



Lesson #11

Cave Art Revisited

A Lesson in Recreating Prehistoric Art

The most famous and outstanding examples of prehistoric art made nearly 20,000 years ago were discovered by accident. The caves at Lascaux in Southern France were found in 1941 by two young boys playing in a field. Their dog disappeared down a hole to chase a ball, and when the boys heard the dog barking below, they followed him down into the caves. The lighted matches they used to guide their way revealed extraordinary drawings of animals. These astonishingly sophisticated examples of man's earliest art have been studied by scientists and artists since their discovery. For a number of years the caves were open to visitors and tourists, but have been closed since 1963 to protect the art from disintegration and destruction. In this lesson, elementary students learn the rich history of prehistoric art and create their own "cave paintings."

Lesson goals and objectives:

1. Students create cave paintings like those found in the caves in Lascaux, France on clay slabs.
2. The lesson incorporates art history, aesthetics, and criticism with a hands on activity.
3. The lesson focuses on ceramic techniques, important composition and design elements, an understanding of the importance of these earliest works of art, as well as self-expression.

Notes: _____

Background and preparation:

1. This project was originally created for third, fourth and fifth grade students, but can be adapted for use with students on all levels from early elementary to high school.
2. The art teacher should introduce an historical overview of prehistoric art, focusing on what an exceptional discovery the Lascaux caves were — that this art has been preserved in caves underground for more than 17,000 years and, most important, that the artist created extraordinary art with crude tools, the simplest of materials, and without the benefit of any sort of technology. Use videos, prints, books, photographs, etc. to help the students visual the marvel and magnitude of the actual drawings.
3. Talk to students about creating their own "cave art." Show them examples and talk to them about the technique and the process.

Notes: _____



Glossary:

Anthropology — the study of the history of human beings including their cultural history

Ceramics — the art of making objects of clay which are hardened by firing at a high temperature in a kiln

Composition — the organization of a work of art

Fire — a term used in ceramics; to heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is dry and hard and becomes pottery.

Kiln — an oven or furnace that reaches very high temperatures (2000°F to 2300°F) and is used for drying, firing, and glazing ceramic ware.

Prehistoric — relating to the time before written history

Slab — a rolled out piece of clay of a certain thickness

Template — a positive pattern

Trace — to copy a drawing onto another surface by following the lines of the original drawing

Underglaze — a special type of color that is usually put on a ceramic piece before the glaze. It has no flux (glass former) in it so it stays where it is put when fired and is good for detail work. It is used for painting and decorating ceramic pieces.

Supplies:

AMACO® Stoneware Clay with Grog No. 48 (Catalog No. 45095L) or AMACO® Warm Brown Stoneware Clay No. 58 (Catalog No. 45007R)
Assorted AMACO® Liquid Underglaze Decorating Colors (LUGs are available in 16 oz. and 2 oz. jars and in sets)
Assorted AMACO® Velvet Underglazes (Velvets are available in 16 oz. and 2 oz. jars and in sets)
Small brushes for outlining
Sponges
Paper towels
Newspapers (to protect table surface)
Sketch paper (9" x 12")
Pencils and erasers
Bowls of water
Rolling pins
Scissors
Bats (or pieces of plywood or drywood) to carry individual clay slabs

Optional Supplies:

AMACO® Brent Slab Roller

Instructions:

For Fourth Grade and Up

1. Students should begin by sketching several animal ideas in a size to fit the clay slab.
2. Roll out clay slabs approximately $1\frac{3}{4}$ " thick, 12" x 8". Make the slabs the size to fit the bats or plywood boards available for ease in moving and storage. Choose a stoneware clay body that will fire to a color that resembles cave walls or rock. Be sure the edges and corners of the clay are smoothed while wet to avoid any sharp edges.
3. Students cut out their drawings to make templates. See photo 1.
4. The animal templates are placed on the wet clay. See photo 2.
5. Using Velvets and underglazes, background colors are sponged around the template.
6. The template is removed and the interior of the animal is carefully sponged (see photo 3) with color.
7. When the colors are dry, steps 4, 5, and 6 can be repeated to create layering or multiple animals.
8. Using black underglaze and a small brush, the students outline the animals.
9. Each clay slab is signed with the student's hand print (instructions above).
10. When slabs are thoroughly dry, high fire to cone 6.



Photo #1



Photo #2



Photo #3

Making Hand Print Signatures

1. Each student's hand print is photocopied at actual size, or if individual hand prints are not possible, photocopy one or two hand prints to be used by all students in the class.
2. The individual hand prints are reduced on the copy machine to approximately 2".
3. The students cut out the reduced hand prints and use the cutout as a template.
4. The students place the template of their hand on the clay slab and sponge bright colors of Velvets over the hand print. When the hand print template is removed, an outline of the hand is left.



Additional suggestions:

For younger students whose cutting skills may be limited:

1. Let the slabs for the younger students set up until they are nearly leather hard. When the clay is not too soft, the younger students can press harder and avoid unwanted marks.
2. Students lay their sketches on the clay slabs. Using a pencil, they trace over the drawings making an impression of the drawing in the clay.
3. Using Velvets and underglazes, colors are sponged onto the clay.
4. Using black underglaze and a small brush, the students outline the animals.
5. Each clay slab is signed with the student's hand print (instructions above).
6. When slabs are thoroughly dry, high fire to cone 6.



Follow up ideas:

Display the students "Cave Paintings" in the art room and throughout the school. Work with the classroom teacher to coordinate history, science, reading, and creative writing lessons. Explore other forms of early art including sculpture, aboriginal stone carvings, and tools with your students.

Special Resources:

Lascaux Revisited, Crystal Productions, Box 2159, Glenview, IL 60025, (800)255-8629.

Assorted Cave Art Prints, Crystal Productions, Box 2159, Glenview, IL 60025, (800)255-8629.

This lesson was created by Allyson Santner, elementary school art teacher for Harris Elementary School, Brownsburg, Indiana. Examples for this lesson were created by her students.

This is one lesson in a series of art plans for elementary and secondary programs using American Art Clay Co., Inc. products.



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