

CREATIVE CRAFTS WITH MODOCLAY

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ART AND CRAFTS

People usually make a distinction between Art and Crafts. Art implies a picture, a piece of sculpture or work in some other medium to look at, touch, or be stirred by, not something to use, except possibly for decoration. Craft implies an article that may be beautiful, have excellent design and interesting texture, but is primarily useful.

With Modoclay it is not necessary to separate Art and Crafts. It is used for sculpture and for making practical objects. In doing either, one can be creative and at the same time learn the craft of handling the material skillfully. But Modoclay is also responsive to the accepted steps in making pottery as preparation for actual experience in ceramics. You can use the ball, slab and coil method. Children instinctively shape balls, flatten out "pancakes" or roll "snakes".

The craft teacher is usually interested in the process for the discipline and skill it provides. He may use specific directions for each phase and turn to ready made molds, patterns or templates. Although the pupil enjoys learning the craft, he may have little opportunity to exercise his creative ability. Since Modoclay is easy to use, students can be encouraged to try out their own ideas, design, templates and patterns or molds and have the added satisfaction that what they make is truly their own idea. In addition, they can finish what they begin, decorate it and put on an airdrying "glaze" themselves, without giving it to someone else for firing.

The classroom teacher or director of club activities need not be an artist to introduce Modoclay, because it is especially designed for children. With it an adult can provide a creative and craft experience without having to make samples or give a demonstration. For instance, if a youngster forms a clay ball the teacher can suggest making a hole large enough to insert a candle and have the beginning of a candlestick. The edge of a "pancake" can be turned up to make a shallow tray or "snakes" can be placed on top of each other to make a coil vase.

There are two ways of working with clay - putting pieces together or pulling out forms from a single lump. Both are acceptable. Most children and some adults prefer putting pieces together. If they have trouble making the joints stick they can make a paste of clay and water called "slip". Most adults pull out the clay and ceramic teachers insist on this because it lessens the danger that the work will come apart in firing. However, since Modoclay is not fired, teachers find students are happier and more creative if they use the method they prefer. It is a help to manipulate Modoclay before tackling a serious project to find out how it handles. This also gives the teacher a chance to observe how each student works instinctively.

SETTING UP FOR WORK

If necessary, cover work table with newspaper, but if surface is smooth this may not be needed as Modoclay washes off easily. Put a lump of Modoclay at each place on a paper towel. Put another towel, a half a cup of water along side and a tongue blade or knife. Pupils should wear smocks to protect clothing.

SUPPLIES

Modoclay, about a pound per person to start with. This should be enough for a craft project with some left over for extras. Modoclay is ready to use as it comes from the bag and does not ordinarily need extra conditioning or wedging.

Modo-Gloss, a milky emulsion which dries clear like transparent glaze. When dry, it is water-resistant and can be wiped off with a wet cloth. Modo-gloss comes in pint bottles and can be poured into smaller containers for individual use. Or it can be purchased in 2 oz. jars by the dozen. It is used both for glaze and glue.

Poster Paint, can be bought economically by the quart or pound. Blue, red, yellow, brown, black and white are useful colors, as children can mix green and purple. Paint can be mixed with liquid starch from any food store by the half or full gallon. This can be added to liquid paint to thicken it and make it go farther.

To mix powder paint, fill a quart jar half full of starch and add the powder. Put cap on jar and shake well. If result is too stiff to brush on, add water. This is easier than mixing powder paint directly in water.

Salad or gelatin containers can be used for paint. They do not tip and brushes stand up in them. When finished, paint should be collected in original jar and cap replaced.

Brushes, half inch. Brushes may be placed in containers with each color or a single brush provided for student who then will need a jar of water to wash the brush.

Paper Towels, paper cups, tongue blades, popsicle sticks, or paring knives as modeling tools.

Smock or apron for each student. A simple solution is to use men's shirts which are worn and cut off collars and part of sleeves. These can be kept on hand for the class or group.

Rolling pins, toy or full size, and several flat sticks, 1/2 in. thick by 1 in. x 6 or 8 in. to use as guides when rolling slabs for uniform thickness. Use paper towel between roller and clay to prevent sticking.

Safety pins and tape to apply to back of Modoclay pins with Modo-gloss. Or regular pin backs. Nails for piercing beads and colored string for beads or pendants.

Round wooden clothes pins for puppet heads.

Colored aquarium stones from a pet shop, bits of colored glass, buttons, discarded jewelry or beads can be pressed into Modoclay. Glitter, which can be bought by the pound at a paint store, can be sprinkled over wet Modo-gloss. Straws, shells, etc. for pressing designs into surface of Modoclay.

Egg boxes, dowels, rustproof wire for large figures, paper plates.

Plaster of Paris, liquid soap, cardboard boxes, throw-away containers.

Newsprint, shelf paper. Stiff cardboard or sides of cartons for collage.

An oven in a cooking stove may be useful for hurry up jobs. Classroom Modoclay work can be heated in 350° oven for several hours, left over night with door open to cool and should be ready to glaze and take home the next day. Steam caused by water evaporation is natural.

CRAFTS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Many authorities today believe that preschool children can learn "craftsmanship" through experimenting with a material like Modoclay. Since many are still in the "scribble stage" they are not usually ready for specific projects.

When small children are introduced to Modoclay they soon get over any initial hesitation and poke it, smell it, feel its slipperiness and softness and the ease with which they can squeeze it. At this stage, when through for the day, they are usually willing to put it back in the bag to use again. But when they discover that they can make imaginary meat balls or pancakes, snakes, planes, animals or people, they will not want to destroy them, but keep them, even if they forget them by the next day. In addition to using the Modoclay by itself they can have the added experience of painting it with poster paints while wet.

Some of these original clay creations can be dressed up attractively with a coat of Modo-gloss, brushed on by the children, who may be surprised to see the white emulsion turn clear and shiny and add new life to the color underneath.

There is the problem of what to do with an accumulation of unclaimed Modoclay work. Unless coated with Modo-gloss, or a water-proof finish, even if painted, it can be soaked in water overnight and put through a hand-operated meat grinder, or it can be kneaded by hand.

CRAFTS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

Many children are full of original ideas which they enjoy working out or the teacher can give suggestions to stimulate them. The following directions are based on the natural tendency of children to make balls, slabs or coils of clay. Younger children may respond better at first to the more imaginative term of "snakes", "worms" or "rings" for coils and "pancakes" for slabs.

CRAFTS FOR ADULTS

Although the suggestions given in this bulletin are simplified, they are basic and can be used to help adults in making things with Modoclay. However, adults will probably be more interested than children in careful construction and finishing. They may have to relearn the basic steps of working with ball, slab and coil.

OBJECTS THAT CAN BE MADE WITH MODOCLAY

1. STARTING WITH A BALL:

PIN: Flatten a small ball of Modoclay about 1/4 in. thick and shape. Designs can be cut into the surface or bits of Modoclay added. On the back attach a safety pin with a half inch strip of cloth, thickly coated with Modo-gloss or glue, over and under the cloth. Or attach a regular pin back.

BEADS: Make small balls, about 1/2 in. in diameter. Pierce a hole through each with a nail, run string through and hang up to dry. They can be painted or covered with Modo-gloss. Glitter can be sifted over wet Modo-gloss.

PENDANT: Flatten and trim Modoclay ball and make hole at one end to hang around neck on colored string. You can press with a tool or add Modoclay, to make an abstract, figure or flower design. Glass, jewels or shells can be pressed into the wet surface, but dab a bit of Modo-gloss or glue on each piece to insure its sticking.

2. PINCH BOWL: Make a 3 or 4 in. ball and press the thumb of one hand into it to make a hole. Then widen the hole by inserting both thumbs, hold the ball upside down and turn it, pinching the clay between the thumbs and the fingers until the sides are thinned out. The bowl can be decorated by pressing the end of a straw into the outside surface or using a knife or stick to incise a simple design.

CANDLE STICK: Make a hole slightly larger than the end of a candle in a ball. Flatten the other end. Attach a handle at the side if you wish.

PUPPET HEAD: Fit ball of Modoclay over end of wooden, round clothes pin. For face, add or pull out the features, exaggerating them to show feeling or character. One can also make caricatures of famous people or acquaintances. Add neck and part of shoulder to hold costume. Paint with bright colors. Remove the clothes pin when finished.

CHILD'S HAND PRINT: Take a 4 or 5 in. ball of Modoclay, press flat about 3/4 in. thick. Teacher carefully pushes child's hand into the Modoclay to make a hand print. Make a hole for hanging it. (This is popular with parents, but is more adult directed than a true craft activity).

HAND SCULPTURE: Make a ball as large as you can hold in one hand. Then with both hands squeeze and push it into a simple rhythmic shape or a figure, such as an animal lying down. To stimulate the imagination, twist the clay at random and study the effect until it suggests a figure which you can then finish.

BOOK ENDS: Make an extra large ball, about 8 inches thick and shape two sides in unison on a geometric shape or to suggest simplified human or animal forms. When finished, cut down the center and you have the two book ends which look well with or without books.

2. STARTING WITH A SLAB: It may be desirable to use "slip" of Modoclay and water in joining slabs.

SPOON DRIP: Use an oval pancake or slab about $3/4$ in. thick. Scoop out a shallow hole in the center to hold a spoon on stove when cooking.

ASHTRAY, PINTRAY: Turn up the edge of a slab about $1/2$ in. thick, or place a coil around the top of the edge. For a safe place for a lighted cigarette, put a small ball or figure in the center and press a groove in the top. Paint the inside of the ashtray black or brown so that cigarette marks will not show. The edges and outside can be any color for contrast. Cover with Modo-gloss when dry. Make pintray same way, but omit ball in the center.

PETAL BOWL: Make round "pancakes" about $1/2$ in. thick. Use large one for the base and place smaller ones upright, attached to the base at the bottom and over-lapping each other like flower petals for the sides of the bowl. Press tight and paint in gay colors.

BOX: Place two wooden sticks $1/2$ in. thick on each side of a slab. Cover with a paper towel and roll to even thickness with rolling pin. Cut pieces for sides and bottom with a knife and attach with "slip", pressing firmly. Make top to fit box. Note: Such boxes can be used to make "buildings" or "bridges" for social studies, or model railroads.

PLAQUE: Roll a slab about $1/2$ to $3/4$ in. thick. It can be as small or as large as desired, say, from 6 in. to 12 in. in diameter and can be round, oval, square, or rectangular. Make drawing with a tool or model a flat figure in profile. Bore a hole at the top for hanging it or imbed wire in the back of wet Modoclay to make a loop. (A simple way to make a plaque is to press Modoclay into a paper plate which will provide permanent backing.)

CUT-OUTS: Modoclay can be rolled thin and cut into pendants, curtain pulls or Christmas tree decorations. Pattern can be cut out in cardboard or shelf paper if several copies of same thing are to be made. Since this resembles the usual cut paper projects, students may still desire to work in the round or try the ball or coil method.

3. STARTING WITH A COIL: Use "slip" between coils.

BOWL: Flatten a base and trim it into a circle. Roll coils about 1/2 in. thick and place on top of the edge of the base. Where the ends meet, flatten them to avoid a bulge. Add other coils on top until you have the height desired.

BASKET: Follow directions for coil bowl. For the handle, roll one long coil and attach each end to top edge.

LOG CABIN: Cut a square base, build up sides with coils and make roof of a slab of Modoclay. Leave coils round to suggest logs.

FLOWER VASE: For a vase that really will hold water, use a glass jar. Roll out coils and flatten them, then wrap around the jar and taper the ends where they overlap. When you reach the top, leave the glass lip free so that water can be poured without wetting the Modoclay. After painting the vase, dry and finish with Modo-gloss.

This same method can be used over a large jar to make a lamp base. Fixtures can be obtained from an electric supply store.

FIGURE OF A PERSON OR ANIMAL: For a small figure, shape flattened balls or slabs for head and body and roll coils for arms and legs. Attach with "slip". Clothes can be made of Modoclay rolled thin and fitted on the figure. Lay figure flat to dry.

to use. (Note: The original Modoclay model should be wet, not dry, for this project.)

A large figure needs support for the Modoclay. You can use sections of egg boxes for the body and attach wooden dowels or rustproof wire for the arms and legs. For standing figures, extend dowels or wires into holes bored in a wooden base. For best results, the support or armature should be rigid as vibration weakens the Modoclay when it is dry.

MAKING PLASTER MOLDS

It is not necessary to buy ready-made molds and it is part of a craft experience to learn to make them. Use Plaster of Paris. If you use throw-away containers, there is no danger of stopping up the plumbing. Dabs of partially set plaster can be placed on wax paper so that students can experiment with it as it hardens.

MIXING PLASTER OF PARIS: Place some water in a bowl. Mix the plaster by sifting it into the water until it will absorb no more and the plaster makes "islands". Then stir the solution gently and pour immediately into the mold. After a while the plaster will "heat", i.e. feel warm to the touch, which means that it has set and hardened.

PLASTER PLAQUE: Use a cardboard box. Make a slab of Modoclay to fit and place it in the bottom of the box. Impress a design into the surface of the Modoclay or add shells, buttons or jewels. Then coat surface of the slab gently with liquid soap. Mix the plaster and pour a layer about one inch thick into the box. After the plaster has set remove box and clay and you will have a plaster model of your slab. To hang it, put a wire loop into the wet plaster before it sets, or bore a hole when it is hard. When plaster is dry it can be painted with mixture of poster paint and Modo-gloss.

MAKING A PLASTER MOLD: Follow suggestions for a plaque in relief or a pinch bowl or make a solid vase form with top wider than the bottom. Place it upside down in a box which is slightly larger than the model. Coat Modoclay with liquid soap. Pour plaster to thickness of about one inch. When it hardens, remove the bottom of the box and the clay, trim the edge smooth and you will have your own plaster mold ready to use. (Note: The original Modoclay model should be wet, not dry, for this project.)

A PRESSED MODOCLAY REPRODUCTION: Press a thin layer of Modoclay on the surface of the plaster mold and gradually add more, to a thickness of about half an inch. Run the point of a knife at the edge between the plaster and Modoclay. Put it aside until the Modoclay shrinks and separates from the plaster. Turn it upside down and lift off the mold. You now have an almost exact reproduction of your original. Any number of copies can be made from the mold and finished in any way desired.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

PAINTING: The paints and brushes supplied for crafts with Modoclay can also be used for painting pictures. This may help to keep the child busy who finishes ahead of the others. An ample supply of newsprint to paint on is all that he will need.

FINGER PAINTING: You can make shakers for dry paint by hammering nail holes in the top of preserve jars and use them to shake paint over liquid starch applied to shelf paper. This provides a satisfactory experience in using finger paint with the minimum expense and hard work by the teacher.

Place a piece of shelf paper on the table (a little water underneath to keep from sliding), have the student pour out some starch from a small container and after spreading it over the paper, shake on some paint. He works that in with both hands and can try other colors to see what happens by combining them.

Dry finger paintings can be used to cover booklets, boxes and scrap baskets.

COLLAGE: The colored pebbles, glitter, shells, etc. can be spread over wet Modoclay on stiff cardboard. Any that does not stick can be shaken off lightly. Paint and Modoclay can be added for variety in the design or picture.