

Spanish Folk Art Ceramic Cherubs

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary, Middle School

SUBJECT: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Math

MEDIA: Sculpture

FEATURED ARTWORK:



Cherub, Late 17th century, Central Spain, Wood, glass, San Antonio Museum of Art, Gift of Peter P. Cecere, 99.21.3

OBJECTIVE:

Students will use clay techniques to make a ceramic cherub in the Spanish folk art style. They will focus on the proportions of the human figure and learn about the cultural influence of Spain on Latin American culture.

DISCUSSION:

Spanish folk art is created by artisans using time-honored traditions and readily available materials. Angels and cherubs, such as the wooden one depicted above, were popular objects in ceremonial (religious) folk art. In Christianity, cherubs are members of the second order of angels and are usually shown in art as winged children. They were frequently placed above nativity sets and churches as symbols of goodness and heavenly guidance in the Catholic faith. This wooden cherub from the San Antonio Museum of Art is remarkable for its compelling facial expression and subtle smile. Its glass eyes were inserted from behind the face, which was customary during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The cherub's outstretched arms and flattened head suggest that it functioned as a shelf support.

When working with clay, it is important to remind students that clay has a memory, like elastic. While two pieces of moist clay will stick together when damp, they will "remember" that they are two different pieces

and separate when dry. To avoid this, it is necessary to trick the clay into thinking it is one unified piece by following a set of steps called The Three S's:

The Three S's (Score, Slip and Smooth): When one piece of clay is attached to another these 3 steps should be followed to ensure the clay will stick together.

1. Scoring: A criss-cross pattern of scratches is made in both of the clay surfaces to be joined in order to roughen them.
2. Slip: A thin solution of water and clay that is lightly applied like glue to the two pieces of clay which will be joined.
3. Smooth: Blending the seams of two connecting pieces of clay for adherence and strength. Ideally, you should not be able to tell where two pieces were joined.

MATERIALS:

- 8.5 x 11" white bond paper for drawing cherubs
- Pencils
- Longhorn white clay (½ lb. per student)
- Clay tools
- Wire clay cutter
- Popsicle sticks
- Toothpicks
- Sponges
- Slip (clay mixed with water) in small plastic containers
- Optional: Glazes, watercolors or acrylics

PROCESS:

1. Review and discuss *Cherub* with students:
 - What traditions and beliefs did the Spanish explorers bring to the Americas?
 - How have these traditions and beliefs impacted culture in the Americas?
 - What shapes did the artist use to make this cherub?
 - Which sections of the figure have the same proportions?
 - What emotions does this cherub evoke?
 - Why would images of angels and cherubs be important for artists to depict?
 - What other cultures or periods of art history depict angels and cherubs?
2. Distribute paper to students and allow them to draw a cherub inspired by the work of art. Ask them to also draw a side view and back view from their imagination. These drawings can be used as guides for sculpting the ceramic cherubs.
3. Pass out ½ lb. of clay to each student.
4. Demonstrate to students how to make a ceramic cherub:
 - Model how to roll a medium-size amount of clay into a large, thick coil.
 - Once each student has formed their clay into a coil, they should pull up a round knob for the head and pinch out sections for the two arms and two legs. Be sure to keep each section of the clay thick for strength. This is the modeling technique - making as much of the figure as possible from one single piece of clay.
 - Students can bend the legs to a kneeling position. Note that one knee is up, at a right angle to the body, and the other knee is on the ground.
 - Once the basic form is complete, add additional pieces of clay to areas which need to be reinforced.
 - Smooth the body and add the details to the face.
 - The wings can be made from triangles cut from another slab of clay. Add the texture of the feathers

- with the clay tools. Attach the wings to the cherub using the Three S's technique.
 - For clay sculptures which seem thick, use a toothpick to discreetly add air holes to the finished sculpture. This will allow air to escape during firing.
5. If a second class is needed to finish the sculptures, wrap each cherub in damp paper towels and a plastic bag. Store the wrapped sculptures in a plastic bin between class sessions.
 6. Allow the finished clay cherubs to dry completely before firing or painting.
 - Unfired clay cherubs can be painted with acrylics.
 - The first time clay is fired in the kiln is the bisque firing. Bisque-fired clay cherubs can be painted with watercolors or acrylics; or they can be glazed and fired a second time. Longhorn white clay can be fired at cone 03 or 04.

TEKS:

§117.14. Art, Grade 4.

(2) By analyzing artistic styles and historical periods students develop respect for the traditions and contributions of diverse cultures. Students respond to and analyze artworks, thus contributing to the development of lifelong skills of making informed judgments and evaluations. (b) Knowledge and skills. (4.1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. (A) communicate ideas about self, family, school, and community, using sensory knowledge and life experiences; and (B) choose appropriate vocabulary to discuss the use of art elements such as color, texture, form, line, space, and value and art principles such as emphasis, pattern, rhythm, balance, proportion, and unity. (4.2) Creative expression/performance. The student expresses ideas through original artworks, using a variety of media with appropriate skill: (A) integrate a variety of ideas about self, life events, family, and community in original artworks; (4.3) Historical/cultural heritage. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture as records of human achievement. student (A) identify simple main ideas expressed in art; (B) compare and contrast selected artworks from a variety of cultural settings; and (C) identify the roles of art in American society. (4.4) Response/evaluation. The student makes informed judgments about personal artworks and the artworks of others (A) describe intent and form conclusions about personal artworks; and (B) interpret ideas and moods in original artworks, portfolios, and exhibitions by peers and others.

§113.15. Social Studies, Grade 4.

(a) Introduction Students identify motivations for European exploration and colonization and reasons for the establishment of Spanish settlements and missions. (2) To support the teaching of the essential knowledge and skills, the use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material such as documents, biographies, novels, speeches, letters, poetry, songs, and artworks is encouraged. Where appropriate, local topics should be included. Motivating resources are available from museums, historical sites, presidential libraries, and local and state preservation societies.

§117.32. Art, Grade 6.

(c) Knowledge and skills. (1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. The student is expected to: (A) illustrate themes from direct observation, personal experience, and traditional events; and (6.2) Creative expression/performance. The student expresses ideas through original artworks, using a variety of media with appropriate skill. (A) express a variety of ideas based on personal experience and direct observations; (B) describe in detail a variety of practical applications for design ideas; and (C) demonstrate technical skills effectively, using a variety of art media and materials to produce designs, drawings, paintings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, (6.3) Historical/cultural heritage. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture as records of human achievement. (A) identify in artworks the influence of historical and political events; (B) compare specific artworks from a variety of cultures.

§113.18. Social Studies, Grade 6.

(15) Culture. The student understands the similarities and differences within and among cultures in various world societies. The student is expected to: (A) define culture and the common traits that unify a culture region; (18) Culture. The student understands the relationship that exists between the arts and the societies in which they are produced. (A) explain the relationships that exist between societies and their architecture, art, music, and literature.

§111.22. Mathematics, Grade 6.

(3) Patterns, relationships, and algebraic thinking. The student solves problems involving direct proportional relationships. (A) use ratios to describe proportional situations (B) represent ratios and percents with concrete models, (C) use ratios to make predictions in proportional situations. (6) Geometry and spatial reasoning (11) Underlying processes and mathematical tools. The student applies Grade 6 mathematics to solve problems connected to everyday experiences, investigations in other disciplines.

Lessons are written by area educators and the San Antonio Museum of Art Education department. If you are interested in sharing your lesson ideas featuring works of art from the museum's collections with the San Antonio Museum of Art Education department, please email education@samuseum.org.