

Shichifukujin

The Seven Lucky Gods of Japan

Introduction

The Japanese shichi (seven) fuku (luck) jin (beings) have been a popular group of deities since the Edo period. Pictures and sculptures of these gods are seen all over Japan, either alone or as a group, and often on their treasure ship (*takara-bune*). Each lucky god (*fukunokami*) has a name:

Jurojin
Hotei
Fukurokuju
Benten
Bishamon
Daikoku
Ebisu

Seven has been an auspicious number for thousands of years in countries around the world, and Japan is no exception. Ancient Japan was divided into seven districts, there are seven basic principles of the Samurai's philosophy (*bushido*), the Japanese Star Festival (*tanabata*) is on the seventh day of the seventh month, a baby's birth is celebrated on the seventh day, a death is mourned for seven days, and again after seven weeks. In Buddhism, the main religion of Japan, people believe in seven reincarnations. It is not surprising then that there are seven gods in the shichifukujin (pronounced she-chee-foo-coo-jean).

Shichifukujin have been an important part of Japanese culture since the 15th century. They come from different parts of Asia



JUROJIN



HOTEI

and from different religions. Although most of these characters have a courtly or scholarly appearance, they were popularized by farmers, artisans and merchants. Consequently their treasures are practical things like rice, fish and cash, rather than gold or jewels.

Special focus is placed on these seven deities in the New Year. The gods arrive each 31st of December on their treasure ship to dispense gifts of happiness and luck to believers. Over the next seven days, whole families visit temples and shrines to pay their respects to the shichifukujin. This pilgrimage tour (shichifukujin meguri) takes place all over Japan.

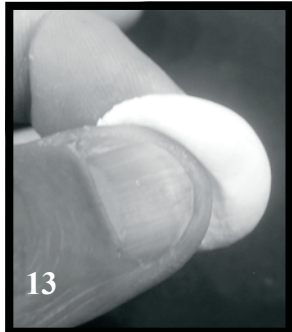
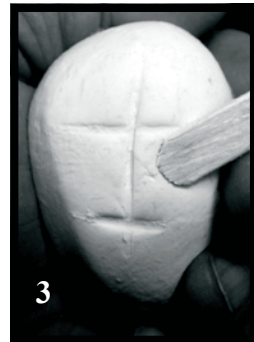
Objectives/Outcomes

Your students will be introduced, informed and inspired by these wonderful characters into creating their own puppet figure using a variety of materials, skills and processes. Each step of the procedure builds on the previous step and in a specific sequence. Students learn to be patient with themselves and with their creative process. Research on the Internet to the sites provided will spark interest in the shichifukujin, the culture of Japan and Asia, and give them the knowledge to write and perform the biography of their chosen character.

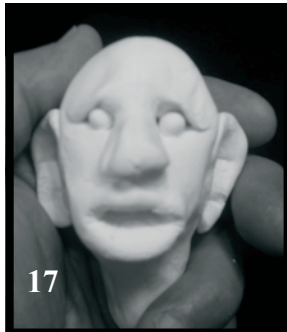
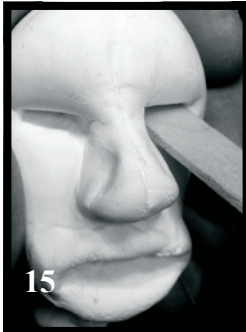
DIRECTIONS



Form a 1-oz. piece of Model Magic (MM) into an egg shape. Use a craft stick to lightly indent a center line down the front of the face. Divide the height of the head into thirds. (1,2) Form the eye socket with the flat of the stick, pushing in and up. (3,4). At a diagonal push the cheek area in toward the center line (5). Use the edge of the stick to push in and lift the nose (6). Push the stick into the face just below the nose and slide it sideways widening the mouth (7). Use the end of the stick to push up and pull out to form the upper lip (8). While supporting the neck-chin area, pull out the bottom lip in a similar manner (9). Check the profile of the head



so that it looks right (10). While supporting the head wiggle the stick up into the head halfway (11). Pole a thin brush end in, out and up to form the nostrils (12). Squeeze a 1/2" ball of MM slightly off center to form the ear (13).



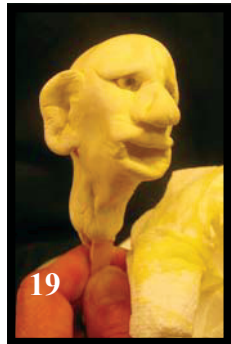
Moisten the MM and apply the ear to the side of the head making sure the top of the ear lines up with the top of the eye. Use the end of the stick to make indentions in the ear (14). Poke the end of the stick a little ways into the eye socket (15), place a hardened 3/16" diameter of MM in the groove and press the upper part of the eye socket down and over the eyeball slightly to hold it in place (16). Make any adjustments to the face to get the look that you desire (17). Let air dry 24 hours.

画
畫
画
画
画

Symbols for 'art'

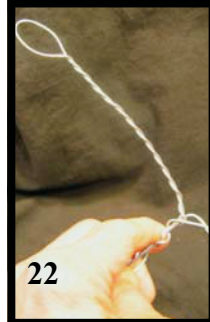
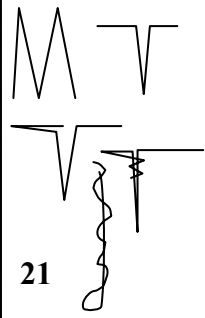
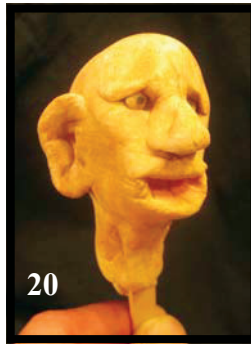


TUKUROKUJU

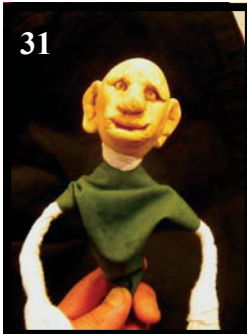


DIRECTIONS

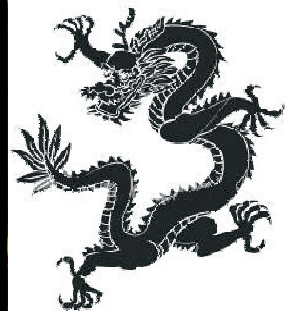
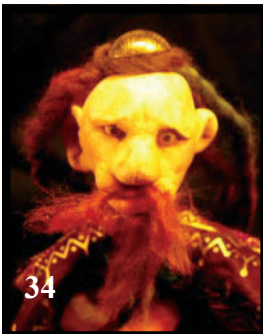
Using very diluted yellow water color, wash over the entire head covering all white areas. Pat the face with paper towel to absorb any excess (18,19). Do the same with dilute orange and end with a wash of yellow-brown or orange-brown. Experiment with layers of color and patting with towel to achieve the skin tone that you desire. Put a very light tint of red inside the mouth (20). Leave the darker tones set in the nooks and crannies of the face to add depth and shadow. Add the pupil of the eye with a fine point Sharpie. Fold a 5' length of wire in half and then half again. Take the two arm sections, bend them 2" past center and wrap the end around the trunk of the



body. Twist the two arms and the body leaving a loop on the ends (21). Take a 2-3" circle of t-shirt material, circle with glue and form a mitten (27,28). Take a 1" wide strip of t-shirt material and, starting at the wrist, wrap the arm



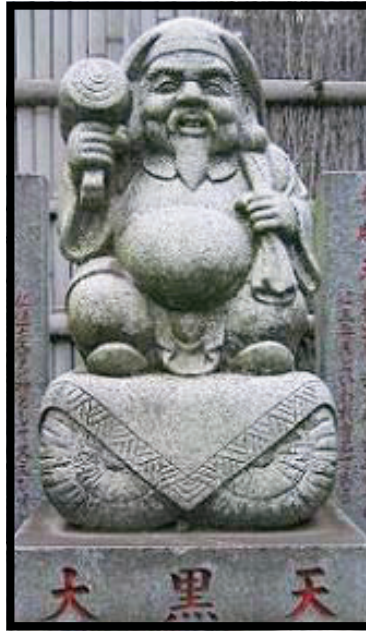
BENTEN



working up to the shoulder, crisscross the chest, go around the neck, and cover the torso (29,30). At this point decide which character you are going to create and add clothing (31,32), yarn hair (33,34), button hats, beads, jewelry, walking sticks with scrolls, fish, or bags tied to them, etc. Read the description of the character/god on the website. Have the kids bring all kinds of old fabric scrap and costume jewelry. Once finished, have them write a biography of their character.



BISHAMON



DAIKOKU



EBISU

Photographs of the seven shichifukujin statues are from Shichifukujin at Tokoji Temple, Meguro-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Materials List

- Crayola Model Magic Classpacks (White) # 1150030
- Craft Sticks, Regular Grade # 289-0005
- Triarco Oval Pan Watercolor Sets (16-Color) # RA01666
- Stovepipe Wire, 16 Gauge # RA02621
- Scotch Multi-Use Duct Tape # RA10273
- Aleene's Tacky Glue # RA07783
- Fabric Scraps in Various Colors, Patterns, Textures # RA11881
- Triarco Novelty Yarn Assortment # RA01391
- Old Jewelry Parts for Pendants, Necklaces, Earrings, etc.
- Chopsticks or Dried Reed for Walking Sticks and Canes, Old T-shirt Fabric for Body Wrapping

Resources

Historical information can be found on the following web sites:

- www.seiyaku.com/reference/seven/shichifukujin.html
- www.onmarkproductions.com/html/seven.shtml
- www.edsebooks.com/oldtokyo/shichifukujin.html

You can also use www.google.com to find text and images for the seven gods.

Extension/Integration

Students can integrate this project of creating a shichifukujin figure by also writing a creative narrative biography and performing it before their class with the puppet figure on their hand. This can be video taped and edited with appropriate software that exists in many school computer labs or on the student's home computer. This can also lead to a discussion of what other cultures believe to be lucky figures and why people find the need to have such figures and their associated beliefs in their lives. Consider a discussion about the saying.....

Luck is when preparedness meets opportunity.

Designed by Bill Kobe



www.eTriarco.com 1-800-328-3360 1-877-727-2380 (New Toll Free Fax)

Printed in USA April 2009 NP 043-09