

Handbuilding & Wheel: Throwing Projects, The Kids 'N' Clay Ceramics Series

Kevin Nierman Creator Elaine Arima Writer

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Clay is a marvelous medium for creative expression and with a little guidance, the results, however primitive, can be very satisfying.

Based on their activities and experiences as teachers and artists, Nierman and the Arimas designed and illustrated a step-by-step guide to help children, their parents and teachers make basic clay pots and projects. No potter's wheel is necessary for most of the projects but, for best results, the ceramic pieces should be fired in a kiln - available in most communities - or smoke-fired in a trash can. Some of the more advanced projects described in the book do require the use of a simple wheel.

The book introduces three methods for shaping pieces by hand - pinch, coil and slab - that potters of any age or ability can use to create bowls, cups, candleholders, animals, abstract shapes and coffee mugs and pitchers. It lists needed materials for suggested projects and practical advice on how to set up a ceramic studio. Many supplies can be found in the kitchen, so the primary expense is the purchase of clay and glazes, and perhaps having the ceramics fired. Scattered throughout the book are answers to questions which pottery teachers have undoubtedly heard many times. The book also includes safety tips, a glossary and occasional quotations from children about how they feel about working with clay.

In special notes to adults comes this sage caution: "The child is the artist and creator.... Try to hold back your urge to fix the problem unless you are asked to help. Parents and teachers should be 'cheerleaders' in the creative development of children." The guide is so inviting and helpful that adults, even novices at ceramics, should be encouraged to roll up their sleeves and make a bowl, cat or pencil holder of their own.

LINDA SALISBURY (March / April 2000)

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