



Personal hobby themes expressed in ceramic boxes adapted to junior high school art instruction
by George Eric Martin

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER
OF ARTS IN ART

Montana State University

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Abstract:

The paper traced the development of a clay box project from the conception of the idea in the instructor's mind to a finished product completed by the junior high school art student. This process included the following four steps: 1. Having junior high school art students create their own ceramic boxes devised from materials used with their personal hobbies after observing models created by the instructor.

2. Testing of the project idea by the instructor.

3. Using the clay box as a medium of artistic expression.

4. Adapting the materials used with personal hobbies to use in the clay box project.

From an enthusiasm for ham radio operations on the part of the instructor evolved a series of ceramic boxes which demonstrated the basic elements required in art: line, shape, color, and value. The techniques outlined were adapted by students at East Junior High School in Great Falls, Montana.

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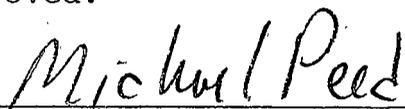
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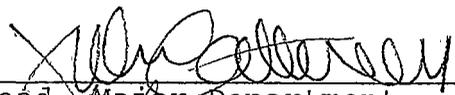
PERSONAL HOBBY THEMES
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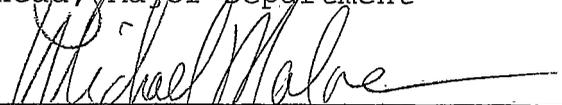
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ABSTRACT

The paper traced the development of a clay box project from the conception of the idea in the instructor's mind to a finished product completed by the junior high school art student. This process included the following four steps:

1. Having junior high school art students create their own ceramic boxes devised from materials used with their personal hobbies after observing models created by the instructor.
2. Testing of the project idea by the instructor.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper was to explore the developmental process necessary for the creation of a finished work of art. The process focused on the joining of the medium of clay with radio as the subject to produce a series of ceramic boxes as an example for junior high school art students. The paper was written to allow the process defined herein to be adaptable to the instruction of art students at East Junior High School in Great Falls, Montana.

The project was worthwhile for junior high school art students for three reasons. First, increasing emphasis is being placed on leisure time activity; students have both time and money for exploring outside activities. Second, students are in need of guidance in completing art projects. Frequently, they fail to initiate an original idea. Characteristically, junior high school students adopt the bandwagon approach to avoid being different. At this age, students are often unsure of values and goals and are easily influenced by peers. Third, students at this level do not lack

enthusiasm; hence, if given an idea, they readily pursue the application of the idea to their own artistic endeavors.

The coordination of an art assignment and the student's hobby provides a unique experience. The junior high school art student is required to identify a hobby which enables him to consider the value of his own leisure time and personal interests. The project then takes on a personal direction; the student then views his hobby as usable or important to him. The task did not presume a "gift" to create; yet, it did call for coordination, the ability to use the mind, to reason cause and effect, and allow for varied levels of accomplishment. Since students were directed to their own hobbies, copying was eliminated. Among student hobbies were snow skiing, swimming, drawing and sketching, playing pool, roller skating, and ice skating. Throughout the assignment, each student was to create his own project and as a result of experiencing independence, he developed a trust in his own abilities.

Since the school was limited in equipment, materials, and resources, the ceramic box project represented an

attempt to restrict the cost of materials and equipment while providing a challenging problem.

BACKGROUND

The initial idea was a result of my interest in amateur radio. Hence, I sought to consider the development of a series of clay boxes using radio parts as elements in the design. Parts included circuit boards, knobs, transistors, resistors, switches, and symbols.

The finished products demonstrated several elements of design such as:

- 1) line
- 2) shape
- 3) color
- 4) value

In addition, the ceramic box series recognized similarities in seemingly unrelated areas. Thus, the student who chose to adapt the process selected an area of interest and applied it to clay design.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The students involved in this project were challenged to recognize situations in which they could apply the materials used in their personal hobbies to the creation of an art project. For example, in Figure 11 on page 25, the student applied his interest in creating geometric designs as he prepared the ceramic box project pictured. In Figures 4 through 8, the author combined materials used in the hobby of amateur radio with visual ideas he had previously seen to create ceramic boxes as examples for student reference. Basically stated, the project was for the student to realize that he could look to his own personal hobby as a source of ideas and inspiration for creating art projects. Since junior high school art students frequently complain that they do not have any creative ideas from which to produce artistic expression, this project was aimed at helping them realize that the source was actually present within their own hobby interests.

Viewing former students' and other artists' work afforded the student valuable experience; however,

direct experience . . . sharpens your mental registering devices, and you "see more" in any art object. . . . Once you have a toe hold in this thing, from the first glimmer of understanding, interest can grow and grow.¹

Hence, the artist was an inventor; mind and hand reacted upon material to product a result.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES - RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

Selection of subject and medium

In order to minimize costs, provide adequate challenge, and seek knowledge in the areas of commercial glaze on clay, I selected to design clay boxes. The boxes conformed to Smith's definition of design,

the creation of a plan for the making of any object that is intended to have aesthetic merit and, if necessary, function properly. Design may be structural and often implies three-dimensional form.²

In addition, the hobby of amateur radio was included in terms of decorative design. That is,

decorative design is not a thing in itself-- it decorates something else. It requires space and a choice of line, form, color, and value, arranged in a pleasing and orderly manner.³

Equipment

Keeping in mind the minimum cost, the adaptability to junior high students' goals, tools were common household items with the exception of the actual radio parts. The reader must recall that each student would be adapting the process described herein to his own specific

area of interest; hence, the availability of radio parts was not a significant factor. Tools included a sheet rock knife, a razor blade, a ruler, fettling knife, brushes, nails, cookie cutters, tinker toys, and a soft sponge to smooth clay joints. A Kemper extruder was used to make coils for inside the slab connection. This technique is explained in the "physical process" section. In addition, I used coarse grit cloth and steel wool to sand square edges when clay became leather hard.

The glaze, applied by brush, was Duncan opaque Covercoat underglaze followed by two coats of Duncan ultra clear transparent glaze. Materials used for decoration were adhered with a Pritt glue stick.

Physical process

The basic construction of all five boxes, considered as examples in this paper, was uniform. The six four-inch square sides, used to form each box, were cut from clay which had been flattened carefully and impressed with radio parts. The pressing of radio parts into clay prior to cutting the clay guarded against distorting the clay sides. Using a template

facilitated the cutting process. The sculpting was done with a razor blade since using a fettling knife did not assure a clean cut. In order to allow for proper texture, the pieces were air dried from two to four hours.

After proper drying, the sides were assembled. The edges which were being joined were scored in order to help bond the clay; slurry was applied to reinforce the bond. Pressure was applied gently to finalize the joint. On the exterior, slurry was applied with a fettling knife to complete the bond. A coil which was made with a Kemper extruder aided slab connection; the coil which extended down one edge across the bottom and up the opposite edge stabilized the box. Figure 1 depicted the use of the coil.

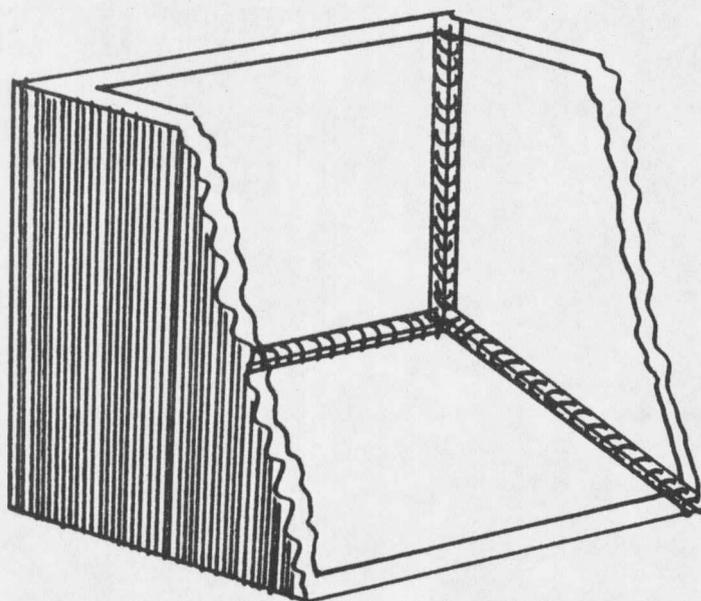


FIGURE 1

INSIDE COIL TECHNIQUE

Throughout the process, construction improved. For example, lids on the first three boxes were made stationary with four strips of clay secured to the lid slab. Figure 2 was an example of this technique.

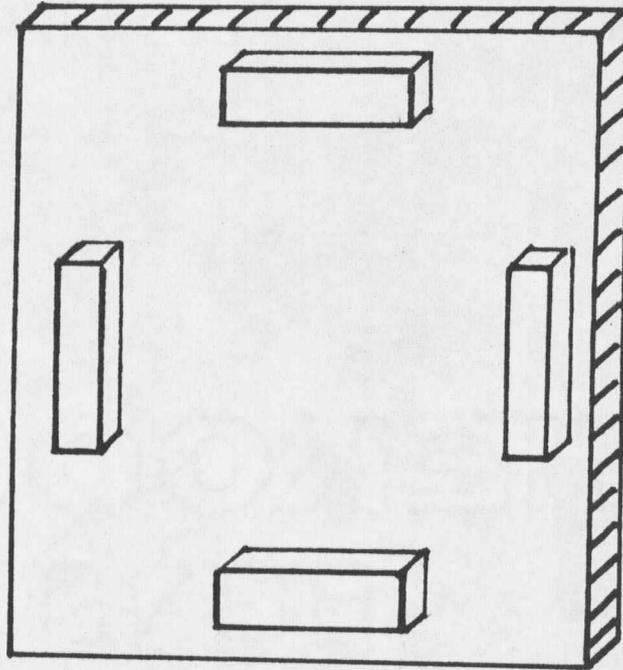


FIGURE 2

STRIPS OF CLAY TO SLAB TECHNIQUES

Improvement was noted when a proportionally smaller slab of clay was added to the lid. The change improved visual appearance and desired physical weight to the lid. Figure 3 demonstrated the slab to slab technique.

