



Caddo Inspired Coil Pots

Jordan Weaver

Sponsor: Maggie Leysath



Why use art to educate?

When my bosses, John Handley and Alisa Steed, asked me to plan an educational program to go along with the upcoming Contemporary Caddo art show at the Cole Art Center I knew I wanted to find an art lesson to teach children. Creating is a great way to teach children about history because it invites them to take an active role in their education, rather than passively listening. After learning that traditional Caddo potters created coil pots out of clay, I knew I wanted to teach this art form to children in the community. Making coil pots requires children to learn a specific technique, but also allows for endless creative expression. It is also appropriate for all ages.



What happened?

1. Caddo storyteller, Cricket Rhoads-Connywerdy, shared stories that have been passed down in the Caddo community for generations. The audience learned about Caddo values, some phrases from the Caddo language, and even a few hand-gestures from these stories.

2. Children and their parents had the option to come to the coil pot making station. To begin, I facilitated a discussion about a few Caddo ceramic coil pots we had in the gallery. The children made observations about the shapes of the different pots and how each one was decorated. They even talked about what they thought the function of each pot would be.

3. I gave a brief demonstration on how to roll coils and stack them to create a pot. The children were given air-dry clay and began making their own pots as I floated around the space and helped as needed. The children were very creative. One girl made a bird out of the clay and turned her pot into a bird's nest. This process of making art based on the work of the Caddos, and discussing the work together, reinforced the connections children made between the Caddos and their own lives.

Was the lesson successful?

There was a wide age range of children, and a couple adults, that participated in the lesson. Some children made interesting connections that demonstrated learning and reflection. One child demonstrated connection-making by incorporating symbolism from a Caddo story about Snake Woman, which was told during the story telling session before the lesson began, into his coil pot. Another child asked me what tools traditional Caddo potters would have used to create their coil pots in place of the plastic tools we used. One child even shared a connection he made between one of the stories shared and a story from his own religion.



Photo by Caddo Mounds Historic Site

How to build a coil pot



1. Use a flat palm to roll a coil.



2. Place the coil on top of the base.



3. Continue to add coils until they reach the desired height.