

# Clay Fun with New Mexico Clay's Sheepdog FiberClay

Abstract expressionism was a school of art that flourished after World War II until the early 1960s, abstract expressionism is characterized by the view that art is non-representational and chiefly improvisational. Abstract expressionist paintings share certain characteristics like an all-over approach whereby the whole canvas is treated with equal importance (as opposed to the center being of more interest than the edges). In this spirit we will take an idea; say a dog, and break it up and rearrange its parts in 3D. Or in this project a 3D painting made of intersecting clay pieces that are purely abstract.

## David Smith sculpture Billiard Player III 1945

*"The sculptor who drew with metal"*

One of the best-known American sculptors of the modern period, David Smith (1906–1965) was a pioneer of abstract sculpture. He revolutionized the possibilities of metal sculpture by introducing the industrial process of welding, enabling him to create the most extraordinarily balanced compositions – using metal to ‘draw in space’. Predominantly known as a sculptor, the book also sheds light on his prolific practice of drawing, sketching, writing and photographing his sculptures.



## Frank Stella, Shoubeegi, 1978



Frank Stella's later work, while diverse, has continued his interrogation of abstraction. Paintings based on the rejection of the conventionally rectangular canvas gave way to complex wall reliefs made from paint, cardboard, and felt. He further blurred the distinction between painting and sculpture in baroque works that practically burst off the wall.

Read more on [www.fiberclay.com](http://www.fiberclay.com)

Learn of Rosette Gault and Graham Hay from Australia.

### Other References:

Present visuals of Artwork by artists such as Rosette Gault and Graham Hay.

Rosette Gault <http://www.paperclayart.com/>

Graham Hay. <http://www.grahamhay.com.au/>

## Constructing Your

### Piece:

Roll out your clay to the desired thickness allow it to become leather hard, draw the shapes you want and cut them out with either scissors or a box knife, be careful. Next you need to make a joining slip, the easiest way is to make “potato chips” of fiber clay and let them dry completely. When we need fiber clay slip all you do is throw them in a cup of water and they dissolve. When attaching two dry pieces together first you wet all surfaces with the slip then roll out a thin rope of wet clay and dip it in the slip. When you use the clay rope it acts like denture cream and fills in the gaps. If excess clay gushes out wipe it off!

If all the surfaces are wetted with slip you should have no problem with the joint coming loose. In fact you'll feel it grab right away.



## Firing Fiber Clay:

If you have the Sheepdog brand fiber clay you will fire it to cone 04. You must do this in a well-ventilated kiln hopefully with a EnviroVent. If you can, leave the lid ajar until the kiln reaches 700 degrees Fahrenheit. Of course in a greenware firing pieces can touch.

### Objectives:

- The Student will learn about fiber clay construction, we will experience the advantages of Fiber clay (sheepdog Cone 04) over regular clay and over more traditional paper clay; we will construct a creature from premade, bone dry, body parts.
- The assembly is with slip \and wet clay. The classroom advantages are obvious, you don't have to worry if the sculpture (or coiled pot) has dried out because you can add on, and even cut off! You can get a project done in 30 minutes.
- Use the slip and denture cream method of attaching bone dry to bone dry clay pieces together
- that holds together adequately.

### Materials:

- Pre made pieces (bases, sets of hand cut shapes ...)
- 1- lb. orange sized pieces of clay per student
- Water container for slip
- Pencils, Plastic spoons, Paper for covering tables.
- Sheepdog Fiberclay from New Mexico Clay

**Discuss** the medium clay, what it is made of and introduce clay vocabulary words such as fire, kiln, and paper clay.

### Procedure:

Demonstrate how to attach bone dry clay to both bone dry clay and wet clay using the slip and denture cream method. Paint slip on all surfaces to be bonded, take a small piece of wet clay and wet it with slip, smush everything together. When dry bisque fire to cone 04, decorate with Concepts underglazes for bisque or glazes and fire to cone 06. Sculpting is about creative inventing, not copying. When using the clay, the students learned about dry to dry slab construction.

### Assessment:

Observe students as they work. Ask:

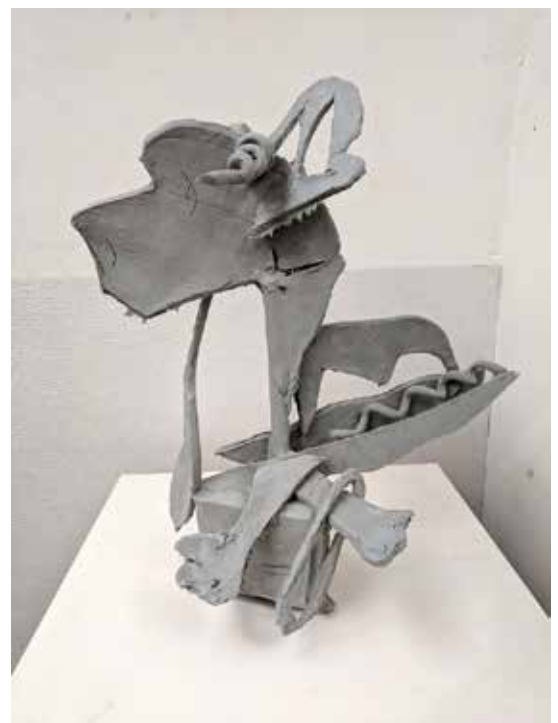
- Who are the artists we talked about today?
- What are the three words to describe the processes of attaching bone dry clay?
- What is clay made out of?

### Vocabulary:

Clay, Fire, Kiln, Ceramic, paper clay, fiber clay, 3- Dimensional, Form, Sculpture, abstract art.

### Modifications:

Instead of making abstract art make a clay animal you can build a dry armature then drape wet clay slabs over it.



### **Cross-curricular Extensions:**

Talk about the fact that fiber in clay is as old as the pyramids of Egypt. Adding straw to clay makes it hold together and resists cracking. Adobe is used all over New Mexico and traditionally used some form of fiber.

### **APS Visual Arts Standards Addressed (pre 2010)**

- Standard 1: Learners will enhance artistic perception and visual and tactile awareness.
- Standard 3: Learners will develop critical thinking skills, analytical skills, and artistic perceptions through observing, comparing and contrasting, and discussing a variety of art.
- Standard 4: Learners will use visual art as a means of self-expression
- Standard 5: Learners will develop qualities, attitudes, and behavioral attributes through visual art experiences that contribute to continuous personal growth.

