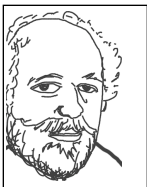




Robert Carston Arneson

January 6, 1930 - November 4, 1992

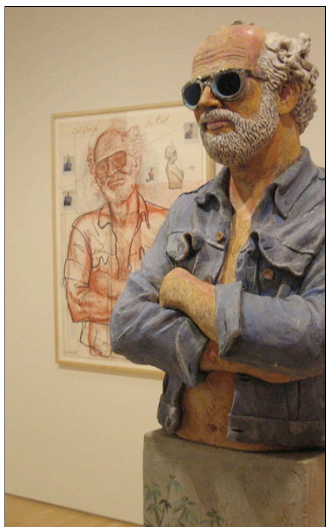
Ceramic Sculptor



Portrait by West Tragessor, age 11

Robert Arneson (AHR neh suhn) is one of America's best-known ceramic artists. His work helped elevate ceramics from a craft to a sculptural art form. Arneson started out as a potter, making bowls and vases out of clay. One day he made a clay vase shaped like a soda pop bottle and stuck a metal bottle cap on top. It changed his career. He went on to make

clay statues of ordinary objects, such as, cookies, bricks sinking into dinner plates, tools, cartoon faces and appliances. The most famous Arneson sculptures are his self-portraits. He made hundreds of statues and drawings of himself. Almost all of them are humorous, especially like the one where Arneson drew himself sticking out his tongue. His larger-than-life sculpted heads have silly expressions and wild hair. He once said that he found himself in trouble when he poked fun at other people, so he decided to use his own face.



CLAY FACE by Morgan Van Slyke, age 12



Robert Arneson's ceramic sculpture *California Artist* (1982) on display in front of his studies for the sculpture (mixed media, 1982), collection of the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco (photo by Geoffrey A. Landis). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 License. This image is shown for web use only, not for book publication.

Form a silly self-portrait using white air-dry clay that will sprout on a wooden dowel from a terra cotta flower pot. This single portrait sculpture honors one of Arneson's self-portrait sculptures -- a flowerpot sprouting three of his jolly, bearded heads.

Grow a Silly Self

Materials

white air-dry modeling clay or playdough
4" flowerpot (traditional terra cotta clay variety)
6" dowel or pencil
choice of tools, sticks and utensils to shape the clay
acrylic or watercolor paints, optional
paintbrush, optional
plastic or silk leaves from artificial plants, optional
glue gun, low-temp (safe for most young artists, but supervise well), optional

Process

1. Fill the little flowerpot with clay. Poke the dowel in the center, sticking up like a flower stem.
2. Form a ball of white air-dry clay the size of an apple and push the ball firmly down onto the dowel.
3. Use clay and clay tools to sculpt one's own face in the clay. Squeeze the ball into the shape of a head. Press eye sockets into the front, and pinch out a nose. Add clay eyeballs, lips and ears. Make an exaggerated silly self-portrait face. (For example, the mouth can be wide-open and yelling, the eyes can be popping open or squeezed shut, the ears huge and sticking out on each side, and so on.) Different tools help shape and smooth the clay, or rough it up and add texture. Use knives and forks, chopsticks and paperclips. A kitchen garlic press makes stringy clay hair.
4. After the clay sculpting is complete, let the flowerpot and clay sit for a week until the clay is completely dry and hard.
5. Choose to let the sculpture stay in its original clay color, or, paint it with natural or fantastic colors.
6. As a final optional step, glue plastic leaves around the base of the silly clay portrait, so it appears to be growing from the flowerpot.

YOUNG CHILD Playdough Face

Squeeze a ball of playdough, and flatten it on a table. Then explore pulling and poking facial features in the dough.