

## The Walls are Watching You!

Form a whimsical and functional “pocket” to animate a wall

Look around — pockets are everywhere! Wall pockets have a rich history and come in many forms. The materials used for wall pockets are highly varied. Although we think of these “hangable” vases as made mainly of ceramics, they have also been made from glass, wood, tin, copper, and cloth. Early references mention wood boxes hung on walls at strategic locations near entry doors or by the hearth, to hold candles, matches, or eating utensils. Pockets made from scraps of cloth would hold sewing items — scissors, thread, thimbles, or a darning egg. Early autos featured a pocket vase for flowers mounted in the interior of the car. In ancient China, wall pockets were hung on the walls of inner courtyards and used to hold chopsticks, plants, or flowers.

There is also a rich and varied history surrounding the placement of a face on a piece of pottery. Of the many crafts indigenous to the mountains of northern Georgia and western North Carolina, the most interesting is the face jug. No one is 100% certain how it originated, but two very different stories capture some of the mystique surrounding these funny and whimsical creations. The first is that people living in Appalachia keep their moonshine in jugs designed with scary faces to keep children from sampling the contents. So the face jug, different from the other jugs in the house, served as an early childproof cap! The second story has to do with devil jugs, or scary-faced jugs with devil horns. The story is that devil jugs, which originated in slave communities, were placed on the grave of a deceased person for one year. If the jug broke during the year, it meant that the deceased was wrestling with the devil.

This project combines the wall pocket with the face jug, creating a fun and whimsical (or scary) face pocket. Anything placed in the pocket might be viewed as hair that adorns the face. Using firing or air-dry clay and the slab method, a face pocket can serve as a planter, or a functional item to hold anything that might benefit from having its own pocket.



**GRADES 2-12** Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

### Materials

**A.R.T. Moist Clay**, Terra Cotta II, 50-lb (30540-3760); need 2 lbs per student

**Kemper® Pottery Tool Kit** (30325-1009); share 12 kits across class

**Blick® Unprimed Cotton Canvas**, 62" x 1-yd, 7-oz (07309-1062); need enough to cover tables

**Yasutomo® Flat Hake Brush**, 1" x 1-1/4" (05408-1001); need one per student

**Amaco® Textured Alligator Liquid Glazes**, assorted color pints (30427-); share three across class

### Optional Materials

**Amaco® Stonex Self-Hardening White Clay**, 25-lb (33247-1025)

**Blick® Studio Acrylics**, assorted colors, 4-oz or 8-oz tubes (01637-)

**Orton Pyrometric Cones**, Cone 4, Box of 50 (32921-1040)



## Preparation

1. View the 15-minute episode of "History Detectives: Face Jug" on the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) website.
2. Provide one grapefruit-sized, 2-lb ball of clay per student.
3. Cover the work area with canvas, and provide one masonite board per student.

## Process

NOTE: Forming the pocket will be done during one class session, and adding facial details will be done during a second class session, after the pocket has set up slightly.

1. Roll the ball of clay into a long slab. Be sure to flip the slab occasionally and roll both ways across the clay.
2. Trim the edges of the clay, and fold the bottom half of the slab toward the top to form a pocket. Place bunched-up paper toweling into the pocket area to help support it and join seams with the slip and score method. Make preliminary marks for facial features by pushing out from the back of the slab where the nose and chin will be, and pushing in slightly for the eye sockets.
3. Leave an area at the top of the pocket at the back to punch a hole for hanging. Cover the pocket with plastic and allow it to set up overnight.
4. Add detailed facial features by further refining the pocket. Add clay for eyes, nose, lips, cheeks, and chin. Use tools to enhance details.
5. When complete, allow the wall pocket to dry thoroughly.
6. For firing clay, bisque-fire, apply glaze, and then glaze fire the piece.
7. For air-dry clay, paint with acrylic paints.



**Step 1:** Fold the bottom half of a rolled slab upward to form a pocket.



**Step 2:** Make initial indentations and marks for placement of facial features.



**Step 3:** Add clay and further refine the face using tools.

## National Standards for Visual Arts Education

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

**K-4** Students know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

**9-12** Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

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

**K-4** Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art

**5-8** Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts

**9-12** Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places