

New Perspectives on the Ancient Indus Civilization k-12 Teacher's Workshop *sponsored by University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for South Asia*

**Arts and Crafts** class, 20 students 9-12<sup>th</sup> grades, 90 minute blocks, 7 sessions culminating in teaching 3 45 minute periods at the system middle school: 7<sup>th</sup> grade art 21 students, 8<sup>th</sup> grade art 13 students, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Art/Literacy 14 students.

Resources: Workshop Reader, Silent Walls of the Indus (video), Lecture, Handouts, Powerpoint

Objectives: 1) Define archeology and 3 different general types of archeological finds. 2) Explain why an interest in past cultures is meaningful to contemporary times. 3) Describe 3 unique characteristics of Indus Culture compared to Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures. (city sites have survived, no warring images, written language not deciphered, engineered water management systems) 4) Identify stylized depictions of bulls which originate from Indus culture. 5) Demonstrate pinch technique with clay creating an animal form(s). 6) Appreciate level of ceramic craft skill and production in Indus culture. 7) Use vocabulary correctly in a short written form.

High School Students Only: 8) Identify basic information to be shared and taught to younger students coalescing into teaching materials. 9) Identify difficulties encountered in pinch forming clay figures so they may articulate a list of helpful suggestions/techniques and demonstrate efficiently.

Day one: Share handout *Artifacts, Overview-From "Encyclopedia of Archaeology"* and an altered *Teachers' notes The Indus Valley Civilization* both from the course *Workshop Reader*. Provide 5-10 minutes of class time to read. Teacher lecture and demo of the pinch process creating a clay figurine in the style of the Indus culture. Students brainstorm in groups what "use" these figures may have served.

Day two: Review information covered the first day by directed questions that cover objectives. Students create their own bull figures.

Day three: Students create two figures within the same time period-a second bull in reduced time and an original animal form similarly simplified and abstracted (no ears on the bull-clean smooth shapes). Teacher demonstrates the brushing of black slip on demo form. Students brush slip on the forms they created on day 2. Teacher critiques student forms.

Day four: Students watch video *Silent Walls of the Indus*—followed by discussion of material covered and what would be most valuable for the class to share with the middle school students.

Day five: in groups students create PowerPoint slides and middle school handout materials.

Day six: High School students create a paragraph, poem, or short story (drawing the type of form from a hat so that all forms are covered) using the vocabulary from the middle school handout. If they finish before table mates they begin a new clay figure trying to better capture the form of the Indus sample. As all table mates finish their written examples the new figures are set aside and students

collaboratively list problem areas of visual and physical issues in pinch animal figure forming-- brainstorming skills to offset difficulties. Students finish forming a final figure.

Day seven: Students take turns teaching a demo of pinch bull figure forming and slip decorate final figures.

Day eight: bus to middle school and team teach 3 sections of art students.

Day nine-ten: High school students watch *Waste Land*. Filmed over nearly three years, WASTE LAND follows renowned artist Vik Muniz as he journeys from his home base in Brooklyn to his native Brazil and the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. There he photographs an eclectic band of catadores—or self-designated pickers of recyclable materials. Muniz's initial objective was to paint the catadores with garbage. However, his collaboration with these inspiring characters as they recreate photographic images of themselves out of garbage reveals both the dignity and despair of the catadores as they begin to re-image their lives. Director Lucy Walker...offers stirring evidence of the transformative power of art and the alchemy of the human spirit.

Student discussion follows with the objective of comparing and contrasting what we know about archeology at the Indus Valley sites with what contemporary artist Vik Muniz and the Rio recyclers have done in their Waste Land series (where, when, what, motivation, intent, process, Vik Muniz/present day archeologists collaborate with whom?, product, dissemination, funding/patrons, goals of each, (?).

**Archeology:** the scientific study of ancient cultures through the examination of their material remains such as buildings, graves, tools, and other artifacts usually dug up from the ground

**Artifact:** an object made by a human being, e.g. a tool or ornament, especially one that has archaeological or cultural interest, objects that may be picked up and moved with relative ease because of their smaller size

**Archeological Feature:** a large find such as buildings, bridges, water management systems

**Archeological Ecofact:** an organic remain not created by a human being that upon scientific examination reveals information about past cultures

**Pinch method of ceramic production** (different than coil, slab, cast, or thrown methods of production): the craft worker uses their fingers to pinch the clay into the desired form

**Ceramic:** clay heated to a temperature of at least 1275 degrees Fahrenheit at which time it becomes glass like



The above images are examples of ceramic objects found at ancient Indus Valley archeological sites. We do not know what the figures were used for. Other students have suggested they might have been: toys, good luck charms, grave markers, trendy to own, sacred idols, objects for ceremony or ritual, or a mythic element of stories. Archeologists in the Indus region have also found small ceramic human forms (some driving carts), other animal forms (including several unicorn figures), and lots of vessels or pots.

\*Art/Literacy students please write a paragraph, poem, or short story using the above vocabulary. Incorporate the clay figure you create as a component in your paragraph, poem, or story.