

*Discovering the Story:
A City and Its Culture*

VASES OF CLAY

A Visual Arts Lesson
for Grades K-3



Mary Louise McLaughlin (1847-1939), The Cincinnati Pottery Club (1879-1890), Frederick Dallas Hamilton Road Pottery (1865-1882), United States (Cincinnati)
Ali Baba Vase, 1880
Gift of the Women's Art Museum Association, 1881.239



Maria Longworth Nichols Storer (The Rookwood Pottery Company)
Aladdin Vase, 1882
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James J. Gardner, 2002.94

The lesson *Vases of Clay* is based on

Aladdin Vase

by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer

and

Ali Baba Vase

by Mary Louise McLaughlin

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OBJECTIVES

- Students will look at images of the *Ali Baba Vase* and the *Aladdin Vase*.
- Students will discuss how these vases are made of clay, and consider another way one can make a clay vase.
- Students will create a vase out of self-drying clay, then paint it, taking inspiration from the *Ali Baba* and *Aladdin* vases.

TEACHER PREPARATION

VOCABULARY

Definitions can be found in the [Glossary](#) on the [Discovering the Story](#) Website.

Ceramics

Clay

Fire

Glaze

Kiln

Slip

Texture

Vase

MATERIALS

- Print Reproductions of the Museum's [Ali Baba Vase](#) and [Aladdin Vase](#)
- “Air-dry” or “self-hardening” clay – this is most cost effective to purchase in bulk, and is available through most teacher and art supply catalogs; estimate one to two pounds per student
- Carving tools – these can be tools specifically designed for carving clay, or simply Popsicle sticks and kitchen utensils
- Long piece of thin wire or wire clay-cutting tool – this may be used to remove the vases from their cardboard work surfaces
- Newspaper or plastic tablecloths – to protect tables
- Cardboard – one piece per student; these pieces will serve as surfaces for the artworks as students are working on them
- Tempura or acrylic paints
- Brushes
- Cups for water
- Paper towels

BRAINSTORMING/GETTING STARTED

- Look at images of the *Ali Baba Vase* and the *Aladdin Vase* with students.
 - What helps make these objects interesting?
 - What do you think about their form?
 - Can you see the textures on these vases?
 - How do you think they would feel if you could touch them?
 - What kinds of pictures are found on them?
 - If you were going to make a vase, how would it look?
 - What would you like to paint on it?
- These vases are made of clay. They were made by pouring clay slip into molds, and later firing them in a kiln. The pictures on them are made by painting glazes onto the surfaces of the vases, then firing them again. We will be making clay vases in a different way, taking inspiration from the *Ali Baba Vase* and the *Aladdin Vase*. We will be forming clay with our hands, letting the clay dry, then decorating it with paint. We will think about form, texture and painting when making our vases.

PROCEDURE

This project is geared toward a classroom teacher that may not have access to a kiln. If a kiln is available, the classroom teacher may consider working with their school's art specialist to adapt this lesson to utilize firing clay and glazes.

1. Cover tables with newspaper and distribute pieces of cardboard and lumps of clay.
2. Students will first roll their lump of clay into a smooth ball.
3. Next, they make a hole in the center of their clay balls with their thumbs.
4. Then, they make this hole wider and deeper with their fingers, manipulating the clay into the form of a vase. Make sure students keep all surfaces of their vases at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick (check clay manufacturer guidelines for specifications).
5. After students form their vases, they can add texture to the outsides of them with their fingers or clay-carving tools.
6. When students are finished sculpting their vases, have them lightly carve their initials into the bottom of them. If a vase is stuck to the cardboard and won't easily lift off, have the student hold it gently while you carefully pull a piece of wire in between the vase and the cardboard.
7. Allow the vases to dry in an area with adequate ventilation.
8. Recover tables with newspaper or plastic tablecloths and distribute paints, brushes, water and paper towels.
9. Review with students the images on the *Ali Baba Vase* and the *Aladdin Vase*.

Students will now paint their vases.

DISCUSSION/PREPARATION FOR VIDEOCONFERENCE

- Create a display area for the artworks. This could be on a tabletop or along shelves or windowsills. Allow time for students to present their artworks to the class. Time allowing, students may also show their vases to the Museum staff member during the videoconference and discuss how they were made.

	<i>How important are the visual arts in our society? I feel strongly that the visual arts are of vast and incalculable importance. Of course I could be prejudiced. I am a visual art.</i>	
	Kermit the Frog, muppet	

VIDEOCONFERENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Students will interact with the Cincinnati Art Museum staff through a sixty-minute [videoconference](#).
- Students will learn about Cincinnati history from 1850 to 1900.
- Students will use Museum objects to reinforce activities completed in preparation for this [videoconference](#).

CONCEPT

A [videoconference](#) conducted by the Cincinnati Art Museum staff extends student learning through emphasis on the viewing and discussion of art objects. During this [videoconference](#) with the Museum, students will explore Cincinnati art history and the methods and practices of many of the artists working in the city.

SCHEDULE

- **5 minutes** Introduction to CAM staff (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)
- **10 minutes** Brief discussion of student pre-videoconferencing activities.
- **10 minutes** Museum staff will lead an interactive discussion with students on the history of Cincinnati from 1850-1900
- **20 minutes** Museum staff will lead students in an in-depth investigation of selected Museum objects.
Objects Include
 - [Bedstead](#) by Benn Pitman, Adelaide Nourse Pitman, and Elizabeth Nourse
 - [Reception Dress](#) by Selina Cadwallader
 - [Aladdin Vase](#) by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer
 - [Ali Baba Vase](#) by M. Louise McLaughlin
 - [Vase and Dedication Medallion](#) by Tiffany & Co.
- **10 minutes** Questions and student sharing of art projects.
- **5 minutes** Closing (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)

ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARDS: VISUAL ART

Grades K-4

Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts.

Benchmark 1: Knows the differences between art materials (e.g., paint, clay, wood, videotape), techniques (e.g., overlapping, shading, varying size or color) and processes (e.g., addition and subtraction in sculpture, casting and constructing in making jewelry).

Benchmark 2: Knows how different materials, techniques and processes cause different responses from the viewer.

Benchmark 3: Knows how different media (e.g., oil, watercolor, stone, metal), techniques and processes are used to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

Benchmark 4: Uses art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.

Standard 3: Knows a range of subject matter, symbols and potential ideas in the visual arts.

Benchmark 1: Selects prospective ideas (e.g., formulated thoughts, opinions, concepts) for works of art.

Benchmark 2: Knows how subject matter, symbols and ideas are used to communicate meaning.

Standard 4: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Benchmark 1: Knows that the visual arts have both a history and a specific relationship to various cultures.

Benchmark 2: Identifies specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

Benchmark 3: Knows how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other.

Standard 5: Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others.

Benchmark 1: Knows various purposes for creating works of visual art.

Benchmark 2: Knows how people's experiences (e.g., cultural background, human needs) can influence the development of specific artworks.

OHIO STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS

Creative Expression and Communication: Students create artworks that demonstrate understanding of materials, processes, tools, media, techniques and available technology. They understand how to use art elements, principles and images to communicate their ideas in a variety of visual forms.

Benchmark A: Demonstrates knowledge of visual art materials, tools, techniques and processes by using them expressively and skillfully.

Benchmark B: Uses the elements and principles of art as a means to express ideas, emotions and experiences.

Benchmark C: Develops and selects a range of subject matter and ideas to communicate meaning in two- and three-dimensional works of art.

Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts: Students understand the impact of visual art on the history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

Benchmark A: Recognizes and describes visual art forms and artworks from various times and places.

Benchmark B: Identifies art forms, visual ideas and artistic styles and describes how they are influenced by time and culture.

Analyzing and Responding: Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgment about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

Benchmark A: Identifies and describes the visual features and characteristics in works of art.

Benchmark B: Applies comprehension strategies to respond to a range of visual artworks.