



*All ceramic houses within this lesson plan were created by Carolina Pedraza, Columbus, Ohio, using AMACO® clays and glazes.*

# AMACO®

## Lesson #17

# Mi Casa es Tu Casa

**A Lesson in Creating Small, Animated Houses with AMACO® Clay and Gloss Decorating Colors (GDC's)**

There's no place like home. For centuries, the idea of home has been a source of inspiration for numerous artists. The most basic definition for 'house' is that of a building in which people live. But, isn't it more than that? The landscape around the structure can sometimes feel as much as home as being inside it. Whether you live in an apartment in the city, or in a house in the suburbs, a house by the beach or a farm in the countryside, your home can be more than just a shelter. It can be a reflection of yourself, created from your own imagination. The Chinese Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-25 A.D.) were so connected to their houses, that they created tomb offerings that were clay models of their temples and houses, including the animals and furnishings that were in them. It was their way of taking a piece of their everyday life with them in the afterlife. In this lesson, high school students will learn to create houses out of clay and use the walls to illustrate the world in which their house exists.

## Lesson Goals and Objectives:

1. Students learn to make animated houses using slab-built clay ceramic techniques.
2. This lesson incorporates aesthetics, illustration, symbolism and personal expression.
3. This lesson focuses on slab building and compositional elements essential for drawing on a three-dimensional object. It will also teach students fundamental technical skills for using a technique known as majolica to treat the surface of the houses.

## Background Preparation:

1. This lesson is designed for high school students.
2. The teacher should present a brief history of architecture and the significance and variety of dwellings.
3. The teacher should present the use of the house as a symbol in sculpture, painting, drawing and ceramics. Artists whose work could be presented are: Robert Arneson, Christine Federighi, Han Dynasty tomb figures, Jack Earl, David Stabley, Jennifer Bartlett and Joel Shapiro, among others.
4. The teacher could also present a brief overview of the use of humor and cartoon-like illustration in the fine arts showing artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Keith Haring, Stuart Davis and Red Grooms.
5. The teacher should explain to students how to compose imagery on a three-dimensional surface, as opposed to compositions on a flat surface (i.e. a piece of paper or canvas). The imagery should wrap around the piece, instead of students focusing on each panel (or wall) of the house as separate.



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## Glossary:

**Sculpture** — a three-dimensional work of art that is intended to be viewed from all sides. It can be made out of materials such as plaster, stone, wood, metal, and clay.

**Composition** — the organization of line, value, color, shape, and form within a work of art.

**Glaze** — a special clear or colored liquid mixture applied to ceramic surfaces that becomes hard and glass-like when fired to the right temperature in a kiln.

**Majolica** — originally an Italian glazing technique that involves brushing on a white base glaze first, then applying colored oxides on top that will fuse with the glaze during the firing.

**Slip** — clay that has been mixed with water into a creamy consistency.

**Scoring** — a method of joining two parts of clay together by scratching the two surfaces and spreading slip between them as “glue.”

**Fire** — to heat the clay in a kiln at a very high temperature until it is hard and it becomes ceramic.

**Bisque** — unglazed ceramic after the first firing.

**Template** — a positive pattern.

**2-dimensional** — images that are flat and can be described in terms of height and width. The images can represent the illusion of real space and are viewed from the front.

**3-dimensional** — forms that have many sides and can be described in terms of depth, width and height. The forms actually occupy real space, and should be viewed all around.



Base: AMACO® Cone 5 Sahara HF-11 White. Design: AMACO® GDC's.

## Supplies:

AMACO® Clay — 77M Terra Cotta clay with grog  
 AMACO® LG-11 White Cone 04 Glaze  
 AMACO® Gloss Decorating Colors (GDC's)  
 AMACO® Wax Resist  
 AMACO® LUG-1 Black  
 Rolling pin or slab roller  
 Wooden rods  
 24" x 24" piece of canvas  
 Fettling knife  
 Scratch tool, comb or fork  
 Wooden tool  
 Small and medium paintbrush  
 Carving tool

## Additional Supplies:

Pencil  
 Poster board, cardstock or newspaper  
 Scissors  
 Small container for slip  
 Small container for water  
 Plastic bags  
 Electric Kiln

*“How To” examples on next page at top by Ben Davis, Indianapolis, Indiana high school students.*



## Instructions:

**1. Concept** — Ask students to draw what kind of house structure they want to make. What will be the shape of the front and back wall and what will be the shape of the side wall? What does the rooftop look like? How many windows does the house have? Does the house have one or two doors? Is the house in the city, the countryside or by the ocean? Are the people or animals that live in it there or are they gone for now?

**2. Templates** — From the drawings, students can draw the shape of the front wall and one of the side walls on a piece of poster board (cardstock or newspaper), as if they were going to construct the house out of poster board (cardstock or newspaper). Houses should be no more than 8 inches tall or wide, so the teacher should check the size of the walls before students cut them out. Once approved, have them cut those shapes, flip them over and trace the cut shapes on top of the remaining poster board to get the shapes for the back and second sidewall. Cut those new shapes. Draw each side of the rooftop (or the shape, if it sits flat on the top of the house) on what is left of the poster board and cut them out.

### 3. Construction —

**a.** Roll slab to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick using a slab roller or with a rolling pin on top of two wooden rods ( $\frac{1}{4}$  inch diameter) on top of the canvas.

**b.** Using template of patterns of walls and rooftop, students should cut the shapes, as well as an additional shape that will serve as the base or bottom of the house using a fettling knife. In order to store slabs, have them layer them

between several sheets of newspaper and wrap everything in plastic over night. The newspaper will help pull some moisture from the clay, so that the slabs are firmer in order to build the house.

**c.** To build, score and slip the base of the house. Then take the front wall and a side wall, score and slip the areas where their sides will come together to form a corner and where they will come together with the base. Place one wall on the scored base first, then the side wall. If walls are still too floppy, have someone hold the first wall, or use an object to help prop the wall up, while you get the other one set.

**d.** Repeat the same process with the other two walls, also scoring the areas on the two first walls where the new walls will attach. Put a coil on the inside to seal the corners. Seal the edges from the outside with a damp wooden tool, finger, or sponge. Cut extra clay from base, and seal bottom edges the same way.

**e.** Take rooftop slabs and add texture as if creating roof tiles, shingles or other type of roofing material.

**f.** Slip and score the top of the house and the undersides of the rooftop sides and close the house from the top. Run damp wooden tool over roofline seams, to make sure they are sealed.

**g.** When not working on the vessels, students should keep them loosely covered in plastic so that they do not dry out and become hard.

**h.** When the students have completed

building their houses, they should cut out the windows and doorways. Doors can be made out of the clay they cut out.

**i.** When this is complete, allow pieces to dry slowly to avoid cracking.

**j.** Ask students to think of where their houses exist. Have them draw a setting that can include plants, cars, sky, the moon, the sun, other houses or buildings, airplanes, etc. The setting can even be the inside of the house. There are no limitations for the setting. Encourage students to think with humor and beyond traditional ideas. Remind them to think about working all around the house, continuing the image past the edges of each wall onto the adjoining walls.

**k.** When thoroughly dry, bisque fire houses to cone 03.

### 4. Glazing —

**a.** When piece is fired and cooled, apply three coats of LG-11 White Cone 04 glaze to the bisqued house with a brush, leaving the rooftop unglazed, unless the wrap-around drawing includes the rooftop. The door, if there is one, can also remain unglazed.

**b.** Based on the drawings of the setting for their house, have students carefully draw on top of the dry white glaze with a pencil.

**c.** Once the drawing is done in pencil, using a brush, have students paint in the drawing with Gloss Decorating Colors (they can apply from 1 to 3 coats of GDC color, depending on how solid or opaque

they want the color to be after glaze firing), trying to leave pencil lines visible.

**d.** With a wider brush (take only 2 or 3 brushes that everyone can use just for this, since the wax will not wash away completely after use) apply a thin coat of AMACO® Wax Resist over all the glazed areas, making sure no glaze is left uncovered.

**e.** Using a carving tool, carefully carve out over all pencil lines around the colored areas. Students will feel the tool scratch the bisqued clay surface occasionally.

**f.** Using a small brush, apply LUG-1 Black to the carved line. See finished examples on this page. The wax will protect the uncarved areas from taking any of the black underglaze. The Wax Resist will burn out during firing.

**g.** Glaze fire to cone 04.



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Majolica glaze technique with AMACO® Gloss Decorating Colors (GDC's) over AMACO® LG-11 White.



Unglazed house made from AMACO® 25-M White Art Clay.



Majolica glaze technique with AMACO® Gloss Decorating Colors (GDC's) over AMACO® LG-11 White.

*This lesson plan was created and written by Carolina Pedraza, Columbus, Ohio.*

*This is one lesson in a series of art plans for elementary and secondary programs using American Art Clay Co., Inc. products. Successful lessons will be considered for future publication. Send your ideas and slides to David Gamble, Vice President, Director of Marketing and Education – Brent and Educational Divisions, American Art Clay Co., Inc., 4717 West Sixteenth Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46222.*

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