



Adire Eleko Canes
Designed by Marji Gates for Polyform Projects



Project Description:

Adire Eleko (“ah-deer-ee eh-leek-o”) cloth was made by the Yoruba people of Nigeria. A plant-based paste was drawn onto white cloth, and then the fabric was dipped into indigo dye to reveal the patterns. The art form is rarely practiced now. This project helps children learn how to make a variety of basic canes and combine them in Adire Eleko-style patterns for decorative uses.

Goals - Students will:

Explore the art of Africa.

Condition polymer clay.

Stack color slabs and create simple geometric or natural patterned canes.

Learn to reduce clay canes to smaller motif sizes.

Cut thin, careful tiles from each block and combine them in rhythmic patterns.

Supplies:

Sculpey III Blue Pearl and white Pearl

Clay Conditioning Machine (Pasta Machine) (1 per 4-6 students) or Firefly Tool Set

Additional Supplies:

Ceramic tiles, aluminum roof flashing tiles or scraps of matt board for work surfaces, one per student.

Show examples of Adire Eleko cloth, noting the variety of repeated patterns in a grid format.

1. Condition Blue and White Sculpey III clays. Stack 1x2" slabs to make a jellyroll cane, a striped stack, or a blue block that is divided with insertions of white slab Xs. A rope of white can be divided with blue to make a leaf, pinched at the ends and wrapped/packed in blue to make a block.



2. Let canes rest before trimming them. Carefully reduce canes by gently rolling each side of the block in turn. Trim away uneven ends.



- Cut thin, even slices of each cane and combine them side by side to create a grid with the variety of designs making a larger repeat pattern (random or sequenced). Blue and white scraps can be combined to make a lighter blue base onto which canes can be placed.



- The Adire Eleko canes can be used in a wide variety of applications, such as covering candy tins or using single rows around paper-covered tin cans to make striking desk accessory cups, covering ball-point pens, to refrigerator magnets, jewelry, or key chain fobs.