

LESSON PLAN

WALL PODS WITH FACES: GROWING EXPRESSIONS

 Suggested Levels: Grades 7-12
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Masks are one of humanity's oldest art forms, used to express identity, culture, and emotion. By designing a wall pod with a mask or face, students explore self-expression while creating a functional artwork that can grow and change over time.

Students will create a slab-built wall pod with a sculpted mask or face on the front. Once fired, the pod can hold a small plant that grows into "hair," transforming the piece into a living artwork.

OBJECTIVES

I CAN... use clay hand-building techniques to construct a functional wall pod.

I CAN... design and sculpt a mask/face that expresses identity, emotion, or symbolic meaning.

I CAN... apply glaze with intention to enhance the expression and symbolism of my piece.

NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- Artists use imagination and research to create meaningful works.
- Students brainstorm, sketch, and research mask traditions before designing their own.

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

- Artists make choices about form and media to communicate ideas.
- Students design their mask face and pod structure for symbolic effect.

Convey meaning through presentation of artistic work.

- Art communicates stories, emotions, and identities when displayed.
- Students present finished pods with live plants, exploring how display changes meaning.



SUPPLY LIST

CLAY

- Clay body of choice

BRUSHES & TOOLS

- Carving/modeling tools
- Assorted brushes/sponges
- Needle tools
- Ribs
- Slip and scoring tools

MISCELLANEOUS

- Rolling pin or slab roller
- Hole cutters or hollow tools (e.g., marker caps)
- Slip, water containers
- Plastic wrap or wet box
- Optional: artificial or small live plants, stencil (for water etching)



COLORS BY MAYCO

Mayco Elements glazes are used in this lesson plan.

Elements glazes offer rich, natural tones that will accentuate the mask's face and features, complementing the greenery above. Students can mix or layer colors to create depth and shading on facial features, giving the mask more personality. The glaze flows nicely over textured clay surfaces, emphasizing facial details while adding visual interest.



Accommodations

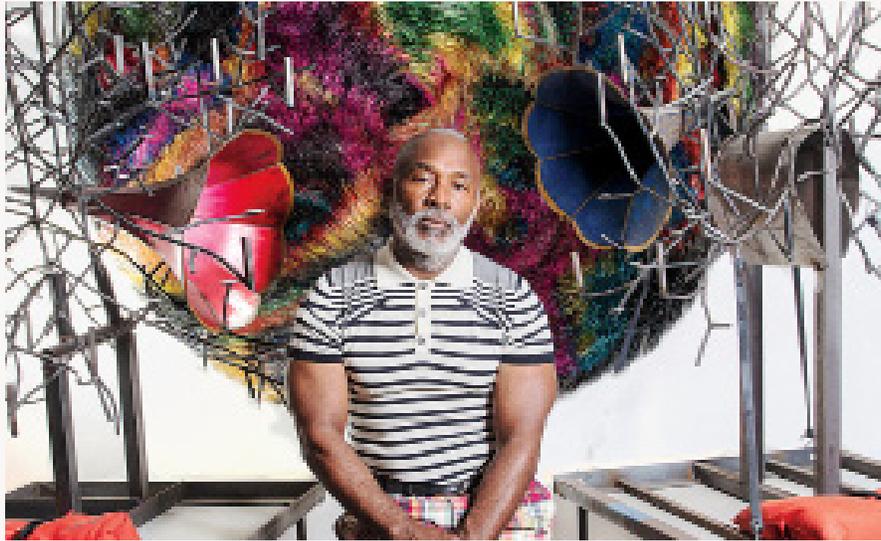
- Visuals: Provide photo examples and diagrams.
- Physical Support: Allow peer/teacher to help with slab rolling.
- Flexible Timing: Extend carving/glazing time.
- Guided Choice: Offer themes like Joy, Growth, Mystery, Strength.
- Verbal and Demo: Model each construction step.



Teacher Tips

- Encourage exaggeration of facial features for symbolic effect.
- Remind students that plants will transform the sculpture (wild hair, spiky growth).
- Dry slabs slowly to prevent cracks.

MEET THE MASTER



Nick Cave

1959-Present

Artist Nick Cave is an American contemporary artist creating colorful sculptures called “Soundsuits,” which were wearable sculptures that cover the whole body and hide a person’s race, gender, and identity. Nick blends mask and costume to explore identity and culture. This helps us think

about how we show ourselves to the world and how we express our feelings. His art encourages trying contemporary ideas, using symbols, and telling a story through your work. In this lesson, you’ll build, carve, and glaze a ceramic wall pod mask. Like Cave’s Soundsuits, your mask can show who you are, how you feel, or what’s important to you and your community. His playful and creative style invites you to have fun with color, texture, and design while making your artwork unique.

“Tell stories the face alone cannot.” — Nick Cave



DIRECTIONS - CLAY BUILDING PROCESS

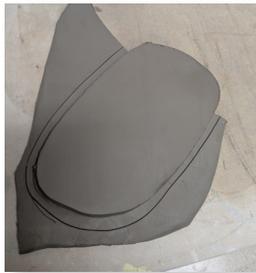
Method 1

1. Roll out a flat slab of clay about ¼ inch thick using the rolling pin. Compress both sides of the clay slab with a plastic card.



2. Cut out an irregular oval shape from one half of the clay slab.

3. Lay the previously cut oval over the top of the leftover clay slab, allowing a section to hang over the cut edge to form the pocket. Outline the edge of the cut oval on the slab leaving about 1/4th inch of excess wider than the cut oval. Cut the second slab following the outline.



4. Crumple up some paper towel and set it on top of the full oval. This will create the space needed for the pocket.



5. Sandwich the crumpled paper towel between the two pieces of cut slab. Slip and score the two halves together leaving the top open to form the pocket.



6. Lay the texture (netting) on top of the whole pocket and lightly compress the texture into the clay using the plastic card.

7. Form a variety of coils into different sizes and shapes. Create enough coils to form the lips, tongue, eyes, and hair.
8. Map out the coils on the pocket to form a face. Once the pieces are where you'd like them to be, slip and score the pieces onto the main pocket.



9. Blend in coils that form the facial features into the background of the main pocket and add any other texture or shaping to the wall pocket.



10. Cut a hole into the back piece of the wall pocket that sticks up over the top of the face and remove the paper towel from inside the pocket.

11. Allow to fully dry and bisque fire to cone 04.

DIRECTIONS - DECORATING PROCESS



This project features Mayco Elements glazes. Elements glazes offer rich, natural tones that will accentuate the mask's face and features. Students can mix or layer colors to create depth and shading on facial features, giving the mask more personality.



EXTEND THE LEARNING *using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory*

LINGUISTIC (Word Smart)

Write a poem in the voice of the mask.

SPATIAL (Picture Smart)

Experiment with abstract or cubist distortions.

INTERPERSONAL (People Smart)

Group installation: "Wall of Faces."

BODY KINESTHETIC (Body Smart)

Use a mirror to act out expressions while sculpting.

NATURALIST (Nature Smart)

Choose plants with symbolic meaning (succulents = endurance, ivy = growth).

LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL (Number Smart)

Calculate pod dimensions to fit specific plant pots.

INTRAPERSONAL (Self Smart)

"What does my mask say about me?"

MUSIC (Music Smart)

Create a playlist for the mask's mood or emotion.

RUBRIC

	EXCELLENT (5 PTS)	STRONG (4 PTS)	SATISFACTORY (3 PTS)	DEVELOPING (2 PTS)	BEGINNING (1 PT)
CREATIVITY & SYMBOLISM	Highly original; strong symbolic/ emotional meaning	Creative idea: symbolism is thoughtful	Some originality; basic symbolism	Limited creativity; unclear symbolism	Minimal effort
CRAFTSMANSHIP	Excellent construction; strong joints, no cracks	Good construction; minor flaws	Adequate; some weak joints	Weak craftsmanship	Poorly built
TECHNIQUES	Masterful slab, sculpting, glazing	Skillful use with minor errors	Basic techniques attempted	Minimal techniques	Misapplied or missing techniques
EFFORT & ENGAGEMENT	Fully engaged; above and beyond	Strong effort	Average effort	Limited effort	Rushed/ incomplete
PRESENTATION & REFLECTION	Insightful statement; thoughtful display	Clear statement; neat display	Adequate statement/ display	Weak or careless	No reflection

Total Score: _____/25

PERFORMANCE LEVELS
25-20 POINTS (A): OUTSTANDING
19-15 POINTS (B): GOOD
14-11 POINTS (C): FAIR
10-7 POINTS (D): WEAK
6-0 POINTS (F): INCOMPLETE