

# ARTICULATED CALAVERAS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This activity was produced by Micaela Seidel, independent artist in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is reprinted here with permission.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels.

## ESTIMATED TIME:

2 90-minute sessions

## VOCABULARY:

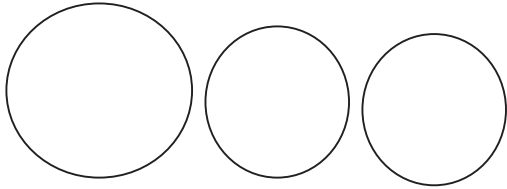
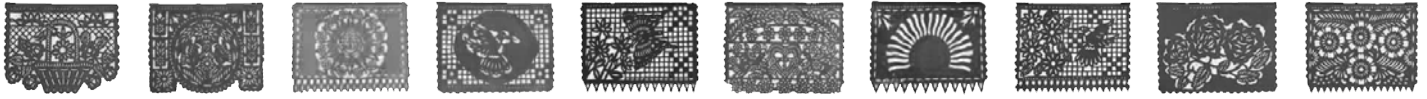
- Calavera
- Articulated
- Muerte
- Death
- Skeleton

## MATERIALS:

- Floral wire (24, 22, or 20 gauge) cut into 28 pieces at 1.25" long
- Air Dry Clay (white or earth tone)
- Acrylic Paint

## PROCEDURE:

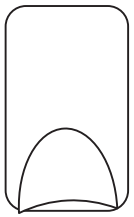
1. Arrange all of the art supplies so that the wire is pre-cut and the clay is divided among the students. Each student will construct his or her own miniature, articulated skeleton (see photo below for finished product).
2. Begin by forming the clay into the different portions of the body, as follows (see illustrations on following page):
  - 3 medium size balls for head, torso, and pelvis (torso is slightly larger)
  - 6 small balls for legs and arms
  - 6 smaller balls for hands and feet



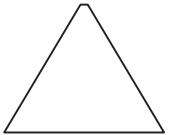
Torso, Head, Pelvis



Skull



Torso with thumbprint



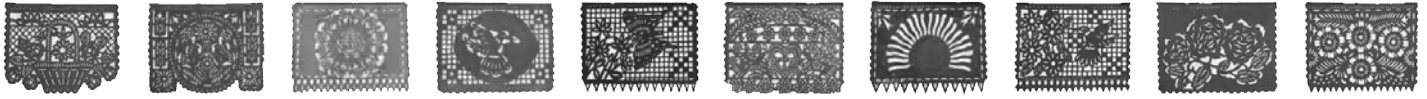
Pelvis



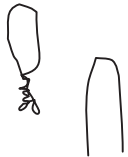
Arm and Leg Bones (16)



Feet and Hands (4)



3. After you have shaped the individual pieces, begin shaping each to conform to unique body characteristics.
  - a. Form the head by making a pear or lightbulb shape; indent two holes for the eyes.
  - b. Form the torso by making a rectangle and then pressing in the lower front to represent the ribcage.
  - c. Form the pelvis as a rounded triangle.
  - d. Form the upper and lower arms, and upper and lower legs, by making cylinders.
  - e. Form hands and feet as small, rounded triangles (feet are pointer, of course!)
4. After each piece has been crafted, then you will begin forming the joints.
  - a. Form all of the joints by joining two U's together and twisting (see below)



- b. Lay pieces down on wax paper as they will appear.
  - c. Attached twisted wire loop to torso (neck, shoulders, and below rib cage = 4 loops)
  - d. Form arms and hands with twisted loops. Leave top OFF until joining with shoulder.
  - e. Attach legs and feet to torso. Leave top loop OFF torso until attaching to ribcage.
  - f. Attach head to rib cage last so it doesn't get squished.
  - g. Attach large loop to top to hang to dry.
5. The calavera is now complete. Given that it is made with air-dry clay, it needs exposure to harden. Cover *\*lightly\** with plastic or wax paper while drying so that it does not crack, but *\*do not seal.\**
6. Once the skeleton is dry (a minimum of 24 hours), you can decorate the body however you like. One approach would entail covering the body with black acrylic paint and then, after that has dried, adding in the skeletal details with white paint. See the following page for an illustration of this technique. Other approaches could include multiple colors, glued-on decorations, paper or cloth clothing, etc.

