



JACK SURES

Scratching the Surface

A Teacher's Resource

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The MacKenzie Art Gallery
3475 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada
S4S 6X6

Front cover: Jack in his studio, May, 1987

Photo: Larry Raynard, the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery

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"My love of clay as an expressive material, with its innate ability to create any and all other materials, its ability to reinvent itself every time it is touched, has endowed my life with a richness and completeness that few people seem to achieve in their lifetimes. My hope is that this richness and completeness is reflected in the work and this spirit is transferred to the viewer." ¹ – Jack Sures

"It's the juiciness of the clay, the sensuousness." ² – Jack Sures

Untitled, 1988
black glaze, expanded sgraffito, porcelain
34 x 22 x 22 cm
MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection
1989-004
Photo: Don Hall

“I’m all about the relationship to the world we live in; from the outside in to the inside out”³

Learning To Love Clay

Born on November 20, 1934, in Brandon, Manitoba, Jack Sures spent the early years of his childhood in the small town of Melita. Like many youngsters, he remembers that he, too, was always drawing and making things from found materials, but never imagined he would become an artist.

When he was twelve, his family moved from Melita to Winnipeg, where he finished high school and enrolled in the Faculty of Science at the University of Winnipeg. But, after taking a sculpture course early in his university studies, Jack was inspired to change direction and graduated instead with a degree in Fine Art in 1957. In the fall of 1958 Jack moved to East Lansing, Michigan to enter graduate school at Michigan State University, where he received a Master of Fine Art degree with a double major in painting and printmaking in 1959. During this time, he took one ceramics course that was sufficient to inspire him in his largely self-taught career in clay.

In effect, one sculpture course and one ceramics course pointed him in a direction that changed his life. Sculptor Jim Leedy, his friend at Michigan State, noted that even as a student, “[Jack] was very devoted to being an artist and had already established a uniqueness of style and was already being collected. He already *knew* he was an artist.”⁴

After graduation, Jack taught one term of junior high school in Winnipeg before taking off for London, England. While he was living there, he found work in the Chelsea Pottery factory in 1960, practicing his skills as a thrower on a rented wheel. As a side job, he learned to cast figures and make molds at Senechal Cats, a factory producing ceramic cats.⁵ He also studied classical guitar with Len Williams, founder of the Spanish Guitar Centre. From 1960–1962 he traveled through Europe and the Middle East, turning his hand to pottery when possible and spending time looking at ceramics wherever he traveled.

With another young adventurer, he set off on a whirl of travel that started in Cyprus. The two rented a house in the village of Lapithos, living off the orange and lemon trees in their garden, fish from the sea, and the kindness of a local café owner. Jack spent his time painting. Eventually, his mother sent him some money that allowed him to continue traveling. In an interview with craft historian Dr. Sandra Alföldy, he recounted the “feat of surviving on only \$20 for his entire stay in Cyprus.”⁶



Early Pot, 1958
glaze over cobalt and white iron engobes on stoneware
mixed with coffee grounds
15 x 17.8 x 12.7cm
Collection of Jack Sures and Cara Gay Driscoll
Photo: Don Hall

From there, Jack traveled on to Israel, then Turkey. He spent some time in Portugal, working in an empty pottery studio on a U.S. Air Force base where he set up a small enterprise making pots. He sold them to the locals for fifty cents each; as part of the price, they could decorate their pots and Jack would do the final kiln firing.

Jack's travel continued with visits to Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, Spain, France, Monaco, Belgium, Germany, Holland and back to London, visiting museums and galleries everywhere he landed. Inexpensive travel was available to many young people during the 60s and 70s. The atmosphere was charged with a sense of opportunity and excitement. A young Canadian was welcome everywhere.⁷

The (Hipster) Innovator

Returning to Canada in 1962, Jack set up a pottery studio in Winnipeg. It was well-equipped, with his handmade kick wheels and a cleverly assembled electric wheel which he fashioned from a farmers' milk separator. In addition, he built the first gas kiln in Manitoba, which meant that his clay could be fired at very high temperatures and controlled at different stages of the firing to achieve some of the glaze effects most admired in the world of ceramic art.

He had returned to Winnipeg with direct experience from Europe and the Middle East, including work in a production studio and a ceramics factory. He had traveled and worked with a variety of people from different backgrounds. This early and worldly approach to working with clay shaped his career going forward and prepared Jack to take on the challenge of making ceramics a career. In 1964, only two years after opening his studio, he received a commission to create a mural for the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba.

All of this activity stirred up the ceramics scene in Winnipeg.⁸ Sures was admired for his ability to achieve results in a variety of sizes, shapes and finishes, for his incredible hard work and his generosity. He opened his Winnipeg studio to others for a small fee, taught classes in technique, and fired and glazed work for others. He has said that he learned ceramics through trial and error.⁹ Others would add that he was tremendously productive, skillful and had the courage to try anything. He inspired those around him. Ceramics were cool. And Jack was at the centre of the scene.



Black Bottle, 1965
glaze, engobe, stoneware
46 x 35.2 x 20.5 cm
Saskatchewan Arts Board Permanent Collection
C65.2
Photo: Don Hall

Digging Deeper

In 1965, Jack Sures was hired by the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, to set up the Visual Arts Department's ceramic and printmaking studios. His energy, optimism, open mind and spirit had impressed local Regina artists when they met at regional workshops. He arrived full of enthusiasm and ideas. Here is Marilyn Levine, one of Canada's best known ceramic artists, discussing the impression Jack Sures made on her as her teacher at the Regina studio:

He essentially built a new pottery department there. And the first thing we did was build a gas kiln. He had two classes. One class built one kiln, and the other class built the other kiln. We had the first gas kiln in Saskatchewan. And it was his way of dealing with clay. If I hadn't met Jack, if I hadn't known Jack, I probably would have thought artists sat around waiting for inspiration, you know, because I never saw the painters paint. I never saw them work. They always came to class, and they didn't have paint on their clothes or anything. But Jack would; I'd see him work. And this work would go back and forth from his studio to the kiln and stuff. And he'd get to work at 8:30 in the morning, and he'd work all through the day.¹⁰

His new position brought with it a stable salary and recognition of his ability to initiate and deliver a great project, but it came at the same time as an award of a Canada Council Travel Grant to visit Japan for six months, only the third such grant to be awarded to a ceramic artist. He managed to do both by delaying the trip for a few months.

The Happy Accident

A trip like his to Japan, in 1966, was a goal for most ceramic artists across the country. A generation of potters had learned of the folk tradition of Japanese ceramics through the writings and enthusiasm of Bernard Leach, eminent and remarkably influential British potter and scholar. When Jack watched the work being made in Japan by Shoji Hamada,

Leach's friend and associate, and others in his circle, he was impressed by the casual, easy manner in which they threw their work on the wheel and manipulated the shapes, cutting them, scratching the surfaces while still wet and handling them with quiet confidence. Later, in interviews, Jack would say the yin-yang idea of Asian thought and the acceptance of the 'happy accident' would influence his own work tremendously.¹¹

Upon his return to Regina from Japan, six months later, Jack worked hard with his students and continued to find time to devote to his own art. In an interview years later, his student, ceramic artist Jeannie Mah, said that she was first influenced just watching Jack work on the wheel, in such a "liquid" way. He seems to have brought to his own work, particularly on the wheel some of the same masterly, yet easy quality he admired in Japan.¹²



Untitled, circa 1968
acrylic paint, engobe, stoneware rolled in kaolin
34.5 x 32.3 x 23.8 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, gift of the artist
1999-140
Photo: Don Hall

Within a couple of years of his arrival in Regina, students were entering competitions in the east and winning prizes...The first flowering of ceramics in Regina, at least at the national level, emanated from the Sures studio."¹³

Jack set high standards for the work that his students were producing in the studio. He was interested in their finding a means of personal expression, not simply replicating standard forms and surfaces. "He allowed people the freedom of their imaginations," says [clay sculptor and former student] Anita Rocamora. He really pushed people to answer 'What does this mean?' or 'Why are you doing this, as opposed to that'?"¹⁴

Jack began to enter his work in competitions, both in Canada and internationally. In 1967 he won an award in the Canadian Handcraft Guild Competition and first prize in the Ceramics '67 competition. International recognition followed in 1968, when he received the *medaille d'honneur* in Switzerland at the Geneva International Ceramics Exhibition.

In 1969 Jack accepted the position of Acting Chair of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, Visual Arts Department and remained in that post until 1972. As Acting Chair, he was instrumental in hiring David Gilhooly from California to replace him as ceramics instructor. Jack remained busy. He was commissioned to create a mural for the Veterinary College at the University of Saskatchewan. He taught drawing and printmaking. He designed the programs for both the Bachelor of Fine Arts and the Master of Fine Arts degrees and continued to experiment with his own ceramic work.

Regina Ceramics Heat Up

The Regina Clay Movement, associated most often with artists Vic Cicansky, Joe Fafard, David Gilhooly, Lorne Beug, Marilyn Levine and others, including Jack Sures, started during this period of the late 1960s to the mid 1970s. Regina-based clay artists threw off the influence of mid-twentieth century art criticism and approaches to art making that were associated with modernism. In particular, they turned their backs on the influence and opinions of Clement Greenberg, a New York thinker and art critic whose ideas were influential, particularly on the East Coast of the U.S. and in other art centres, including Regina.¹⁵

Several Regina artists chose to study in California or were influenced by California sculptors working in clay, notably David Gilhooly. Although his time in



Joe Fafard
Jack Sures, 1969
plaster, oil, pastel, lacquer, wood
39 x 29 x 29.7 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery,
gift of Jack Sures and Cara Gay Driscoll
2008-098
Photo: Don Hall

Regina was short, Gilhooly's own work and his satirical humour were emblematic of the times. Sarcasm, wit, and personal expression were goals for artists working in many mediums in the 1960s and 70s, particularly sculptors who chose the relatively unused material of clay. This was a particularly interesting time in Regina's art scene and essays, videos, images and ideas tied to the movement were explored in the exhibition *Regina Clay: Worlds in the Making* organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery, and can be accessed on-line at <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ReginaClay/>

As always, Jack Sures's open mind, sense of humor and admiration for authentic personal expression were necessary ingredients in making the atmosphere so creative. Jack could feel a strong sympathy for the figurative, colourful and humorous, though biting, sculptures produced by Gilhooly, Fafard and Cicansky.

On the Road Again

Jack received his second Canada Council Grant in 1972, at the end of his tenure as Acting Chair. This time the opportunity was to live in Paris and work in the studio of Albert Diato, an artist and friend of Picasso. Diato was a founder of l'Atelier Triptyque, along with Gilbert Portanier and Francine Del Pierre, in the famed pottery-making village of Vallauris, southern France, where Picasso worked with local potters to create his own work in clay.

In the middle of his grant period, the United Nations requested that Jack assist the Caribbean Craft Development Program by establishing a ceramics program in Grenada. During 1973, he worked with local artists to establish a program and build a studio. As part of this effort he converted their kilns to burn nutmeg shells for fuel, an abundant local resource that would otherwise have been dumped in the ocean. When his time in the Caribbean was over, he returned to France to complete the grant requirements.

The Alpha Maker

In September, 1975 Jack returned to Regina and to teaching ceramics. He continued to exhibit his work, accept his biggest commissions, and garner awards. He never lost his excitement and curiosity about what could be made with clay and his students benefited from his presence enormously.¹⁶

In 1978, he began work on one of his most important commissions, an outdoor mural for the west wall of the Sturdy-Stone Building in Saskatoon. The mural is mammoth, covering 884 square metres. Composed of 4,200 separate clay pieces, it took Jack and five of his students more than a year to complete the project, which is now part of the Collection of the Province of Saskatchewan.

In 1987, Jack designed and built a terrazzo floor for the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in Regina, the first thing you see upon entry.

In 1988, he entered a competition for a mural to be installed on the outdoor, curved wall of the new Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau,



Jack's construction crew
Sturdy-Stone Building, Saskatoon, 1978
Photo: Jack Sures—

Quebec. His proposal was accepted and the mural, measuring sixty metres long and four metres tall, consists of hollow tubes, open at one end and varying in length. It is an extraordinary example of Jack's ability to work at any size for any requirement.

Jack's charisma and allure as an artist can be attributed to his unshakable "can do" spirit. Sandra Alföldy, in her catalogue essay "Jack Sures, Regina Clay Hipster", describes him as an "Alpha Maker". The definition she uses comes from Mark Frauenfelder's book, *Made by Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throwaway World*, where an Alpha Maker is described as "an individual who has learned to design and build cool stuff."¹⁷

From his earliest years as a backpacker abroad, to his creation of a pottery studio with handmade equipment in Winnipeg, to the University of Regina, Jack has attracted others to his projects and his ideas with his hands-on approach to the art making experience. There are few artists who can make the considerable jump from making and decorating bowls to imagining, designing and then completing murals with more than 4,000 units or measuring sixty metres long. That is what makes Jack an Alpha Maker.

Just Rewards

Jack's acclaimed career as an artist and teacher has been rewarded worldwide. In 1980, Jack was chosen as one of fourteen participants, from a field of eighty, for a symposium at The International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemét, Hungary, an international working retreat centre for ceramic artists.¹⁸

In 1989, he competed with 3,733 artists from sixty countries in the Second International Ceramics Competition in Mino, Japan with his entry: a thirty by twenty-four metre wall sculpture. Made using leftover tiles from his mural at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Jack's installation received the Grand Prize of three million yen and a three month study trip to Japan.

In 1991, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada, which recognizes a lifetime of outstanding achievement and dedication to the com-

munity and service to the nation.¹⁹ The same year, he was elected to the International Academy of Ceramics.²⁰ In addition, he received an award from the University of Regina Alumni Association for Excellence in Teaching, followed by an award for Excellence in Research in 1992.

In 1993, Jack exchanged homes and studios with Australian artist Ray Hearn. The exchange included a visiting fellowship and exhibition at the Northern Territory University in Darwin. The exhibition of his work made in the Hearn studio was particularly well-received by colleagues and critics. His sense of humour and his ability to work at any scale impressed, as always. When describing the exhibition in *Ceramics Art and Perception*, Cara Driscoll writes "The essence of Sures' aesthetic is evident; he finds the appeal of clay, both physical and aesthetic, inseparable....The amount and quality of the work demonstrates Sures' exuberance and ability while the tone of the exhibition reflects the obvious pleasure of the artist's sojourn in the Northern Territory."²¹

In 1998, Jack Sures retired from the University of Regina, after thirty three years of teaching, with the honorary title Professor Emeritus. In 2003, he was awarded Saskatchewan's highest honour, the Award of Merit.

The Beat Goes On

Over the course of his long career, Jack Sures has been instrumental in creating a fertile environment for artists in Regina. His students have gone on to careers as professional artists who continue to acknowledge with gratitude the skills and work habits they learned under his guidance.

In 2011, at 77 years old, Jack continues to create in his own studio and to exhibit his work. His remarkable work can be found in people's homes, in museum and gallery collections, on prominent Canadian buildings and now in this important exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

While firmly associated with Regina's influential art scene, Jack Sures has, through his own open heart, expansive vision, and international friendships and connections, brought the global art world to Regina. Timothy Long, MacKenzie Art Gallery curator, quotes admiringly a five year old gallery visitor, who upon seeing Jack's expressive spherical ceramic sculpture, said "Look! It's the world!"²²



Hand Built Pot, 1968
oxides, fibreglass stoneware
59.5 x 60 x 60 cm
Saskatchewan Arts Board Permanent Collection
C68.18
Photo: Don Hall

Activities

1. Activity: Getting Acquainted with Clay

In this activity the students will explore the essential characteristics of clay. Jack Sures likes "...the juiciness of the clay!"

Context

To walk the earth in Saskatchewan is to walk on clay. Formed over long periods of time by the movement of water and weathering, clay is derived from ancient rocks and is usually naturally mixed with other minerals. Regina sits on top of an ancient glacial lake where clay was deposited as the last glaciers melted and receded northward.²³

When Jack Sures says he loves clay for its expressive qualities, he means that you can make any shape with it and it will hold that shape. It is plastic, not elastic. It won't bounce back!

As a young boy Jack wasn't thinking about art when he made sculptures and objects from found materials. He could have used twigs, bottle caps, paper labels, cardboard boxes or other materials that would have cost nothing and would be found just by looking around.

Clay is the original *found* material! People throughout human history have found clay just by looking down, digging down, or walking along the side of a river bank.

Most types of clay that are easily found have been moved by water. Glaciers come and go. Rivers ebb and flow. As the clay moves along, it picks up other ingredients that can give it color or make it smoother by grinding its individual particles finer. For example, earthenware is a kind of clay that is often reddish in colour because of the iron it has picked up in its movement. Sometimes, mica or other minerals are part of the clay and make it stonger, or make it sparkle.

When clay has been shaped, dried and fired in a kiln (an oven for baking clay that reaches higher temperatures than kitchen ovens), it changes back to a kind of rock again!



Artist Lorne Beug likes to use clay because "We basically live at the bottom of a dried lake bed. And I liked the fact that, unlike stone, you can change this clay so easily when it is wet. Then, by firing it, you can turn it back into rocks in whatever shape or colour you want. It's a controlled rock-making process."²⁴

Before clay is fired, even after you have shaped an animal or a bowl, you can recycle the clay by adding a little water and kneading it again and again. If you keep it covered by plastic or in a covered pail, you can always go back to it for another shape-making exercise.

But if you *fire* the clay in a kiln, you cannot use that clay again for making shapes. It has no more water in it and is now a kind of rock. Clay becomes *ceramic* when it has been fired.

It can be exciting to use the least likely art supplies to create something with meaning and presence. By "presence" we mean that the creation draws the eye of the person looking at it.

Karen Dahl, texturing clay, circa 1978
Photo: Jack Sures

Materials

- Composite board or several layers of newspaper, the size of a placemat for each student, to use as a work surface
- Extra newspaper or toweling to wipe off hands before using the sink for hand washing at the end of the activity

Tools to share

- Chopsticks or popsicle sticks
- Forks and knives, either plastic or from used goods store
- Dowels, short lengths for rolling out clay, 1 for every 4 or more students
- Clay, as ordered from your school board, eg. low-fire earthenware
- Slip, stored in yoghurt or other covered containers; slip is clay mixed with water to make clay liquid and glue-like
- Old toothbrush for slipping (applying slip) and scoring; scoring is a way to roughen a surface to make it hold the slip and more easily attach other clay to it. Slipping and scoring will make sure that parts that are added don't fall off as they dry.
- Length of nylon fish line to cut clay from blocks
- Plastic mesh from grocery store items, such as onions, for making textures
- Spray bottle with water to dampen clay, if and when needed
- Plastic bag to store clay after the exercise
- Paints for later decorating

Before you begin ²⁵

- Discuss clay as a material; where do we use it today? (dishes, toilets, sinks, tiles, flooring, counters, bricks and more)
- Historically, how would Aboriginal people have used clay? (vessels, ritual objects, toys, beads, etc.)
- How do we know how people in the past used clay? (fired clay has been found where people used it or buried it; it has been saved and interpreted)
- Why do artists still love to use it?

Method

- Start by making a ball of clay
- Poke a hole in it with your finger
- Poke another hole with the wooden tool, chopstick or other tool
- Close up the holes
- Flatten the sides of the ball of clay to make a cube
- Add texture to the cube using your fingers, a tool or found objects nearby (pencils, foil, key, etc.) Texture is often most successful when you create it by repeating a motion, like pressing the mesh against the flat sides of the clay with the dowel several times.
- Roll out coils
- Note whether or not the clay is starting to feel dry and use a tiny bit of water to moisten the clay. Careful, clay will be mushy if it gets too wet!
- Make the clay into a ball again
- Shape it into a small nest, using your fingers to open the clay into a bowl shape
- Fill the nest with eggs, birds, or worms, using slip to make them stick to the bottom of the nest
- Let dry in the air for several days
- Paint with tempera, watercolours or acrylics when thoroughly dry

Discussion

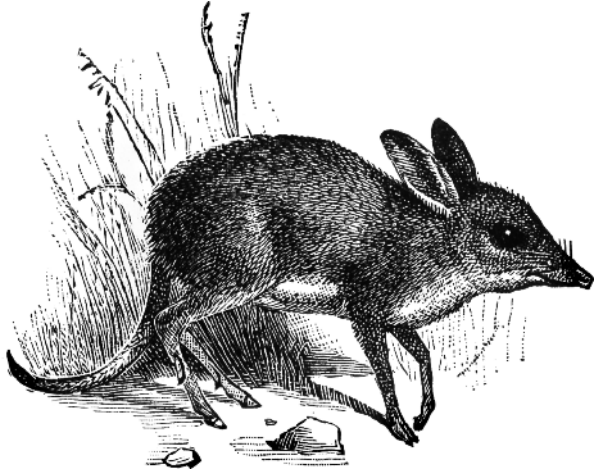
Depending on the age of the students, there will be more or less success with this activity. Older students may feel this is too easy.

Keep the exercise moving along by discussing impressions along the way. Encourage the students to discuss and share their creations. How do they feel about the clay? How is it different from playdoh or other non-clay sculpting materials that they know? Do they enjoy working with the "real thing"?

Suggest that the next clay activity could be making "beasts" or fantasy animals that come from their own imaginations.

2. Activity: The Bandicoot and its mysterious ways

In this activity the student will use clay to make a “signature” or personal animal—fantasy or based on a real animal.



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Context

Jack Sures loved to work with certain images. One of the images he has used throughout his career as an artist is that of a small animal with four legs, fur and a very long nose. This little “beast”, as he called it, showed up in his drawings, his prints and his ceramics. He never felt he had to explain why he was attracted to it, nor why he came back to it repeatedly.

Artists use certain methods or images that become like a signature of their work. This little beast is like a sign that the art was made by Jack Sures. He didn’t use it for everything, but when he did there was no doubt whose work it was. After years of painting, drawing, carving and sculpting the beasts, a visitor from Australia took one look at it and declared it a *bandicoot*.²⁶ The bandicoot is a small rat-sized marsupial found in Australia, but never in Canada.



Materials

- All the materials from Activity #1
- Paper and pencil for the animal sketch

Before you begin

- Ask the students to consider what characteristics an animal should have if they want it to stand for them personally—to represent them, to be their signature animal.
- What will their choice have in common with real animals they already know about, such as a tiger or a dog? Will the student choose to have a real life animal be their signature?
- Or would the student like to invent an animal that has more or different qualities?
- Ask the student to draw a picture, using pencil on paper, of their signature animal.

Method

- Start again with a lump of clay. Use a piece large enough to shape a ball that will fit in your hand.
- Now use another clay lump to make a smaller ball.

Untitled, 1987
underglaze pencil, black glaze, porcelain
12 x 49 x 49 cm
Collection of the Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery,
purchased in 1987 from the exhibition *Personal Imagery
of Jack Sures 1967-1987*,
organized by the Moose Jaw Art Museum
A.9.87.16.1
Photo: Don Hall

- Remind the students to think of the shape of their animal's body and work the clay with their fingers and tools toward that shape.
- Now they can think about the details. Use the smaller ball of clay to make the head and all the details, such as horns, legs, tail, etc.
- Remind the students to slip and score when adding any parts.
- Clay dries better without cracking when it is not too thick anywhere. Piercing the thick parts of the animal with a pencil or a chopstick will allow even drying. Pierce it where it won't show or make it a part of the animal's details, such as a hole through the mouth.
- Let the animal dry thoroughly for several days and then paint with tempera, watercolour or acrylics.

Discussion

The class can work in small groups. Each group will then be able to show their animals to the larger class. All students should have the opportunity to discuss the imaginative process they used to develop the idea and the final shape of their signature animals.

Is there a way in which the finished clay animal can represent the student's thoughts, feelings or group identity?

Does this activity create an opportunity to write labels for the finished animals? Could they be displayed all together? What would be the title of the exhibition?



Untitled, 1991
sprayed engobe, earthenware
51 x 61.6 x 61.6 cm
Collection of Jack Sures and Cara Gay Driscoll
Photo: Don Hall

3. Activity: Taking the Bandicoot for a Ride

In this activity the students will explore painting as a two-dimensional medium.



Context

Jack often used the image of the bandicoot in painting and in prints as well as in ceramic sculpture. It can be interesting to take the idea of the fantasy animal from Activity #2 and recreate it in paint.

When thinking about a simple painting of the animal (or a similar subject) it might be good to limit the number of colours available. The choice of colour can help the student think about the qualities of the animal and the environment in which it lives. Even a fantasy animal will have a home or nest, young ones and food to eat.

When Jack Sures used images in two dimensions (on flat surfaces, such as paper or tiles or flat edges of vessels) he often filled the whole space with the image.

Materials

- Use tempera, watercolour or acrylic paints and an assortment of brushes with different widths and a variety of tips, flat or pointed. Choose one type of paint or a variety.
- Allow each student to use no more than four colours. The paper should be chosen for the type of paint to be used.

- Use a paper that is thicker than copy-weight paper, if possible, but there is no need to purchase expensive art paper.

Before you begin

- Discuss how to use the paints. The goal is not to learn professional techniques so the discussion can be more generally about how to use water, along with the simpler idea of how the brushes will work on the paper when they are heavily or lightly loaded with paint.
- Have the students experiment on a piece of scrap paper.
- Remind the students to think about using the entire sheet of paper and how they might use a version of the signature animal they have designed in earlier activities.
- There is no reason to make “perfect” images. Sometimes repeating simple shapes can lead to the most powerful final image.

Untitled, 1986
ink on paper
9.2 x 24.8 cm
Collection of David Johnson
Photo: Don Hall

- Together the class could decide to use a completely different image, perhaps one they have agreed upon together, such as a beaver or a heart shape.

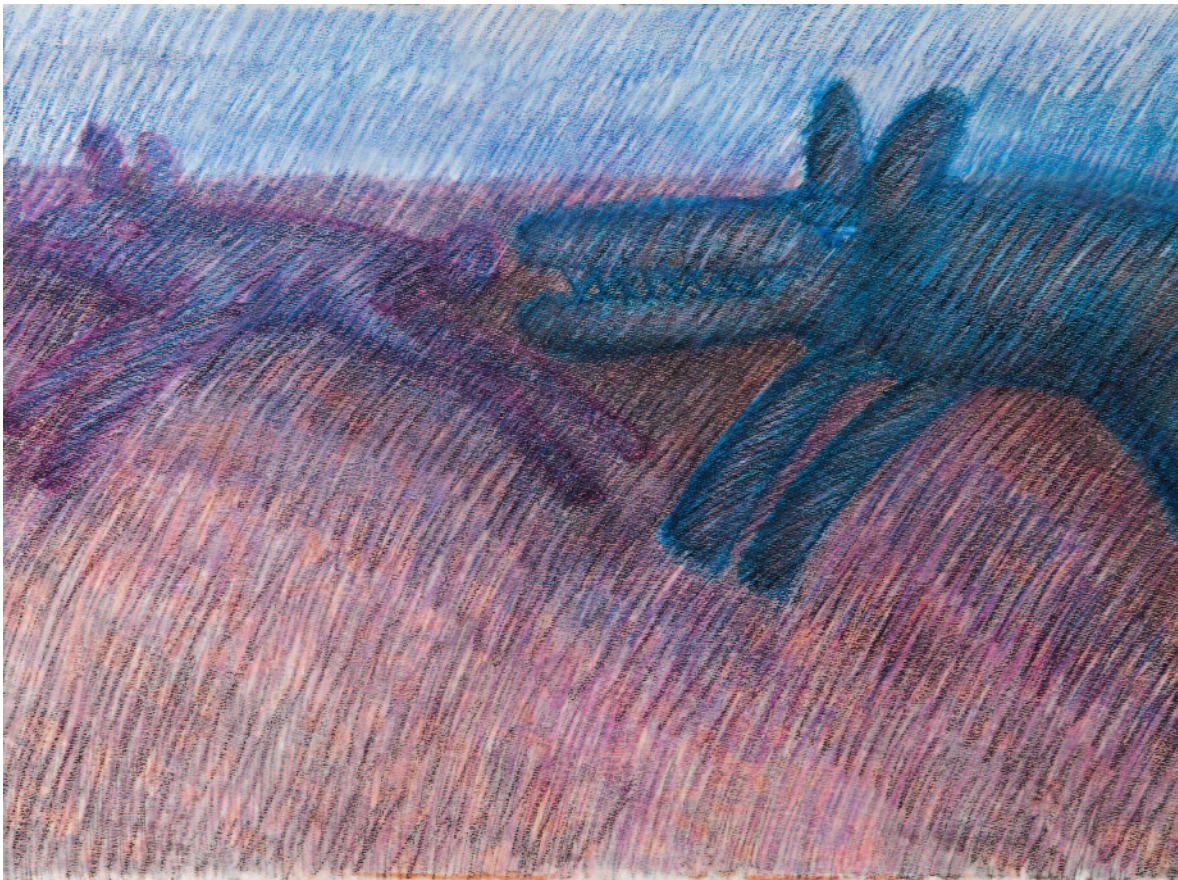
Method

- Before beginning, have each student sign their name on the back of the sheet of paper.
- Set a time limit to this project, perhaps 20-30 minutes, with the goal of filling the whole sheet of paper. Remind the students that blank spaces (called negative space) create shapes as well as the colours they lay down with their brushes.
- Allow at least ten minutes for cleaning up the brushes and safely storing the paintings where they can dry.

Discussion

Moving across methods is a nice way to rethink an idea. Discuss as a group how using colour has added to their designs. Were the students able to think about covering all or most of the surface with their painting? Did they do this by repeating images or by adding more and different images?

Now is a good time to discuss what has been learned by moving from three dimensions (the clay sculptures of fantasy or signature animals) to two-dimensional drawings and paintings. Let each student describe how that experience of 'moving across methods' worked for them.



Be Fruitful and Multiply, 1995
pastel and wash on paper
56 x 76.3 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery,
gift of the artist
1999-164
Photo: Don Hall

4. Activity: Stamp it out! Direct printing on paper

In this activity students will first print (stamp) on paper. Then they will create a cylinder from the flat paper to help them understand the challenge of drawing on a round surface.



Context

Jack Sures worked in many different ways with clay, making murals, tiles, sculptures and vessels. He used a variety of methods to change the surfaces of the work and make each one unique.

Trained as a printmaker and painter, Jack became a renowned artist who worked primarily in clay but continued to draw, paint and make prints. There is a common element in his work that comes from his interest in manipulating the surface.

Untitled, circa 1968
monoprint on paper
64 x 46.5 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery,
gift of Drs. Morris and Jacqui Shumiatcher
1994-197
Photo: Don Hall

Using a combination of printing and drawing, the students will begin to fill the blank paper with two of the many techniques used by Jack.

When the students have completed their designs, they will roll the paper into a cylinder to create a new framework for viewing their drawing and to remind them of the idea of the vessel.

Materials

- One potato for each student, cut in half
- A sharp pencil or nail to etch or incise (cut into) the surface of the potato
- Tempera or other paint or an inked stamp pad to use as printing ink
- Letter size paper for printing on
- Masking tape to create and stabilize the cylinder

Before you begin

- When you print from an incised potato, the ink will transfer from the surface of the potato that is uncarved.
- The lines can be curved or straight and do not need to represent anything
- Tell the students that they will be printing on the paper and then connecting the printed sections with a pen to create an all-over effect

Method

- Students should etch or incise the potato surfaces, with the goal of making two different effects, one on each potato half
- The students can then brush on tempera or other paints, or stamp the potato on an inked stamp pad
- Working directly on the paper, the students can create a pattern from the potato stamps
- When the paint has dried, the students should connect the printed shapes by drawing with a pen

- Then the students can roll the paper in the shape of a cylinder and tape it shut with masking tape on the inside

Discussion

The discussion can then centre around the problems and advantages of having a design on a curved surface. As the discussion moves to the problem of never seeing the whole design at one time, let the students devise scenarios that use this “problem” as an advantage.

Jack Sures is often thinking of the viewer of his work and the impression or perspective that the viewer will bring to the occasion. Although he often works on a flat, all-over surface, he manages to create the illusion of movement by the lively way he paints the details. On a cylinder or vase shape, his design encourages the viewer to turn the object or look around to the other side.

It is useful to begin to think of the viewer instead of the artist when looking at the cylinder. What is the use of concealment? How are stories told? Would it be more difficult to etch the design on a curved surface or a flat one?



Untitled, 2007
sgraffito, black glaze, glaze, porcelain
46 x 22.5 x 22.5 cm
Collection of Esther and Roland Daum
Photo: Don Hall

5. Activity: Impressions and Influences

This activity will involve research by students who will discover some of the major influences on Jack Sures's own art. They will begin to think about the influences in their own lives as an inspiration for future projects. For older students, interested in research projects.



Context

We are each of us the expert on our own lives. Our experiences add up to something important and new experiences just keep coming. Jack Sures has always been curious about the world around him. He has kept an open mind as he has traveled to many countries and he has been alert to new possibilities wherever he has gone.

Jack knew he had something to say and decided that the language he would use would be art—painting, printmaking, and working with clay. Everywhere he has lived or traveled he has looked for art in museums, galleries and artist's studios so that he could learn more about the way artists com-

municate their ideas and discover what their artworks could say to him.

He is often thinking of the viewer of his work and the perspective that the viewer will bring to the occasion. Notice how his painted details cause your eyes to travel over the entire surface.

Jack has often mentioned certain artists or ideas that have meant the most to him. He often speaks of the artist Albrecht Dürer, the great artist of the late Renaissance, and Paul Klee and Mark Tobey, both twentieth century painters. He refers frequently to his pleasure in meeting Shoji Hamada and seeing firsthand the way he and other Japanese potters worked, accepting the "happy accident." As well, the Chinese idea of yin-yang or complementary opposites has influenced his art. A lifelong influence on Jack's work has been looking at art in museums and galleries.

It is always interesting to see if an artist's inspirations show up in their work. As part of a short report to the teacher and/or the class, each student should summarize one or two of the influences on Jack's art. How do those influences appear in Jack's work? Or is it difficult to see the influence?

Students should do their research with the understanding that they are themselves exposed to many influences. As part of their report they should discuss an influence they feel in their own lives, for example from popular culture (music, films, etc.), friends, ideas, family or art. Do they think this influence on them is seen by others?

Untitled, circa 1970
lustre, commercial tile
15.4 x 15.4 x 0.5 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, gift of the artist
1999-142
Photo: Don Hall

Materials

- School library or public library for books and other art resources
- Gallery website www.mackenzieartgallery.com
www.tomthomson.org
- Online images of artists mentioned and Jack's own work

Before you begin

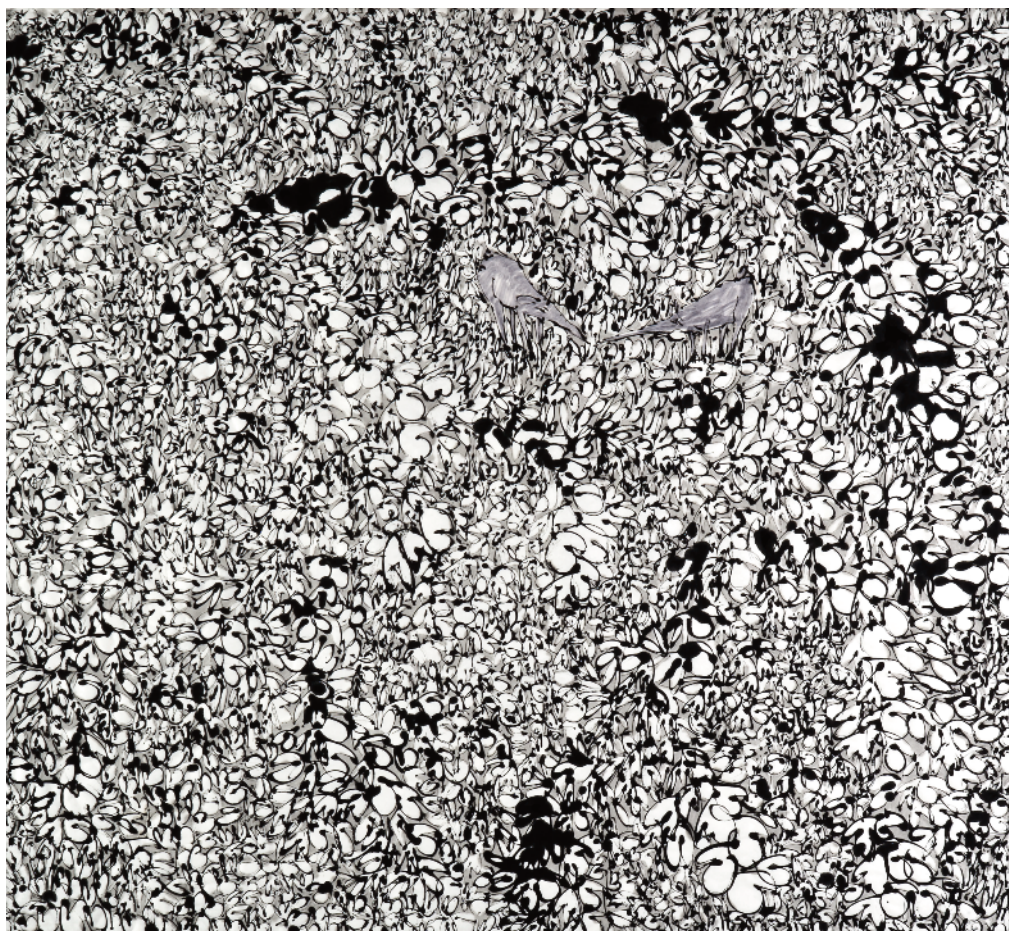
- Remind the students of the available resources for research
- Consider your students' available time to commit to this project
- Determine the best way to receive the report. Should it be written, spoken, public (in the classroom setting) or private, with just the teacher and student?

Method

- Introduce the idea of the research project to the group
- Remind the students that a goal of the project is to recognize the influences that are working in their own lives as they research Jack Sures's life as an artist
- Encourage the students to use the exhibition website freely

Discussion

- Have the students participate in a session of discussing major influences on their lives
- Consider the idea that there are common influences, felt by all, and individual influences that are not generally shared
- How can researching an artist's influences help us understand and talk about that artist's work?



Getting to Know You, 1998
Chinese ink on rice paper
82.3 x 89.3 cm
Courtesy of the Regina Bell Ringers
2008-072
Photo: Don Hall

6. Activity: The Body of the Pot

In this activity the students will begin building an art vocabulary to use when they talk about art and artists. They will make a small vessel and describe it with their new art words.



Context

Every specialty has its own language or jargon. Artists are often asked to talk about their art. The language of art is special, too.

In the world of ceramics the parts of a pot or a vessel are often described using the same words we use for parts of our bodies. *Foot, belly, waist, shoulder, neck, skin* and *lip* are some of the terms that are familiar to people who make pottery.

Artists often talk about their art using words that are sensory. They could say a colour is “delicious” or a surface is “touchy-feely.” Sense words are a way to communicate something very direct about an artwork or anything in our lives that provokes a strong response. We can say that something “stinks”!

Addition and *subtraction* are terms used in sculpture or when decorating the surface or form of an artwork. They mean just what they say—you can add to the surface or you can scrape it away.

Materials

- An apple
- A vase
- A toy figure of a person
- Clay materials from Activity #1

Before you begin

- Pass the apple, the vase and the toy figure around the class
- Use the vocabulary from the “context” paragraph to discuss them
- Share with the class the goal of this activity. The students will make a clay bowl or plate or tile. They can then talk about it using some of their new vocabulary.

Method

- Start with a fist-sized ball of clay
- Provide another small ball of clay for possible additions
- The work can be realistic or abstract
- This activity is an exercise to be completed in class so that the discussion can easily follow

Untitled, circa 1996
black glaze, iron oxide, expanded sgraffito, porcelain
49.5 x 49.7 x 49.7 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery,
gift of Jack Sures and Cara Gay Driscoll
2008-111
Photo: Don Hall

Discussion

Do the students know the childrens' song "I'm a little teapot"? This is a simple way to think about the vessel and the body. Is there a way to make a pot "touchy-feely"? Who used addition and who used subtraction? Both on the same piece?

Often Jack Sures has left his ceramics untitled. But he titled one bowl "What do you do with a pot?" When you are looking at sculpture or ceramics you can use your new vocabulary to begin a conversation with a friend about how the work was made and how the artist intended the viewer to respond. Or you can keep the conversation private, in your own mind, as you think about your interaction with the artist.



What do you do with a pot..., 1988
underglaze pencil, black glaze, porcelain
13 x 59.8 x 59.8 cm
MacKenzie Art Gallery,
University of Regina Collection
1989-005
Photo: Don Hall

Notes

- 1 Jack Sures, artist statement.
http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Fire_Earth/Artists/Sures/SuresStmntEn.html
- 2 Sures told writer Margaret Hryniuk in a profile she wrote in 1988. Retrieved July 18 2011 from: http://www.artsask.ca/en/collections/themes/craftredefined/jacksures/untitled_footed_bowl
- 3 Jack Sures quoted at:
http://www.artsask.ca/en/collections/themes/craftredefined/jacksures/untitled_footed_bowl
- 4 Jim Leedy, telephone interview with Mathew Kangas, February 11, 2011, as cited in "Jack Sures: Concentric Circles", in *Tactile Desires: The Work of Jack Sures*, exh. cat.
- 5 Gail Crawford, *Studio Ceramics in Canada 1920-2005* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and the Gardiner Museum, 2005): 161.
- 6 Jack Sures, interview with Sandra Alföldy, Regina, November 4, 2010, as cited in "Jack Sures, Regina Clay Hipster", in *Tactile Desires: The Work of Jack Sures*, exh. cat.
- 7 http://www.uregina.ca/library/archives/collections/finding_aids/99_38_2000_11.pdf
- 8 Gail Crawford, *Studio Ceramics in Canada 1920-2005* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and the Gardiner Museum, 2005): 162.
- 9 Video: *How I Got Started in Ceramics* retrieved from <http://www.artsask.ca/en/artistis/jacksures>
- 10 <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-marilyn-levine-12144>
- 11 <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ReginaClay/english/sures091011sures.html>
- 12 <http://artsaskdev.ohmedia.ca/en/artists/mah>
- 13 Gail Crawford, *Studio Ceramics in Canada 1920-2005* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and the Gardiner Museum, 2005): 187.
- 14 Ibid., 188.
- 15 In Greenberg's view all art should be "about" the material; i.e. clay shouldn't be decorated, painted, portray images or something "other." He felt artists working in clay should have the material itself as their subject.
- 16 Beth Hone in a telephone interview with Sandra Alföldy, October 2, 2003. Retrieved from: http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ReginaClay/english/documents/rcalalfoldy_setting_stage_final.html
- 17 See Sandra Alföldy, "Jack Sures, Regina Clay Hipster" in *Tactile Desires: The Work of Jack Sures*, exh. cat.
- 18 <http://www.icshu.org/about.htm>
- 19 <http://www.gg.ca/honour.aspx?id=2918&t=12&ln=Sures>
- 20 <http://www.aic-iac.org/english/the%20iac.html>
- 21 Cara Driscoll, *Ceramics Art and Perception*, No. 14, 1993: 81.
- 22 Video, <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ReginaClay/english/sures2021long.html>
- 23 <http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/WDMResearch/Saskatchewan's%20Clay%20Resources%20by%20Janet%20MacKenzie.pdf>
- 24 Lorne Beug, quoted in Hryniuk, Margaret. "A different look at the vast Regina plains." *Regina Sun*, April 3, 1988. Retrieved from: http://www.artsask.ca/en/collections/themes/earth/scienceandart/lorne_beug/slice_of_earth
- 25 See Activities in Clay at http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ReginaClay/english/education_resources_activ.html
- 26 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/51578/bandicoot>