

Illustrious Dinner Party

Create an illustrious place setting for someone you admire using recycled dinnerware!

(art + social studies) (art + history) (art + creative writing)

A dinner party is often held to honor a specific person, to commemorate an event, or to simply host a gathering of friends. The question, “if you could invite x number of people from any point in history to a dinner party, who would they be, and why?” has long been used as a conversation starter, interview question, and general thought experiment. Judy Chicago answered this question with her installation, “The Dinner Party,” where she designed 39 unique place settings, each honoring an important woman in history.

Whom do you admire? Who would you want to honor if you could pick absolutely anyone in history? The possible answers are literally endless! Authors, poets, artists, musicians, philosophers, scientists, and even modern day celebrities are all fair game.

In this lesson students first choose an honoree, and then, using an assortment of inexpensive dinnerware, create a place setting that is visually and thematically representative of that person. Plates, bowls, cups, and flatware, all sourced from thrift stores, garage sales, and flea markets, make a great foundational structure that can then be covered with Celluclay. Paper plates and cups also make a great support, as their structure can be greatly altered with a pair of scissors and some masking tape. Embellish with additional materials such as fabric, jute, cotton balls, paper, and sculpture wire to enhance the design. Press these additional elements directly into wet clay, and when dry, use paint and drawing materials for further expression and detail.

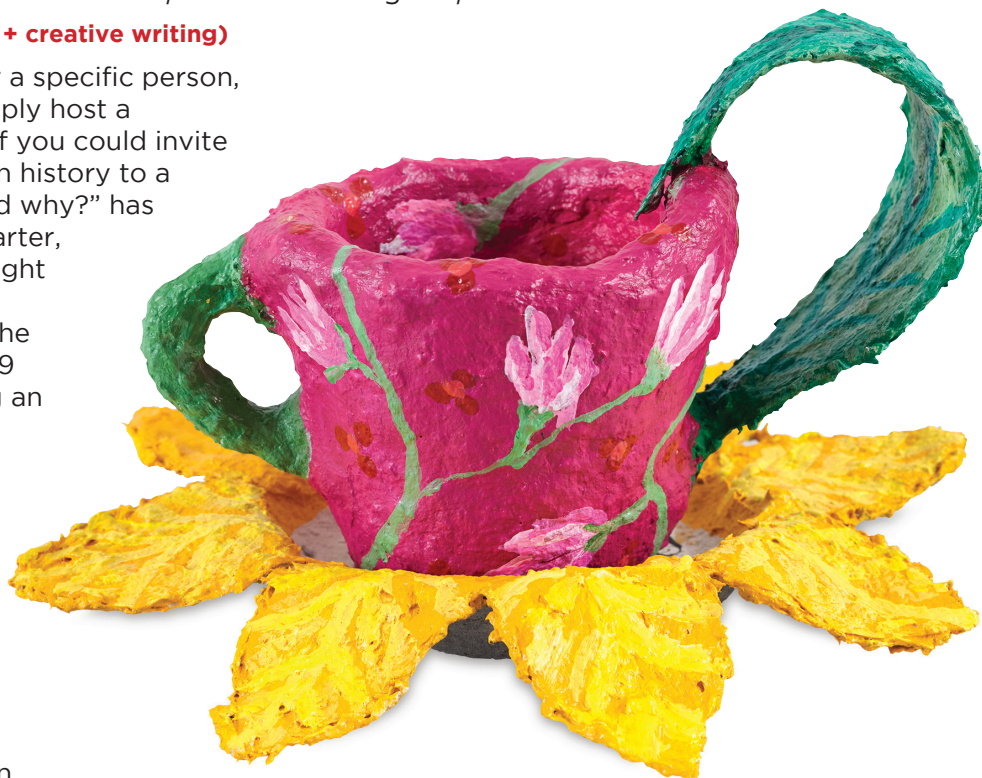
Students can host a collective “Dinner Party,” and write formal invitations to their guest of honor to be shown with their place setting.

Note: These pieces are intended for visual display, not for actual dinnerware. Not recommended for contact with food or water.

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Collect or purchase an assortment of cast-off dinnerware from flea markets, thrift stores, and garage sales.
2. Invite students to reflect on whom they admire and write an invitation to the person detailing why they would like to honor them at this great imaginary classroom dinner party.



Materials (required)

Various pieces of china, plastic, or paper dinnerware: 3 items per student makes a good sculptural grouping

[Activa Celluclay Instant Papier Mache](#), Original Gray, 5 lb (33106-1005); share two across class

Armature and structural additions:
recommend:

[Blick Armature and Sculpture Wire](#), asst. thicknesses (33400-)

[Natural Burlap](#), 10 oz, 46" (63202-1436)

[Jute Twine](#), asst. thicknesses (62984-)

[Jumbo White Craft Fluffs](#), bag of 100 (61431-0100)

Surface decoration:
recommended:

[Blick Studio Acrylics](#), asst. colors, (01637-); share 8-10 tubes across class

[Uni-Posca Paint Markers](#), asst. colors, (19994-); share 8-10 across class

Process

1. Students select two to three items to combine into one sculptural piece. This could be a cup and saucer with a spoon, a plate, and a bowl; a plate with cup and a utensil; and so on. Paper plates and cups can be transformed by cutting, taping, and further shaping before covering with Celluclay. Select collage materials to use in the piece. Newspapers, old magazines, and decorative papers all work well.
2. Mix the dry Celluclay with water to achieve the desired thickness. Mix it in batches in bowls or sandwich bags and share among a few students.
3. Cover the dinnerware with clay, and add any structural elements. Cotton balls, fabric, jute, and sculpture wire all make great supports to build out and alter the shape of the piece. Cover additions for uniformity in the piece; this will also help hold everything in place.
4. To smooth out the clay simply dip your fingers in water and smooth over the piece. Likewise, add texture and patterns by hand or with clay tools.
5. After the piece is covered add collage elements. There is no need for glue when the clay is still wet — the adhesive in the clay will adhere to most papers and lightweight fabrics.
6. Add further detail and embellishments with paint or marker when the piece is dry.



Step 1: Select dinnerware and begin covering in Celluclay.



Step 2: Change the structure of the piece by adding desired materials. Cover in clay.



Step 3: Add details using paint or



National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 8: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

