

LESSON PLAN

THE ART OF DESSERT: POP ART INSPIRED CERAMIC TREATS

Suggested Levels: Middle School to Advanced
Designer: Sally Meixner



In this lesson, students will create pop art-inspired ceramic sweet treats, like cupcakes, pie, and ice cream cones, using clay and vibrant Mayco underglazes. Inspired by Claes Oldenburg's playful sculptures, they will explore texture, color, and creative forms while learning core ceramics techniques.

Students will use hand-building techniques like coiling, slab construction, and sculpting, to dive into the playful yet bold spirit of Pop Art, creating their own sweet treats in Oldenburg's style. To bring their creations to life, they will use Mayco Fundamentals[®] Underglazes, renowned for their rich, consistent colors and versatility. These underglazes allow students to achieve the bright, bold hues essential to the Pop Art aesthetic while maintaining precise control for fine details, such as sprinkles, frosting drips, and candy stripes.

Once the underglazes are applied, students will complete their sculptures with Mayco's clear gloss glaze to enhance the vibrant colors, giving their pieces a polished, realistic finish

that mimics the shiny appeal of actual confections. The durability and ease of use of Mayco products ensure students can achieve professional-looking results, even as beginners.

By the end of the lesson, students will have gained valuable sculpting and glazing skills while creating eye-catching ceramic pieces that celebrate the fun and creativity of Pop Art. This project highlights how Mayco's underglazes can transform a simple ceramic object into a striking, professional-quality work of art.

OBJECTIVES

I CAN... sculpt a ceramic sweet treat inspired by Claes Oldenburg's Pop Art style using hand-building techniques.

I CAN... apply vibrant Mayco underglazes to create bold, detailed, and realistic designs that mimic actual confections.

I CAN... replicate the scale, texture and color of sweet treats to create visually striking and lifelike ceramic sculpture.

NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

- Students will brainstorm and design an exaggerated, Pop Art-inspired ceramic sweet treat, considering scale, texture, and color to transform everyday objects into art.

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

- Students will use hand-building techniques to sculpt ceramic forms and apply Mayco underglazes to develop bold, colorful designs.

Refine and complete artistic work.

- Students will refine their ceramic sculptures by adding detailed textures and applying vibrant finishes that reflect the whimsical nature of Pop Art.

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

- Students will connect to their experiences with everyday objects, such as sweet treats, and reinterpret them in creative, artistic ways inspired by Pop Art.

MEET THE MASTER



Claes Oldenburg

is a Swedish-American artist best known for his contributions to the Pop Art movement, particularly for his oversized sculptures of everyday objects. Born on January 28, 1929, in Stockholm, Sweden, Oldenburg moved to the United States with his family as a child. He studied at Yale University and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago before moving to New York City in the 1950s.

Oldenburg gained attention for his large-scale, often playful sculptures that exaggerated ordinary objects like food, tools, and household items. He would create these objects in soft, inflatable forms or with materials like vinyl, plaster, and steel, making them appear both familiar and surreal. One of his most famous works is "Clothespin", a giant sculpture of a clothespin in Philadelphia, and his "Giant Soft Fan" and "Giant Hamburger" are iconic examples of his ability to transform everyday objects into monumental art.

His work is often viewed as a playful critique of consumer culture, emphasizing the connection between art and the objects of everyday life. Oldenburg's use of humor, scale, and materials challenged traditional ideas about art and its relationship to the world around us. His work continues to inspire artists and is displayed in major museums and public spaces around the world.



"If I didn't think what I was doing had something to do with enlarging the boundaries of art, I wouldn't go on doing it." – Claes Oldenburg

SUPPLY LIST

CLAY

- Clay body of choice

BRUSHES AND TOOLS

- Clay cutting tools
- Canvas sheets
- Slip containers
- Scoring tools
- Sponges
- Modeling or loop tools
- Rolling pins or a slab roller
- Icing tips
- Found objects for texture



COLORS BY MAYCO

This project features Mayco's [Fundamentals® Underglaze](#) line. Mayco's underglazes are perfect for a Claes Oldenburg-inspired ceramic sweet treat project for many reasons:

- **Vibrant, Bold Colors:** Mayco Fundamentals® Underglazes are known for their rich, bright pigments, making them ideal for creating the eye-catching, vibrant hues typically seen in Pop Art. Students can use these underglazes to capture the bold colors of sweet treats, such as candy pinks, chocolate browns, and bright yellows, just like the exaggerated, larger-than-life sculptures of Oldenburg.
- **Easy to Use:** Fundamentals® Underglazes are beginner-friendly, allowing high school students to work with them confidently. They can be applied with brushes, sponges, or even applied directly into textured areas, offering plenty of creative flexibility while working on a project that combines both sculpting and glazing.
- **Can Take the Heat:** While Fundamentals® Underglazes were initially formulated for cone 06 firing, they are able to “take the heat” and fire up to cone 10. This allows for them to be used in a wide range of classes and levels. Their performance at cone 6 is noted on each individual product label, and we recommend testing on your clay body and in your kiln prior to use.

Fundamentals® Underglazes will fire matte. For additional depth and shine, apply a glossy clear glaze to transform the matte finish or combine for a stunning contrast. Fundamentals® may be cofired with a clear glaze in a single firing to save time in the classroom.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Here are several accommodations to support diverse learners:

1. Modified Materials:

- Provide pre-formed clay pieces or larger clay slabs for students who may have difficulty with detailed hand-building techniques. This reduces the amount of sculpting required and allows them to focus more on decoration and design.
- Offer textured tools or stamps to help students add intricate details like sprinkles or icing without requiring fine motor control.

2. Step-by-Step Guidance:

- Provide visual aids or a video demonstrating the techniques, especially for students who benefit from visual learning. Break down the hand-building process into clear, manageable steps with demonstrations at each stage.
- Use written or visual instructions alongside verbal explanations to reinforce concepts for students with hearing or language challenges.

3. Extra Time:

- Allow additional time for students who need it, whether for sculpting or glazing. This can help reduce stress and give them a chance to experiment and perfect their work.
- Schedule one-on-one check-ins with students who may need additional support during the process.

4. Peer Support:

- Pair students who need more assistance with peers who can provide guidance and support during the sculpting and glazing process. Peer tutoring helps reinforce learning and provides social interaction.
- Set up a buddy system for shared materials, where more experienced students can help with mixing underglazes or cleaning up tools.

5. Simplified Expectations:

- For students who may feel overwhelmed by the scale or complexity of the project, offer an option to create a smaller, simplified version of the sweet treat sculpture or focus more on design and painting, rather than sculpting the entire form.
- Provide flexible deadlines or modified grading criteria, ensuring that all students can successfully complete the project at their own pace while still engaging in the creative process.

DIRECTIONS

1. Use paper to create a template for your sweet treat.



2. Cut the template pieces from a 1/4" slab, compressed with a rib. Assemble the form by joining the walls into an "A" shape. Press the walls down into the floor and rock the form back to create the back wall. Slip and score all attachments. Trim away any excess.



3. Compress the floor and softly round the back wall.



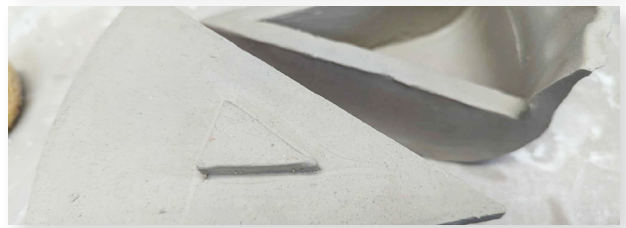
4. Weld all seams. Use a dull pencil to redefine the crust.



5. Softly pinch along the upper crust and trim away any excess with a wet fettling knife.



6. Create a simple flange by using the paper template to cut a small triangle with the same angles. Attach it to the underside of the lid.



7. Roll a coil and use a loop tool to cut away ribbons. Gently twist the textured coil and form a swirl shape, using the paper template to ensure the correct size.



DIRECTIONS

8. Repeatedly tap the swirled coil onto the table until it is firmly settled. Use a damp brush to smooth cracks and manipulate the peaks of whipped cream.



9. When the whipped cream is leather hard, hollow it out from the underside with a loop tool and firmly compress the inside.



10. Mark where the whipped cream sits on the lid and use the markings to cut a hole. Be careful not to disturb the flange! Attach the whipped cream by slipping, scoring, and welding seams. Allow to dry slowly with the lid on and fire to cone 04.



11. For glazing, select [Fundamentals® Underglaze](#) colors to bring your ceramic sweet treat to life.



ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Wet your fettling knife before use for clean slices without sticking.
- Clay can “warp” or subtly change shape during the drying and firing process. Prevent wobbly lids by drying and bisque firing boxes with lids on.
- Dry *slowly* to mitigate cracking caused by the tension between a dry exterior and damp interior.
- Create more realistic crust by waiting until the end to pinch along the upper edge for a cracked, flaky look.
- Stroke & Coat will fuse boxes shut if applied along the contact points of the lid and fired together. Choose to either glaze fire the box and the lid separately, or to keep the contact points of the box and lid free from glaze. If working in low-fire, separating the box and lid during the glaze firing will not cause a poor fit.

EXTEND THE LEARNING *using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory*

LINGUISTIC (Word Smart)

Assign students to research the history of Pop Art or Claes Oldenburg's work and give a short presentation to the class. They can focus on how Oldenburg used everyday objects, including food, to create playful, thought-provoking art, connecting it to their own.

Facilitate a group critique where students describe their own sculptures and analyze their peers' work. Encourage them to use specific vocabulary related to art (e.g., texture, color, scale) and to explain how the project reflects Pop Art principles.

SPATIAL (Picture Smart)

Have students create detailed 3D sketches or small models of their sweet treat sculptures before working with clay. They can use paper, wire, or other materials to experiment with proportions, shapes, and spatial relationships.

Challenge students to design an engaging display for their sculptures, considering how the pieces would look in a gallery or public setting. They can experiment with arrangements, lighting, and perspectives to enhance the impact of their work.

INTERPERSONAL (People Smart)

Create a mock "sweet treat marketplace" where students showcase their sculptures and take on roles such as artists, gallery owners, or buyers. They can explain their work, negotiate sales, and discuss the artistic and cultural significance of their pieces.

Assign small groups to research Claes Oldenburg or Pop Art's impact on modern culture. Each group can present their findings to the class through a skit, poster, or slideshow, encouraging collaboration and shared learning.

BODY KINESTHETIC (Body Smart)

Ask students to present their sculptures by demonstrating how they were built. They can mimic the motions (rolling, pinching, shaping) or even act out the process of creating their piece, engaging their physicality to explain their artistic choices.

Host a gallery walk where students rotate through stations to view their peers' works. Incorporate a physical element, such as jotting down notes or sketching their favorite designs while moving between sculptures.

NATURALIST (Nature Smart)

Discuss sustainability in art, including the environmental impact of materials. Challenge students to think about how they could create art that mimics nature's forms or themes while being eco-conscious, such as by designing sweet treats inspired by biodegradable packaging or plant-based desserts.

Have students research the natural origins of common sweet treat ingredients (e.g., chocolate from cacao beans or sugar from sugarcane). They can present their findings alongside their sculpture, linking their work to environmental and agricultural themes.

LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL (Word Smart)

Have students calculate and plan the scale of their sweet treat sculptures. For example, if they are enlarging a cupcake, they can determine the exact proportions and dimensions needed to scale it up by a specific factor.

Challenge students to estimate and measure the amount of clay needed for their sculpture. They can weigh the clay or calculate the volume of their designs based on shapes like cylinders or spheres.

INTRAPERSONAL (Self Smart)

Provide students with a rubric or set of questions to evaluate their work independently. Ask them to analyze their craftsmanship, creativity, and how well they achieved their vision for the project. This encourages introspection and self-growth.

Let students independently research Claes Oldenburg, Pop Art, or another artist whose work resonates with them. They can create a written or visual presentation exploring how the artist's themes connect to their own artistic process.

MUSIC (Music Smart)

Have students create a playlist or soundtrack that represents their sweet treat sculpture. For example, they can choose upbeat, whimsical songs to match the playful nature of their dessert. They can explain how the music connects to their artistic choices.

Pair students with peers in a music class to compose a short tune inspired by their sculptures. Alternatively, students can interpret a piece of music through their ceramic design, translating melodies or lyrics into visual elements.

RUBRIC

	4 - EXCELLENT	3 - GOOD	2 - SATISFACTORY	1 - BEGINNING
CREATIVITY & ORIGINALITY	The sculpture shows a high level of originality and unique design choices. The work is imaginative, and a fresh approach is clearly evident.	The sculpture demonstrates good originality, with some creative elements, though not fully unique.	The sculpture has limited originality and includes basic or typical design elements.	The sculpture lacks originality, with minimal creative effort or repetitive ideas.
TECHNICAL SKILL	Excellent craftsmanship; the sculpture is well-constructed with smooth edges, consistent shapes, and no cracks or visible flaws.	Good craftsmanship; sculpture is mostly well-constructed with minor flaws or rough edges.	The sculpture has some technical flaws, such as uneven surfaces, cracks, or structural instability.	Poor craftsmanship; the sculpture has major flaws in structure, surface, or form.
DETAIL & COMPLEXITY	The sculpture features intricate details and a high level of complexity, enhancing the overall composition.	The sculpture includes a moderate level of detail and complexity, enhancing the overall effect.	The sculpture has basic details but lacks complexity, making it appear simple or unfinished.	The sculpture lacks detail and complexity, appearing basic and underdeveloped.
CONCEPT & THEME	The concept is highly developed and well-executed, and the theme is clear and impactful.	The concept is clear and relevant, with a well-developed theme.	The concept is somewhat clear, but the theme may be weak or underdeveloped.	The concept is unclear or irrelevant, with little to no focus on a central theme.
FINISHING TECHNIQUES	The sculpture demonstrates excellent finishing techniques, including smooth surfaces, vibrant glazing, and attention to texture.	Good finishing techniques; surfaces are mostly smooth with a decent glaze application and texture.	The finishing techniques are satisfactory, with some rough areas or uneven glaze coverage.	The sculpture has poor finishing techniques, with noticeable roughness or incomplete glazing.
PRESENTATION	The sculpture is presented in an organized, visually appealing way, with careful consideration of display and background.	The sculpture is presented neatly, but the display or background may need minor improvements.	The sculpture is presented adequately, but the display may appear disorganized or lacking.	The sculpture is poorly presented, with little attention to display or overall presentation.

RUBRIC

This rubric provides a clear and balanced way to assess both the technical and creative aspects of the project, while also encouraging student reflection and effort throughout the process.

Total Score: _____/24

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

20-24 POINTS (A): OUTSTANDING WORK, WITH HIGH LEVELS OF CREATIVITY, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND ADHERENCE TO POP ART STYLE. THE PROJECT REFLECTS CONSISTENT EFFORT AND ENGAGEMENT.

16-20 POINTS (B): GOOD WORK, DEMONSTRATING CREATIVITY AND SOLID CRAFTSMANSHIP. SOME MINOR FLAWS, BUT THE PROJECT MEETS EXPECTATIONS.

12-15 POINTS (C): FAIR WORK, WITH SOME CREATIVE EFFORT AND BASIC CRAFTSMANSHIP. SEVERAL AREAS NEED IMPROVEMENT.

9-11 POINTS (D): PROJECT LACKS CREATIVITY OR CRAFTSMANSHIP, WITH NOTICEABLE ISSUES IN CONSTRUCTION OR ENGAGEMENT.

BELOW 9 POINTS (F): INCOMPLETE OR RUSHED PROJECT WITH MINIMAL EFFORT OR ENGAGEMENT. FAILS TO MEET THE BASIC CRITERIA.