

Exploring Stitching and Creating Decorative Bowls

Time: 1 hour hands on, plus dry time

Difficulty level: Moderate

Messy level: High



Inspired by the work of Dutch industrial artist Hella Jongerius, this activity will guide you in the exploration of creating a decorative ceramic bowl that can be embellished with stitching.



To view a hi-res image of the work, visit the [MFAH website](#).

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Hella Jongerius is known for reinterpreting conventions of craft to produce new hybrids that are fun and clever. Can you tell which two craft techniques are used for this piece?
2. Jongerius has made a unique choice to stitch the decorative elements onto this bowl. Can you name a few ways that ceramic bowls are typically decorated?
3. How do you think an artist would punch holes into ceramic bowls? Imagine what process the artist would use.

Gather These Materials

- Air-dry clay
- Skewer or pencil for poking holes
- Thread or yarn
- Needle appropriately sized for yarn or thread being used*
- Scissors
- Paint
- Medium paintbrush
- Water cup
- Paper towels

*Note: for younger children, use larger holes, embroidery needles, and yarn. If dexterity is an issue, try using pipe cleaners as a substitute.

Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Make sure your area is prepped for working with clay. It should be wiped clean so that no dust or crumbs get into the clay.
2. Cut or pull off a medium chunk of clay. If you want a large bowl, get a large amount of clay.
3. Roll the clay into a ball.
4. To get rid of lines, use one hand to tap the ball of clay against your other palm. Keep doing this and rotating the ball until all major lines are smoothed out.

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5. We will be doing a pinch pot technique; hold the ball in one hand, and use the thumb of your other hand to press it into the center of your ball.
6. Press down with your thumb until it almost reaches the bottom of your ball.
7. Keeping your thumb in the center, place the other four fingers of your other hand on the outside of the ball.
8. Begin pinching and rotating your ball until it begins to form a bowl.
9. To make the sides of your bowl higher, slightly pull upward on the clay as you are pinching and rotating it.
10. Once you are happy with the shape of your bowl, use your fingers to smooth any rough areas and edges.
11. Think about how you want your bowl to look. Consider how thick your thread or yarn is to decide the size of the holes and consider the pattern you want to decide the placement of the holes. Using your needle, skewer, or pencil, poke holes into the bowl in whatever pattern you want.
12. Let your bowl harden completely.
13. Paint your bowl, making sure not to fill holes with paint. The paint will create a seal and keep the clay from crumbling or cracking.
14. Thread your needle.
15. Begin threading through the bowl's holes, making sure to leave a little tail for knotting.
16. Tie your finishing knot.
17. Cut the thread.
18. You're done! Remember that you can cut this thread anytime you want and replace it with other colors and sizes of thread. You could even try incorporating beads.

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