

Asante Gold Weights

art activity

The Asante people of southern Ghana are known for their gold. In addition to mining and trading it they create elaborate gold and metal works of art. Fanciful weights are used to measure gold dust on scales. The gold weights are not really made out of gold. They are made of brass and sculpted in many different shapes and designs. Some have the shapes of coils or diamonds, and others are miniature animals or people. The weights were not only used for measuring. They were also worn as jewelry and storyteller charms. The storyteller would hang the charms on his hat and have people point to a charm to hear its story. Brass weights would initially be sculpted out of wax. The wax sculpture would have been dipped several times into liquid clay called *slip* and allowed to dry. The piece would then be baked in fire. While in fire the wax would melt, leaving a hollow mold just the shape of the sculpture. Molten brass would then be poured into the mold. Once cool, the ceramic shell would be chipped away to reveal the brass weight.

Materials

Gold sculpy (comes in 2 oz. packages, limit 1oz. per child.)
knife
small clay modeling tools
toothpicks
plastic bags with baking instruction

Choose the type of brass weight sculpture you would like to make try one of the examples given or create one of your own. Examples here are four-legged animal, a figure, or a small bowl.

Four-legged Animal Process



Step 1. Roll a small oval shape in the palm of your hand.



Step 2. Squeeze the neck.



Step 3. Cut slits in the body crosswise to form the legs.



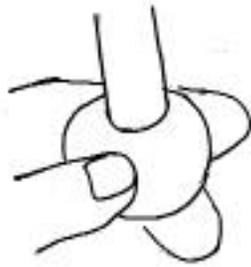
Step 4. Pull up the legs and shape. Consider sitting, standing and elongated animals and positions.



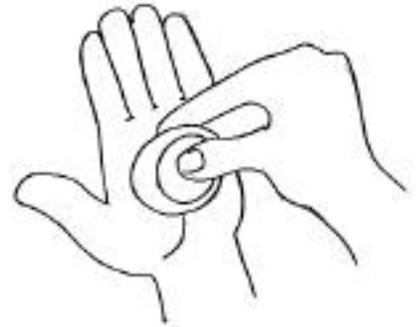
Step 5. Add details with small tools and toothpicks



Step 1. Roll a small ball shape in the palm of your hand.



Step 2. Push pinky finger or cylindrical tool (pencil) into the ball.



Step 3. Use thumb to push out and open the pot form. Continue to push and turn to form an even shape and wall thickness.

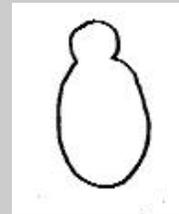


Step 4. Smooth out form and add details with a tooth pick and small tool.

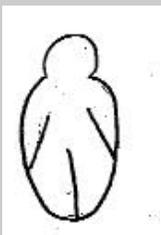
Small Figure



Step 1. Roll a small oval form of clay in your hand.



Step 2. Pinch the top to form the head.



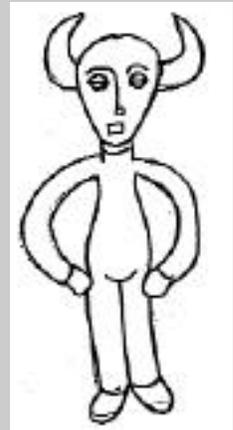
Step 3. Cut slits in the oval as shown.



Step 4. Spread out the arms and legs.



Step 5. Soften forms and shape.



Step 6. Add details and decorate with pattern using small tools and tooth picks

