

Faux Cloisonne Enameling

(art + social studies)

The history of traditional Chinese Cloisonne dates back over 700 years, with the most beautiful, artistic pieces attributed to the Ming dynasty. This elaborate and complicated art form has inspired metalworkers, muralists, jewelry artists and painters all over the world. It is still highly popular and valued today, as it is still created by hand using many of the same traditions and processes passed on for generations.

Chinese Cloisonne involves a 5-step process of

- 1) creating and preparing a base
- 2) soldering copper filigree to it
- 3) filling with enamel
- 4) firing
- 5) finishing

This simplified method follows the same steps, only with safer, easier materials for the classroom. Students will apply design elements including line, shape and color while considering their relationship to a 2-dimensional surface.

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Grade Levels 7-12

Preparation

If you wish to use squeeze bottles for applying the paint, you may want to prepare in advance. Fill squeeze bottles with Liquid Sculpey and add a small amount of oil color to tint it. It doesn't require much. Mix thoroughly with a paintbrush or toothpick. Keep lid on until ready to use. If students will be applying the paint with brushes, you may wish to mix the colors up in advance on a palette and cover to keep it from drying.

Process

1. Students begin with a preliminary drawing to make sure they understand the process of creating "walls" to hold the color in. Check to make sure designs are simple and that students will be able to reproduce it in clay.
2. Draw the design directly on the copper base lightly with an Ebony pencil.
3. Using small pieces of copper Premo Sculpey, roll very small coils, 1/16" or less in diameter. Students should try to keep their



Cloisonne bowl, above, uses 3" dia. x 3/8" deep round copper base (30605-1003)



Cloisonne tiles, left, use 1.5" square copper shapes (30604-0900)

Materials

Copper Dish (30605-) or Copper Shapes (30604-) designed for enameling, need one per student

Premo® Sculpey, gold (32334-9003), share three blocks across class

Liquid Sculpey® (33246-1005), 8-oz bottle, share two across class

Reeves® Oil Colors, 18-color set (00480-1019), share two across class

Student Modeling Tools (30361-1009), 7-tool set, share three across class

Blick Scholastic Red Sable Round, size 1 (05863-1001) and size 6 (05863-1006), need one per student

Sculpey® Glaze Gloss (33218-1013), 1-oz, need three per class

Sanford® Design® Ebony Pencil (20411-2009), package of 12 pencils, need one per student

Cookie sheet and oven for baking

Optional

Empty Squeeze Bottles, 2-oz (04958-1000), need one per color

Process, continued

coils consistent in size throughout the piece. Following the pencil marks and beginning in the center of the design, students place the coils to form the "walls". Slight pressure may be applied to keep the coil in place, but not flatten it. Modeling tools should be used to help form curves and to trim off excess Sculpey. The last coils will form a border around the outer edge of the copper base.

4. Because Sculpey will not dry out, students can begin painting right away. Putting paint in squeeze bottles (see PREPARATION, above) makes application very easy for the students, but there will be some waste. Use small brushes (size 1 or smaller) for brush application. If students get some paint on the sides of the Sculpey walls, it's okay, it will actually look more like enamel that way. If students get paint on the top of the Sculpey walls, have them gently wipe it off with a tissue. Paint can be mixed and blended directly on the copper, or left partially blended for an interesting "marbleized" effect (see center of Sunflower on copper bowl, above) Shading and highlighting areas will add dimension and interest.
5. Bake at 275° for 20 minutes on a cookie sheet. Allow to cool.
6. Baked pieces will have a matte finish to them. To achieve the glossy, enamelware look, coat pieces with a thin layer of Sculpey Gloss Glaze using a medium to large size, soft brush (size 6 Red Sable). Allow to air-dry, then add a second coat if desired.

Option

- If using small copper shapes, make faux copper enameled jewelry by attaching pin-backs with a permanent glue or drilling small holes and stringing on a necklace cord.

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

5-8 Students use subjects, themes and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

9-12 Students describe the origins of specific images and ideas and explain why they are of value in their artwork and in the work of others

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

9-12 Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making