

Whimsical Fish

by Noelle Hoover



Fish have been important since prehistoric man depended upon them as food. Since then, the many different species and the ways to catch them have been depicted in art. Because their world under water is different from ours, we have long been fascinated by them. From fresh water gold fish to oceanic clown fish, they come in all shapes, sizes and colors. From those which live on the bottom of their underworld, to those which live close to the surface, their shape quite often reflects where they live. Start this lesson by studying different species of fish and discuss their shapes and colors. Study fish in art history and how different cultures portrayed fish. Study the art of caricature and how it can be used on more than just people. Through exaggeration of certain features, students will learn to make whimsical caricatures of actual fish species over several class periods.

Tools & Materials

- AMACO® Low Fire Clay (White #25 or Red #67)
- Liquid Slip (make by adding dry clay to mixture of 50% water and 50% vinegar)
- AMACO® Scoring Tool
- AMACO® Fettling Knife
- AMACO® Wooden Throwing Rib
- AMACO® Slab Roller or Hardwood Rolling Pins with Hardwood Thickness Strips
- AMACO® Polyethylene Plastic Bags
- AMACO® Low Fire LG Gloss Glazes
- AMACO® Soft Arroya Glazes **NEW!**
- AMACO® Ceramic Brushes

Technique



1. Start with two equal size balls of AMACO® Low Fire Clay.



2. Press thumb into center of ball $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through. Begin to pinch and pull the ball of clay in a circular pattern until the ball forms a round cup or bowl shape. Repeat for second clay ball.

Lesson Plan Goals and Objectives

- Students will create a hollow fish using pinch and slab methods, learn techniques for refining the surface, then personalize with texture and glazes.
- Students will learn to translate perceived 2-D volume to a 3- dimensional form.
- The lesson integrates natural history with art.

National Visual Arts Standards

- Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes.
- Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.
- Using knowledge of structures and functions.
- Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics of artwork.
- Choosing a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.



3. Cover clay bowls loosely with AMACO's Polyethylene Plastic Bag and let set over-night. The next step can be done when the clay bowls are stiff but still moist (leather hard).



4. Score the rim of each bowl with AMACO's Scoring Tool and apply slip with a paint brush to each rim.



5. Press both bowls together at the rim to make a hollow clay ball. Gently rotate the bowls slightly back and forth until they make a firm seal at the seam.



6. Smooth the seam with a wooden throwing rib.



7. Use a fettling knife to cut a "mouth" hole in one end of the ball.



8. Form the features (eyes, lips, or teeth) of your fish with a softer clay. Then score and use slip as in step 4 to attach the features to your fish.



9. Roll some clay slabs using either a slab roller or a rolling pin. Cut fins and tail shapes from the slabs. Attach the fins and tail with the scoring and slip method.

10. Allow fish to dry uncovered to greenware stage. Greenware stage is reached when the clay no longer feels cool or moist when placed against your cheek.

NOTE: If your fish has a closed mouth design, be sure to cut a vent hole in the bottom to allow air and water to escape during firing.

11. Bisque fire to Cone 04.



12. Use a soft natural-hair brush to apply a variety of bright AMACO® Gloss (LG) Glazes. Apply three generous coats in a cross-hatch pattern for a smooth finish. Allow to air dry.

13. Apply one to two coats of AMACO® Soft Arroya glazes Black or White to create texture and variety in the gloss glaze. The thicker the coat of Arroya, the larger the "scales" will appear. The AMACO® Soft Arroya glazes are great for hiding surface imperfections in the clay object.

14. Glaze fire to Cone 05.



Glossary

Bisque: Unglazed pottery after first firing.

Caricature: A picture or description of a person or thing in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect.

Glaze: A special clear or colored liquid mixture that is applied to pottery and becomes a hard glass surface when fired to the right temperature in a kiln.

Greenware: Completely dry clay piece which is very brittle. This is the stage the clay must reach before firing.

Leather-Hard: Drying stage of clay which is slightly wet but stiff. The perfect stage for carving or incising designs into.

Scoring: Carving tiny slits into the moist clay with a fork or scoring tool before adding slip and joining.

Slip: Clay mixed with water to the consistency of a heavy cream or milk shake. Used to join clay pieces together.



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