcelona. Never
overly modest, the artist later said, "When I was
12, I was drawing like Raphael." In 1900, Picasso
went to Paris, the center of the art world at that
time. At first he worked realistically. But after seeing
African masks and sculptures, he began to reduce his
paintings—like *Self-Portrait* (above)—to the bold
angular lines, and simplified shapes he saw in
African art.

"Sudden visions seem to force
themselves on me."
—Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Head* (wide, moulded vase), 1956. 14 1/2 in. high.
White earthenware, impressed, satin matte glaze.
14 1/2 in. high. Private collection.



ury

"I wish to show two views of an object at the same time, that is, in the same picture." —Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Seated Woman (Marie-Thérèse Walter)*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in. Musée Picasso, Paris.

Interested in showing objects or figures as they existed in "real" space, Picasso began to work out a revolutionary new painting style called *Cubism*. To capture the three-dimensional world on a flat surface, he developed a method of showing every side of the subject in a single painting.



"For me, ceramics is sculpture without tears." —Pablo Picasso

In *Seated Woman* (above right), the forms are **simplified, stylized, flat, and mainly geometric**. The figure appears to sit in a shallow "room." Her face is seen from two **points of view**—the front and the side.

Picasso didn't begin creating his most famous clay objects until he was over 65. But throughout his career, the artist had always modeled his sculptures in clay before casting them into bronze. When he began spending most of his time working in clay, the ceramic objects he created had many of the same qualities as his paintings. *Head* (left) is a pitcher that is also a face resting on its hands. The woman's figure on the cover is also a vase. Compare the **simplified, stylized features, heavy**

black lines, and flat geometric patterns of these two sculptures with *Seated Woman*. Not only are these works ceramic pieces, they are drawings in three dimensions. The images are seen from many **points of view**. In *Head*, the rounded base reads as arms and elbows; the hands are painted directly on the face. In the vase on the cover, the arm is a handle; the head the vase's top.

In the late 1940s, when Pablo Picasso began transforming ordinary domestic objects into art, ceramics was thought of as "only a craft." Because of his great fame and influence, Picasso made ceramics into a "serious" art. Over the next 26 years, the artist produced thousands of highly inventive ceramic pieces. Picasso died in France in 1973, at the age of 91.



"A sense of humor is what we need most." — Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Hands Grasping a Bird* (zoomorphic jug), 1950-51. White earthenware, incised, painted with slips, colored, glazed ground. 16 1/2 in. high. Private collection.

Visual Joke

How would it feel to be the most famous artist in the world? Everyone would recognize you. Crowds would wait at your house, then follow you everywhere you went, day and night. For a while it might be exciting, but imagine this going on all the time. That was Pablo Picasso's situation in 1947, two years after the end of World War II. All the important work the artist had done, and his colorful lifestyle, had made him known all over the world. He was tired of this kind of fame. And he felt stuck artistically. He needed a new direction that would make his work fresh again. So he left Paris for the beaches of southern France.

Over the next few years, the thousands of ceramic works produced by Picasso reflect his feelings of rebirth. He was living in a new place; he had a

new wife and a new baby. The subjects he chose—food, fish, bathers, animals—and the simple shapes and bright colors he used to depict them, suggest his life on the sunny coast of the Mediterranean. The playful quality of his work reflects the artist's unusual family situation—three generations of Picasso children constantly coming and going. The many visual puns he created in clay brought humor, spontaneity, and new life to the traditional concept of ceramics.

Picasso and his family settled in an area that had manufactured ceramic cooking vessels for hundreds of years. While visiting a local pottery studio, the artist tried modeling a few pieces. Later, local potters helped him learn ceramic techniques. Soon Picasso began to transform functional objects like pots, jugs, and vases into figurative sculptures. A fierce bull's face appears on a soup bowl, wilting clay flowers form the top of a vase, fish are painted on the bottom of a pot.



"When a work of art is finished, it goes on changing according to the state of mind of the viewer." — Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Zoomorphic Vase* (wine pitcher), 1947-48. White earthenware, crackled glaze with patina. 15 in. high. Private collection.

"I love the idea of a little meal hanging on the wall."
—Pablo Picasso

Picasso. *Still life with Fish, Fork, Slice of Lemon*, 1953. White earthenware, press-moulded plate, modeled relief, painted, glazed, 9 in. wide. Private collection.



Often the shape of the container inspired the changes he made to it.

Head (bottom, left) was actually a tall, plain, roughly textured, monochromatic (one color) bottle made of pottery. Picasso turned it into a sculpture by bending and reshaping it. But it was the simple, final addition the artist made to it that transformed the bottle into a grotesque face. The flattened upper part of the bottle reads as a forehead. The bent spout becomes a nose, but only because of the thin line that has been incised, or cut, into the bottle right under the "nose."

surface which suggests a shimmering pool of water.

In some cases, Picasso kept the original container. The object's shape remained the same, but he used paint to turn it into something else. A pitcher's shape reminded the artist of a duck (above, left).

"When individuality appears, that's the beginning of art."—Pablo Picasso

Often the changes Picasso made to a ceramic vessel to turn it into a work of art made it useless as a piece of pottery. An ordinary dinner plate is the basis for the work above. To the plate, the artist added modeled clay bas-reliefs—a fish, a lemon slice, and a fork. He then raked a comb through the fish so it had a scale-like texture, and incised a few lines to define the eye and the lemon. He gave this still life a bright, shiny

Simplified, stylized lines stand for eyes, feathers, markings, and feet. The human hands on the sides are not three-dimensional clay forms, but flat, painted shapes. They can be read as grasping the pitcher, or grabbing at the bird. They even suggest the artist's hands as he creates the sculpture. In spite of the stylized forms, the glossy, multicolored lines and shapes covering this work give it a realistic feeling.

Dishes Into Art

Once Picasso had learned the traditional methods for making ceramics, he began to reinvent them. He experimented with various techniques and approaches. A plate becomes a painting, a vase is transformed into a face, pots are turned into women, platters into fish.

Traditional potters use a wheel to spin clay into a round shape. Picasso himself never “threw” pots on the wheel, but worked with preexisting pots. Or he made his own. He took advantage of the unpredictability of



“An object can be seen in many different ways.”—Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Head* (wide, moulded vase), 1956. 14 1/2 in. high. White earthenware, impressed, satin matte glaze. 14 1/2 in. high. Private collection.

atures) in a kiln, or oven for pottery. During firing the clay hardens and the glaze becomes part of the surface. Shapes, colors, and surfaces can change radically during each of these stages. Picasso used the accidents that burned, cracked, or collapsed his objects. He often reworked damaged pottery.

“When I am dreaming, I do not see anything out of the ordinary”—Pablo Picasso

the ceramic process. Once a clay shape is modeled, it is usually covered with a liquid called a glaze. The object is then fired (heated to high temper-

The use of unconventional tools such as kitchen knives or cooking utensils gave the artist's work a unique look. Often he would take a textured material (like corrugated metal) and press it against the wet clay (see vase above) to imprint a pattern. To this work Picasso also added a lump of clay for a nose and clay for eyes. He experimented



“Create an object, then destroy it. Do this over several times.”—Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Dove*, 1949. White earthenware. 9 1/2 in. long. Private collection.



with combinations of surface coverings. Here, thin layers of glaze bleed into each other.

While professional potters at that time would carefully prepare their pieces, Picasso worked with anything he found around. *Dove* (below, left) was constructed from discarded slabs of unfired clay. Its unfinished quality and the way the torn, crinkled **positive shapes** interact with the **negative spaces** between, gives the figure a light, lifelike feeling.

As well as **mismatching** or **repositioning** handles or spouts, Picasso would **combine standard shapes** to create a completely new ceramic vessel. *Man Riding a Horse* (left) is made up of parts of five different containers. The horse is a **vase** turned on its side. The base is that of a **pitcher**. The man's head is a **bowl** on top of the neck of a **bottle**. The rider's arms are **pitcher handles**. The surface is treated like a painting whose story continues as the shape is turned. Different aspects of the horse and rider are seen from every side.

Is a large pottery jar the first object you think of when you turn to pages 8-9? This object was originally a large, unfinished clay jar made for storing vinegar. It hung from ropes threaded through the handles. To create a giant insect Picasso made the top into a head, drew feet at the bottom, and added hands to each handle. He used **slip**—liquid clay—to paint the body with thick, blue strokes. He **incised** a thin, white line inside each stroke. This linear design suggests six legs and a segmented body. The dull **matte** surface gives *Insect* its dynamic vitality.

"In a picture you look for depth. With a vase, you try to make it look flat from every direction."—Pablo Picasso

Picasso, *Man Riding a Horse* (pitcher), 1951. White earthenware, incised, painted, glazed. 16 1/2 in. high. Private collection.

Insect

by Pablo Picasso

"The artist is a receptacle for images that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from an insect's wing." —Pablo Picasso



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). *Insect* (jar), 1951. White earthenware, incised, painted, glazed, 16 1/2 in. high. Private collection. © Images Modernes; Photo: Eric Baudouin.

Concepts in Clay

Does the sculpture on the right look like it's made of clay? Does it even look like art at all? Why would *Popples* by Jeff Koons—a giant clay version of a cheap trinket carefully crafted down to the tiniest eyelash—be considered a work of art?

American Conceptual sculptor Jeff Koons considers art and commercialism to be one and the same. "I completely believe in advertising. My art and personal life are based on it," he says. "I let the things I respond to in life come forward. They aren't necessarily found in museums, but maybe just walking down the street, or in somebody's home."

By presenting ordinary—even trite—objects in unex-



Jeff Koons, b. 1955. *Popples*, 1988. Porcelain, 29 1/4 x 23 x 12 in.

pected sizes, materials, and formats, the artist suggests that we take another look at them. He places basketballs in glass tanks, vacuum cleaners in display cases, and reproduces garden gnomes in stainless steel.

Here, a small stuffed toy has grown into a large, grotesque clay sculpture. In this work, the artist may be commenting on the intense relationships people have with modern consumer objects. The original item on which this sculpture is based has no artistic value at all. It may be silly and sentimental, but it is admired and purchased by many people. Its faithful reproduction on a mon-

umental scale and its placement in a museum setting symbolizes its value to the owner, and to the artist.

"Don't you really prefer silly knickknacks to Van Goghs or Picassos?"—Jeff Koons

Bringing Clay to

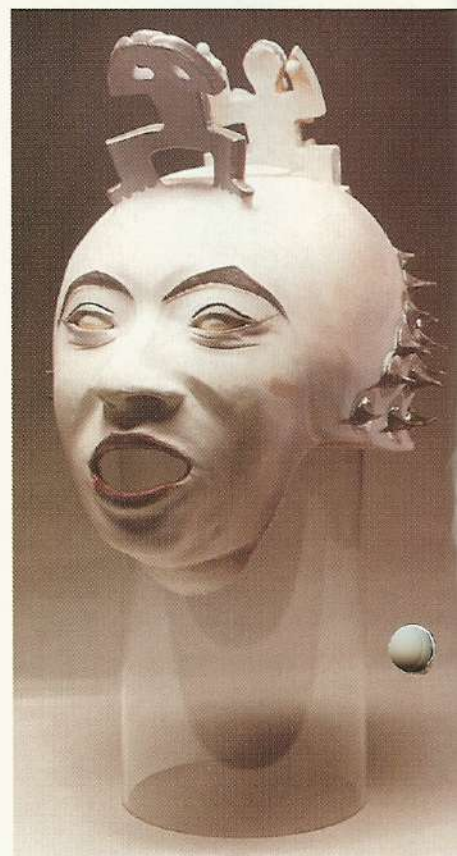
Three artists working today who are making inventive crea

Modeled Messages

African-American ceramist Winnie Owens-Hart went all the way to Africa to learn how to work in clay. She traveled 6,000 miles to live and work with a group of female potters in a small village in Nigeria. Many of her pieces are the result of learning traditional African ceramic techniques.

Owens-Hart's clay sculptures, such as *Take 1—Karma Series* (right), combine both African and modern American qualities. The artist often uses traditional mask forms as well as lines that suggest body markings common in West Africa. This hollow ceramic "mask" sits on a plexiglass support. The two stylized figures on top have upraised arms, like some Nigerian figure sculptures. But in this contemporary American work, the raised hands of the black figure in front, and the white one behind, it have an ominous meaning. The feeling of conflict is further suggested by the mask's alarmed expression and the sharp, metal spikes growing from its head. The mask's modeled organic shape contrasts with the geometric, slablike quality of the figures, heightening the sense of potential violence.

"I could have just dropped down dead because I was living my life's dream, to go to Africa and do pottery." —Winnie Owens-Hart



Winnie R. Owens-Hart, b. 1949. *Take 1—Karma Series*, 1982. Ceramic with plexiglass support. 16 1/2 x 8 x 10 1/4 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Tiny Takeover

A few years ago, a large crowd arrived at an art gallery in England to see a new work by British artist Antony Gormley. When the doors opened, the people realized they couldn't get into the room. The space was completely filled with tiny clay figures—35,000 of them crowded together on the floor of the gallery.

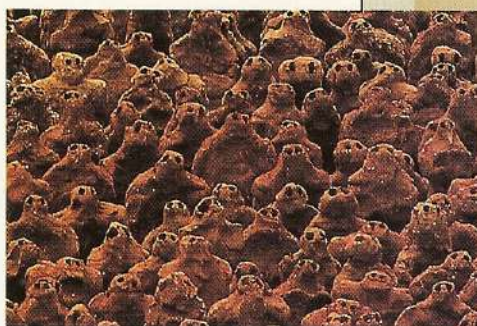
Field for the British Isles was not made by Gormley himself. The artist directed the work, but each figure was modeled by volunteers living in the English community where the clay used for the project was gathered. The figures, as you can see in the detail below, are not detailed representations. They can be seen as primitive

shapes emerging from the unformed clay. They all share one feature—a pair of large eyes staring expectantly up at the viewer. Many viewers feel uncomfortable looking down at these thousands of earth-colored figures. It is as though the land itself is rising up to remind us of our responsibility for the health of the Earth.

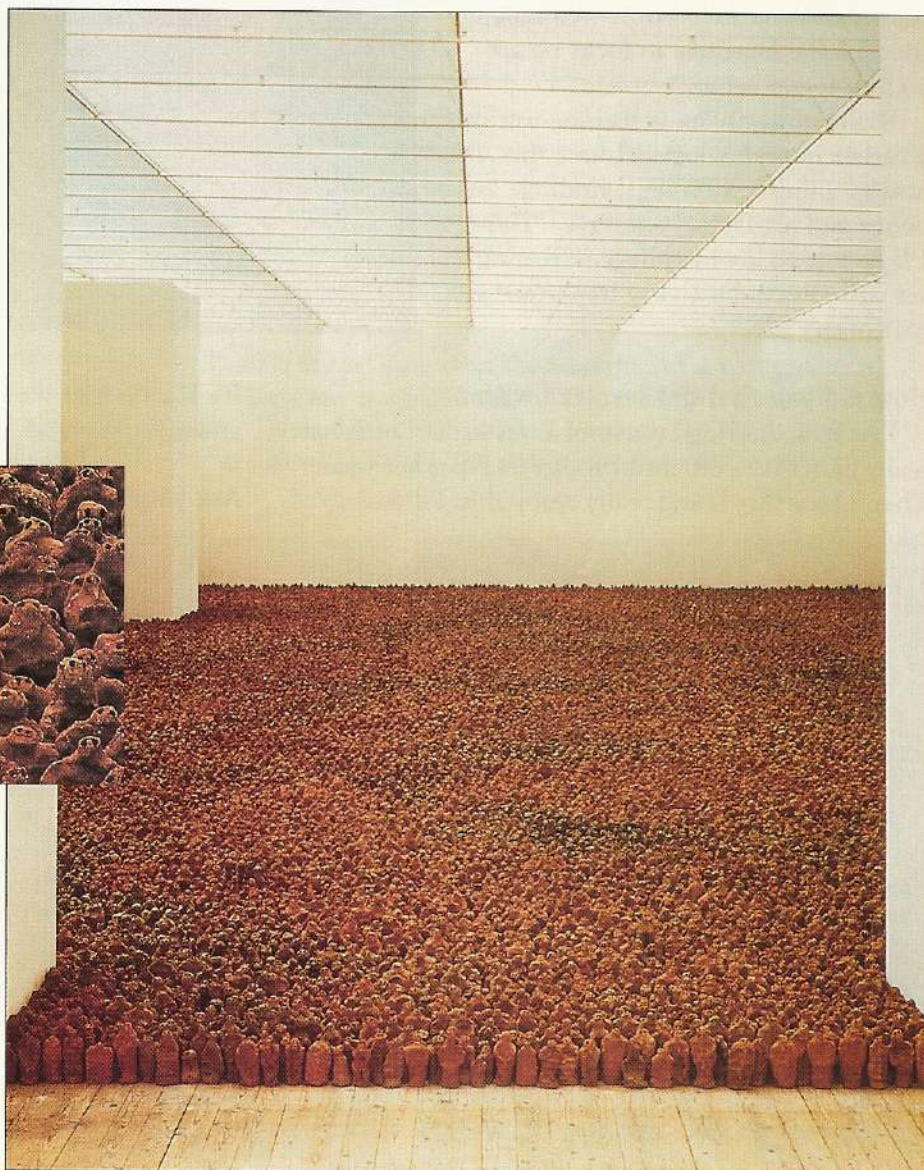
In this work Gormley uses **repetition** and **miniaturization** to show us that human beings do not control nature; that they are only a small part of the whole natural cycle. The artist has said, "I like the idea that I'm only temporarily borrowing the materials I try to shape. *Field* will eventually melt back into the earth where it belongs, back into the cycle of things."

"You are looking at 25 tons of clay energized by fire, sensitized by touch, and made conscious by being given eyes."—Antony Gormley

Life
tions in clay



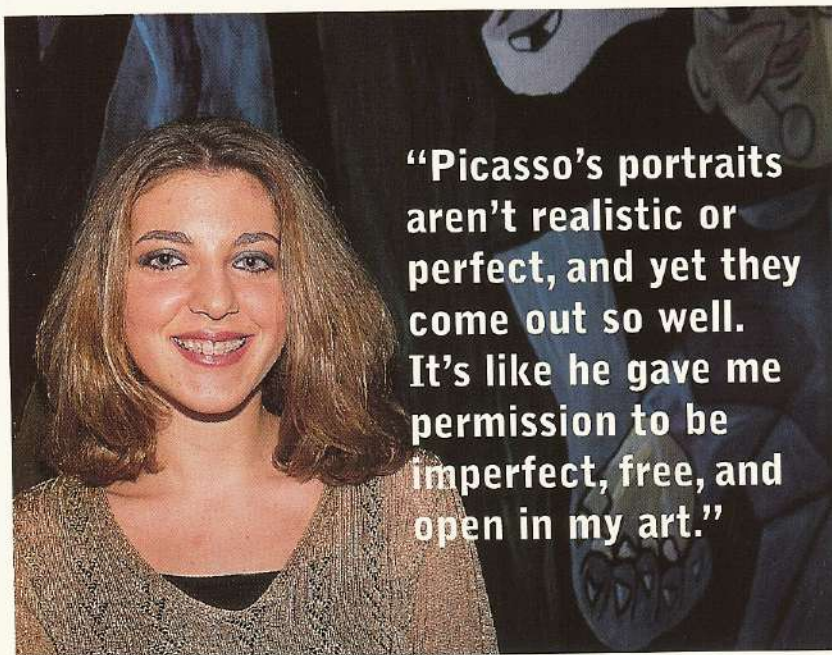
Antony Gormley, b. 1950. *Field for the British Isles*, 1993. Terracotta. 35,000 figures 3-10 in. high. Photo © Jay Jopling, London.



Shana Celli: Creating Clay Faces

Sixteen-year-old Shana Celli has always enjoyed creating art. But when she won a Scholastic Award for the ceramic head she created last year at Valley View (Pennsylvania) High School, she began to get serious about her art. It was the first time Shana realized she might have real potential as an artist. "I thought, 'Wow, I'm only a sophomore and I won this.' Winning gave me the incentive to focus on art and try to get better."

Right now, Shana is leaning toward a career in archeology. "I love the idea of going out on digs, finding bones and artifacts," she says. "But I'll be taking art in college. Creating art will always be a very important part of my life."



"Picasso's portraits aren't realistic or perfect, and yet they come out so well. It's like he gave me permission to be imperfect, free, and open in my art."

© Harvey Finkel

How did you first get involved with art?

I've been drawing ever since I was little. But my art really didn't take off until I took Art I as a freshman. Then I took Art II and really enjoyed it. I'll probably take AP art next year.

How did you come to do this award-winning piece?

Our assignment was to build a slab structure out of clay. There were no other guidelines. I came up with the concept of a four-sided structure, then I modeled a clay hand that started on one side and wrapped around to the next side. I enjoy creating faces, so I created a face for each of the remaining sides. I did them Picasso-style because we were studying his art and I liked it a lot. That's why I created the faces with their expressions, bright colors, and bold, big black lines the way I did. I thought it would look cool.

What is it about Picasso's style that you like?

His art seems so free. Picasso's portraits aren't realistic or perfect, and yet they come out so well. I'm not that great; my portraits don't come out perfectly.

It's like he gave me permission to be imperfect, free, and open in my art.

Are your faces portraits of anyone you know?

No. I just made them because they were interesting looking. One side has a sad face, he's upset. The other looks happy, and the last has no expression. My goal was to create expressions that would show that people aren't perfect. I thought using bright colors would help get that idea across. Picasso uses vibrant colors and thick, black lines. So I chose to do that too.

What about the jagged edges and other distortions? What effect were you after in this work?

I didn't want my shape to look like a straight box. I did the jagged lines to add dimension, and the lines support the message I was creating with my faces. People aren't perfect like a perfect box. They have jagged lines and edges.



After seeing your piece, what were you hoping the viewer would walk away with?

I tried to make my work abstract so people would have to think about what I wanted it to say. My piece wasn't going to be a beautiful landscape or a perfect portrait. At first, my mother thought this piece was so ugly. She laughed. Everyone did. But as they saw it again and again, they liked it more and more.

How did it feel to hear your work was ugly?

It didn't hurt my feelings. I laughed too, because this was so different from all my earlier work. But it's my favorite piece. It allowed me to express the way I was feeling about people and myself in general. It's the freest thing I've ever done. Usually I do perfect little pencil drawings. This piece was a big step forward for me as an artist. I didn't copy it from a portrait. It was my idea. It was a cool feeling to win an award for it.

How did you go about putting it together?

First I did sketches. Then I took the clay and rolled out the four sides. I drew the hand and faces on the clay, and used knives to give the sides jagged edges as I cut them. Next, I took more clay and started molding the faces. That was the hard part, making the design I created on paper become a reality in clay. I modeled each face, then cut lines on the back. I used slip (liquid clay) to attach the faces to slabs. After the four sides were done, I put them together to make the box structure. I cut lines into the edges of the slabs, then used slip to stick them together. The base was created last, then the piece was put into a kiln and fired.

After firing your piece, what did you do?

I painted it. I did the hand first because that was easiest. That's when I decided to use bright colors and bold lines. I continued that style with the next three sides. The clay was grayish and dry when it came out of the kiln, so I had to keep applying coat after coat of paint to make sure it sunk in. I used regular paint instead of glaze, so I knew exactly the colors I would get when I refired the painted piece.

Does your school have lots of equipment?

Yes we have a separate ceramic room with sinks and a kiln. I know lots of schools don't have these things. I was lucky. If I hadn't had access to this equipment, I wouldn't have been able to do this project or win this award. And, I wouldn't have considered studying art in college.

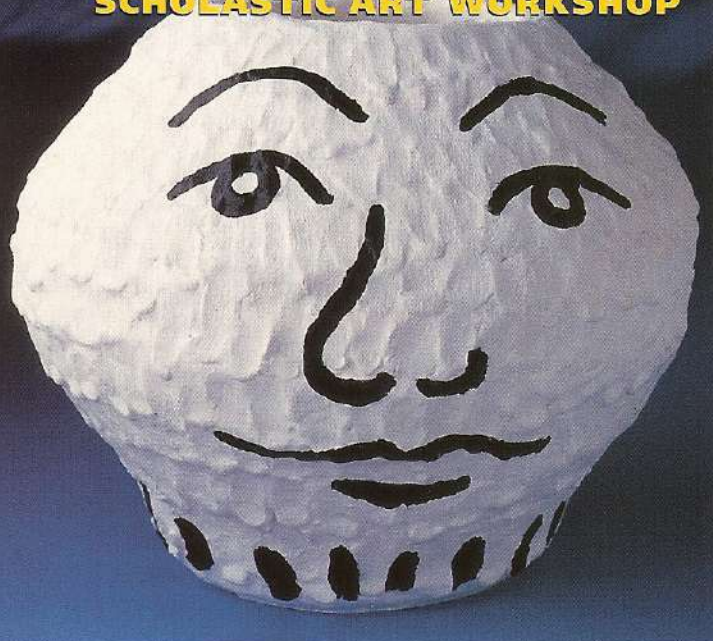
What advice might you have for aspiring artists like yourself?

This piece came totally out of my imagination. If you're thinking of being an artist, you need to follow your own style. Do what you feel is right and don't let others influence you. Totally be yourself. If people say they think your work is ugly or not that nice, ignore them. Don't let that bother you. If you let it, you're never going to be the best artist you can be.

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Three different views of Shana Celli's award-winning ceramic sculpture.



Ceramic heads by Kimberly R. Deets; LeAnn M. Stuart; Paul S. Meiste; Tyler J. Britt

Portraits in Clay

Create a ceramic container, then turn it into a stylized portrait.

Pablo Picasso created thousands of ceramic objects based mainly on items he saw around him every day. One of his favorite subjects was the human head. He made faces from vases and plates, pulled and twisted jugs into human forms, painted and scratched features on pitchers and bowls.

In this workshop, you'll model your own ceramic shape, then transform it into a unique self-portrait.

MATERIALS

- Moist air-dry clay (about 5 pounds per student)
- Duct canvas boards or 15 x 15 in. fabric pieces taped to table
- Small plastic container for water
- Small plastic container for slip
- Plastic grocery bags/ dry cleaning bags/ plastic wrap to store moist clay
- Paper towels
- Wire clay cutter
- Damp clothes
- Plastic spray bottle
- Table knife
- Rubber finishing tool (plastic scraper)
- Straight needle (dissecting needle)
- Water spray bottle
- Dinner plate
- 12 in. party balloons
- Black felt marker
- White, black, brown *Blickrylic* (tempera) paint
- 1/4 and 1/2 in. round paint brush

STEP 1

Before working with clay, remove jewelry, watches, place in pocket. Wedge (knead) clay to remove air bubbles, make it flexible. Shape clay into a 10 in. long cylindrical shape. Rope shapes must be uniform in size and thickness. Discard ropes that are wavy, lumpy, not round. They will spoil form's shape. If clay cracks, add moisture using spray bottle. Make 12 ropes, cover with damp cloth, use as needed. To store, keep damp cloth over clay—wrap in plastic.



Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr. & Stuart P. Roddy, art instructors, Morrison (IL) Junior High School and Morrison High School. Assisted by Nicholas R. Bonheur & Andrea D. Beveroth, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL. Photos by Larry Gregory



STEP 2

To form base, begin with a ball of clay the size of an orange. Place on dinner plate covered with damp cloth. Flatten ball into 6 in. circle about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick. Since maximum size of form will be 8 to 12 in. high, base should not exceed 5 in. Use paper circle template to cut base. Place clay base on dinner plate with cloth under base. Plate makes form easier to work and store.



inside of each layer. Rotate form during construction. Check at eye level to make sure shape stays uniform. Form should not go straight up, but round out slightly. Small changes can be made in shape by gently pushing from the outside (while supporting from the inside) with upward

motion. If soft clay sags, set aside while it dries a little. When satisfied with shape, air-dry to leather-hard stage.

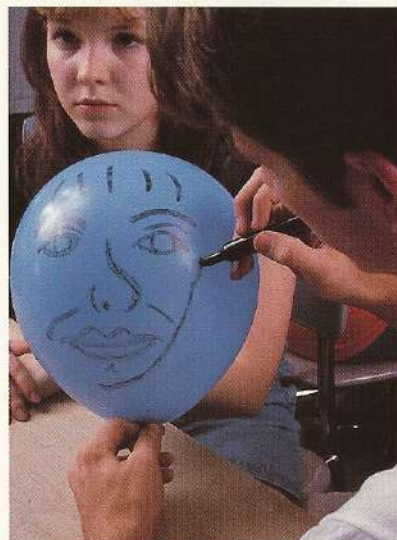
STEP 3

Measure a little more clay rope than you need, then use needle or fork to incise/score rope and edge of base. Add slip (equal mixture of water and clay which acts like a glue) to one of the incised areas. Since form will slope outward, place rope on inside edge of base. It should overlap about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Join overlapping ends of rope. Blend inside and outside to smooth, even thickness with gentle up/down wiping motion. Avoid pinching or squeezing. Add more ropes, finishing outside then



STEP 4

When form has completely dried, paint entire surface a neutral dark (black, brown, dark gray) or light (white, beige, light gray) color. Use contrasting neutral color to paint an abstracted self-portrait or portrait of a classmate on surface. Before painting on ceramic form, you can practice by drawing lines with a permanent marker on a balloon. Include only essen-



tials; emphasize lines' expressive qualities. When lines are painted, you may incise areas of portrait for emphasis.

SOME SOLUTIONS

Your form's shape can be **round** or **oval**, **flat** or **elongated**. Its surface can be varied by making it **smooth** or **textured**. You might wish to **imprint a pattern** in the clay. When you paint the outside surface, you can make it light with dark lines. Or you can **reverse positive and negative** by making the surface dark, adding white lines. Linear facial features will be **simplified**, **stylized**, **flat**. They may be **geometric** (angular) or **organic** (rounded). Facial features can be **symmetrical** (same on both sides) or **asymmetrical** (slightly different on each side), **close together**, or **spaced out**. You might

wish to combine a **side view** of one feature with a **front view** of another. Your lines may be **painted** or **incised** (scratched in). The lines themselves can be **thick** or **thin**, **continuous** or **broken**, **straight** or **curved**.

Ceramic Expressions

Can you identify any of these faces?

On the right are just a few of Picasso's thousands of heads—both human and otherwise. Most of these details are examples of ceramic techniques, materials, or design principles the artist used to create his pottery.

Next to each word or phrase below, write the letter of the visual that best applies (some phrases may be used more than once).



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Imprinted surface | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Hands painted on face |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Incised line | <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Matte surface |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Bas relief | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Clay coils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Simplified, stylized hair | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Scale-like texture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Symmetrical features | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Layers of translucent glazes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Two-dimensional | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Slip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Unfired | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Cubism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Slab construction | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Unglazed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Rough texture | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Positive shapes/Negative spaces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Multicolored | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Three-dimensional drawing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Reshaped bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Monochrome |