

# LANTERNS TO LIGHT

## Handbuild with Textured Slabs

by Cara Moczygemba

Fire can create tools, transform muddy clay into pottery, and light the darkness. Lanterns were developed to protect a candle's flame from wind and to prevent flickering. This ensured better lighting and helped make light more portable. Historically lanterns have been also used for signalling (like a light house) or to generate an ambience of warmth.

This simple rectangular slab form is enlivened by symbolic textures and cut-outs that reference architecture, nature or various cultures. Before starting, read more about Uluru in the Outback, the Moorish Alhambra, East Asian gardens or other subjects to determine your design. Cut-out forms, bases, and lid finials should be designed to enhance your concept and form.

When completed, insert a tea candle or electric tea light and enjoy the illumination.



This Islamic lantern was created with the MCTM-3 Islamic Texture Mold then glazed with two coats of Velvet Underglaze, V-343 Chartreuse, and one coat of O-23 Sapphire Blue to create the two-toned appearance.

## Lesson Plan Goals and Objectives

- Students will create a functional and decorative lantern using design skills, slabs, and textures.
- Students will learn and use proper slab-building techniques to create structures.
- This lesson is suitable for 4th graders to adult.

## National Visual Arts Standards

- Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.
- Students understand and apply media, techniques and processes.
- Students use their knowledge of structures and functions.
- Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture.



This Aboriginal lantern was created with the MCTM-4 Aboriginal Texture Mold then glazed with AMACO® Stone Texture ST-33 Straw.

## Tools & Materials

- Low Fire (Cone 05) Clay (choose one)  
AMACO® Versa Clay No. 20 (45030R)  
AMACO® White Art Clay No. 25 (45015Y)  
approximately 5 lbs. of clay per Lantern
- AMACO® Velvet (V) Underglazes
- AMACO® Low Fire Glazes (Cone 05)  
F-Series (F) glazes  
Opalescent (O) glazes  
Stone Texture (ST) glazes
- AMACO® Texture Molds  
MCTM-1 Pre-Columbian (32228C)  
MCTM-2 East Asian (32229D)  
MCTM-3 Islamic (32238M)  
MCTM-4 Aboriginal (32239L)  
TM-3 Geo/Floral 6-Pattern Design (32220W)
- Slab rolling device, e.g.  
brent® Mini SRC slab roller (22683B)  
Hardwood Rolling Pin (11196M) and  
Hardwood Thickness Strips (11190F)
- Hardwood Pony Roller (11198T)
- Fettling Knife (11192H)
- Scoring Tool (11199R)
- AccuAngle (11297V)–Optional
- Wood Tools
- Glaze Brushes
- Vinegar
- Rubber Scrubber (11245B) or scrubbing pad
- Ruler or Template (template can be made from paper, cardboard, or plastic)
- Optional: Cardboard Tubes for small candleholder project



1. Roll slabs between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches thick. Smooth with rubber rib.



2. Lay smoothed side down on textured plaster mold, then press with small sand bag using a firm rolling motion from center to edges. Use Pony Roller to press clay further into mold.



3. Remove slabs from mold before cutting.



4. Measure or use template to cut four rectangles (4" x 8") and one square (4" x 4") from textured clay. Or use the AccuAngle tool to "miter" the 8" length on the untextured side.



**5.** Use knife to cut the inside edges (untextured side) at a 45° angle (miter) of the 8" sides of the rectangles. If you used the Accuangle in Step 4 you can skip this step.



**9.** With the sides mitered, seams are invisible and the texture goes all the way to the corners of the lantern. Score, slip, then gently press edges together without blending or "erasing" the texture.



**6.** Let slabs set up by allowing to dry evenly while flat until barely leather hard. Clay should be soft enough to join, but firm enough to stand up without support.



**10. Lid:** cut triangles from textured slab approximately (4 1/4" bottom, 4 1/2" sides). Miter sides of triangles (not bottom) and join. Use constructed lantern to hold lid as you join the parts.



**7.** Score seams, and use water, slip, or vinegar to join walls to base with textured sides facing out.



**11.** Score, slip, and use a coil of clay to join seams. The coil will also help to fill any gaps between the slabs.



**8.** Use a wood tool to "stitch" the seams on the inside of the form and press a thin damp snake of clay into each seam. Smooth inside seams.



**12.** Make a slab flange to sit down inside the lantern and join to the lid.



**13.** To add a decorative element, make a finial for the lid which is consistent with your design. Either use a press mold or hand build. Join securely by scoring and slip.



**14.** Use a sharp knife or hole cutter to cut openings in the sides and lid of the lantern. Make sure to leave at least 1/2 inch uncut around corners to maintain the structural integrity of the lantern.



**15.** Once the lantern is leather hard, use rubber scrubber or slightly damp sponge to soften the edges of the cut openings.

**16.** Allow to dry slowly and completely. Bisque fire to Cone 04.

**17.** Glaze: Brush 3 coats of desired glaze to Cone 04 bisque. Taper off the application of the glaze near the bottom. Do not glaze inside of lid or edges that will touch.

**18.** Glaze fire to Cone 05. Do not fire with the lid on the lantern or they will stick together.

### Optional:

This project can be simplified by leaving out the lid and scalloping the top edge of the lantern.

For a smaller project, or for younger students, a candle-holder can be made with one slab, 11" x 3", made into a cylinder. The textured clay can be wrapped around a cardboard tube for stability. Score, slip, and join the parts the same way as the lantern. When the clay is firm to the touch, shapes can be cut out for a candle-holder.

### Glossary

**Bone-dry:** Final stage of greenware, completely dry and ready to be fired. Clay is very fragile, non-plastic and porous at this stage.

**Finial:** A decorative ornament at the top, end, or corner of an object.

**Glaze:** A mixture of ceramic materials including clay, silica and fluxes that forms the protective and decorative coating on the surface of pottery when subjected to high temperatures in a kiln.

**Leather-hard Clay:** Stage between wet and dry clay. The clay is stiff enough to support its own weight, but pliable enough to be bent and worked with.

**Miter:** Bevel at a 45° angle, two parts to be joined, therefore creating a 90° corner.

**Slip and Score:** Process of joining 2 pieces of clay by texturing each piece slightly with little cuts where they will be joined then applying slip (watered down clay) or vinegar and pressing together to form a strong bond.

**Template:** A positive pattern used to trace a shape or design.

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This lantern was created with the TM-3 Geo/Floral 6-Pattern Design Texture Mold then glazed with F-Series glazes.