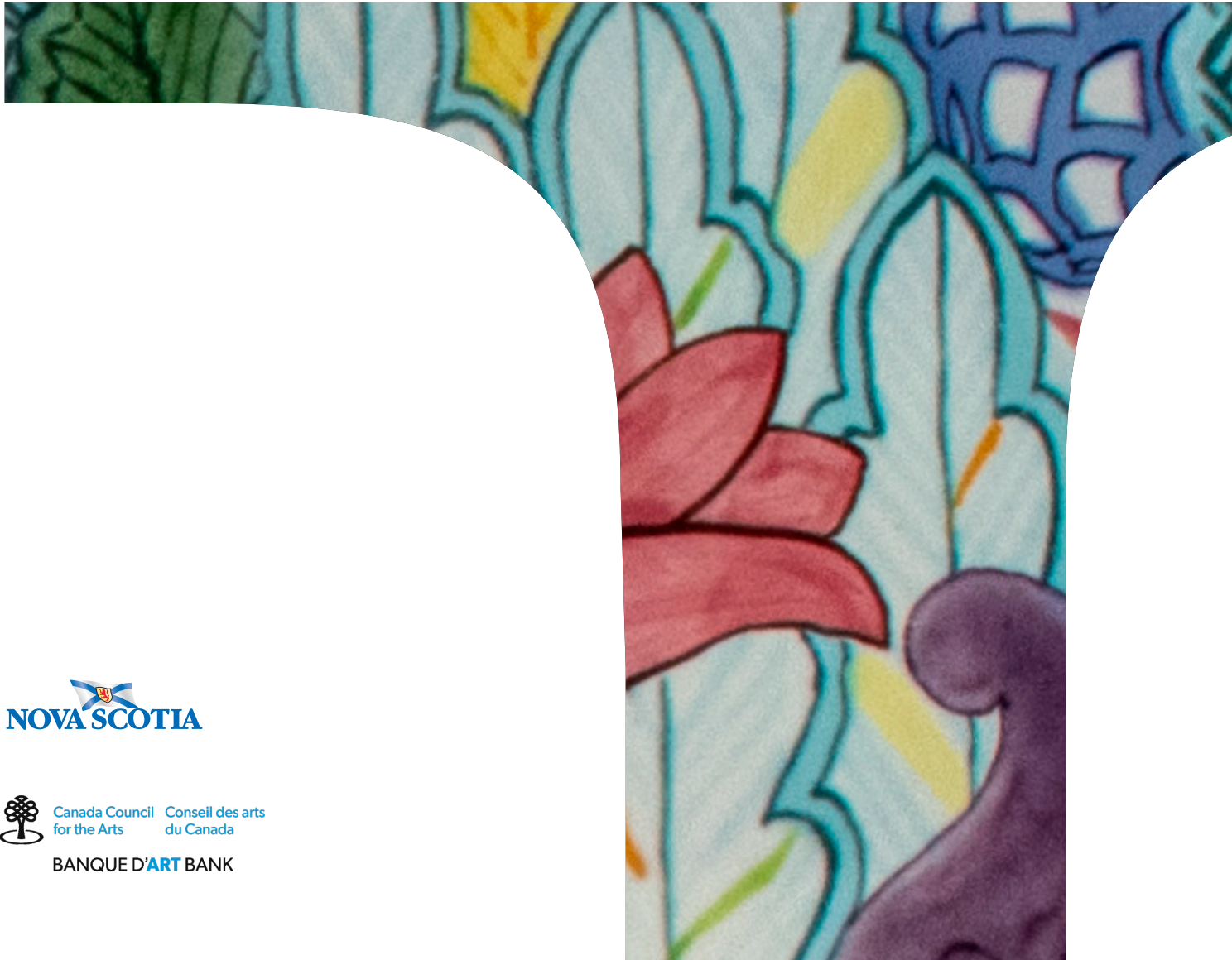


# Clay Pots and Passion

Making Pottery with Ceramic  
Artist Walter Ostrom

Grade 4 (Age 8-10)

ARTREACH LESSON PLAN



NOVA SCOTIA



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada

BANQUE D'ART BANK

# Clay Pots and Passion

## Making Pottery with Ceramic Artist Walter Ostrom

---

**Grade Level:** Grade 4 (Age 8-10) | **Lesson plan prepared by:** Ceramic Artist Marla Benton

---

### SUBJECT AREAS

- Visual Arts – form, shape, texture, illustration, sketching, 3D sculpture
- Social Studies/History
- Math (form, shape, volume)
- Language Arts

### RATIONALE

This lesson was developed in conjunction with the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's exhibition, *Good Earth: The Pots & Passion of Walter Ostrom*. Walter Ostrom is one of Canada's foremost ceramic artists. He was also an inspired NSCAD University instructor for over 40 years and his ceramic works of art reflect the long history of clay as well as his love of gardening, particularly rhododendrons. Ostrom's art practice is also influenced by China and its ceramic traditions and ceramists.

#### Students will be expected to:

Learn clay hand building techniques

Explore the elements and principles of design through applying texture and decoration to clay

Create a vase/bowl form using air-dry clay

### SUGGESTED MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Air dry clay (250g/student) \* Firing clay can also be used if a pottery kiln is available for firing.
- Clay sculpting tools (wood craft sticks, skewers, cutlery, pencils, etc. are also useful clay tools)
- Small amount of water
- Parchment paper or thick cardstock as a work surface



## SCULPTURE OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

Students will explore the creative process, individually and collaboratively, using a range of materials and technologies, to create with respect and sensitivity a variety of artworks that express feelings, ideas, and understandings.

Create artworks with emphasis on the elements and principles of design.

Use a variety of materials, technologies, and tools to create art.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Visual Arts 4–6 Streamlined Curriculum  
[https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/visualarts\\_4-6\\_streamlined.pdf](https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/visualarts_4-6_streamlined.pdf)

## INTRODUCTION

Show images of Walter Ostrom's pottery to the students. Large scale versions of these images can be found in the Walter Ostrom Pottery Images PDF document that accompanies this lesson plan. These images can be projected like a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, or colour printed.

### Discuss with the students:

- What do you notice about the decoration on the first 4 pieces of pottery?  
(Illustrations on the pieces)
- How has the artist used the elements (line, shape, form, space, colour, value, texture) and principles of design (balance, repetition, pattern, movement, rhythm, contrast, emphasis, unity)?
- Which shape/form (shape) do you like the best?
- Which piece of pottery might you choose to hold flowers on your kitchen table?

### Questions to guide further understanding of Walter Ostrom's pottery (Encourage students to focus on one piece):

First impressions: What words best describe these works of art?

Looking and Describing: What objects, materials and elements do you see that are familiar?

Analyzing: Choose one piece. What do think is the most important part of this pottery?

Interpreting: How does the work make you feel?

Personalizing: Why do you think Walter wants you to see in his pottery? What do you think Walter would want you to do if you owned one of his pieces?



\* Additional information and images of Walter Ostrom's artwork can be found online.

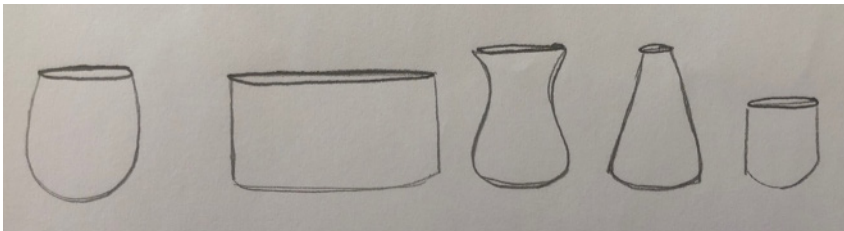
## PROCESS

### Prep/Set up:

- Have a piece of parchment paper or cardstock ready for each student
- Cut clay pieces into pieces (approximately 250g for each student)
- Prepare a clean-up station for washing clay off hands and sculpting tools – preferably a bucket of water or a basin, as clay washed down drains may clog the plumbing.
- Prepare a space for the finished clay pieces to be left to dry

### Brainstorm Sketching:

On the Smartboard/white board, sketch several basic bowl and vase pottery shapes/forms. Illustrate how to make a flat bowl or vase drawing look like more 3D by adding an additional curved line at the top.



Instruct the students to sketch between 3 and 5 basic vase shapes/forms they find interesting (in a sketchbook or on paper).

### Working with the Clay:



Using two hands, squeeze/roll the piece of clay into a ball.



Push your thumb into the middle of the clay ball, creating a hole.



Using both hands like lobster claws – press and move your fingers around the outside of the ball, keeping your thumb inside the hole, while pinching the clay between your fingers and thumb. Your clay ball will begin to open up into a bowl-like form.



Pinch the clay up from the bottom of the bowl toward the top. This will make your form get higher. Hold the bowl in one hand and sweep your fingers, or thumb, around the inside of the bowl – making sure support the outside by cupping it in your hand – to create a wider form.



Continue to work on your form until you have a bowl or vase shape you like. Use your fingers or a clay tool to smooth the outside of your piece (use your other hand for support).



Apply texture and create patterns on your clay form. Experiment with a variety of mark making tools, including pencils and skewers.



Set aside your work to dry, which may take several days.



### Painting/sealing:

- PLEASE NOTE these bowls and vases cannot hold water or food and will always be more fragile than pottery that has been fired in a kiln.
- Acrylic paints are best if you choose to paint your pottery.
- Help protect your piece by painting/sealing it with a waterbase sealer glue and finish, such as Mod Podge.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

### Student Responses: (oral or written)

1. My pottery is successful because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The thing I would change or do differently is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The thing I want you to notice about my work is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What pleases me most about my pottery is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I would like to improve or get better at \_\_\_\_\_.

\*Make anecdotal observations based on students' oral presentation and engaged participation during "art talks"

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Math

- Students spend more time on sketching 2D and 3D forms, planning for their pottery work.
- Students choose their favourite form and add lines, shapes, patterns, etc. to their drawing, using elements and principles of design. Use coloured pencils or markers to add colour to the drawing.
- Give students a variety of containers and vessels and discuss the volume of each form.
- Use flowers (real or artificial) to test which are most successful as flower vases.

### Online Research

- ceramic vases – see a huge variety of modern, mostly commercially made, vases.
- historic ceramic vases – see examples of Greek, Chinese, Egyptian and Mayan pottery
- Discuss the differences between the modern and historic pottery forms and decoration (colour, line, illustrations, etc.