

Lesson Plan

Grades 8 - 12

Fire Up Your Creativity™

Speedball®

Animal Habitats

Exploring relief, and its inherent depth and use of shadow, as a format for artistic expression with ceramics.



by Nancy Sowder

History – This project is a form of relief but it is constructed by an additive (sprigging) process rather than a subtractive one.

Goals - To use articles from nature to represent a habitat for the chosen animal. To use the score-and-slip method for assembling clay pieces together. To explore relief (and its inherent depth and use of shadow) as a format for artistic expression.

Materials:

1. Moist earthenware clay
2. Speedball® Underglazes
3. Speedball® Earthenware Glazes
4. Brushes
5. Tools including; slab roller or rolling pin, rubber rib or brayer, knife or needle tool for cutting, serrated rib and a scoring tool (a serrated rib works for this, or a fork or small wire brush)
6. Leaves or other flora
7. Slides or photos of reliefs and of animals in their natural environments.

Description: Each student will choose an animal and its habitat to represent in a relief. Each will use underglazes to paint the animal onto a slab then press and cut out leaves to add to the background slab. After the piece is assembled and bisque fired, transparent colored glazes will be applied to the leaves to highlight the imprinted texture.

Step 1 – Have the students choose an animal and its surroundings. Then have them collect leaves which suggest that type of environment and climate. Consider if the appearance should be tropical, alpine, etc. A piece of bark can be pressed into clay to resemble the trunk of a tree.

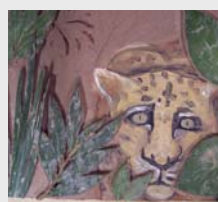
Animal Habitats with Ceramic Glazes 8-12

Step 2 – Have the students roll a slab from the moist clay for the background of their relief and cut it to the desired shape and size. To decide on a composition, have the students arrange their leaves on the slab and think about where the animal will be painted. Once the placement is decided, draw a faint outline of the animal with a pencil or wood tool.

Step 3 – Take some of the leaves and press them into the background around the animal to make an imprint of their texture. Remove them as you go.

Step 4 – Using underglazes, paint the animal onto the slab. Because the slab is still wet, the underglazes will blend easily. This may be helpful, but it may also make painting a little more difficult. Try to use bold strokes and don't over-blend to avoid mudding-up the colors. Touch-ups and some additional painting can be done once the slab has dried a little, but most should be completed now to avoid trying to paint around the leaves.

Step 5 – Take a second slab about ¼" thick and smooth away any texture with a rubber rib. Then lay the leaves on top (most textured side down) and press them firmly with a rib, or roll with a brayer so that the veins on the leaf are pressed into the clay. Cut the leaves out with a knife or needle tool. A serrated rib can be used on the edges if desired. Turn them over and score the back with a serrated rib, fork, or wire brush; and apply slip. A thick coat of slip will help the pieces attach to the slab without trapping air. Try to keep the slip away from the edges as it will spread beyond the leaves when pressed onto the slab. If slip squeezes out beyond the leaf edges, it can be cleaned up with a small brush. After all are applied, remove the leaves. Rough edges may also be smoothed with a wet brush.



Step 6 – Allow to dry slowly. When completely dry bisque fire to cone 04.

Step 7 – Using colored, semi-transparent glazes paint the animal's surroundings. This type of glaze is designed to enhance textured surfaces. If desired, the edges of the leaves can be painted with a glaze, or an underglaze. The animal may be covered in clear glaze, or additional color can be added with semi-transparent glazes to increase the depth of the image. Remember that different color glazes may blur into one another where they touch. This may or may not be a desired effect.

Variations: *If a glossy surface is not desired, use an underglaze to stain the background instead of glazes. To do this, proceed as above through the bisque stage. Take the bisqued relief and apply underglazes to the areas impressed with leaves then sponge the underglaze off. You can thin the underglaze with a little water if desired. This will leave color in the recessed areas of the leaf impression, highlighting the delicate leaf designs. Re-fire to cone 04, 05 or 06 to set the underglaze.*

Both methods can be combined, staining the leaf patterns with a dark color underglaze, and then applying semi-transparent colored glazes (or a clear glaze) on top. In this method, re-fire to cone 05 or 06.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on

- Composition of relief
- Selection and application of leaves or other flora
- Mastering of score-and-slip technique
- Execution of construction and painting