

Art Activity

Create Your Own Vessel!



VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

The historic region of Mesoamerica includes modern day El Salvador and for thousands of years was populated by groups that include the Mayan people. In present day El Salvador, Mesoamerican heritage is expressed through traditions and crafts such as pottery. The Mayan people created hand-built vessels featuring low-relief carvings that held food and drinks. Vessels were also used in burial and offering ceremonies.



Now it's your turn to create a vessel inspired by Mayan pottery!

Cultures all over the world create decorative patterns, perhaps inspired by the enduring patterns humans see in the natural world that surrounds us, from the cycle of the seasons to the pattern of the stars in the heavens. Follow the instructions listed below to create a vessel from air dry clay.

Materials:

- Air Dry Clay (*If you do not have air dry clay available, make your own dough using the recipe below!*)
- White paper
- Black Marker

Instructions:

1. Select a piece of air-dry clay. Roll, pinch, and shape your clay into your desired vessel shape. A vessel is a hollow container that can be used for a wide variety of things from decoration to food and more.



2. After you finish forming your vessel, use a black marker to draw designs onto the surface. **Optional:** Transfer your designs by drawing them on a sheet of white paper and then gently pressing the sheet onto the vessel's surface. Make sure to press the front-side of the paper onto the surface.



3. Allow your clay to dry for 24hrs hours and display your vessel! Although your vessel will not be food safe, it could be used for small items such as jewelry, pencils, dried flowers, and more!



Instead of using air dry clay, make your own salt dough using the recipe below!

Ingredients/Supplies:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tbsp. Oil
- 1 cup water
- stove-top safe pot
- Stove-top safe spoon
- stove-top burner
- parchment or baking paper

Allergen Options: Substitute flour for gluten free or other alternative flours to accommodate allergies. Add additional oil or water if the dough is too sticky.

Salt Dough Instructions:

1. Combine flour, salt, cream of tartar, oil, and water into a large pot.
2. Place the pot on a stovetop burner and using medium heat constantly stir all ingredients until the dough begins pulling away from the sides of the pot (approximately 2-5 minutes).
3. Once a dough ball has formed, remove dough from the pot and place it on parchment paper. Let cool until safe to touch.
4. Knead your dough until the texture matches that of a play-dough consistency (about 1-2 minutes)

Collection Connection at VMFA!



Funerary Vessel (Primary Title), AD 700-800

Unknown (Artist)

Mayan Culture

Terracotta with polychrome pigments

Pre-Columbian Art

77.98