

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORKSHOPS

July 29, 2011 Kate Kelland Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Education, Egypt Archaeology, British Museum, Building Exploratory, Canopic jar, children, education, egyptian, fieldwork archaeologist, Geffrye Museum, Hackney Museum, head, learning, Mummification, museum, National Army Museum, Pharaoh, Sir John Soane Museum, Soane, Soane Museum, workshop

I'm one of the ever increasing breed of part-time workers and freelancers. In the past twelve months I have worked for five different organisations including the British Museum, Geffrye Museum, Sir John Soane Museum, National Army Museum and at Hackney Museum for the Building Exploratory. The most difficult part of my job is remembering where to head to each morning!

For this Day of Archaeology post I'd like to present to you the '*Create a Canopic Jar*' children's workshop that I'm running at the Sir John Soane Museum. Truly a fabulously quirky and endlessly fascinating museum, if you haven't been I highly recommend it (although be careful of the queues for their candle-lit openings).

The workshop description is thus:

"Explore the Ancient Egyptian secrets of mummification and look at the magnificent sarcophagus of Seti I. Then make your own Canopic Jar fit for a Pharaoh."

It caters for 10 children who will spend the day with me in the Soane Museum and their education space. The workshop itself will take place in early August but the preparations began far in advance. It was over a year ago that I came up with this concept and was booked in to run the workshop. In the last few months I have been planning the workshop logistics, creating material lists & resource, and, most importantly, doing a test run. Always important to do a test run! As well as seeking out potential problems it also helps to refine the process, you can work out where breaks should be (lunch time is a sacred time that no workshop must impinge on!), write process lists and make sure you know what's what and when to do what.

And, with a workshop like this, you get to get your hands dirty (I used to be a fieldwork archaeologist, I miss the mud), so doing a test run is even more appealing!

So, test run day came and, with much excitement and a little trepidation (I've never worked with modrock before and my modelling skills aren't exactly world renowned) I began to create my own canopic jar.

Advisory notice: No organs were harmed in the making of this post.

Materials I had to hand: modrock (like the stuff they use to bandage broken limbs), newspaper, masking tape (vital!), empty plastic squash bottle (although my Mother, when looking at my pictures of the test run, thought that it was a glass bottle and asked me if I should use glass with children... I am a professional

you know...), bowl, tepid water, yeowling cat (I threatened him with mummification but he didn't seem worried).

Step 1: Make a newspaper tube that will enable the head to be slotted into the top of the squash bottle.



Step 2: On the top of the aforementioned newspaper tube create the head of the canopic jar as a ball of newspaper. Make ears and any other features for the head. Liberal use of masking tape is advised.



Can you guess which head I'm making yet?

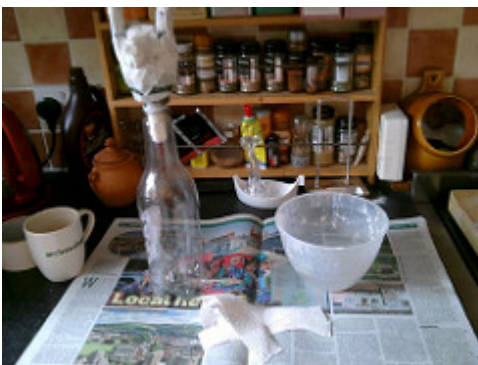
Step 3: Masking tape ears and other features to head ball.



Step 4: Check the head fits snugly into the squash bottle. At this point you may need to tape the squash bottle down with duct tape, I didn't do this. Cue 'hilarious' moments during the next few steps of balancing squash bottles whilst modrocking, gently pushing cat from under feet and needing at least four arms.



Step 5: Quick cup of tea – necessary preparation as tepid water is needed so you might as well have tea as well. Put a layer of newspaper on the counter and put tepid water in a bowl (I suggest one that isn't precious to you). Now wrap the head carefully in modrock.



Step 6: Stand back and admire your work so far.



Step 7: Modrock the squash bottle, one layer is enough. Give the cat a treat so that he stops trying to interfere with the artistic proces.



Step 8: Voila! Canopic jar is complete! Well, except for adding painted decoration, but my workshop is only one day and so the children won't have time to do this. They will design on paper the head decoration and can complete this at home once the modrock is totally dry.



At this stage it is also advisable to ignore certain family members who liken your creation to Bugs Bunny.

I am also devising other activities that will complement this workshop and help to fill the whole day. These include creating card collars for the jars (dual purpose – will be decorated like Egyptian necklaces but also serve to hide the join between head and bottle), the design of the decorated head, a tour round the museum and a discussion of the practice of mummification (to highlight not just the process but the reasoning behind it).

Workshops like this are designed to enthuse, occupy, interest, create learning opportunities and engage.