HANDS ON
CRAFTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Print, Clay, Fabric & Fibre

Edited by Ultan Cowley

Published By
Potter’s Yard Press
CONTENTS

Introduction To This Series .................................................. p. 5-6
Primary Printmaking by Órla Bates ........................................ p. 9-36
Exploring Fabric & Fibre by Mairead Holohan ......................... p. 37-70
Ball to Bowl by Patricia Howard ........................................... p. 71-98
“The fundamental goal of this series is the empowerment of children in the creative use of craftsmen’s tools and materials.”

- Ultan Cowley, Editor
Welcome to Hands On: Crafts For The Classroom. This innovative Three Part Series covers the following Visual Arts Media: Print; Clay; Fabric & Fibre. The Series is designed to facilitate the teaching of these three challenging and rewarding crafts within the context of the Primary Schools Visual Arts Curriculum. The selected strands also integrate and illuminate aspects of the remaining prescribed strands – Drawing, Construction, Painting and Colour. These strands will be the subject of Volume Two in the series.

Teachers are provided with an inspirational series of structured Lesson Plans designed by professional practitioners for the instruction and enjoyment of children between the ages of four and twelve years.

The series is designed to familiarise teachers with these crafts so that, in addition to being able to teach crafts more effectively, they may welcome and benefit more fully from hands-on tuition by visiting professional practitioners in the classroom. In addition we aim to make the series attractive and helpful to parents and children wishing to practice these crafts in the home environment. It is all about ideas effectively executed.

Each book begins with an Introduction by the author to their own teaching philosophy and experience, vis a vis children, thereby striking a friendly and personal note. The text is supported by detailed illustrations - either drawings, photographs, or both.

The fundamental goal of this series is the empowerment of children in the creative use of craftsmen’s tools and materials. In the digital age, where thumbs and fingertips all too often encounter nothing more substantial than a keyboard, the importance of children learning to coordinate manual, visual, and intellectual skills in the making of beautiful and useful objects cannot be overstated. That which we make, with our own hands, we truly own. It is this passionate belief, shared by all of us, which gives this book its title. Enjoy!

Ultan Cowley
Editor
Contents

Biographical Note
Introduction
Lesson Plan 1: Texture and the World Around Us
Lesson Plan 2: Making Marks
Lesson Plan 3: Rubbing Resists
Lesson Plan 4: Roller Prints
Lesson Plan 5: Texture Creatures
Lesson Plan 6: Spud Stamps
Lesson Plan 7: One of a Kind
Lesson Plan 8: Matisse Monoprints
Lesson Plan 9: Creative Collographs
Lesson Plan 10: Printing Patterns
Lesson Plan 11: The Great Wave
Lesson Plan 12: Building Blocks
Lesson Plan 13: It's a Jungle Out There

Glossary of Terms
List of Stockists
Órla Bates is a practicing visual artist and art educator living and working in County Wexford. Órla studied art, specializing in printmaking, at Limerick School of Art and Design and graduated in 2000. In 2002 she embarked upon further studies at the National College of Art and Design and completed the Higher Diploma in Art and Design Education. Since then Órla has continued to work as an artist, printmaker, and art teacher.
Recently I was teaching a primary school art in-service course and spoke with a participant about teaching printmaking in the classroom. She told me that, as she was thinking about signing up for the course, a colleague asserted that printmaking is not relevant in the classroom!

Forgive me for disbelieving that there could be any question as to whether printmaking should be taught in schools. If one thinks printmaking is irrelevant or obsolete, particularly in this technological age, then why paint or draw either? Why teach children any of these things?

Art is extremely important and enables children to find ways of understanding the world around them. Participating in purposeful art activities helps children to gain tools for becoming more imaginative, for respecting others’ ideas, developing creative problem solving skills and valuing their own unique thoughts and ideas. Integrating art into the curriculum helps to expand on, and enrich learning in, other subjects.

I have been teaching art to primary school children for over ten years and, in my experience, printmaking is amongst the most challenging and rewarding exercises for children. At every level, children enjoy all aspects of the process of creating prints, whether it is rolling a brayer in the sticky ink, carving marks into foam, or the excitement and surprise of pulling the print like an unwrapped present. Printmaking offers a diversity of techniques which make it a wonderful medium through which children experiment with and explore visual art. It can be adapted to suit all levels of ability and can encompass almost any theme or curriculum area.

Through printmaking, children learn many values, which extend beyond the art lesson. They learn to be patient and persist, to practise to become better at something, to accept and value differences and to work together to achieve great things. With more and more time spent staring at computer screens, and other electronic devices, the hands-on experience which printmaking offers has become more important than ever.

The aim of this book is to share my excitement around printmaking with teachers everywhere in the hope that they too will spread the love of print to their students! The lessons offer an introduction to a range of basic printing techniques which are easy to use in the classroom including monoprint, relief printing, and collographs. Each project requires basic equipment and materials. all of which can be printed by hand, without the use of a printing press. As you explore the different techniques in the book and acquire more confidence in delivering the lessons you will discover that the exciting possibilities of printmaking are almost endless.
Lesson Plan 9: Creative Collographs

Introduction:
This lesson is a great mix for children who love science, maths or art or all three! In this project let's use art as a stimulating starting point for exploring concepts in math and geometry. Children learn how to make their own geometric tile pattern by printing foam shapes which is inspired by Islamic art and tessellations.

Learning outcomes:
Students will:
- Learn how to make a relief print
- Understand repetition in pattern design
- Experiment with different colours and arrangements

Teacher Preparation
- Cut cardboard into blocks 4x4
- Make an example printing block

Level:
- Junior Infants to Sixth Class

Materials:
- Thick cardboard / mounting board / small wooden blocks
- Foam shapes (self adhesive if possible)
- Double sided tape
- Water based block printing ink
- Rollers
- Paper for printing
- Scissors

Duration:
- 3 lessons
- Lesson 1: Look and respond to Islamic art and Tessellations
- Lesson 2: Design and make the stamp block
- Lesson 3: Printing the pattern designs

Support Study:
- Islamic Art and Geometric Design
- M.C. Escher
Method:

1. Begin this project by looking at and responding to examples of Islamic Art and tessellations with your students. Look at the different shapes that are used in the designs and how they are arranged.

2. Using the foam shapes, demonstrate different ways the children might arrange their geometric shapes to make a tile design. Give materials out to students; they need a base for their pattern and either pre-cut shapes or foam sheet to cut their own shapes.

3. Allow time to play around with the foam shapes to try out different arrangements. Once students have decided on a design they can start sticking the shapes to the board. If you do not have self adhesive shapes you can stick strips of double sided tape onto the backing board and students can peel off when they are ready. If there are corners of exposed sticky tape just cut them off.

4. Now the fun begins! Start with one colour in each tray and roll out the ink with a brayer. Set the classroom up with the tables in groups with four to six students in each group. Place one or two trays on each table, with two rollers in each tray. The stamping blocks can be inked up with the roller or by simply rubbing the block directly in the inky tray. Press the block onto the paper, taking care not to let it move once on the paper. Lift the block to reveal the design. Repeat the inking and print process. Try out different arrangements, such as a circular pattern or alternating the prints in opposite directions.
SKILLS LEVEL: Junior Infants - Sixth Class

5. Once you have tried printing a pattern in one colour then you can experiment with more than one colour in the next lesson. Wipe the ink off the block with a damp sponge or baby wipe and dry it well. Older students can apply individual colours to the shapes using brushes and print the blocks as described in step 4.

6. Have students work in a group with 4 blocks rotating the design ¼ turn each time they print. These look great and the students will be surprised at their results.
INTRODUCTION:

The Austrian artist and architect, Friedensreich Hundertwasser is famous for his unique shaped buildings, filled with vibrant colours, flowing lines and organic shapes. Some of his designs included rooftops covered with grass, uneven apartment floors, and always a preference for curvy lines over straight ones. Exploring Hundertwasser’s work will captivate children of all ages and take them on a journey through a magical world of creativity. In this lesson children will design a dream house inspired by Hundertwasser’s style.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students Will:

- Learn about colour, line, shapes and subject matter used by Hundertwasser.
- Discuss different ways through which the works of Hundertwasser communicated his ideas and beliefs about the environment.

Teacher Preparation

- Make a visual aid with examples of the shapes and forms seen in Hundertwasser’s buildings to help children with ideas for their own buildings.
- Cut Styrofoam sheets to required size
- Set up classroom for printing session

Materials:

- Styrofoam sheets A4 / 30 x 21 cm
- Drawing paper, same size as printing plate
- Pencils
- Tracing paper
- Masking tape
- Inking trays
- Rollers
- Cartridge paper for printing

Support Study:

- Explore the work of Friedensreich Hundertwasser, in particular images of buildings designed and recreated by the Austrian artist and architect. Talk about line, shapes, colour and pattern. Children love hearing the fact that Hundertwasser despised straight lines, as he said there are no straight lines in nature. This encourages children to draw more confidently and I even go so far as to ban rulers!
**Method:**

1. After looking at and responding to buildings by Hundertwasser, students will design their own dream house, which will be used as a design for a relief print. Begin by making preparatory drawings using the building blocks handed out. Demonstrate how to draw different shapes arranged together to form an unusual building. Next add smaller features such as windows, doors, chimneys or columns. Then fill the shapes with lots of patterns and lines just like Hundertwasser. This drawing lesson works very well in oil pastel and water colour resist.

2. Trace over the main shapes in your building with tracing paper and transfer the drawing onto the Styrofoam sheets using the method described on page 7.

3. Draw onto the Styrofoam plate using not-too-sharp pencils or pens. Follow the instructions for carving into styrofoam on page 7. Once all plate is completely carved, demonstrate how to cut away the empty space around the building, using a scissors. Here you will see why it’s a good idea to encourage children to use big, simple shapes instead of tiny drawings.

4. Once the printing plates are prepared then you are ready to print. For this lesson we will use the colour blending method which lends itself nicely to Hundertwasser’s work. Place small lines of two or three coloured printing inks just touching, on the inking tray. To blend these take a roller as wide as the printing block. Begin by rolling the inks up and down with the brayer. The colours gradually blend together where they
Lesson Plan 12: Building Blocks

SKILLS LEVEL: First - Sixth Class

meet on the roller, producing a rainbow effect. Older students enjoy this activity a lot and once shown how it’s done will be able roll the ink themselves.

5. Demonstrate how to roll the ink over the Styrofoam plate, reminding students to only move the roller up and down. If the brayer is rolled in a different direction the blending effect will be lost. Once the plate is covered evenly place a sheet of paper on top of the plate and rub the back of the paper. Hold the paper with one hand so it does not move. You will find that once it sticks to the ink it does not tend to move.

Have a peek by lifting one corner of the paper to check if it is ready to pull the print.
Glossary of Terms

**BLOCK:** In printing, a piece of thick flat material, with a design on its surface, used to print repeatedly. This could be made from foam, card, or wood.

**BRAYER:** A small, hand-held roller used to spread printing ink evenly on a surface before printing.

**COLLOGRAPH:** A print made from a collaged block built up by gluing different materials such as fabric, card, or other textured materials.

**EDITION:** A set of identical prints, made by the artist, which are numbered and signed.

**PRINTING INK:** a medium with a thicker consistency than paint suitable for printing.

**PLATE:** A term used for a sheet of metal, plastic, etc. from which a print is taken.

**PRINT:** The actual picture which the artist makes from a printmaking process.

**RELIEF PRINT:** A means of making prints in which the image is printed from a raised surface. The design is inked, or covered with colour, and stamped on paper or other surfaces.

**STYROFOAM:** A soft but dense foam material, which is used as a block, and into which an impression can be made by a pencil, stick, or other object.

**STENCIL:** A template for a design involving cut out shapes from stiff paper or card.

**MONOPRINT:** (Monotype) A form of printmaking where the image can only be made once, unlike most printmaking techniques which allow for multiple identical prints.
List of Stockists

**GALWAY**

Specialist Crafts
Level One
Liosban Retail Centre
Tuam Road
www.specialistcrafts.ie

**WEXFORD**

Spectrum Art & Framing, 13 Selskar st Wexford Co. Wexford

Selskar School and Office Supplies, Selskar, Wexford

**CORK**

Cork Art Supplies, 26-28 Princes Street
Cork
Exploring Fabric & Fibre
By Mairéad Holohan
Edited by Ultan Cowley
Published by Potter’s Yard Press
EXPLORING FABRIC & FIBRE

Mairéad Holohan

Editor: Ultan Cowley

Potter’s Yard Press
Mairead has an MA in Education and a Higher Diploma in Community Arts Education and is a member of The Teaching Council. She works for KCETB Community Education as a Tutor working with FETAC. She is on the Crafts in the Classroom panel with The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. She has worked as an artist/craftsperson in schools for many years. She has worked with groups at all levels of ability from Special Needs children to adults. She is a committed believer in the value of the arts to children’s cognitive development. She regards creativity as central to problem solving and believes that children need to make mistakes in order to learn how to resolve them.
As a textile artist, specialising in changing the surface of fabrics, I like to take a piece of fabric and do things with it which are fun. I take my inspiration from my surroundings and the colours which appear in nature. I am also very interested in people and the past; I am interested in the marks which people have made on the countryside and which are always visible to us. The granite stone walls of my adopted County Carlow are a particular source of inspiration to me, as are animals, and my life-long love of horses. Also the people who have shaped me - my mother, especially.

METHODOLOGY:
The curriculum recommends that the following skills be acquired when working with Fabric and Fibre:

A. Sewing
B. Applique
C. Surface Design, e.g. Printing, Dying, Painting
D. Construction
E. Manipulation

This book aims to provide the teacher with step-by-step tutorials which will link with these learning outcomes whilst encouraging individual creativity. The aim is to enable the teacher to help the children to develop sensitivity to the elements of art and design using Fabric and Fibre.

The approach is to break the work into some of the elements of textile design, in accordance with the curriculum guidelines, which include structures, textures, patterns and colours.

Fabric and Fibre is an excellent way to reinforce understanding of colour, tone, shape, texture, pattern and rhythm in a fun and practical manner. Through the art of textiles children learn to understand the basics of designing and making at age-appropriate levels.
Introduction

As the area of Fabric and Fibre is so broad, for the purposes of this book we will concentrate on surface design and sewing. Children will learn how to design and make their own fabrics and then use these to design and make their own items. They will use a variety of media and materials which can be adapted in most cases to suit the age and abilities of the children. There will always be links with other strands especially drawing, colour, and print.

Surface Design (samples)
1. Mono printing; on bags, fabric, book covers
2. Wax crayon batik, on cotton bags
3. Screen printing on cotton
4. Wet felting for pictures or book covers
5. Felted soap
6. Fabric paper (i.e. book covers)
7. Natural dying

Sewing (Samples)
1. Introduction to stitching
2. Applique
3. Felt pictures
4. Felt jewelry
5. Tropical traditional batik (i.e fantasy creature)
6. Weaving on a box

The projects will be broken down into easily achievable age-appropriate stages. Some of these ideas will be do-able in one session, whereas others will require two or more sessions to allow for drying, etc.

Some projects will require certain skills to execute. For example, to make the applique, it is preferable that the children can use a needle. With felting it is advisable to practice on a small individual piece. Once the children have learnt the skills in these projects it is preferable to have sessions where they then work out their own ideas, using the strands of drawing, and then are encouraged to tackle projects that bring as many strands together as possible.
Lesson Plan 7: Appliqué

Exploring Fabric & Fibre - Mairéad Holohan

Flower Power
SKILLS LEVEL: Age 6-8

INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this project is to show children how to design and sew an image of their choice or design onto a piece of fabric. They will learn to make decisions about colour and shape. Texture may be included also if you have access to different types of fabric. The result can be used in a variety of ways: for book covers, cushion covers, the back of a denim jacket, and more. It is an opportunity for children to look at a flower, to respond by drawing a simple version of it, and then to reproduce it in fabric.

Learning outcomes:

Children will learn to:
- Look at nature and respond in a creative manner.
- Create a decoration on a piece of fabric by sewing another piece of fabric on top of it.
- Experiment with different stitches; learn to look at stitch as line and decoration.
- Older children will learn to cut out shapes.

Teacher Preparation
- Lay out fabrics and cut out shapes for smaller children.
- Thread needles in a variety of bright colours.

Materials:
- Fabric scraps
- One piece of A4 felt fabric per child
- A selection of smaller pieces of fabric, the more variety the better.
- Needles; thread in a variety of colours
- Embroidery hoops (optional)

Support Study:
- Look at Van Gogh’s Sunflowers
- Pick a daisy and see its pattern
- Perhaps look at Egyptian applique on tents for older groups
BEGINNERS:

1. Older children can practice sewing by using leftover scraps of fabric to create abstract designs, which can be used on the covers of notebooks.

2. This in itself can be an exercise for the younger age groups; it will teach them to make decisions about colour, shape, and dimensions.

ADVANCED:

1. Design, draw, or trace a simple image, e.g. a flower, or a horse’s head.

2. Make a simplified drawing of the petals, trace this onto tracing paper, then cut it out. You now have a template for this exercise - a circle for the centre, and one petal to be repeated six times.

3. Lay the template on a fabric of your choice, pin it down, and then cut around the edge of the fabric and template.
4. Pin these fabric pieces into the shape of a flower, on a larger piece of fabric, allowing the students to choose their own colours.

5. Choose a thread that contrasts with the fabric. Use a running stitch around the edges of the petals.

6. Next, stitch the inner part of the flower.

7. Do not be too critical if the stitching is not uniform. It is better to allow the children to feel that they are doing well. By all means show them how to be neater - for example by having an equal distance between stitches, but sometimes the results are the better for not being too ‘perfect’.

8. This is the reverse of the piece:

9. Some students’ work will be more successful using an embroidery hoop whereas others may not need one.
Two different versions of this design:

An older or more competent group could attempt something like this:

“I really enjoyed making something with such nice material and colours. I’m going to give the flower I made to my Mum.”

- Sean, 2nd Class
Lesson Plan 14: Working With Wool
Making Felted Soap
SKILLS LEVEL: Age 7-10

INTRODUCTION:
Working with wool is a very satisfying thing for children and offers a great opportunity to learn about where wool actually originates. This lesson could include research into wool and how it varies between different breeds of sheep.

The wool which we work with, and which is dyed by the suppliers, originates with Merino sheep from South America.

In this exercise we are going to cover a bar of soap in wool and then ‘felt’ it so that it makes a bar of soap in its own ‘jacket’.

Learning outcomes:
Students will:
- Learn what happens when wool is combined with warm water, soap and lots of rubbing, and then allowed to dry.
- Make a bar of felt-covered soap to use at home.
- Learn where wool comes from.

Teacher Preparation:
Prepare the classroom by:
- Putting plastic on the floors and the tables.
- Sourcing one pop sock and one bar of soap per child.
- One flat bottomed plastic bowl per four to six children, half filled with warm water.

Materials:
- Wool roving, carded and combed wool
- A bar of soap, any will do
- Nylon popsocs
- Towels
- Hot and cold water
- Basins

Support Study:
- Look at felt and its origins.
- Discuss the pros and cons of having a bar of soap in its own cloth.
Making Felted Soap
SKILLS LEVEL: Age 7-10

Method:
To make the felted soap bar:

1. Get the children to choose coloured wool; perhaps two or three colours maximum.
2. Allow them to collect a pile about the size of their hands and one inch high.
3. Show them how to pull the wool from the strip of roving
4. Hold roving in the palm of one hand and gently pull the wool apart, releasing about three inches of wool. This is called a staple, and is the sheep’s natural hair length.
5. Wrap a thin layer of wool all around the soap.
6. Wrap a second thin layer of wool around the soap in the opposite direction.
7. Repeat a third time, in a different direction again, this time ensuring that soap is no longer visible.
8. Dip the piece gently into water as hot as you (and the children!) can bear.
9. Get one child to hold the pop sock open while another places the now wet wool-covered soap bar into the sock.
10. Insert this carefully into the nylon as above.
11. Knot it tightly so that it does not move inside.
12. Dip it again in water as hot as you can bear.
Making Felted Soap
SKILLS LEVEL: Age 7-10

13. Once it is wet all over start to rub it as though washing your hands. It will get very soapy; this is good.

14. Repeat for as long as it takes for the wool to be stuck together and no longer moving when you squeeze it.

15. When it feels like there is no more loose wool, carefully remove the pop sock, and continue to felt/rub in all directions. Leave to dry.

17. Have fun washing (this soap could be used for shaving as it produces lots of foam!)
## Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACID DYES</td>
<td>For dying animal fibres such as wool, silk etc. They are not harmful;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the name relates to their acidity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALUM</td>
<td>A colourless compound used in dying and tanning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPLIQUE</td>
<td>Where a small piece of fabric is sewn onto a larger piece to make a pattern or design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BATIK</td>
<td>A method of dying fabrics whereby wax is used to preserve areas from being dyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOCK PRINTING</td>
<td>Where a block is used to transfer ink onto paper or fabric; this allows us to create a repeat pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTRASTING</td>
<td>A difference in tone or colour to create a visual impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUBLE SAUCEPAN OR DOUBLE BOILER</td>
<td>A saucepan with a detachable top compartment heated by water in the bottom part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DYLON DYES</td>
<td>Dyes that can be bought in any chemist, are easy to use, and are most suitable for cotton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMBROIDERY HOOP</td>
<td>Two circles of wood that fit into each other to hold fabric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FABRIC</td>
<td>Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIXING A COLOUR</td>
<td>To make a dye permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESSIAN</td>
<td>A coarse fabric made from Jute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOTPLATE</td>
<td>Any heat source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIN</td>
<td>A lightweight cotton with a plain weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVA</td>
<td>Polyvinyl acetate; a type of glue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCION DYES</td>
<td>Dyes for using with cellusose fibres such as cotton, hemp, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCREEN PRINTING</td>
<td>Where ink is pushed through a stencil on a screen to create an image on paper or fabric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPLATE</td>
<td>A shaped piece of paper or other material to be used as a pattern to enable a person to cut out and copy an item, such as a flower, for applique. This enables a person to make the same shape more than once.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Glossary of Terms**

**TJANTING:** An instrument for drawing with hot wax. It has a small metal bowl on one end which has a spout that the wax is dripped out of onto the fabric while the wax is hot.

**WAX POT:** A special electric pot, which allows the temperature to be regulated in order to melt wax.

**WOOL ROVING:** A roving is a long and narrow bundle of fibre. Rovings are produced during the process of making spun yarn from wool fleece, raw cotton, or other fibres. Their main use is as fibre prepared for spinning but they may also be used for specialised types of knitting or other textile arts.
## List of Suppliers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art and Hobby Shop</td>
<td>9 Coffee House Lane, Market Cross Shopping Centre, Kilkenny</td>
<td><a href="http://www.artnhobby.ie">www.artnhobby.ie</a></td>
<td>056 7771904</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones Business Systems</td>
<td>Enterprise Park, O’Brien Road, Carlow</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jonesbusinessystems.ie">www.jonesbusinessystems.ie</a></td>
<td>0599132595</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Silks</td>
<td>85 High St., Great Missenden, Bucks, HP16OAL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rainbowsilks.co.uk">www.rainbowsilks.co.uk</a></td>
<td>0044(0) 1494 862111 <a href="mailto:caroline@rainbowsilks.co.uk">caroline@rainbowsilks.co.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Crafts</td>
<td>Level One, Liosban Retail Centre, Tuam Rd., Galway</td>
<td><a href="http://www.specialistscrafts.ie">www.specialistscrafts.ie</a></td>
<td>Tel. 091 768809 Fax 0917688111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollknoll</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wollknoll.eu">www.wollknoll.eu</a></td>
<td>Wollknoll GmbH Forsthausstr. 7 74420 Oberrot-Neuhausen</td>
<td>Telefon: (07977) 91 02 93 Telefax: (07977) 91 04 88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork Art Supplies</td>
<td>28 Princes St., Cork</td>
<td><a href="http://www.corkartssupplies.com">www.corkartssupplies.com</a></td>
<td>021 4277488</td>
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Ball To Bowl
PROJECTS IN CLAY
By Patricia Howard
Edited by Ultan Cowley
Published By Potter’s Yard Press
BALL TO BOWL

Projects in Clay

Patricia Howard

Editor: Ultan Cowley

Potter’s Yard Press
Contents

Biographical Note p. 65-66
Introduction p. 67-68
How to use this Book p. 69-70

Lesson Plans:
1. Under the Hedgerow - The Hedgehog, The Ladybird, The Toadstool
3. The World of Fantasy - Dragons, Witches, Angels
4. The World of Home - Thatched Cottages
5. The World of Animals - Pigs, Elephants, Cats

Cleaning Up! p. 81
Glossary of Terms (inc. Technical Notes) p. 82
List of Stockists p. 83-84
Patricia is an accomplished potter with over thirty years’ experience. With a background in Art History, she trained under craft luminaries such as sculptor Christa Reichel in West Cork, and potters Peter and Helena Brennan in Dun Laoghaire. Patricia worked for various studios, most notably that of Danish potter Tue Polsen in Copenhagen, before finally settling in South Wexford in 1997.

At present she is a member of Wexford County Council’s Artist In The Community Panel and works with a wide range of community groups across the county. This programme succeeded the Council’s previous highly successful ‘Summer Fun’ Programmes For Children in which Patricia participated in the years 1998-2005. She also facilitated in the provision of after-school programmes for the Department of Education.

Since her selection for the Design and Craft Council's CraftEd programme in 2011 she has taught in a number of primary schools across the full class spectrum. Her contribution was recognised by DCCI's Education & Innovation Manager, Muireann Charleton, who wrote: ‘...we have found ourselves on a quest to enhance the craft, hands-on experience, and visual arts practice of young pupils and teachers at primary level in Ireland. Your knowledge, skills, and passionate enthusiasm have enabled this to happen’.
The year is 1971. I have just named my new studio 'Circle Pottery'. The kiln and wheel are in a tiny room in a yard to the rear of a townhouse in Sheare Street, Cork City - my own creative space at last. I have completed 5 years of apprenticeships in the workshops of practicing potters, most recently in Denmark, and I am home in Ireland to stay. Income in this new micro enterprise is entirely dependent upon sales and, as an unknown potter in an almost non-existent market, I am looking at lean days ahead.

A conversation with Christa, friend and partner in the enterprise, leads to the radical thought of offering Pottery Classes to the children in the area. As an only child, I have had little contact with children, and I find the idea quite frightening. But necessity presses and I advertise Children’s Pottery Classes at Circle Pottery. I put posters around the city and soon some mothers call by to book a place for their child.

The first class, at 4 o’clock on a wintry Tuesday afternoon, threatens to be a disaster! There are six children, one completely uncontrollable, and I panic! But the mother removes the child, the group settles down, and the fun begins…

To my surprise, I discover a natural empathy with the creative energy of the children, and thereafter more and more turn up for the weekly pottery class. Children’s classes on a Saturday morning are filled every week - local children arriving on foot and running in the door, eagerly pressing fifty-pence pieces into my hand. Suburban children, driven and dropped by parents, equally eager for the experience of handling clay.

This innocent era preceded Saturday morning children’s television, digital gaming devices, and the current all-pervasiveness of sport. Classes for adults, once offered, were also filled in a flash. People were parched for creative activity. The enthusiasm for clay has always been infectious but since then the provision of creative outlets for children has changed and blossomed beyond all imagining in Ireland. Christa and I lit a small candle of creativity in Cork all those years ago which burns now like a raging fire.

Today there is a great awareness in the public mind and amongst our mainstream educators of the value of artistic expression. The provision for six strands of creative craft in the Primary Schools Curriculum is a huge leap forward, allowing teachers and children the space to explore the wonderful worlds of clay, print, fabric & fibre, construction, colour, painting and drawing.

It is to aid in their exploration that this little book, and its sister books in the series, has been conceived. It is also a personal tribute to those years in Cork, and all the years and all the children since, who have enjoyed creating in clay and have marvelled at the alchemy of clay changing to glazed pottery through the mystery of fire. Pottery is an ancient craft which never loses its primal appeal. Clay is a gift from Mother Earth to all her children. Enjoy the fun…

Patricia Howard
How to Use This Book

Clay has a fascination for children - it is soft, squishy, malleable. Mastering the skills to manipulate it is a journey of practice, of trial and error, and of great enjoyment. Ceramic objects, in the full metamorphosed glory of their fired and finished state, are wonderful and enduring works of art and of human ingenuity.

This book is designed to start a child on their journey. The lesson plans are organised to begin with the very simplest ‘pinched’ form which can be managed by the small fingers of a five year old.

In the final level, where the requirement to form two joined bowls, ‘pinched’ from a half kilo ball of clay, demands larger hands, longer fingers, and greater overall strength of mind and body to successfully complete the process.

In between The Ladybird and The Pig, for example, there are two intervening levels which, if successfully worked through, will build the skills and confidence the child will need to tackle the final projects.

The title, Ball To Bowl, suggests the guiding principle which is the evolution of a basic shape, the ball, via skillful manipulation and mastery of technique, into a variety of increasingly sophisticated but related shapes evocative of everyday life in the Irish countryside.

The age levels indicated are for general guidance only. I have found a Sixth Class challenged by Level 1 while a group of Senior Infants coped brilliantly with each level in turn. The size of the group has a significant bearing on the progress made to master the co-ordination and motor skills inherent in carrying out the exercises.

A bonus is that, in getting there, the children will also acquire an intuitive understanding of certain principles of physics which, in the form of gravity, stress, and tensile strength, underly basic engineering and construction.

My hope is that this book will become a catalyst and inspiration, in our classrooms, for further discoveries and creative adventures through the amazing medium of Clay.
The Tortoise
SKILLS LEVEL: Ages 7 to 10

INTRODUCTION:

The Tortoise makes a charming pet. A slow walker, and a vegetarian, the Tortoise can live for a very long time indeed. To make one of these ancient creatures is one of the first lessons in clay modelling.

Learning outcomes:

Students will:
- Grow their confidence in handling clay.
- Learn the discipline of making these specific shapes.
- Learn the use of the repetition of pinching.

Teacher Preparation:
- Break the class into groups of four to a table, if possible.
- Give each group a set of tools as specified in Materials.
- Open a bag of clay before class to check that it is of an adequate consistency. If is too soft open the bag fully to allow for air drying. The consistency is important, as very soft clay is difficult to work with. It should be stiff but still malleable.

Materials:
- Buff or Terracotta clay
- A potter’s knife
- A pot of slip & paint brush
- A potter’s needle
- A rolling pin
- Cloth

Support Study:
- Finding One’s Way with Clay
- Pinched Pottery & the Colour of Clay by Paulus Berensohn; published by Pitman’s 1974
www.ian-gregory.co.uk
Lesson Plan 1: The Watery World

The Tortoise

SKILLS LEVEL: Ages 7 to 10

Method:

1. Take a fresh piece of clay in your hand, approx. 100grms, more if you can handle it easily. Pat the lump into a round ball, gradually smoothing the edges with the gentle pressure of the other hand. When you have a shape like a tennis ball sitting in your hand, push your thumb into the centre of the ball, creating a channel to within 6mm of the base of the ball.

Begin to squeeze the clay with your thumb on the inside of the ball and the forefinger and middle finger on the outside wall of the ball. This is pinching and this gentle pressure will open up the clay to the shape of half an orange. Turn the form upside down and lay it on the table.

2. The Turtle has four short stumpy legs, a head, and little tail. To make these features roll a long coil to 2mm thick. Using the potter’s knife cut the coil into four lengths for the legs, plus one piece for the head, then model a small pointed piece of clay to make the tail. When these are assembled on the work bench pick up the bowl and turn it over in your hand.

3. Smear the inside of the bowl with slip – carefully attach a leg (two on each side of the bowl) smoothing the clay firmly so the legs do not fall off when the clay has dried. The piece of clay to make the head is then attached and, at the opposite end of the body, the tail is attached.
Now turn the creature onto its legs on the table and look at it. Take a needle from the tool box and score eyes and two holes for the nose and mouth. The characteristic design or pattern to be found on a tortoise shell is a series of circle-like lines joined together by horizontal lines. These can be drawn on lightly with a pointed tool or potter’s needle. Don’t worry if your lines wobble!

When your Tortoise is complete, and has been very lightly sponged to remove all the rough making edges, stand him/her carefully on your work board. Give him/her a fun name! Air drying is the perfect method to finish your piece before placing it in the kiln.
INTRODUCTION:

Frogs also are creatures too of the watery world. Loving and needing wet areas of land, living in dampness and undergrowth, these rotund amphibians are a gift for adaptation to our medium of clay.

Learning outcomes:

Students will:
- Grow their confidence in handling clay.
- Learn the discipline of making these specific shapes.
- Learn the use of the repetition of pinching.

Teacher Preparation:
- Break the class into groups of four to a table, if possible.
- Give each group a set of tools as specified in Materials.
- Open a bag of clay before class to check that it is of an adequate consistency. If it is too soft open the bag fully to allow for air drying. The consistency is important as very soft clay is difficult to work with. It should be stiff but still malleable.

Materials:
- Buff or Terracotta clay
- A potter’s knife
- A pot of slip & paint brush
- A potter’s needle
- A rolling pin
- Cloth

Support Study:
- Finding One’s Way with Clay
- Pinched Pottery & the Colour of Clay by Paulus Berensohn; published by Pitman’s 1974
www.ian-gregory.co.uk
Lesson Plan 2: The Watery World

The Frog

SKILLS LEVEL: Ages 7 to 10

Method:

1. Let's make a large frog, and this time, instead of one hollow bowl we will use two. These are pinched out as usual and then joined together at the rim; only join them ¾ way around the rim. Leave a gap.

2. Set your joined bowls onto the table. Tap gently to create a flat area which is the base of the body. Now ease the clay in the gap by pinching it gently to form the large open mouth of the frog. Use a wooden modelling tool to help your hands with this delicate operation.

3. The bulbous eyes are made by rolling two pieces of clay, each the size of a large pebble, in the palm of your hand. Flatten these 'eyes' slightly and coat the back with slip. Attach both eyes to the side of the frog's head and indent with the end of a pencil.

4. The frog's legs are thin, long, and articulated with knees, thighs, and long webbed feet. These would not support its rotund clay body so take a rolling pin and roll a small slab of clay, using the guide sticks, to make a thickness of no more than ¼ cm. Cut two feet, with three toes each, and a heel. Slip these well and, turning over the body of the frog, attach the two feet to the base using lots of slip. Set him back on his two feet on the table.

Now Freddy is ready to hop off into his watery world - keeping well away from the ducks in the pond who love a tasty snack of frog!
Cleaning Up!

1. Ask for three volunteers from the group and give one a scrap bag and one a large sponge. The task of the third is to collect the tools from the table.

2. The child with the plastic scrap bag can go around the table and collect the unused and tail-end pieces of clay to put into the bag. This clay can be used again in a future class so long as it is kept moist. Fasten the neck of the bag when full with a strong length of wire twisted into a knot to prevent air hardening the clay. Clay improves with keeping.

3. The large sponge is the best tool for cleaning the work table after all scraps have been removed. Do not flood the table with water. Wet the sponge and squeeze it to moistness. Rub the table thoroughly. Clay is water based and will rub off the surface whether the table is plastic topped or wooden.

4. Wooden or plastic hand tools should be washed in a basin with warm soapy water and left to dry on the drainer. Never throw the used tools into the tool box with lumps of clay adhering. It is bad craftsmanship and a sloppy way to finish the class.

5. The slurry or slip pot should have a lid which fits tightly to keep the paste wet until next time it is needed.

Glossary of Terms

CLAY: Weathered rock found in nature as a plastic, sticky material, usually in the bed of a river or stream or on wet marshy ground. In use since ancient times to make water-proof containers for liquids and food stuffs.

SLIP OR SLURRY: A glue-like wet paste made by adding water to hard clay until the clay becomes a sticky goo. Essential in pottery making to stick clay pieces together.

COIL: A sausage-shaped length of clay which can be used to form the wall of a pot when one horizontal coil is placed vertically upon another and then bound together with slip or slurry.

SLAB: A flat piece of clay which, when dried to a certain consistency, can be used to make dishes, tiles, and vertical forms.

KILN: A metal-walled box lined with high temperature insulating bricks into which pottery is placed in order to ‘fire’ it. That is, bring the box up to a high temperature, in order to harden the clay. Temperatures used by potters vary from 1060°C to 1300°C, depending on the type of clay being used. Typically, electric elements inside the kiln are used to conduct the heat into the box. Bottled gas can also be used, as can wood.
List of Stockists

NORTHERN IRELAND
Ulster Ceramics 29 Garvagh Road, Swatragh, Co. Londonderry BT 46 5QE
Scarva Pottery Supplies, Unit 20, Scarva Industrial Estate, Banbridge, Co. Down. BT 32 3QD

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
Dublin
RPM Suppliers, 46, Western Park Way, Lr. Valleymount, Dublin 12

Wexford
Spectrum Art Supplies, North Main Street, Wexford. (clays only)

UNITED KINGDOM
Bath Potters Supplies Ltd, Unit 18, Fourth Ave, Westfield Trading Estate
Radstock, Bath, Somerset BA 3 4 XE
Potterycrafts, Campbell Road, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4ET
“An inspiring collection of creative Lesson Plans. Each is perfectly structured for practical use in the primary school classroom.”
- Carmel Rochford, Primary School Teacher, Wexford (Retd.)

“That which we make, with our own hands, we truly own.”
- Ultan Cowley