

African Clay Boxes

by Mayco® Colors (art + social studies)

African art is as diverse as the great number of ethnic and tribal cultures living there. Like most of the world, the culture of Africa has been impacted by both internal and external forces. The arts and crafts of Africa find expression in a variety of woodcarvings, brass and leather works, sculpture, paintings, pottery and ceremonial headgear and dress. In African art, the object was not as important as the soul force behind the creation of the object. It is also of great importance that all art be functional.

In most of traditional art and craft of Africa, certain themes significant to African culture recur, including a couple, a woman with a child, a male with a weapon or animal, and an outsider or a stranger. The man with the weapon or animal theme symbolizes honor and power.

By making an animal shaped box out of clay, students honor both the vast diversity of Africa's animal world, and also create a functional work of art! After choosing a favorite African animal, students will hand build a clay box with lid. After firing and applying color, the project is complete.

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Materials

Blick® Talc-Free White Clay, 50-lb box (30544-1050); need 2-lbs per student



Sculpture House® Sgraffito and Clean-Up Tool Set



(30310-1009); share 4 sets across class

Mayco® Stroke & Coat Wonderglaze for Bisque (30408-) share various colors across class

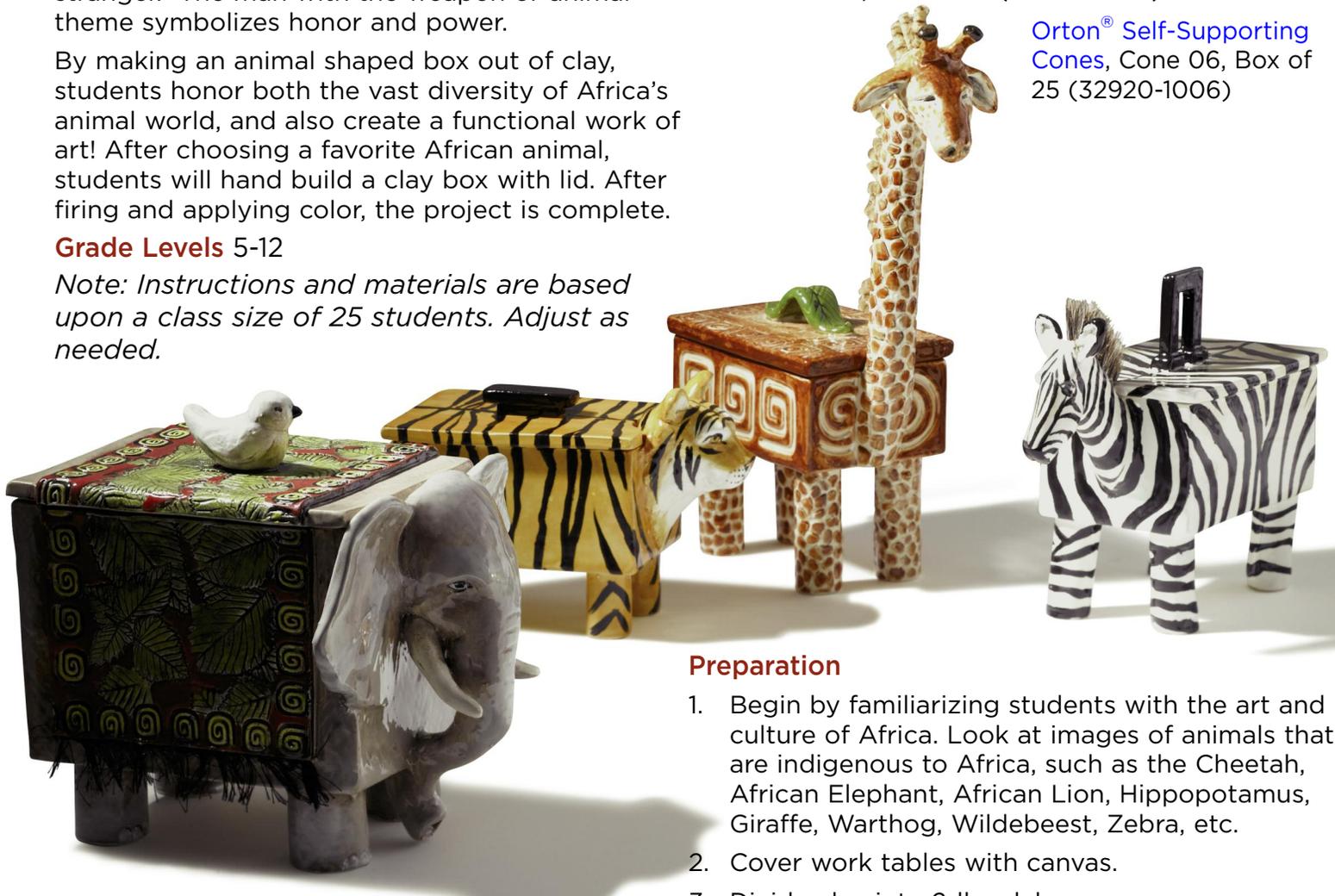


Mayco® Stroke & Coat Wonderglaze for Bisque, Brush Glaze, Natural Clear, Pint (30408-1026); share across class



Orton® Self-Supporting Cones, Cone 04, Box of 25 (32920-1004)

Orton® Self-Supporting Cones, Cone 06, Box of 25 (32920-1006)



Preparation

1. Begin by familiarizing students with the art and culture of Africa. Look at images of animals that are indigenous to Africa, such as the Cheetah, African Elephant, African Lion, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Warthog, Wildebeest, Zebra, etc.
2. Cover work tables with canvas.
3. Divide clay into 2-lbs slabs.

Process

1. With a rolling pin and two 3/8" dowels, roll out the slab of clay to the size a legal piece of paper (8-1/2" x 14").
2. Place the clay on the canvas covered table, and with a dowel rod on each end of the rolling pin, roll the clay into a slab. The dowel rods serve as guides to ensure that the clay slab is of a uniform thickness.
3. Make clay "slurry" by mixing a piece of clay about the size of a large marble with water in a cup. This will act as the "glue" to attach all the pieces together.
4. Following the pattern on page 3, or using a similar design, cut the sides, bottom and lid of the box out of the clay.
5. Using a small clean up tool, cut out the pattern and save the excess clay for the head, feet and tail of the animal box.
6. Using various stamps and press tools, design a pattern on the sides, bottom and top of the animal box.
7. Attach the sides to the bottom of the box by scoring (scratching into the surface of the adjoining pieces with a fork or needle tool). Use the slurry as glue to hold the pieces together.
8. To the bottom side of the lid, add a small coil of clay by scoring and slipping. Make sure the coil fits inside the box to make the lid fit securely. Place the lid on the box with a thin layer of newspaper or paper towel between the two pieces to avoid them sticking together.
9. Let the box dry to the leather hard stage. (The clay is still visibly damp but has dried enough to be able to be handled without deformation. The clay may be gouged or incised without breaking, but will not receive impressions)
10. Once the body of the box is leather hard, add legs, tail and head by scoring and using the slurry made earlier as the glue. Form legs by making fat coils and bending at the foot. Make a smaller coil for the tail. Using various shapes, form the head and neck of your animal. Add eyes, ears and nose. Use press tools to help in creating your animal head.
11. Allow to dry completely and bisque fire to shelf cone 04.
12. Using a brush, slightly thin the base coat of glaze and apply over the entire piece. Wipe back with a damp sponge over the tops of the design to give the piece an antique look
13. Further embellish your African Box using one coat of various colors of Mayco Stroke & Coat Wonderglaze for Bisque. Allow to dry.
14. Using a brush, apply two coats of Crystal Clear Brushing glaze. Allow to dry. Wipe any glaze from the bottom of the feet. Do not apply glaze to the area where the lid fits on the box, or alternately, fire them separately.
15. Fire to cone 06.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8 Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12 Students 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

Content Standard #2 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

5-8 Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

9-12 Students apply subjects, symbols, and ideas in their artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

9-12 Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

African Box Body Pattern

