

# Expressive Clay Tiles

*Project is recommended for students grades 4-8. Lesson extensions are included for advanced or secondary students.*

This exciting project in clay incorporates basic slab construction with a student friendly texture technique using rubber stamps. Each student will create an original clay tile with rubber stamp textures in wet clay to frame the tile. The space free of texture, or "clay canvas," invites the artist to display an image, i.e.: portrait, landscape, still- life, etc. of choice and encourages the student to express personal ideas and creativity.

Glazing will include applying color to enhance the area of texture and the layering of decorative colors to create the students' image of choice.

## Objective & Preparation:

Students will choose a personally meaningful image or idea. Class discussion should focus on their choices of color, texturing symbols and designs, and image concept. This project can very easily be modified to make connections to other disciplines and historical or cultural learning objectives.

Students will also develop an understanding of clay, clay properties and clay forming techniques, and investigate various glazes and application tools and methods to create an expressive ceramic tile.

## National Standards:

- Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas

*Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures and Making Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines are also applicable if the tile image is focused on a specific time period, culture or academic discipline.*

Project Images



Student Images



## Materials:

- Earthenware Clay (Cone 04)
- Wire Clay Cutter
- Slab Roller or Rolling Pin
- Wood Slats 6" L x 1/2" W x 1/2" D
- Ruler
- Rubber rib
- 6"x6" template
- Fettling (or Plastic) Knife
- Pony (or 2" wide) Roller
- Mayco Rubber Stamps
- Pencil
- Fan Brushes
- Glaze Brushes (liners and rounds)
- Masking Tape
- Glaze applicator (squeeze bottle type)
- Sponge

## Mayco Glazes

- Foundation Glazes
- Series 2000 Glazes
- Elements Glazes
- Stroke & Coat Glazes – Decorating color



## Procedures:

### Create Slab

1. Use a slab roller to roll a slab of clay to 1/2" thickness using wood slats as thickness guides. Alternative option: give each student three to four pounds of clay and a rolling pin – use a ruler or wood slats to produce their own 1/2" slab.
2. Smooth both front and back sides of clay slab with a rubber rib.
3. Place 6" x 6" template made from stiff cardboard or other firm material on top of slab and use fettling knife to cut out a 6" square.

### Textured Frame

4. Create a textured frame for the smooth, untextured image area by pressing the rubber stamp along the outer edge of the tile with pony roller. Use the entire rubber stamp or specific designs or sections of it. Gently raise stamp up after each pressing.

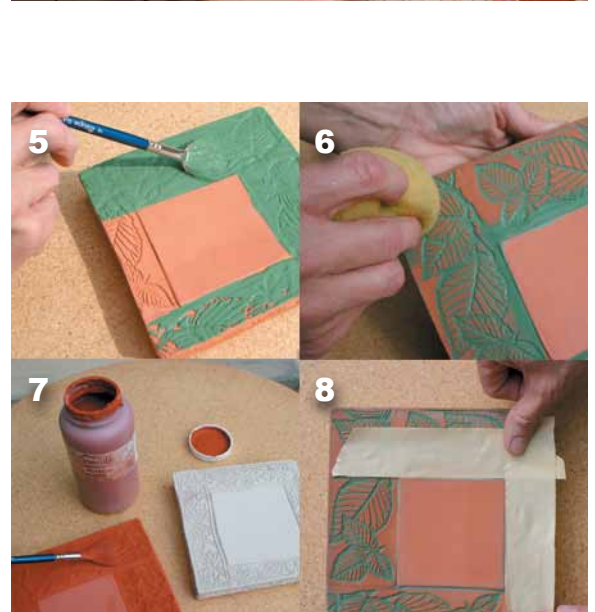
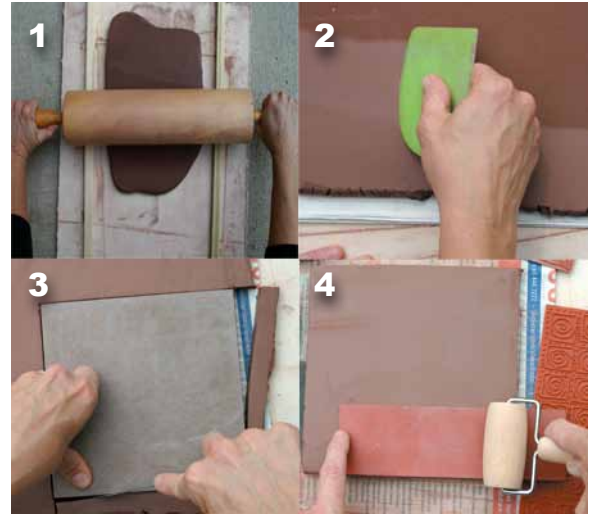
***Let the clay dry and Bisque fire to Cone 04.***

### Glazing the Frame

5. Glaze choices and techniques can add interest to the textured frame. Elements produce variegated earth tones reminiscent of high fire pottery; Foundations and Series 2000 provide rich colors. Or the student may wish to leave the frame unglazed.
6. Distressed Effect Option: brush glaze over textured areas and wipe off glaze with a sponge to leave glaze only in the deepest part of the texture.
7. All-over Coverage Option: apply one coat Foundations or Series 2000 glaze onto entire tile front (textured and smooth canvas area) and then paint two more coats of the same glaze on the texture part of tile only. ***Note: Keep glaze off the bottom of tile where it would sit on the kiln shelf – wipe off with a sponge if needed.***

### Image Area Detail

8. After the textured frame glazing has fully dried use masking tape to create a protective border around the smooth image area (all four sides).
9. Paint base coats of glaze onto canvas area (an example: one coat of Foundations or Series 2000 that matches color used on texture and then two coats of White to create the base coat). ***Note: The layered base glaze can add color depth to the white canvas above. Remove masking tape while glaze is still wet to prevent pulling dried glaze from image area.***
10. Once base coat is dry use a pencil to sketch image on the canvas area of the tile (pencil will burn off in the glaze firing and will not show on the finished tile).
11. Use liner and round brushes to layer Stroke & Coat glazes onto the sketched image.
12. Fill glaze applicator bottle with Stroke & Coat Tuxedo Black to outline the finished image. ***Note: Outlining adds definition to the painted image and can be applied to all or parts of the image.***
13. Finally, outline the image area to offset from the texture. Glaze fire to Cone 06.



# Lesson Extension:

*Transforming a tile into a 3-D structure*  
*Advanced or Secondary clay artists.*

## Objective(s)

Students will choose a personally meaningful image or idea, display an understanding of clay, clay properties, and investigate various glaze applications to create an expressive ceramic tile.

Students will expand their understanding of clay and clay properties and apply their knowledge through a construction of a 3-D form, attaching wall structures and complete the tile by adding an additional support structure for presentation.



## National Standards:

- Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- Using Knowledge of Structures and Functions

*Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures is also applicable if the tile image is focused on a specific time period or culture.*

## Additional Materials:

- Wood Slats 1" x 2" x 8"
- Scoring/scratching tool
- Vinegar
- Thin solid copper wire or picture hanging wire
- Needle nose pliers



## Additional Procedures:

### Create Side Walls

1. Prepare an additional slab of clay for side walls.
2. Cut out walls of the tile 6" L x 1/2" W x 1/2" D (need five of these for each tile).

### Attach Side Walls

3. Turn the 6" x 6" tile over and prepare to attach the side walls. Use scoring tool to carve grooves along each outer edge of the tile. Also score one edge of each side wall.
4. Line up side wall pieces against the tile and trim side wall as is necessary.
5. Lightly brush vinegar along the score lines in both the tile and side wall strip. Attach side wall to tile by butting both vinegar-treated surfaces to one another. **Note: The acetic acid in the vinegar "fizzes and bubbles" with the clay to create a glue-like sticky surface. Avoid excessive application of vinegar.**
6. Use wood slats (1" x 2" x 8") as a brace to hold tile steady and square when smoothing attached walls.
7. Press into place and smooth all butted seams and edges – inside and outside – with fingers. Use rubber rib to make a final smoothing pass on the outside of all four side walls.
8. Cut the last 6" L x 1/2" W x 1/2" D strip into three equal pieces. You will use two of these pieces as mounting supports. With the back of the tile facing you measure approximately 2" down from the inside edge of the top side wall along the left and right side walls and carve horizontal score lines (from left to right) at this point.

### Wall Mounting Supports

9. Carve score lines in the two small pieces to be used as mounting supports. Brush vinegar on the score lines and attach and smooth as was done for the side walls.
10. Create holes in the two support mounts using a thin brush handle. Gently press the handle through, twisting slightly until a clear hole has been created. **Note: Depending on student's dexterity you may want to pierce the mount supports prior to attaching to the tile.**
11. Students may want to sign their name on the back of the tile.

*Follow the same Frame Texturing, Glazing and Image Area Design processes previously listed.*

### Attach Hanging Wire

12. Thread wire through one hole and loop wire back to the top. Use needle-nose pliers to create a knot, securing the wire from pulling free from the mounting support. Repeat this process for the second mounting support hole.

