

Project: Action Figures Sculpture using the clay itself to make an armature.

7th thru 12th Grade

Created by Brant Palley
New Mexico Clay

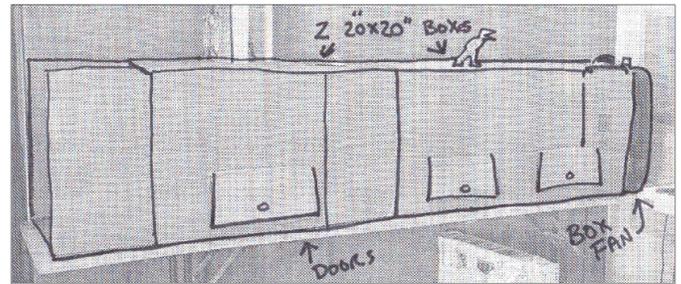
Materials list: Sheepdog fiber clay.

Supply list: Basic Pottery tools, Water, A slip made from Sheepdog clay*, Small plastic disposable cups. About a half pound of Sheepdog Fiberclay per student.

Objectives: The objective of this project is to create action figures; using the clay itself as the armature and then building upon that dried Clay armature. This will combine anatomy, and sculpting, in a way that is fun because everyone loves action figures.

Don't like action figures? Make a dinosaur.

Preparation: You may need to construct a drying box if you're in a hurry: consisting of a box fan and two or three or even four cardboard boxes taped to it. When you need to dry an armature open a little trap door that you cut in the side of the boxes and the piece will dry quickly.



Instruction:

1. Make an armature beginning with a base **heavy enough and wide enough** to support the sculpture. Add legs, and pose them with the idea of the finished sculpture in mind, join the tops of the legs to make hips..
2. Put that in the dryer until its bone dry.
3. Using slip made from sheepdog clay. Take the slip and wet the armature where you want to work on it. Start adding muscles, buttocks, backs, arms. Use plastic action figures to help plan out the sculpture, notice where the muscles bulge.
4. If the sculpture gets a little bit wobbly. Put it back in the dryer. Add more clay
5. Continue, sculpting until the project looks the way you want it to. Don't worry, even if it dries out you can still add on- you can still chop off. You can change it.
6. If a piece breaks off, or it falls over, you can repair it even if it is bone dry. Wet the spot you want to join with water if it is too dry, the add slip to both sides to be joined, if the two shapes don't match use a piece of clay (wetted with slip) as denture cream to fill in the gaps.

Firing: When the sculpture is completely dry. You can fire it to 04.

Decorating: You can decorate the sculptures before firing using traditional underglazes, or bisque to 04 and then color with Concepts or Stroke & Coat. And refired to 06, or even use acrylic paint at this point.

Vocabulary: Additive sculpture, anatomy, popular culture, slip and score,

Arts Integration: While constructing characters from fiction, students learn anatomy of muscles and bones through sculpture. Write a short story about your character's life.

Teaching Process:

- Sketching helps visualize the pose of the figure.
- Look at comic book illustrations or magazine ads for poses.
- Explain the importance of play and imagination in life.
- Note that nothing has to look perfect the sculpture is just a sketch like a drawing in 3D.

Closure: Discuss the function of what we have made. Is it functional or decorative?

Did we have fun, was it stressful? WAS IT SCARY AT FIRST TO CREATE SOMETHING? But then as it happens was it fun?

Outside Links: Fiberclay.com, nmclay.com, [Graham Hay \(Paperclay Artist\)](#)

A slip made from Sheepdog clay*A few days ahead make thin sheets or “potato chips” by pinching the clay. Let these dry completely. When you need slip for joining, place the clay in a small cup and add a small amount of water. The dry clay dissolves instantly as the fibers draw in the water. Sometimes I make a thin slip for wetting dry clay and another thick slip for joining.



Colors Used: CN112-2 Bright Delft, CN013-2 Dark Straw, CN074-2 Really Red, CN221-2 Light Blush, MCSP260-2 Silver Lining Speckled, CN253-2 Black