



Mochaware Pottery: DIY Design/Build

We are going to explore the concepts of color, shape, and design and create our own piece of pottery, inspired by Shelburne Museum's mochaware collection.

Goals

We will learn art vocabulary to identify art and design principles; find out about mochaware, and learn to make homemade playdough to create our own version of mochaware.

Art and Design Vocabulary

Design—an artform that has the potential to solve problems.

Mochaware—a generic term for slip-decorated utilitarian ceramics mass-produced in the Staffordshire region of England from the late 18th through the mid-19th century. This type of pottery layered different color slips on top of each other in order to create a carve-able surface.

Pattern—a repetitive design.

Pinch pot—a simple form of hand-made pottery produced from ancient times to the present.

Pottery—an art form that uses natural clay, shaped into a vessel, then baked at extremely high heats to set the material. Pottery can be created by hand or by use of a wheel.

Slip—white or colored thin glazes made of clay and water applied to pottery.

Background Information

Mochaware is a type of pottery that uses **slip** to create its unique designs.

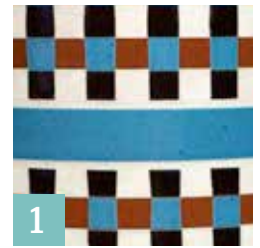
- With fanciful patterns produced by a combination of both industrial technology and handcraftsmanship, mochaware refers to the slip-decorated utilitarian ceramics mass-produced in the Staffordshire region of England—in the country's West Midlands—from the late-18th through the mid-19th centuries.

- A worker operating a mechanical lathe with special blades created lines and geometric patterns by scraping away different layers of colored slip (fig. 1).

- The vessels covered in tri-colored dots or “cat’s eyes” were decorated by a three-chambered slip cup that spilled droplets on the surface as the piece rotated on a lathe (fig. 2). At slower speeds the slip droplets produced the cable or “earthworm,” pattern (fig. 3).

- The dendritic, or tree-like decoration (fig. 4) was applied directly by the artisan with a paintbrush, allowing gravity and the motion of the lathe to help the liquid to branch outwards. (see videos below) The presence of the human hand in each of these techniques resulted in irregularities or “slip-ups,” which make each manufactured piece a unique work of art.

Staffordshire Potteries (Staffordshire, England)
Assortment of Mochaware (details), early 19th century
Earthenware and slip, between 3 x 5 1/2 in. and
8 3/4 x 6 x 9 in. 31.16 Group



1



2



3



4

More Resources

- Mochaware demo by Tony Remington, Youtube, <https://bit.ly/Youtube1-SM>
- Creating pottery things using Mochaware technique, Youtube, <https://bit.ly/Youtube2-SM>
- Potter, Donald Carpentier explains how to create Mochaware, Youtube, <https://bit.ly/1768Lathe-SM>

National Core Art Standards

VA:Cr1.2.1a Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.

VA:Cr2.1.3a Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

VA:Cr2.1.4a Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.

Mochaware Pottery: Level 1

For this activity, you will mix up your own playdough with simple household ingredients, make a pinch pot and, after it dries, decorate it.

To begin, make your playdough:

PLAYDOUGH RECIPE

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar (This ingredient is optional but you will have a brighter dough if you choose to use it.)
- 1/3 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Step 1

1. Mix together all the ingredients in a medium saucepan.
2. Cook over low/medium heat, stirring.
3. Continue stirring until the mixture is much thicker and begins to gather around the spoon.
4. Once the dough no longer looks wet, remove and put onto wax paper or a plate to cool.
5. After cooling for 30 minutes, knead playdough for a few seconds.
6. Store in an airtight container in the fridge!

The above will make you one (1) large ball of playdough.

Now you're ready to make your pinch pot!

Step 2

1. Gather the dough into a ball.
2. Tap the bottom on a counter or flat surface to create a base.
3. Holding the ball in one hand, take the thumb of your other hand and press it into the ball; be careful not to press through all the way.
4. Leaving your hand in the dough, slowly begin to pinch between your thumb and pointer finger working your way from the bottom to the top. Try to keep the walls of your pinch pot at least ¼" thick.
5. Once your pot is to your liking, leave it on the counter to dry.
6. Once dry, use a paintbrush and paints to decorate it with patterns like those on mochaware!



Mochaware Pottery: Level 2

In this activity, you will make your own clay-like playdough, tint it, and use the material to make a mochaware-inspired tile that will highlight the colors and patterns of these beautiful and useful vessels.

PLAYDOUGH RECIPE

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar (This ingredient is optional but you will have a brighter dough if you choose to use it.)
- 1/3 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- gel food coloring
- metal spoon for carving

Step 1

1. Mix together all the ingredients in a medium saucepan.
2. Cook over low/medium heat, stirring. Once it begins to thicken, add food coloring to achieve the color you want.
3. Continue stirring until the mixture is much thicker and begins to gather around the spoon.
4. Once the dough no longer looks wet, remove and put onto wax paper or a plate to cool.
5. After cooling for 30 minutes, knead playdough for a few seconds.
6. Store in an airtight container in the fridge!

The above will make (1) large ball of colorful playdough. Repeat the recipe for the number of colors you wish to make. You will need at least two colors.

Step 2

Now you're ready to create your mochaware design-inspired 4"x 4" tile.

1. Form each color into a separate ball.
2. Roll each ball out into square sheets.
3. Layer the color-tinted playdough sheets on top of one another thinking about color flow, and lightly press together.
4. Allow the block to set.
5. Once your block is set, use a spoon and delicately try to carve away the layers to reveal the colors below.

While our layers are much thicker than the slip applied to mochaware, mochaware patterns are sometimes created in a similar way, carving away material layer by layer to reveal what is below.

