

Clay Carving

*Carve away the leather-hard clay block to create a **figure** or **organic** inspired sculpture.*



Definitions...



An example of a clay figure

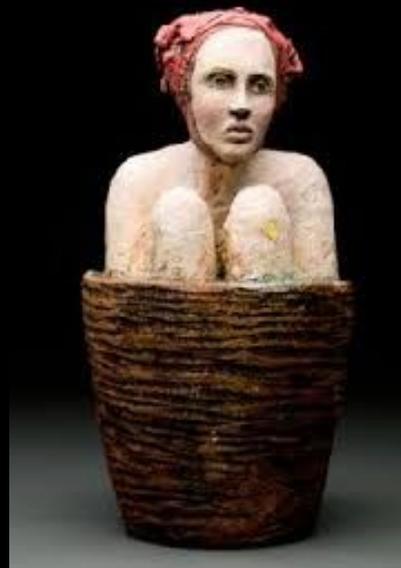
Figure: Figurative art describes any form of modern art that retains strong references to the real world and particularly to the human figure.

Organic: In art terms refers to resembling a living organism.



Examples of some organic inspired textures and patterns in clay

Examples of clay figures...



Hint: Notice how none of these figures have limbs sticking too far out from their bodies? When working with clay it is a good idea not to have thin bits poking out. As the clay dries it shrinks and becomes brittle and any thin bits can easily crack and break off.

YouTube Video

Watch a detailed time-lapse video of carving a head with correct proportions here:

(This video is quite long and detailed, you can skip through it)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64bpcvDM4Ug>

Examples of organic patterns and shapes in clay..



What do these remind you of?

What kind of shapes and patterns can you see? What similarities do all of these pieces have?





If you decide to focus on organic for your sculpture...

For inspiration look outside and see what kind of organic patterns you can see in nature... in a rough piece of bark, the veins in a leaf, even in soap bubbles!

Take some photos or do some sketching.



A couple of notes about clay...

Leather-hard— is a term used to describe clay that is at a certain stage of hardness. It is an ideal stage for carving and the clay should be a similar texture to soap, soft enough to easily carve into, but not wet or sticky or easily manipulated by hand.

If your clay block starts cracking while you are carving it, it may be too dry and will need to be lightly sprayed with water. Don't over wet it as it can easily become sticky and too wet to carve properly.

At the end of each day if you have not finished your carving, give it a light spray with water and wrap it back up in plastic wrap until you are ready to continue carving to prevent it from drying out too much.

If it does become too dry, spray with water, wrap it up and leave it for a day for the water to soak in.

Clay is also messy and you will have a lot of bits from the process of carving. Make sure you put something under your work to catch the mess.

You Will Need...

- Block of leather-hard clay
- Carving tools such as knives, chisels skewers, plastic cutlery, metal ruler and ceramic tools (or anything else sharp, pointy and practical)
- Damp sponge and water
- A hard flat solid surface to work on
- A lazy susan (if you have one) so that you can easily keep rotating your work to work on it from all angles.
- Paint (optional)



Step 1:

Design!

Think about and plan your design. Would you like to carve out a figure or something organic/ some organic inspired patterns and shapes?

Look at your block of clay, its size and shape to help you decide.

Tip: Make it easy on yourself.

Simply carve an organic inspired pattern into the surface of your block or carve out a simple figure with no arms or legs.

Remember: the less parts you have sticking out the better as they will become brittle when dry and could easily break off.



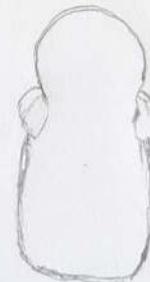
Left Side



Front



Right Side



Back

DON'T FORGET: YOU ARE CARVING OUT A THREE DIMENSIONAL SHAPE WITH FOUR SIDES, TOP AND BOTTOM. DO LOTS OF DRAWINGS TO SHOW YOUR DESIGN AS VIEWED FROM ALL DIFFERENT ANGLES.

STEP 2:

Transfer your design onto your clay block.

If it helps you, draw your design onto your clay block to help you start carving. These lines will disappear as you carve but they will set out a plan for your carving.



STEP 3:

Carve out your design slowly, bit by bit. *Don't rush.* Keep turning your block around and work on it from all sides and angles. Carving takes time and patience. Do a bit each day if you like. You don't have to finish it all at once.

Click here to watch a time lapse video of carving clay:

<https://youtu.be/kgR4PbirNlo>

STEP 4:

When you are happy with your work use a lightly damp sponge to smooth off the clay if you would like a smooth finished surface.

Be careful not to use too much water as it could make your clay too sticky and ruin your carving!



Leave your carved clay creations to dry for a few of weeks. If you notice cracks forming when drying use a damp sponge to fix cracks then lightly wrap in plastic wrap to slow down the drying process. Let them dry slowly to avoid cracking. When dry you can paint them if you want to.



SHARE YOUR CARVED CREATIONS!

E-mail your photos to: artgallery@devonport.tas.gov.au

