

Clay Sculpture for Firing lesson plan



National Curriculum: KS 3&4 Art and Design

Artist Lorna Graves made a number of animal sculptures in clay inspired by the landscape of Cumbria where she lived. They are modern but still look like they could have been found in an ancient burial mound. To make clay sculpture that will fire successfully in a kiln without exploding you need to follow a few simple rules. Have a go at making a simple animal sculpture by following our simple steps.

Give your class the opportunity to work in exactly the same way as Lorna Graves by watching the videos below.

<https://www.culturestreet.org.uk/lesson.php?id=51>

Learning Objectives

Pupils should increase their proficiency in the handling of different materials. In addition students can gain knowledge and understanding of the work and approaches of artists, craftspeople or designers from contemporary and/or historical contexts, periods, societies and cultures. Students can refine their ideas as work progresses through experimenting with media, materials, techniques and process.

Overview

This lesson plan can be used:

- To start a sculpture project.
- To develop ideas and understanding of processes and materials.
- As part of study of any artist using armature building, modelling or lost wax casting as part of their process.
- As part of individual study

Suggested Classroom Activity

Background - **Sculptor Lorna Graves**

Born in Kendall, Lorna Graves grew up on farms in Cumbria and her preoccupation with the landscape and heritage of the area lasted her whole life. Although she did move away to study when she became a full time painter and sculptor she soon returned to Cumbria. Her ceramic animals have a quality that looks like they could have been found in a bronze age tomb and it is no coincidence that she was fascinated by stone circles and ancient burial sites



Raku fired ceramics

Lorna Graves ceramic sculptures were fired using the Japanese Raku technique. A coarse rough clay is worked to make the animal sculpture which is then fired in the kiln. When the clay is still very hot it is laid in leaves, twigs, wood-shavings which catch fire producing smoke and ash which becomes embedded within the body of the sculpture and produces the unique finish.



Ceramic animal forms by Lorna Graves



Lorna made a number of apparently simple ceramic animal sculptures but they have the quality of objects found in an ancient tomb and they make you want to touch them. This sheet shows some of her sculptures to inspire you to make your own mythical animal.

Image sheet

A selection of the Raku fired ceramic work by artist Lorna Graves



Making a clay animal for firing

This short time-lapse video shows the making of a basic animal form in clay. We are using Raku clay which is quite coarse as this helps avoid cracks and explosions in the firing. If you are not going to fire your animal sculpture you do not need to be so careful in hollowing out the centre of the sculpture and can use a finer clay.

Watch video <https://www.culturestreet.org.uk/lesson.php?id=51>

This is a low cost workshop that anyone can try by watching the video a few times and seeing how the artist works. If you follow our top tips you should have success.

Development Activity

There are a number of other resources on CultureStreet about artists and sculpture using clay that can be used to support this lesson plan. You could start with CultureStreet's section on Halima Cassell and the clay workshop inspired by her work. In this workshop Carving Clay Halima describes a sculpture project she was set at art college that inspired her and you can try the same project.

Andy Goldsworthy uses clay to cover a wall at Yorkshire sculpture Park

There is also a more basic an artist led workshop Clay workshop where students make animal themed clay pots which is more suited to whole class activity or a younger group.

