

CLAY LITHOGRAPHY

For Sixth Graders or Adults

Lithography is a printing process based on the principle that oil and water don't mix. In this process, a stone or metal plate is typically used to receive oil-based ink or paint. We'll be using clay instead of a stone or plate, and since our ink is water-based, we should probably call this project "clay monoprinting," for accuracy. But "lithography" sounds cool.

Here's your cheat sheet in case you get "distracted" and forget to pay attention:

- 1) Pat out a "mudpie" of clay onto your waxed paper. It should be about 6" around. Use one of the rolling pins to further flatten the clay to a thickness of about ¼ inch or more. No more than ½ inch.
- 2) Use the inks and brushes to apply color *in any way you like*. You may blend colors, paint realistically, make a pattern, or simply swirl the ink in any way that makes you happy. (Do keep in mind that if you want to incorporate a word, letter, or numeral into your design, it will be printed *backwards*. I'll let you think for a moment and realize how you might prevent that outcome.) Try not to apply the ink too thickly.
- 3) Use the combs, brushes, skewers, your fingernails, or any texture tools on the table to alter or etch into the surface of the clay. Think: pattern. Think: texture. Add and take away. Experiment. IMPORTANT: after painting, take a clean paper towel and wipe away any ink that may be on the waxed paper so that it won't transfer to your print!
- 4) When you're done painting and such, clean your hands. (Nobody wants fingerprints on their clean paper!) Then take one of the pieces of "good" paper and place it on top of your painted clay.
- 5) Put on a second sheet of waxed paper. This is to act as a buffer to prevent your "good" paper from tearing.
- 6) Lightly rub the top of the waxed paper with a bamboo baren. Don't squish it. Don't use force. You're simply trying to transfer the ink from the clay onto the good paper.
- 7) When you think you've successfully transferred the ink, remove the top layer of waxed paper and then peel back the good paper slowly. There's your print!
- 8) Sign, date, and title your print with a pencil. It may take 24 hours for the ink to dry.

Want to do that again? Knead the clay and start over. The clay may have a slightly tinted appearance the next time because there is still ink in it. No problem---just incorporate that into your next design.

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