

Roliquery Balls – Make a Rolling Impression!

Deeply textured clay spheres produce an interactive art experience in sand or clay

(art + history)

The word roliquery is a play on the word reliquary, which is, simply, a container for relics. A relic is an object that is usually very old, such as a piece of pottery, a piece of bone, or even a part of a deceased holy person's body or belongings.

Indiana-based artist Amy Brier carves very large limestone balls that she calls Roliquery Balls. Her large-scale sculptures allow anyone to have an interactive art experience by rolling them in sand to create ephemeral and always renewable sculptural patterns. This hands-on and very personal art experience can spark a passion for art in anyone! "My art is unique on many levels," Brier says. "For example, in the Roliquery series, I follow the basic semiotic premise of binary oppositions, which defines much of our language. Every image carved is either in the negative, which when printed becomes positive, or vice versa. Viewers complete the creative process as they roll the Roliquery and create images in the sand." In Brier's work, the carved stone sphere is a tool that is used to create an image. The fluid quality of the sand is the perfect medium in which the solid sphere is impressed. "Even though this final act is playful, it often leads to serious aesthetic investigation of how forms are made, and what it means to be an artist." By interacting with the Roliquery, people are not just passive viewers of art, but rather active participants in it.

Making a smaller clay Roliquery ball is simple! Start with a ball of clay made into a sphere. After carving and firing, the ball can be used over and over to create patterning in sand, or on soft clay slabs

GRADES preK-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Provide each student with a ball of clay about the size of an orange.
2. Cover tables.

Process

1. Out of the large ball of clay, take smaller pieces and roll them into sphere shapes. Alternately, a thick "log" of clay could be made.
2. Let the ball or log of clay dry to the leather hard stage. Leather hard just means the clay is half-dry and appears similar to leather.



Materials (required)

[Blick Stoneware Clay](#), 50 lb (30517-1050); share one across class

[Colored Sand](#), White, 25 lb (61006-); share one across class

[Mini Ribbon Tool Set](#), 6-piece (30397-9339); share four sets across class

[Kemper Straight Needle](#), 5" (30308-1005); share four across class

Shoe Box lid, painted

Optional materials:

[Ampersand Gessobord Shadow Boxes](#) (14944-0012)

[Amaco Stonex White Clay](#) (33247-)

[Mayco Sprig Molds](#) (30700-)

[Blickrylic Student Acrylics](#) (00711-)





Step 1: From the large ball of clay, make smaller spheres or logs to texture.

Process, continued

At this point, the clay is still visibly damp but has dried enough to be able to handle without distortion, and carving is much easier than if the clay were softer or harder. Using small carving tools or loop tools, carve designs into the clay. Try carving leaf motifs, insects, shells, or snowflakes — or make freeform geometric or organic shapes. Deeper motifs will result in more raised designs when the piece is rolled.



Step 2: Using loop tools, make deep carvings into the leather hard clay.

3. At strategic areas in the design, use a needle tool to make a deep hole into the center of the ball. This will allow steam to escape during firing. Make a few deep holes all over the design.
4. Allow to dry completely. Since the clay is solid, make sure it's very bone dry before a slow bisque firing to cone 04. One way to test complete dryness is to hold the piece to a cheek. If the clay feels cool, there's probably still moisture present.
5. While the Roliqueries are drying and being fired, make the box for the sand. Repurpose a shoe box or other box lid by painting.
6. After the pieces are fired, fill a box with sand to a depth of about 2". The lid of a shoebox could be painted to serve this purpose, or a shadow box frame works very well. When the fired piece is rolled over the sand, interesting raised patterns result. Just shake the box to level the sand and make more patterns! The fired Roliqueries also make excellent tools for patterning clay slabs or soft clay ceramic pieces. Lastly, they make interesting and curious pieces to explore visually and tactilely.



Step 3: After a bisque firing, use the Roliquery to make patterns in sand, or onto soft clay.

Options

1. An alternative texturing option is to add sprig mold design elements onto the ball of clay. Press clay into the mold and then remove it using a needle tool. Score the back of the molded piece with the needle tool and add a little clay slip before attaching it to the sphere. The addition



Options, continued

designs will produce a design that presses down into the sand or clay, rather than being raised.

2. Use air dry clay to create a Roliquery.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Performing

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

