

Episode #3: “Here and Now” with Carole Epp

Targeted Age Group: Grade 7 – Place

An artist, curator, writer, community builder and teacher, Carole Epp provides a detailed journey into the artistry and history of functional art. Students will be guided through two projects (ceramic tile and pinch pot) featuring imagery from the students’ own exploration of “place”.

What to expect?

Part 1: Carole addresses students with an introduction to her ceramic practice as an artist and activist. She introduces students to the history of her practice and discusses what inspires her and what her practice encompasses: writing, curating, her role as a maker with the functional and non-functional ceramics, and her role as an activist through the narratives she explores in her artwork. Carole considers the role of artists, whom she notes are “storytellers” for a time in history.

Part 2: Carole introduces students to clay and its history in our evolution. In this video, students will be introduced to terminology, where clay comes from, its everyday use in our lives, and various firing processes. This video serves as an introduction, with things to keep in mind when working with clay (in preparation for the hands-on activities in Parts 3 and 4).

Part 3 is an extension of Part 2, with hands-on activity: How to tell your own story on a clay tile. Carole discusses how to create your own symbols through the stories students create with their own narrative imagery.

Part 4: Carole introduces students to exploring the narrative on a three-dimensional form: the pinch pot. Students will learn how to form a three-dimensional object and consider illustrations through carving techniques. Carole ends Part 4 with “10 Things”, with a list of advice, wisdom, lived experience, dos & don’ts, etc.

Episode Highlights

Artistic Skills: Historical context of ceramics, sculpting techniques, generating ideas, visual storytelling, painting techniques.

Social Themes: Artists as activists, why make art?, community building, artist training, artistic impact, queer representation, dealing with stress and failure, where objects come from and how they are made, craft vs. art.

Possible Arts Education 7 Curricular Outcomes:

- **CP7.10** Create visual art works that express ideas about the importance of place (e.g., relationship to the land, local geology, region, urban/rural landscapes, and environment).
- **CP7.11** Investigate and use various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about place.
- **CP7.12** Use image-making skills, tools, techniques, and problem-solving abilities in a variety of visual art media.
- **CR7.2** Investigate and identify ways that the arts can communicate a sense of place.

- **CH7.1** Investigate how artists' relationship to place may be reflected in their work.
- **CH7.3** Investigate and identify a variety of factors that influence artists, their work, and careers.

Run Times:

Part 1: 24:48 Meet the Artist
 Part 2: 24:43 Working with Clay
 Part 3: 28:20 Making a Clay Tile
 Part 4: 27:18 Making a Pinch Pot
Total: 1:45:09

Materials:

-clay (air-dry or fireclay)
 -foam sheets
 -stamps
 -Drawing Paper
 -Pencil
 -Water/Sponge
 -knife
 -scoring tool
 -wooden tools (popsicle sticks, skewers, etc.)
 -acrylic paint/ brushes
 -plastic

Part One: Meet the Artist

Running Time: 25 minutes. Suggested Class Time: 30-60 minutes (Watch the video and follow-up discussion)

Getting to know Carole and her art practice. Carole discusses her journey, history, what she explores in her work, the role of the artist, influences, relationships, the importance of community in ceramic practice, and what a typical day is like as a professional ceramic artist.

Carole addresses the following questions:

1. What is a typical day like for you?
2. How did you get started?
3. What do you love about your work?
4. What kind of issues or subjects do you explore in your work?
5. What is the artist's role in society?
6. What kinds of responses has your work received?
7. Do people ask you to make specific pieces for them?
8. What inspires you?
9. What's difficult about being an artist?
10. Is Saskatchewan a good place to be an artist?

11. What's some good advice that you've received?
12. What advice would you give to yourself as a kid?

Part Two: Working with Clay

Suggested Time: 30-90 minutes, depending on other possible integrated lessons

Students will be introduced to ceramics, including its history, where clay comes from, different clay bodies, terminology, processes and techniques, and the firing process of turning clay to ceramic. Students will also learn basic handling of the material and considerations to be mindful of when working with clay, in preparation for creating their own tiles and pinch pots.

Working with Clay (0-6:28 minutes): Where clay comes from and how it's used in various industries and home environments.

Turning Clay to Ceramic (6:28-14:20 minutes): Discussion on various firing processes involved when turning clay to ceramic. Carole also discusses various clay bodies and talks about different qualities inherent to different types of clays.

Things to keep in mind when working with clay (14:20-24:43): Carole discusses the properties of clay and the considerations students will need to be mindful of when handling the material. Students will also be introduced to attaching clay pieces together through a technique called "slipping and scoring".

Part Three: Making a Clay Tile (Suggested Time: 2-3 hours)

Note: Project can be completed over a three- to five-day period.

Students will explore symbols and their personal connection to these symbols as they create their own narrative of a story they want to tell. Students will also be introduced to helpful tricks, as they translate imagery from paper onto a clay tile and build up portions of the tile to be a low-relief sculpture.

Exercise One: Creative Idea: Warm Up (0:00-9:55). Suggested time: 15 minutes

Students will explore their own symbolic imagery and create their own characters in creative exercise.

- 0:00-8:50-Explanation
- 8:50-9:55- Activity- On a piece of paper- Make 6-"Blobs" and doodle a character within each blob. Consider setting a time limit.

Exercise Two: Defining Place (10:03-12:39). Suggested Time: 15-30 minutes.

Students will consider place as a starting point for their narratives. They will consider places of travel, the place of an experience, a memory from childhood, family experiences, etc. and explore associations to that specific place. Students will explore, through free-flow doodle, how they might represent that place with imagery.

- 10:03: Explanation

- 12:26: Activity – Start a doodle page about place. How does this place make you feel? How can you represent that with an image?

Exercise Three: Draw Your Tile Design (12:39-15:55). Suggested Time: 15-30 minutes

Students will sketch elements they plan to use on their tiles.

- 12:39: Creating a visual narrative – Explanation
- 15:00: Activity – Draw your tile design

Exercise Four: Making the Tile (15:35- 24:05). Suggested time: 30-60 minutes.

Students will make their own tiles with clay (air-dry or fire clay) and learn basic techniques to build up elements in their narratives to make low-relief tiles. Students will consider details as they carve lines and build up features that stand out.

- 15:35: Explanation and transfer drawing onto tile
- 19:06: Activity – Using foam sheets – cut out portion of drawing and add clay. Remember to score and slip.
- 23:47: Activity – Add elements to your tile – carve lines or make features that stand out.
- Finish: Cover tile with plastic and return next day to paint.

Exercise Five (Next Day): Painting the Tile (24:05-28:20). Suggested time: 30-60 minutes.

- 23:50: Explanation – Adding details and fine-tuning. (Suggested time: 10-20 minutes)
- 25:15: Activity – Painting the tile – Create a black wash to emphasize drawing and then paint with acrylic paints. Tiles may be sprayed at later time to give them a sheen.

Part Four: Making a Pinch Pot

Students learn to create a three-dimensional form through a technique of pinching the clay. The goal will be to create a form that is even in thickness and as tall as it is wide. Students will then explore creating an illustration that will go around the object.

- 0:00: Making a pinch pot – Explanation
- 5:07: Activity – make a small pinch pot with your eyes closed
- 7:29: Activity – make a pinch pot (Suggested Time: 20 minutes)
- 8:50: Explanation – Sketching on a three-dimensional object and visual storytelling
- 15:38: Activity – Create your pinch pot illustration. Use a strip of paper and join the ends to see how it works in the round.
- 19:04: Activity – Paint the whole pot black and, with a pointy drawing tool, draw the illustration by carving lightly through the black paint. Use a dry brush to clear away the dust.
- 22:18: “Ten Things” to remember

Biography

Carole Epp (She/Her)

Carole is an artist, curator, writer, community builder and teacher. She received her BFA in ceramics from the University of Regina, and her MFA from the Australian National University. Carole currently works as a studio artist, exhibiting primarily in Canada and the United States. A fierce advocate for the ceramic community, she is editor of *Musing About Mud*, the co-founder

of Make and Do Ceramics, and she volunteers on the board for Clayweek.org. She travels internationally to teach workshops, published a ceramic book in 2020 through Uppercase publishing and works part-time for The Ceramic School out of Austria. In 2021 she curated an exhibition of 88 Canadian ceramic artists for an international exhibition and in 2017 was named the Ceramic Artist of the Year by Ceramics Monthly Magazine (USA).

“Art can be this beautiful and subtle way to start a conversation.”