

Watercolor Texture Casts

Molding, casting, sculpting, painting and monoprinting — this simple project pulls all of these together into one low-relief sculpture that demonstrates the elements of texture and color.

Texture is defined in clay by pressing objects in or sculpting with tools. Next, the clay is painted with watercolor. Blick® Carve & Cast is a dry powder that, when mixed with water, combines the best properties of plaster and papier mâché. There's no shrinkage, so it picks up great texture without distortion. Dry watercolor lifts from the clay surface and absorbs directly into the casting, softly bleeding together.

Grade Levels 3-12

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

Preparation

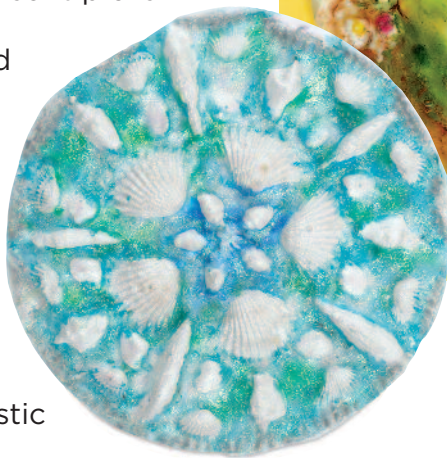
1. Collect foam plates, aluminum or plastic trays, shallow food storage boxes or other moisture-proof containers to support the moldmaking and casting process. The examples shown were made with dinner plate-sized foam plates.

Process

1. Flatten the clay with a rolling pin into a shape about the size of the container. Roll it out on a plastic tablecloth or a piece of canvas. Press it into the bottom of the container and flatten it with your fingers.
2. Create texture drawings in the clay. Press objects into the clay to make impressions: leaves, twigs, stones, shells, wooden shapes and more. Use modeling tools or other instruments to make interesting impressions.

NOTE: keep in mind that the cast will be a reverse of the texture created in the clay. What is depressed will be raised in the finished piece. Thin lines (smaller than 1/16") should be avoided, as they may be too delicate to cast well.

3. Paint the surface of the clay with watercolor paints. Because modeling clay is oil-based, the more water in the paint, the less likely it is to remain on the clay surface. Watercolors squeezed freshly from a tube will stick best with minimal crawl. If the paint will not stick, allow it to dry and try applying a second or third coat. Perfectly smooth coverage is not necessary, as colors will bleed into the wet casting mixture when it is applied. However, the less watercolor on the clay surface, the less intense the color will be in the finished piece.



Above: "Sailor's Valentine" casting made with Sea Shells (61451-1010) and Sargent's Glitter Glaze (00704-1006)



Materials

Van Aken® Plastalina Modeling Clay, White (33268-1041); need 1/4-lb per student

Blick® Artists' Watercolors, 5-color set (01728-2009); share one across class

Blick® Carve & Cast (33103-1010); share one 10-lb box across classroom

Blick® Economy Sable Rounds, 36-piece Classpack (05147-0369); share one across class

Round 10-Well Plastic Trays (03041-1010); share one between two students

Foam Plates

Student Clay Modeling Tools, 7-piece set (30361-1009); share one among four students

Wooden Rolling Pin, 8" (30345-1008); share one among four students

Drying rack or screen



Left:
Watercolor Mandala
made with assorted
Wood Shapes
(60453-1000)

Below:
Nature Casting
made with leaves
and twigs.



Process, continued

4. Measure one cup of lukewarm water into a mixing bowl. Dry the measuring cup with a paper towel and scoop one heaping cup of Carve & Cast. Add it to the water gradually, stirring briskly to mix. Continue mixing for 3 minutes after all of the dry mix has been added to the water. The mixture should be solid enough to pick up with your hands, but not stick to your fingers. If necessary, add a little more water or mix.
5. Drop the Carve & Cast by spoonfuls over the painted clay surface. Use all the mixture. Lift plate or tray 1" from the table surface and drop it several times to evenly distribute and to work air bubbles to the surface. The plate can also be picked up and rapped on the bottom with knuckles to release air.
6. Once bubbles stop, set aside to dry for 24 hours. Placing in a sunny location or in front of a fan will speed drying. Carefully remove from the plate or tray and place Carve & Cast side down on table. Pull the clay away gently.
 - If pieces pull away that shouldn't, press back in place. A little white glue may be necessary if the cast is too dry.
 - If areas of color didn't transfer well, blend with fingers while the cast is still moist.

- Once the casting is completely hardened, rough edges can be smoothed down with sandpaper.
7. Place the casting on a screen or drying rack so that air can reach both sides. A complete cure can take several days, but it can be hardened more quickly by:
 - placing it outdoors in the sunlight and air currents
 - placing it in front of a window or fan
 - using a hair dryer
 - placing it in an oven set to 200°F for several hours
 8. Remove any leftover watercolor from the clay with an alcohol-based cleaning wipe or dishwashing liquid on a wet paper towel. Modeling clay may be used over and over again.

Options:

Finished pieces are lightweight and rigid but may be sealed for extra protection and durability with Krylon® Low Odor Clear Finish. Read the label carefully and follow all precautions. Do not use with children present.

National Standards

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

K-4 Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.

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 #2 Using knowledge of structures and functions.

K-4 Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.

5-8 Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas.

9-12 Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.