

Touch & Clay.

by Matilda Lewandowski

VOL I.



KEY

GREEN = RESEARCH
RED = REFLECTIONS

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Project Proposal.

There's something about clay.

You push it; it pushes back. It moulds, forms and flows with your touch. Whether you use your hands, tools or a pottery wheel, there is a relationship with the material that builds and grows with you.

For my research, I ask, how does touching clay and the act of making offer the ability to improve our well being?

Can it offer something unique alongside our growing understanding and acceptance of mental health issues, that perhaps more common methods, such as talking therapies or medications, cannot?

Not to say that these techniques are pointless, they are important methods to help improve a persons well-being. But what is it about creativity and hands on making that seems to access a part of our psyche that has no words? Perhaps, in a way, our true essence.

WHAT IS HEALING?

- Healing: *noun* the process in which a bad situation or painful emotion ends or improves
- Therapy: *noun* a treatment that helps someone feel better, grow stronger, etc., especially after an illness
- Well-being: *noun* the state of feeling healthy and happy

ARE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS INCREASING?

The overall number of people reporting mental health problems has been going up in recent years.

- The amount of people with common mental health problems went up by 20% between 1993 to 2014, in both men and women
- The percentage of people reporting severe mental health symptoms in any given week rose from 7% in 1993, to over 9% in 2014.
- The number of young women reporting common mental health problems has been going up.

STATISTICS ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UK.

How many people in the UK experience mental health issues?

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England
- 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England
- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts
- 1 in 14 people self-harm

HOW MANY PEOPLE GET TREATMENT?

Reports from both England and Wales suggest that:

- Approximately only 1 in 3 adults with a common mental health problem are currently getting treatment in the form of talking therapies, medication or both.
- The most common treatment offered is psychiatric medication



Me throwing a bowl, petra grog clay.

WHAT IS HEALING?

5 ways to wellbeing

Health
in Mind

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Research by the New Economics Foundation has found there are five ways to look after your mental wellbeing:



Connecting with the people around us is a great way to remind ourselves that we're important and valued by others.

- Arrange to meet people regularly
- Reach out to someone
- Take time to get to know your neighbours



By regularly engaging in some form of exercise we can look after our mental and physical health at the same time.

- Go for a walk during your lunch break
- Walk to work
- Join a local sports club



Taking notice of our thoughts, emotions and surroundings is a great way to stay present and pay attention to our needs.

- Take up a mindful hobby e.g. knitting
- Write down three things you feel grateful for



Learning new things is a good way to meet new people and boost our self confidence, which in turn improves our mental health and wellbeing.

- Try out a new recipe
- Join a class or learn a new language
- Learn something new about the people around you



Research has found a link between doing good things and an increase in wellbeing.

- Try and do one kind thing every day
- Become a Health in Mind Hero by giving your time through volunteering/ fundraising

www.health-in-mind.org.uk



Health in Mind is a charity registered in Scotland SC004128 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland SC124090. The registered office is 40 Sutherland Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT

This poster describes the '5 Ways to Well-being' as mentioned on the NHS website.

These include steps in your everyday life to improve your general mental health. Words that jump out to me are "connect" "self-confidence" and "mindful-hobby" which may be relevant when looking towards making as healing.

Each section can be achieved through making with clay:

1. Clay allows connection, with yourself and with others in a group setting or sharing your clay creation.
2. Clay can be physically demanding, wedging or throwing requires arm and hand strength. This fulfils 'be active'.
3. Playing with clay is perfect for noticing our thoughts and emotions as our hands intuitively tell us our thoughts and feelings. I find depending on my mood whatever I make has a certain essence of my feelings.
4. Keep learning: clay is a never ending and endlessly explored material. It is one of the oldest human crafts and there is so much to learn.
5. Doing a good deed could be giving something you create as a gift. Often, when people first interact with clay they feel excited to give this to someone they care about. It's unique to their hand shape and own personality; its a special gift to receive a handmade ceramic object.

There does seem to be a correlation between doing something physical, that allows you to connect with yourself and others which can make you more present and in tune with how you feel.

My research delves into specific areas of why this is. Including my own material experiments and explanations, to really understand why making and touch (and clay itself) is incredibly valuable.



Fig 1. Modelling clay, coil pot, 2022.



I personally have noticed an increase in mental health issues being acknowledged and spoken about as the years have gone on. However, I strongly feel there is still a stigma around how we tend to heal.

Creativity has always come as a natural and instinctive way for me to express and understand my feelings.

I was encouraged as a child to be messy and make paintings, create sounds and music, make up games with my little world inside the home and outside in nature or a playground.

I have carried this with me into adulthood, often expressing myself through what I make creatively.





Fig 2. natural patterns, 2007.

Me and my childhood best friend creating patterns with our feet and water in the John Majeski garden at the V&A. There is a childhood freedom of self-expression that I feel slowly fades as we age. Making, without pressure on outcome, I feel re-creates this joy in adulthood.



I know a lot of my friends feel a similar way about creating and making...



“Making puts me in a state where time passes by really quickly. I can concentrate on what I’m doing unlike any other activity. Which is very cathartic and feels really positive.” - Jessie



“Making is a way for me to quiet my thoughts. When I’m making, all my energy and focus is put into what I’m making. Being creative is a way to express myself and helps me relax, reflect and connect to myself; I guess it makes me happy. It’s something that’s always felt natural, not like a choice. It’s just something I’ve always found myself doing.” - Yolly



“I’ve always been making, my parents used to encourage us to be artistic, taking us to exhibits and museums as well as making things at home. So now when I am creating it reminds me of them and how I wouldn’t be doing this without them.” - Sholto



“I like playing bass because it’s productive alone time where I can enjoy making noise whilst also being introspective” - Lottie

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How can the act of making bring about better mental health and well-being?

I looked at the Well-Maker Space, which was a workshop organised by Nic Gant, Fiona Hackney and Katie Hill in 2017 at the Making Futures Conference 2017. With the paper on the research published in 2018.

“This workshop sought to build and share understandings of how making might contribute to wellness or, as we term it, ‘well-making’. To this end it offered a range of talks exploring different maker activities, processes and projects that are devised, owned, championed and offered by modern makers in support of health and well-being. The workshop also hosted discussion and reflective activities in order to interrogate the meaning of well-making and the well-maker-space. Run in a gallery space around communal tables covered in paper, cardboard, pens, sewing materials, scissors and tape, the Well-Maker-Space workshop brought together twelve paper presentations from international authors to contribute to prototyping: debating, imagining, questioning, visualising, conceptualising, critiquing and creating a framework (and potential design brief) for the well-maker-space.”

This workshop set out to question the value of making as a tool for individuals and the communities well-being. Making provides a space to allow “questioning, visualising, conceptualising, imagining...” In a way that brings people together but also allows personal growth and self-expression.

“There has long been an implicit notion that making provides benefits beyond the mere function of object, artefact or product creation.”

There is arguably a general agreement that making fosters well-being, seen especially during the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic, where everyone got stuck into new crafts and creative hobbies to keep us all healthy. Why is this emphasis not held during our ordinary lives also?

“Ours to Master a recent report by the Royal Society of Arts, reveals the potential for maker-spaces to boost people’s sense of self-efficacy and wider well-being (Dellot 2015). Maker-spaces seem to offer a particular form of private/public space, as third spaces or ‘great good places’ (Oldenburg 1989) that foster creativity and social interactions, the health benefits of which require further attention if we are to better understand and maximise the value of the arts in our communities.”

There is a sense of boosting our own abilities when we create something. Whatever it is, we have achieved something physical, to hold, show to others and give us a sense of confidence.

“What is evident from the papers, and workshop speakers and participants’ contribution to prototyping activities is that the phenomenon of well-making and the well-maker-space is meaningful for a diverse and multidisciplinary range of projects, practitioners, and communities in varied contexts locally, nationally, and internationally. It works across art,



well maker space

craft, and design practices; happens in public at the market, and privately at home; is shared online or in person, but common to all is the fact that the act of making embodies, enables, or realises well-being. While we all use making as a tool to foster well-being, we do so differently according to such variables as the specifics of a design problem/brief, the nature and needs of participants we are working with, the modes of craft practice we employ, the contexts in which we work, our parameters and contingencies, and the complex inter-relationship between all these, among other things. “

There seems to be many places where ‘Well-Making’ can be achieved. For me, and my project, I ask how we can do that through clay as through this course I’ve discovered a passion and emotional alignment with the material.



Fig 3, Making Patterns on a slab exercise, Modelling clay, 2022.

At University we share workshop spaces allowing our own artistic community to develop. It means creating in a cohort but also having space as an individual. You learn to feel comfortable allowing your own self-expression in the presence of others, without having to explain yourself. Instead, your hands and work do the talking.

Thus, alleviating pressure and building confidence.





Resources

The Healing Power of Art

Learn formalizations, reflections, and somatic exercises around art and well-being.

2014 No. 9 / Healing Through Art & Health

Healing through Creativity

Using Art to Ease the Effects of Trauma

By Ann Sengul



A gallery at the Healing through Creativity Festival in Danvers, New Virginia, September 2014. Photo courtesy of George Koberstein.

artnet news

Science & Tech

In an Astounding New Book, a Neuroscientist Reveals the Profound Real-World Benefits Art Has on Our Brains

Neuroscientist Pieter Leemans explains how we need "medicine that's a little artistic."

Research Letter, March 6, 2014

Hope & Healing: The UF Health Blog

The Connection Between Creativity and Healing

Published Feb 1, 2014 By Ann Sengul
Category: Health, Living, Alternative Medicine

As a 2-year-old pediatric patient scribbles furiously in a coloring book, she's not thinking about the pain in her body, the constant beep of monitors or strangers waiting for up in the middle of the night for a routine blood pressure check. She's thinking about the black and white outlines on the page, the explosion of colors in the crayon line and creating a masterpiece for Daddy. She's not thinking about healing, but that's exactly what's happening.

Creativity can be a mood booster, a pain reliever and a welcome distraction to an otherwise dull day.

"Most of us feel that there is no time for the indulgence of making." Eric Muller, director of UF Health Shands Arts in Medicine Program. "In Arts in Medicine, we stress that it's not about setting time aside to make great art, but rather being creative in the moment - whenever you are. Take five minutes to draw a coffee cup, mandala right at your desk. Notice the excitement as you walk to your next meeting and snap a picture with your phone. These simple activities engage the brain in ways that encourage a mental shift, reduce stress, and simply make you feel better. And that's all it takes, why not do it every day?"

The Connection Between Creativity and Healing

A 2012 study of more than 30 patients with chronic stress and cancer, creativity including visual art activities, had a positive effect. Patients reported feelings less stress and anxiety, a decrease in negative emotions, and improved medical outcomes. Patients also believed the art projects distracted them from unpleasant thoughts about their disease, and helped them express the grief they felt as a result of the disease and treatment.

Individuals who are relatively healthy can also find magic in creativity, as well as a break from their always-connected world.

"It can be incredibly easy to get consumed - from emails, television, social media, and other technological demands - instead of create. Creating allows us to turn off these distractions and contribute something to the world. That helps restore balance to your life, which can improve your mood." Muller said.

THE HEALING POWER OF ART & ARTISTS

We are a global community of Artists & Advocates. We believe Art serves as a catalyst for healing individuals, society and our environment. This is an initiative of the National Arts Administration, NAC, NEA.

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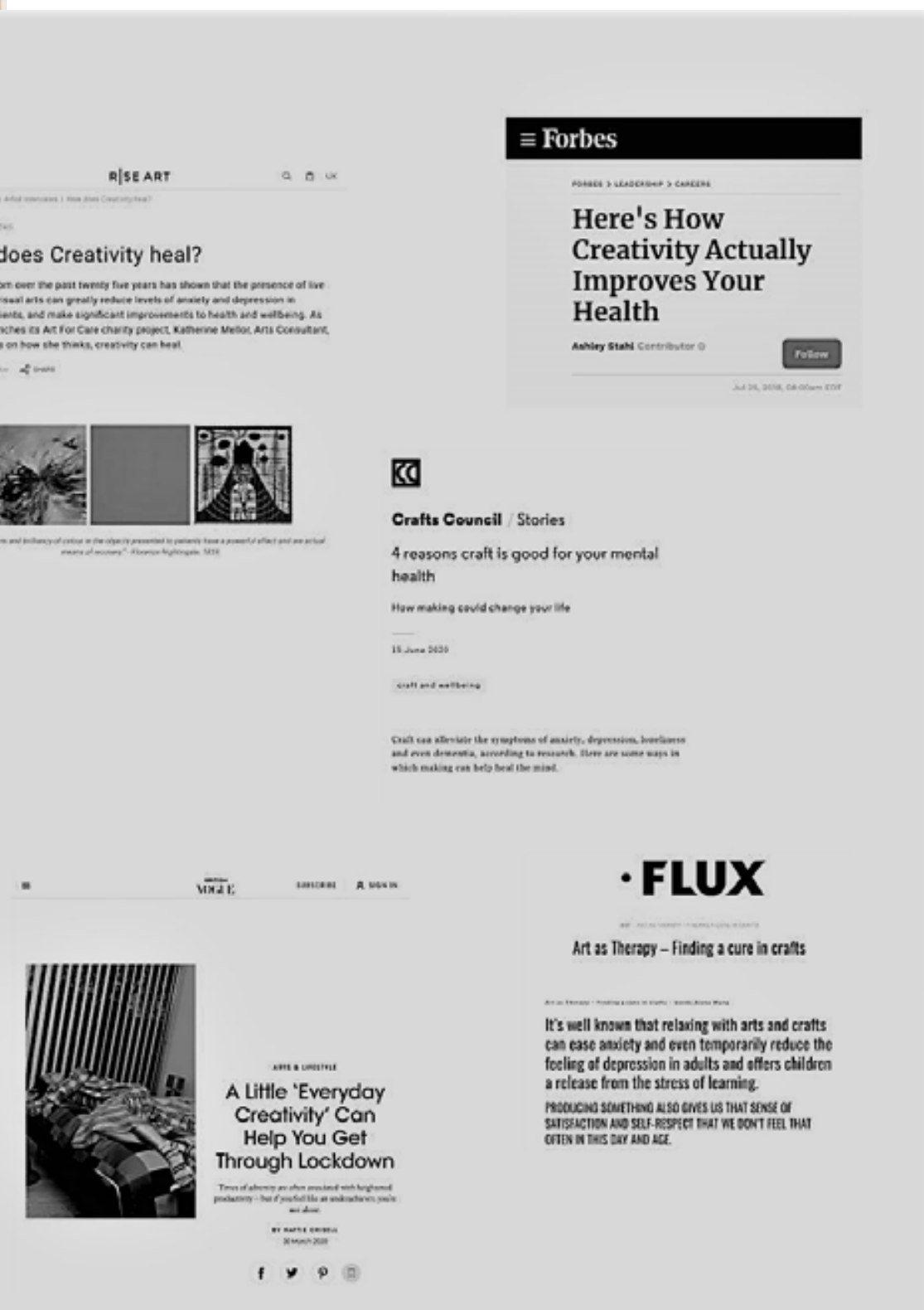
ARTICLES RESOURCES SUBSCRIBE

You are here: Home / Art News / Creativity Good For Your Health

Creativity is Good For Your Health

By Ann Sengul - 1/16/2014





Here is a collage of some headlines that come up on google if you search "healing through craft. There is information from specific art organisations, but also publications like Vogue and reputable news sources such as Forbes.

These will be included in the bibliography if you are interested to read them. But it shows that the well-being aspect of being creative and making is a bigger part of pop culture and mainstream media.

T O U C H.



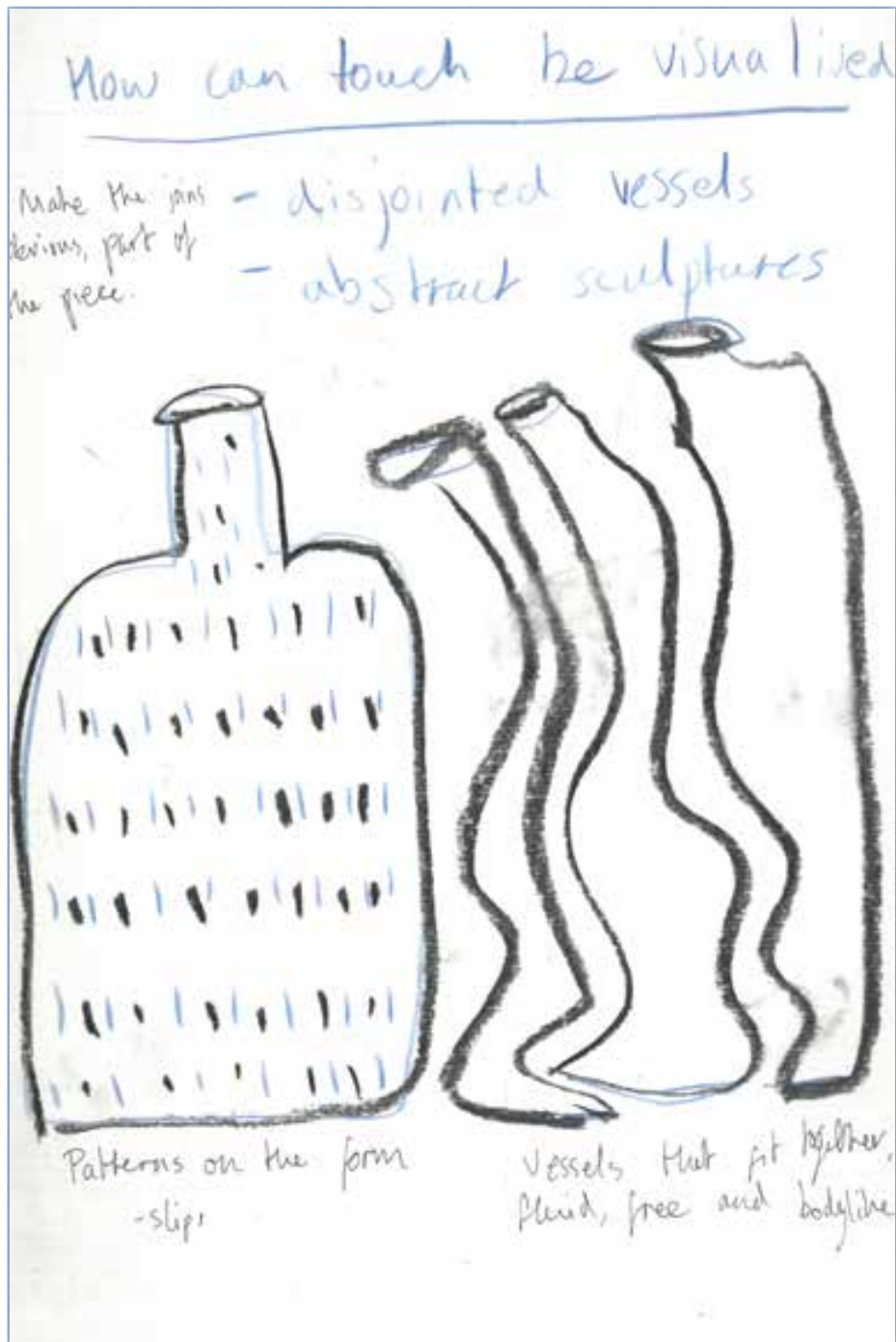
Fig 4 & 5, finger imprints and pattern, 2022

Here is a making exercise I performed which involved rhythmically pressing similar sized balls of clay in between my fingers. I started from my thumb, worked my way to my pinky, then started again. I spent about fifteen minutes overall and noticed how the repetition brought a sense of calm and focus on my hands and the motion of the action. I could feel the cool clay form around

my fingers and then view how each piece looked similar, but was unique depending on the finger and how much pressure I used.

After fifteen minutes I started to create patterns with the pieces. Together, there seems to be a new story than just one by itself. There is something more poignant and powerful about multiple objects and not just the one.





“Touch is the least susceptible to deception and hence the one in which we tend to put the most trust - Constance Classen.

Perhaps this notion of touch as truth and as something deeply personal can be reflected onto ourselves through the medium of clay.

The marks I make, almost like drawing or sketching but using clay instead of pencils and paper, is completely unique to me physically but also me emotionally. I convey who I am without even trying to

achieve anything. Simply the act and motion of intuitive or repetitive making makes something unique.

“In the bubble of privacy that people maintain around themselves, touch perhaps represents the most direct invasion”.- Constance Classen

Touch is seen as intimate and something we protect. Therefore in making, sharing our touch through what we make is authentic and vulnerable.

MOONJAR WITH PROTRUSION.



In this making exercise I further tried to explore visualising touch. I imagined a moon vessel would feel nice to cup in your hands, but wanted to add my own physicality to the form also.



Fig 6, coild built vessel, modelling clay, 2022

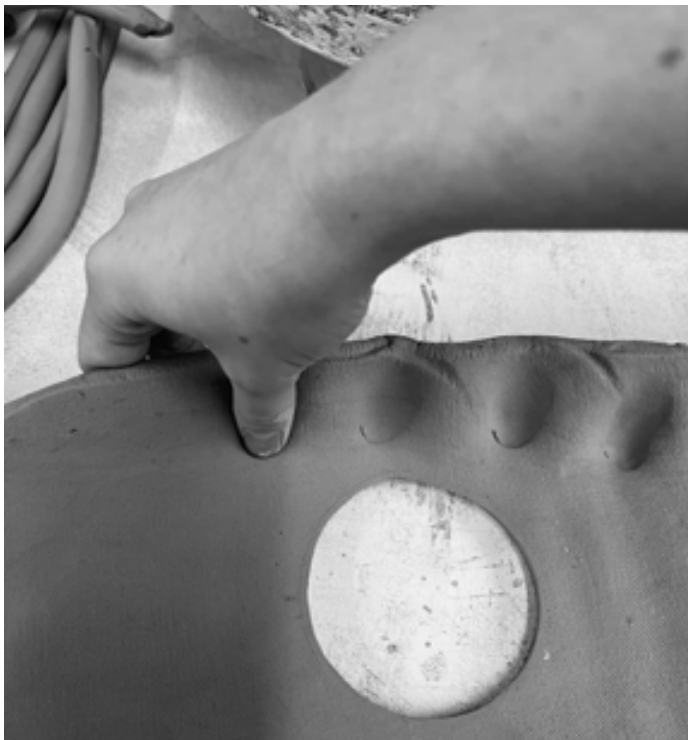
Here is another hand built vessel, using the coiling method. I then warped the shape by pressing the form with my hands, making it bulge and twist in unusual ways. I then pressed my thumb around the upper and lower edges. I enjoyed the process of this, but did not visually enjoy the outcome. How can I blend both process and outcome to be enjoyable?

MOONJAR WITH IMPRINT.





Fig 7, 8 & 9, Thumb print moon jar,
Modelling clay, 2022



These are thumbprint experiments I explored in order to make protruding shapes on a handmade moon vessel shape. I found this ultimately to be unsuccessful as the lip was heavier than the thumb prints so the narrative of touch became lost. Next time I will need to make it clear what the original shape is made from instead of making it ambiguous; thus making the narrative of touch and healing getting lost in translation. This balance is something I will be constantly having to critically think about.



The Intervention of Touch in Psychotherapy and Trauma Treatment

Patricia Berendsen

Introduction to Touch in Psychotherapy and Trauma Treatment

Therapists regularly deal with psychological issues that arise from developmental disruptions and trauma-related experiences. As clinicians we are brought into the lives of our clients when they are not vulnerable, fearful, desperate, feeling alone in the world, and wounded. We find ourselves in direct contact with stories that illustrate various aspects of trauma.

Touch in therapy could be an important therapeutic tool, particularly in areas of trauma where touch was absent or withheld. However, touch in trauma and therapy is usually hinged on a word: DON'T! More often than not, we are discouraged from touching our clients for fear of crossing boundaries, transference or counter-transference, or allegations of wrongdoing. Older (1977) and Ison (1982) echoed sentiments that continue to this day: Many therapists have used touch but do not talk about it. Clinicians tend to be rigid by the flood of scientific data supporting the relationship between the body and psychotherapy. However, most mainstream therapists trained in talk therapy are ill-equipped to make the transition to include somatically based modalities (Berendsen, 2011, p. 32). In fact, research by Strasser, Kriek, and Sale (2003) suggests that 82% of social workers report that touch was inadequately addressed in their educational training (p. 37).

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The body/mind connection is well informed & researched but touch is usually absent in talking based therapies.

Trauma patients can experience touch in a negative setting so re-framing touch positively can be healing

Touch brings empathy & connection. When sad, often you don't want advice but just a receipt of touch and understanding from a hug for example. It's fundamental to our relationships.

this

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TOUCH IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

It would appear that the clinical landscape regarding touch is changing and furthermore needs to change. Neuroscientists have confirmed the integration of the body, mind, and emotions. Thus, somatic approaches to therapy, including touch, will become increasingly necessary within our talk therapy framework. We will need to develop body- and touch-literacy skills. The importance of a connected and empathic therapeutic presence is vital (Berendsen, 2011; Hutterer and Liss, 2006). Touch is one of the ways that a client can experience this empathic response.

Although some relationships have had the impact of wounding and hurting a human being, other relationships, including the therapeutic one, can nurture and support healing. One byproduct of trauma can be isolation. Connection and relationship, however, can become the antidote to trauma and isolation. Touch can be a necessary intervention, which in turn can help to establish a sense of self, a sense of belonging, and connection. Touch can also be highly effective in enhancing therapeutic alliance, which is the best predictor of positive therapeutic outcomes. As such, touch in therapy may be moving from an occasional occurrence to an essential and staple intervention.

Exploring Theory and Research: A Rationale for Touch in Trauma Therapy

Touch is inherent to our humanity. Our survival and ability to thrive is dependent on touch (Montagu, 1971; Feldman and Eidelman, 2007). As infants we are touched, cuddled, and rocked, yet instances of touch decline as we grow older. This reduction in touch occurs despite the fact that our "touch hunger" does not diminish over time. From this perspective, most of us could be suffering from "skin starvation." Suffice it to say that being human and needing touch are integrally connected. An awareness of ourselves through skin contact of some sort does seem to be important for an ongoing sense of self. Touch is one of the most essential elements of human development. Through touch we transmit through touch constitute the most powerful means of establishing human relationships; the foundation of experience (Montagu, 1996, p. xv).

Touch is important in bonding and attachment (Ainsworth and Wittig, 1969; Bowlby, 1988; Harlow, 1959). Touch and emotion are our first language. According to Montagu (1971), the skin is the "self's

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Eyckmans (2009) describes in detail her experiences as a therapist in different cultures, illustrating the importance of context and utilizing a culturally sensitive framework. According to Kepner (2001), "we must come to understand how we embody the cultural, as well as personal beliefs, and attitudes that make touch forbidden or frightening" (p. 74).

Touch supports communication with others (Courtney and Gray, 2014; Salzman-Erikson and Eriksson, 2005). Horton, Claror and Sterk-Elifson (1995) found that clients indicated a deeper trust and stronger attachment with the therapist when touch was used in therapy. Clients attribute touch to creating a feeling of being connected or a sense that the therapist really cares. Salzman-Erikson and Eriksson (2005), in their research on the meaning of touch with patients who have been treated for psychosis, describe that through touch, clients can feel a sense of belonging and safety. In my therapy practice, I can recall a middle-aged woman with severe eating issues. When I responded warmly to her request for a hug at the end of her session she looked up with tears in her eyes and said, "You know, I can't believe you would hug me. I didn't know I was deserving of being touched by anyone. I don't feel so unlovable. Thank you!"

Touch facilitates communication and clients' comfort. Clients tend toward increased self-disclosure when touched (Pattison, 1972; Mintz, 1969; Eiden, 1998). Salzman-Erikson and Eriksson (2005) reported that according to clients "feelings get communicated in the act of touching" (p. 848). In addition, touch contributes to greater openness with the therapist. As clients are able to verbalize their feelings, they increase their potential to reach developmental milestones that may have been missed (Goodman and Trecher, 1988; Ture, 2005). Montagi (1971) asserts that "taking almost anyone's hand under conditions of stress is likely to exert a soothing effect, and by reducing anxiety and giving a feeling of greater security" (p. 216). The give someone your hand is not just a physical action, it is a welcome into a shared world that therapists, but also clients initiate" (Rasmark, Richt, and Rudebeck, 2014, p. 5). Salzman-Erikson and Eriksson (2005) indicated that "The need for touching becomes stronger when one's mental health is in deterioration. Touch from another human being has a comforting and supportive function" (p. 847).

Touch promotes awareness and affirms the sense of the self. Touch can facilitate and support the successful sense experience of the client. This can allow the client to be with an intense feeling or emotion and

keep their "witness" on board. In this way, touch can help a client to maintain full awareness of both the present and the past. In addition, the client's self-awareness tends to provide increased self-explanation (Courtney and Gray, 2014). Touch can support the acquisition of skills to enable clients to identify and experience their physiological sensations (Davis, 2001). Touch also affirms the sense of self (Peloquin, 1989; Mintz, 1969; Eiden, 1998; Courtney and Gray, 2014). Through touch, a therapist can communicate the message that "I accept you," "I see you," or "I am here for you." Horton, Claror, Sterk-Elifson and Emshoff (1995) examined individuals in therapy with a non-body-oriented psychotherapist who experienced some sort of physical contact beyond accidental contact or a formal handshaking with the therapist. Interestingly, 71% of patients who reported a history of abuse identified that touch enhanced self-esteem, trust, and a sense of their own power. Some patients reported that touch helped them to feel that they were worthy of respectful touch, stating, "touch helped me learn I was lovable" (p. 451).

Touch assists in the development of intimacy. Rasmark, Richt and Rudebeck (2014) noted that professionalism involves using not only our competencies, but also our physical and emotional contact to deepen the relation. When people touch, the distance between them decreases. Touch can be a means of closeness in the therapy room. However, since touch is a form of intimacy, the timing of touch is important. Nuances of knowing when to touch and when not to touch deepen the therapeutic relationship.

Touch helps client access/express pre-verbal material (Shaw, 1996). Steiner, Krizek and Sale (2003) suggest that touch itself may facilitate clients "getting in touch" with emotions that may not be obvious in psychotherapy. "Respectful, reassuring touch seemed to help many patients feel supported and safe enough to move into threatening material on a deeper level" (Horton et al., 1995, p. 451). Furthermore, touch can be a means of processing pre-verbal material that literally has no voice, only sensations. In addition, touch can facilitate touch-promoting when the client is incapable of verbal communication, perhaps where there has been a deficit in childhood (Bosanquet, 1970; Mintz, 1969; Toronto, 2006). In these instances, it is imperative for the therapist to meet the client at the somatic level as words can sometimes be experienced as misattunement.

Touch is needed when someone is ill. Touch can bring us out of a distressed state with considerable ease. Bowlby writes that the need

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- idea of feeling
safe and loved
enough to
process difficult thoughts



Fig. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 'The Jar of Touch', clay moulded on my body, modelling clay, stoneware, 2023

THE JAR OF TOUCH.



Fig. 15, the act of making hand moulds and shapes, modelling clay, 2023



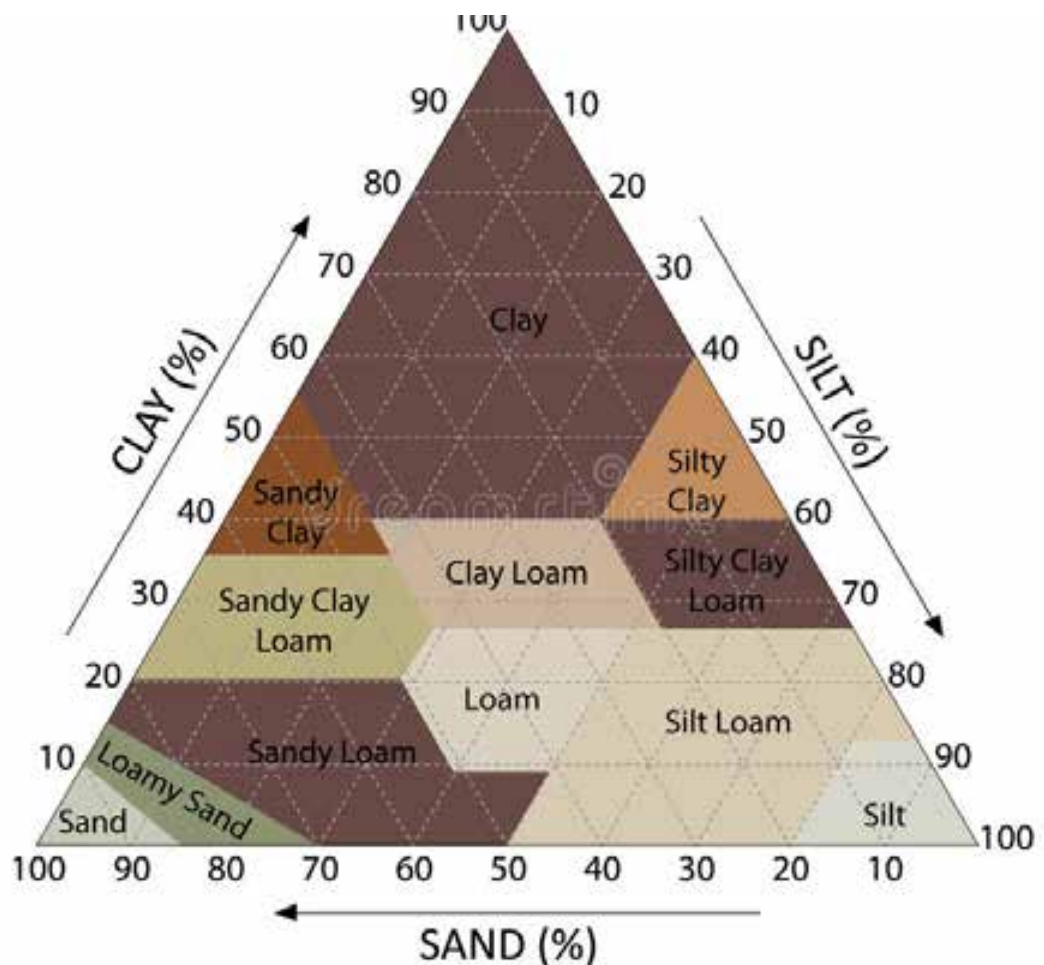
WHAT IS CLAY?

Clay, soil particles the diameters of which are less than 0.005 millimetre; also a rock that is composed essentially of clay particles. Rock in this sense includes soils, ceramic clays, clay shales, mudstones, glacial clays (including great volumes of detrital and transported clays), and deep-sea clays (red clay, blue clay, and blue mud). These are all characterized by the presence of one or more clay minerals, together with varying amounts of organic and detrital materials, among which quartz is predominant. Clay materials are plastic when wet, and coherent when dry. Most clays are the result of weathering.

No other earth material has so wide an importance or such extended uses as do the clays. They are used in a wide variety of industries. As soils, they provide the environment for almost all plant growth

and hence for nearly all life on the Earth's surface. They provide porosity, aeration, and water retention and are a reservoir of potassium oxide, calcium oxide, and even nitrogen.

Taken from Britannica.



WHY CLAY?

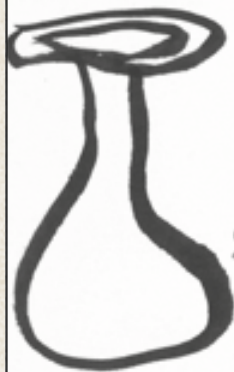
EARTHY

It is an organic natural material that appears everywhere.



INSTINCTUAL

You want to pick it up, touch and play with it.



DESTRUCTION

It can be completely destroyed, and made into something new, then destroyed again. It can be re-used over and over.



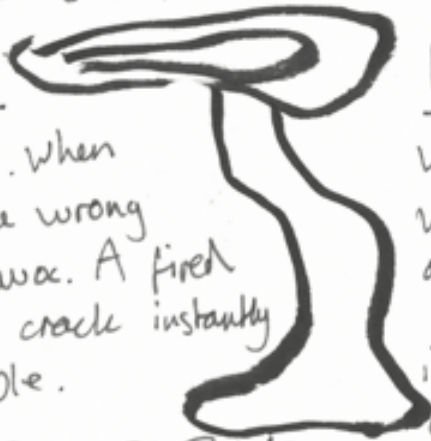
STRENGTH

Once fired, it becomes permanent. Lasting thousands of years.



FRAGILITY

It is also delicate. When making ceramics one wrong move can cause havoc. A fired piece dropped can crack instantly and become unusable.



MESSY

Working with clay and water creates a lot of mess, on workspaces as well as yourself. There is freedom in it. But also a responsibility to clear it up after playing.

UNPREDICTABLE

There are so many variables: clay type, method of making, kiln, glaze, .. Unexpected surprises or disasters.



FAMILIAR

We walk along the Earth's crust, and everyone interacts with ceramics on a daily bases. It forms our history. Most people are familiar with it.

MALLEABLE

It is a material that yearns to be pulled, rolled, squished, squeezed, youred, hit. It takes any shape you desire with minimal effort, or lots of skill.

IMAGINATIVE

The possibilities of what can be done with clay are endless.

ART THERAPY.

Taken from the British Association of Art Therapists:

- *Art therapy is an established form of psychological therapy delivered by trained art therapists / art psychotherapists. It's designed to help anyone, including those whose life has been affected by adverse experiences, illness or disability, by supporting their social, emotional and mental health needs.*
- *Why is art therapy needed? Art therapy participants use art to express their experiences, to find the words to articulate how they have been affected, and to support their well-being, and any social, emotional and mental health needs.*
- *When our lives are affected by adversity, it can have an impact on our well-being – but this experience may be difficult to put into words. Because of this, art therapists are often able to work with people who have not been able to access talking therapies. In this way, art therapy helps to ensure that no one is left behind.*
- *Who is art therapy suitable for? Art therapy can be used by anyone of any cultural background and age (infants and parents, children, young people, adults and older people). Participants are usually interested in what creativity and imagination can offer, but do not need any previous experience in making art.*
- *How is art therapy regulated? To practise as an art therapist or art psychotherapist in the UK, it is a legal requirement to complete a training course validated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC also maintains a register of qualified art therapists.*

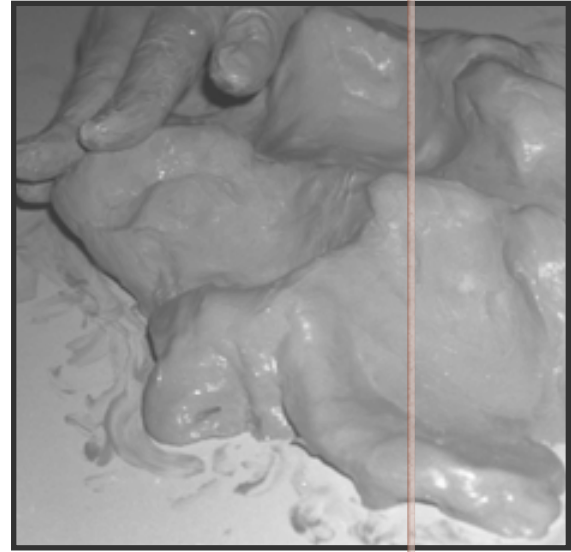


Fig. I6, touching clay, water, modelling clay, 2022

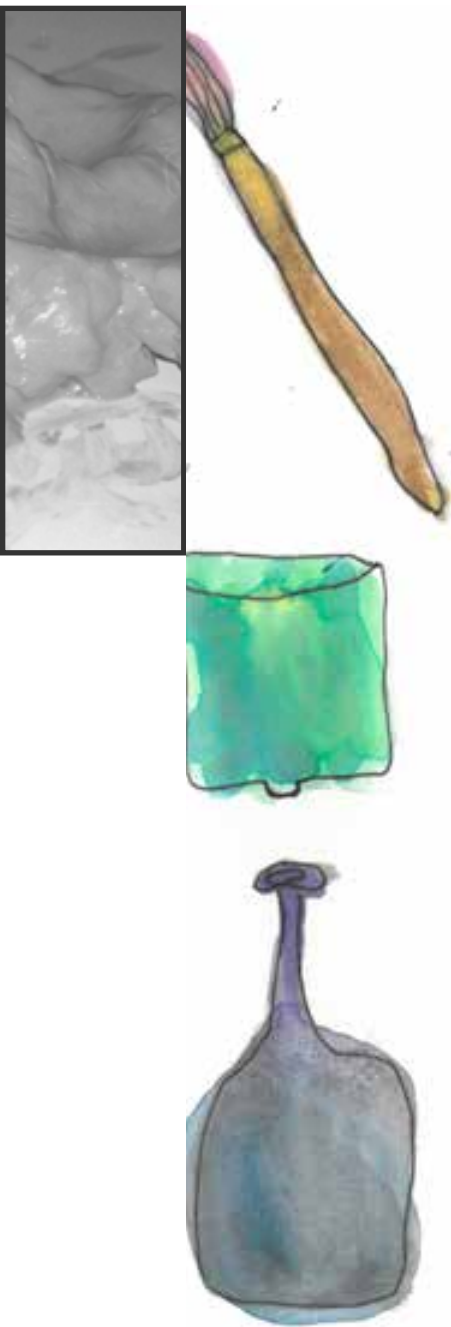
Art Therapy is linked to personal growth, not just the handling of symptoms such as depression, anxiety or PTSD. It allows non-verbal self expression to gain a greater understanding of complex emotions that may be difficult to word. It is more about the creative process itself than the final object. Ultimately, the purpose of art therapy is to communicate experience. It can be particularly useful for those with disabilities, children or people with dementia due to the connection and communication being non-verbal. However, art therapy is useful for anyone who wants to do it. Everyone struggles with verbalising complex emotions.

As Edith Kramer says, a pioneer of art therapy:

“Art tells the truth”

Taken from the NHS Website, highlighting the increasing emphasis on creativity and the arts being promoted to improve the nations health:

- As detailed in the landmark report Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Well-being, arts and



- culture are making great strides in helping to keep people well, aid recovery and support longer lives better lived.
- Music therapy, for example, has been found to reduce agitation and the need for medication in 67% of people with dementia. An arts-on-prescription project has seen a 37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions. And, a study conducted within deprived communities in London found that, of those people who engaged with the arts, 79% ate more healthily and 77% engaged in more physical activity and 82% enjoyed greater wellbeing (cited from the Creative Health: The Arts for Health Well-being report).
- In fact, the Government's own analysis of its data on arts participation rates in England estimates that the total annual NHS cost savings due to reductions in GP visits is £168.8 million.
- As local systems develop plans to take forward the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan, the arts sector is increasingly seen as an integral player in the health and care offer. With a proven ability to make a mark on issues including health inequalities, mental health, long-term conditions and ageing, the sector can make an invaluable contribution to a healthy and health-creating society.
- Southbank Centre has long been an advocate of the role of the arts and culture in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. From its conception with the 1951 Festival of Britain – often described as a tonic for the nation's wellbeing following the Second World War – to the Changing Minds festival, a dedicated weekend-long festival, which

explored mental health and the arts. In more recent years, this has been more formalised through a plethora of ongoing initiatives to tackle these issues.

Taken from the Wellcome Trust:

A UK study of adult mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic has found that more than a fifth of a 70,000-person sample engaged more with the arts during lockdown than before. Researchers have also found that Google searches for prayer reached their highest ever levels at this time, with many finding meaning through psychology and philosophy.

the Covid Living project emerged from Wellcome's attempts to understand the mental health component of the pandemic. It experimented with forms of cultural enquiry in order to sample direct insights from 14-to-24-year-olds experiencing the first global pandemic in a century.

It was developed with film-maker Jack Arbuthnot and the creative agency Flying Object, whose agile imaginations concocted a range of ways to spend time on-line with young people in their homes in unusually taxing circumstances around the world. This collaborative exercise resulted in a form of 'remote documentary':

"When I indulge in art... my mind doesn't wander to different places. Specifically to the things that make me anxious." (25 year-old female from India).

I really feel the after effects of the global pandemic, especially with younger peers. A lack of socialisation and more time to spend in your head on your worries means worsening mental health problems. I truly believe making and art can be a huge factor in improving well-being.

CLAY THERAPY.

WHAT IS CLAY THERAPY?

Introducing Clay Therapy

Clay Therapy is a form of active psychotherapy where unidentified and unexpressed feelings and emotions become visible through physical manipulation of clay. Working with clay in therapy is potentially both powerful and profound because worries that previously have caused inner concern or turmoil are given shape and form in the outer world. When problems can be seen it is easier to share difficulties by talking them through with a qualified practitioner in a safe environment.

Clay Therapy enables communication when problems are hard to put into words. This makes it a universal language for fostering emotional intelligence and is especially helpful when working with issues such as anger, bereavement, loss, attachment, separation, harassment, bullying, sexual identity, transgender issues, shame, and guilt.

How Clay Therapy Works

In a safe space, when a respectful working relationship has been created the qualified therapist invites the client to work freely with a lump or block of clay creating whatever takes shape. When talking is not required the fingers and hands, wrists, elbows or maybe feet make contact with the medium by simply holding, smoothing, squeezing, squashing, bashing or using some other action. This touching of

earth in the form of clay frequently initiates right and left brain communication whereby forgotten ideas and buried experiences and memories are activated bringing them more into consciousness.

Most people find touching clay is a pleasant experience and since no specific prior skills or knowledge are needed it is rare that a client experiences failure in being able to work with the medium.

Who benefits from Clay Therapy?

Clay Therapists use clay to work with all age groups from three upwards. Children and adolescents engage with clay in a purposeful way helping them to release feelings and they rarely worry about making a mess.

Individual adults, couples and groups find that once clay has been touched by them in a therapy session an outlet for expression has been activated.

Clay is particularly useful for people from different cultural backgrounds. Likewise children, adolescents and adults with learning or physical disabilities are able to access Clay Therapy.

Taken from Claytherapy.org

I liked living in my old village. We had a house where my mum and me lived with my two brothers and our animals. We had two dogs and three cats and some fish. Sometimes it was a bit messy at home but mostly it was ok. I liked feeding our pets. I did this because I was the oldest child and I wanted to help mum because she was always very busy and it wasn't easy. That was when I was eight. Soon afterwards we moved to our new house so we could be nearer our grandad who is getting quite old - we couldn't bring all our pets because it's a smaller house and we're not supposed to have animals in this house my mum says! This is me making



Fig. 17, an example of clay therapy from one of Lynne's patients.

INTERVIEW WITH DR LYNNE SOUTER-ANDERSON.

“We are of the earth, our chemicals and minerals come from the earth. When we are working with clay and touching it, its almost as if we are touching ourselves”

Lynne started her career as an art, pottery, drama, and textiles teacher. Her counselling background overlapped her teaching career and she then qualified as a therapist in 1989. Her trainer urged her to blend her art training with her talking therapy. In 2001 she was deciding which avenue to go down, and through a cup of tea with a friend was offered ... came out of full-time secondary school teaching to do so.

Lynne herself has a background in ceramics; she also comes from five generations of potters! She describes still naturally reaching for clay when she has the urge to understand her own feelings. Her work now Combines all three areas; teaching, therapy, and clay. She doesn't describe it as work, but as a passion. The joy in her voice when she talks about it is truly moving.

In the beginning, Lynne describes peoples curiosity at how clay can be used to help people talk. Now, people come specifically for clay therapy. During the pandemic Lynne was asked if she could provide clay therapy training online, but she states, “no, its so deep and profound I don't think its safe to do online”.

She developed the clay conversations course, teaching people who may work in a care setting (teachers, librarians, foster parents etc.) on how to use clay safely; meaning how to use clay to help somebody open up, but knowing the importance of referring it onto a therapist if it becomes deep emotional stuff.

When she completed her doctorate in 2011 the Head of the Programme at the Metanoia Institute, Ealing noted that there will come a time when Lynne would also need to create a clay supervisors' course. This means someone who is doing clay therapy has someone to refer back to. As therapy is often one to one, the clinical supervisor can help the therapist unpack what is going on with the clients. This means

Offering guidance and making sure the therapist isn't becoming enmeshed with the client.

So now there are three avenues Clay conversations, clay therapy and clay supervisors. At this point I ask; what is the boundary between art and therapy?

Lynne noted that often in art therapy training there is not an emphasis of using clay. Clay therapy is it's own discipline, with its own theoretical underpinning.

Lynne then spoke on clay and healing.

- “Spirituality is about healing, its about being with nature”.
- “We are working with ourselves; we are forming something that is important to us”.
- “We have millions of nerve endings in our fingertips, so when we are working with the clay (and different parts of the hand have different meanings as well) we are really sending messages through our spinal column into our brain and that's when connections are being made”.
- “Working with clay often regresses us to an earlier time”.
- “When working with clay we are in our own little world”.
- “Working with clay relaxes us, it alters our frame of mind, and it takes us into another place. These states of unconscious streams of thinking -

“The impermanence of clay and the soil is so like the human psyche, its constantly changing.”

- -Become almost like a trance.”
- “You are with yourself; its wonderful, the whole world can just go away”.
- “Clay offers a space to be quiet and reflective”.
- “Clay has a way of bypassing the intellect and goes straight to where something needs to be expressed”.
- “We can start working with clay without knowing what we are going to make, and something materialises. If we don't like what we've done, we can squash it and start again. In this sense, it's very friendly. It's very forgiving.”

Because clay goes through different states, it can be more wet or dry. It can transform naturally. But we can also get the pleasure of destroying it and starting from scratch with exactly the same material! It no longer “squishes” but cracks. Waiting to be hydrated again, to be moulded into a new form of being. I mentioned the relief felt when smashing clay in the reclaim room at university, Lynne suggested we name it the “regression room”.

Anyone who is interested with working with the clay, is a good candidate for clay therapy. Its a kinaesthetic activity which makes it particularly useful for people with disabilities, its easier to get stuck into. Lynne kindly shared a story of her late father when I asked how to ease people into clay therapy who may be sceptical or “defended”.

Lynne needed photographs for her second book, so asked her father and husband if they would be willing to help. To her delight, neither wanted to stop working with clay once they had gotten over the initial hurdle of starting. Lynne ended up using her fathers (who was in his eighties, and had never worked with clay) creation for the front cover.



“Clay has a way of bypassing the intellect and goes straight to where something needs to be expressed”

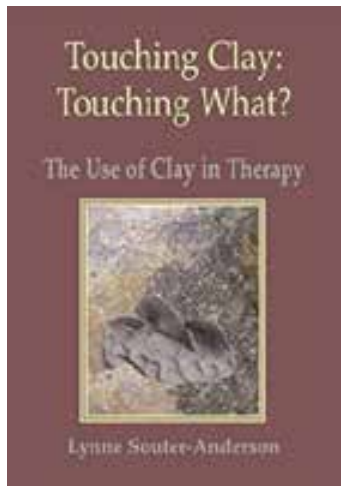
There is something playful and child-like about making with clay, it is unsophisticated. I also think that working with a 3D, tactile material seems to have more of a presence. Perhaps, there is less pressure and shame about its ‘child-like’ appearance, that potentially drawing; which requires more skill. A sense of pride within yourself is made just by creating something with your own hands.

Lynne asked a family friend, who was a builder, how would you feel about trying clay therapy? He answered he would give it a go, as it seems easier than talking. He explained that you don't have someone “staring you down.” In this sense it allows client and therapist to meet in the middle, having something to communicate through that isn't intimidating or confrontational, when someone may be heavily defended.

When Lynne did her masters and doctorate there wasn't much academic support, so her work has come from within herself. She herself had been trying to find a theoretical underpinning for it. She questioned, how can I write about it, how can it be taken seriously?

Lynne taught art GCSE in the mid-nineties. For their final exams the students were asked to do a project titled ‘Myself’. Lynne was surprised at how many students did it on the theme of death; making with clay seemed to bridge a gap that words couldn't fulfil. Lynne had learnt more about her students in ten hours than the years she had actually taught them. This made her realise just how powerful clay could be in communicating repressed emotions. These youngsters were telling Lynne their own story, she often says: “Let your hands tell the story.”

As children, we used to play in the earth. At the beach we would want to dig in the sand, we would mould this land or when she was younger, she would make marble runs. This connection with the earth, like sand or soil, that draws us in.



Lynne's first book published in 2010.



Lynne's second book, with the spider her father made on the front cover, published in 2015.

It's very interesting for me, as someone who grew up in the early 2000's, on the cusp of the digital age as we know it, but I also remember a time when there was only one computer in the house and no phones. I have experienced relying heavily on my imagination as a youngster, but also the normality of a conscious stream of content from social media and the internet. I know often my peers, when feeling anxious or low, will take a break from social media and go back to activities that seem to clear your mind; such as walking or making. This was even seen during the height of lock-down, when a huge rise in arts and crafts came about in the name of better mental health.

There does seem to be a link with doing something that makes you present, allowing yourself to feel how you feel, a link with the Earth around you, that is linked to better mental health.

Lynne then pointed out people are often drawn to gardening in older age, showing a strong bond with the Earth. It's an activity that not only nurtures yourself (exercise, fresh air and a routine/ meditation) but also nurtures our planet and community.

At the end of our conversation, when I was discussing the idea of permanence and impermanence when talking about raw clay vs. fired, Lynne told me about how she lets pieces of clay dry out; before giving them back to the earth. So, in her garden, she has big patches of clay all in different stages of existence. In the end, it all goes back to nature.

To learn more about clay therapy Lynne has a website, <https://www.claytherapy.co.uk/>, where you can find out more information about what she does and the courses she offers.

Questions I asked Lynne:

1. What is your academic and professional background? How did you end up doing clay therapy?
2. Do you have an artistic background or interest in the arts?
3. What do you feel is unique about using clay in a therapy setting opposed to just talking therapies? Is there a particular benefit in using your hands instead of words as a tool for self-expression?
4. Is there a particular type of person that can benefit from clay therapy?
5. Is there a particular client, or moment, where you really saw a breakthrough due to using clay therapy? (Client can remain anonymous/ a different name used?)
6. Would you say you generally have to ease clients into the process, or do they all start digging in? Do you have any tips/techniques that work in most cases?
7. Have you used clay therapy on yourself?
8. If you could tell someone who didn't know anything about art therapy, and had never even heard of clay therapy; one reason why it's important and useful; what would you say?

“It’s a very powerful, very potent medium.”



Fig. 18, something a client made during clay therapy from Lynne’s website.

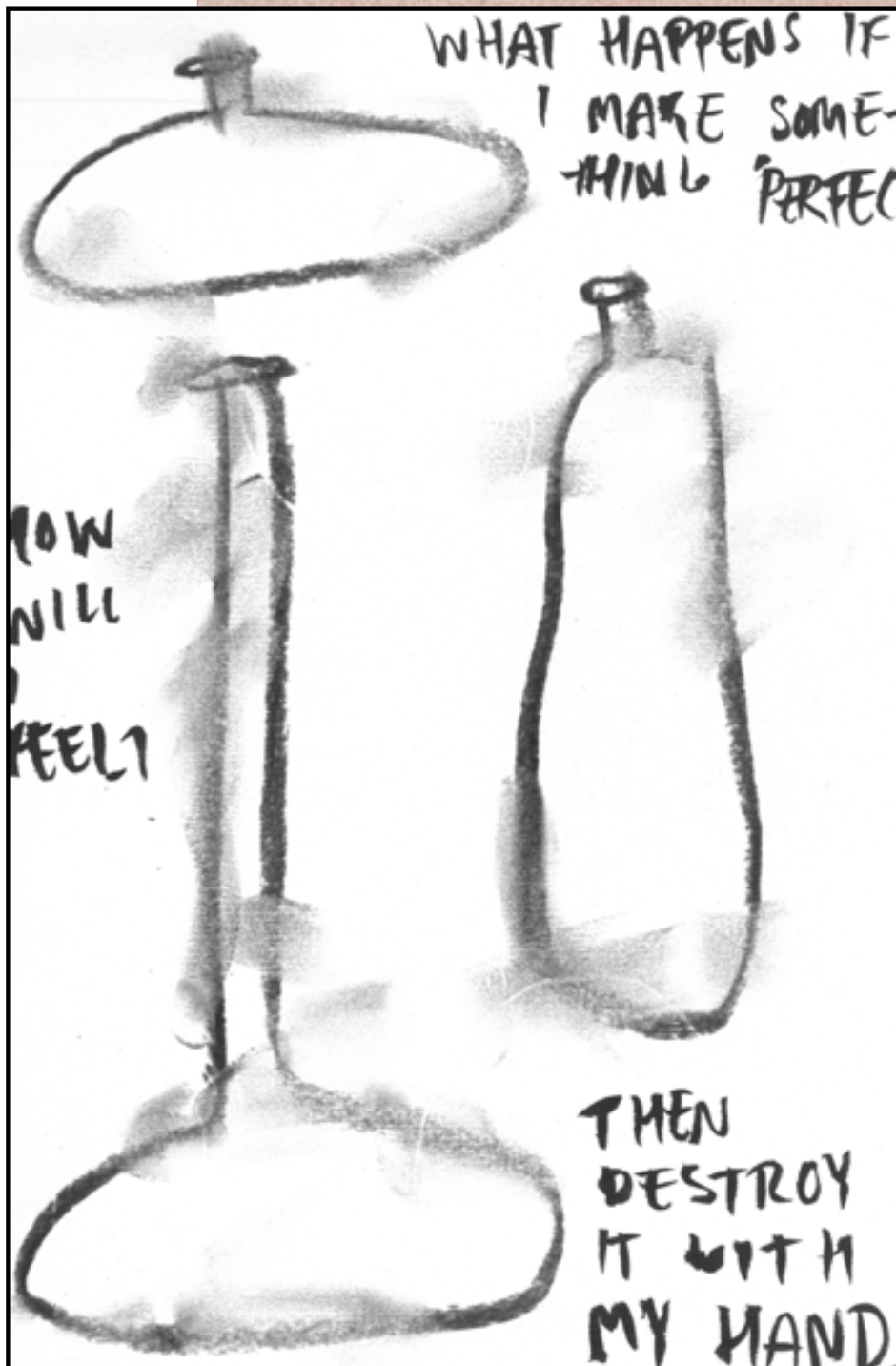




Fig. 19, feeling clay, modelling clay, water, 2022

CLAY FIELD THERAPY

CLAY FIELD THERAPY...

is a flat rectangular wooden box that holds 10 - 15 kg of clay. A bowl of water is supplied. This simple setting offers a **symbolic "work" for the hands to explore**. There will be no artwork to be taken home. The hands enter the Clay Field and move to it in their ability or inability to "handle" the material they tell the client's life story. The hands then can be encouraged to find ways to deal with situations and events. **to complete actions that previously could not be coped with**

This unique art therapy approach is recognized in Europe as a discipline in its own right. **Over 500 Clay Field Therapists** are currently practicing in numerous institutions. It is part of the curriculum in schools for disabled and disadvantaged children; it is widely used in women's shelters, refugee centres and to facilitate trauma healing.

"Due to the texture, weight and resistance of the clay, the material demands physical effort. Very quickly the head - and with it our cognitive conditioning - is pushed aside to make way for the more "ancient" urges of our libido.

no pressure to be 'perfect'

There will be **no finished product, no artwork to show to friends, no sculpture to be proud of**. At the end of a Clay Field session, only intense body memories will be taken home. The kinaesthetic motor action combined with sensory perception will have lasting therapeutic benefits, especially in cases of developmental delays in children and trauma healing.

Touch is the most fundamental of human experiences. The first year of our life is dominated by the sense of touch. Tactile contact is the first mode of communication we learn. Our earliest stages in life are dominated by oral and skin contact between infant and caregiver. Our **earliest body memories** and **attachment** were formed when we **relied on sensorimotor feedback to feel safe and loved**. **Love as well as violence is primarily communicated through touch.** Our boundaries are invaded through inappropriate touching. Sexual experiences are overwhelmingly ruled by the sense of touch - and so are medical procedures, as well as all other **events that happened to our bodies**.

Work at the Clay Field involves an **intense tactile experience** - it can link us to a **primal mode of communication, to a preverbal stage in our life**. This is the truly beneficial quality of clay in a therapeutic context. Its **regressive qualities** will allow a therapist to address early attachment issues, developmental setbacks and traumatic events in a primarily non-verbal way, contained in the safety of the setting.

Toddlers may pile simple building blocks on top of each other and then enjoy knocking them down over and over again, thus learning **positive destruction** as a way to **achieve object constancy** (Winnicott 1971). Such play **prepares children to cope with the real world** as a continuum of constant change, of encounter and separation, of comings and goings of loved ones and events, of endings and beginnings. Trust is gained from the ability to survive such changes intact. Work at the Clay Field involves a **continuous process of destruction and creation**, because the material is both limited in its amount and unlimited in its possibilities. We can create at the Clay Field only if we **have autonomy** the smooth surface and continue to have the courage to take something apart that we have put together before. We can **learn to survive change** to

→ the nature of life and dealing with emotions

grasp and handle it. In this manner the work can assist in dealing with the emotional injuries we suffered from overwhelming change and destruction in the past.

Pre-school children learn primarily through touching and handling objects. During the evolution of mankind, the cognitive brain was shaped through skilled hand movements; **with our hands we learned to understand the world** (Wilson 1999). These innate language skills become reactivated through handling things and through observing the hand-gestures of our caregivers, as a recent study at the University of Chicago showed (Rowe 2005; 2008).

School children will create three-dimensional representations in the clay - 'real objects', figures, scenes and landscapes that have meaning and emotional values attached to them. At the Clay Field adults and children alike weave these developmental layers into a complex **web of biography, narrative kinaesthetic body memories, frustrated or traumatized internalized patterns of behaviour** and the search for **more authentic impulses and holistic structures**.

From C. Ellbrecht, Trauma Healing at the Clay Field 2012

In recent years **sensorimotor** has emerged as a term to describe **body-focused psychotherapies** that use a **bottom-up approach**. Instead of a cognitive top-down strategy, sensorimotor art therapy encourages the **awareness** of innate motor impulses in the **muscles** and **viscera**, also as **heartbeat** and **breath**. The expression of these motor impulses followed by their perception through the senses, **allows the development of new neurological pathways that can bypass traumatic memories**; such an approach is capable of **restoring wholeness and wellbeing**.

Work at the Clay Field is a **sensorimotor, body-focused, trauma-informed** art therapy approach. It is not necessarily concerned with an image-making process, but supports the awareness of body memories. While these memories are always biographical, the therapy itself is **not symptom-oriented**. Not the specific problem or crisis becomes the focal point, but the **aptitude to new answers and solutions** as they are **embedded in the body's felt sense**. Such sensorimotor achievements are remembered **similar to learning how to swim or ride a bike**. They are lasting achievements that can transform even early infant developmental set-backs; they assist in finding an **active response to traumatic experiences**. They allow us to **rewrite our biography** towards a more authentic, alive sense of self.

From <https://www.sensorimotorarttherapy.com/blog/2019/5/9/clay-field-therapy-work-at-the-clay-field>

→ Idea of focusing on the body and actually re-writing our neurological pathways





HOW DOES IT FEEL?

IS IT COLD?

IS IT WARM?

IS IT HEAVY?

TOUCH. IT.

Fig 20, 21, 22 clay field therapy example.

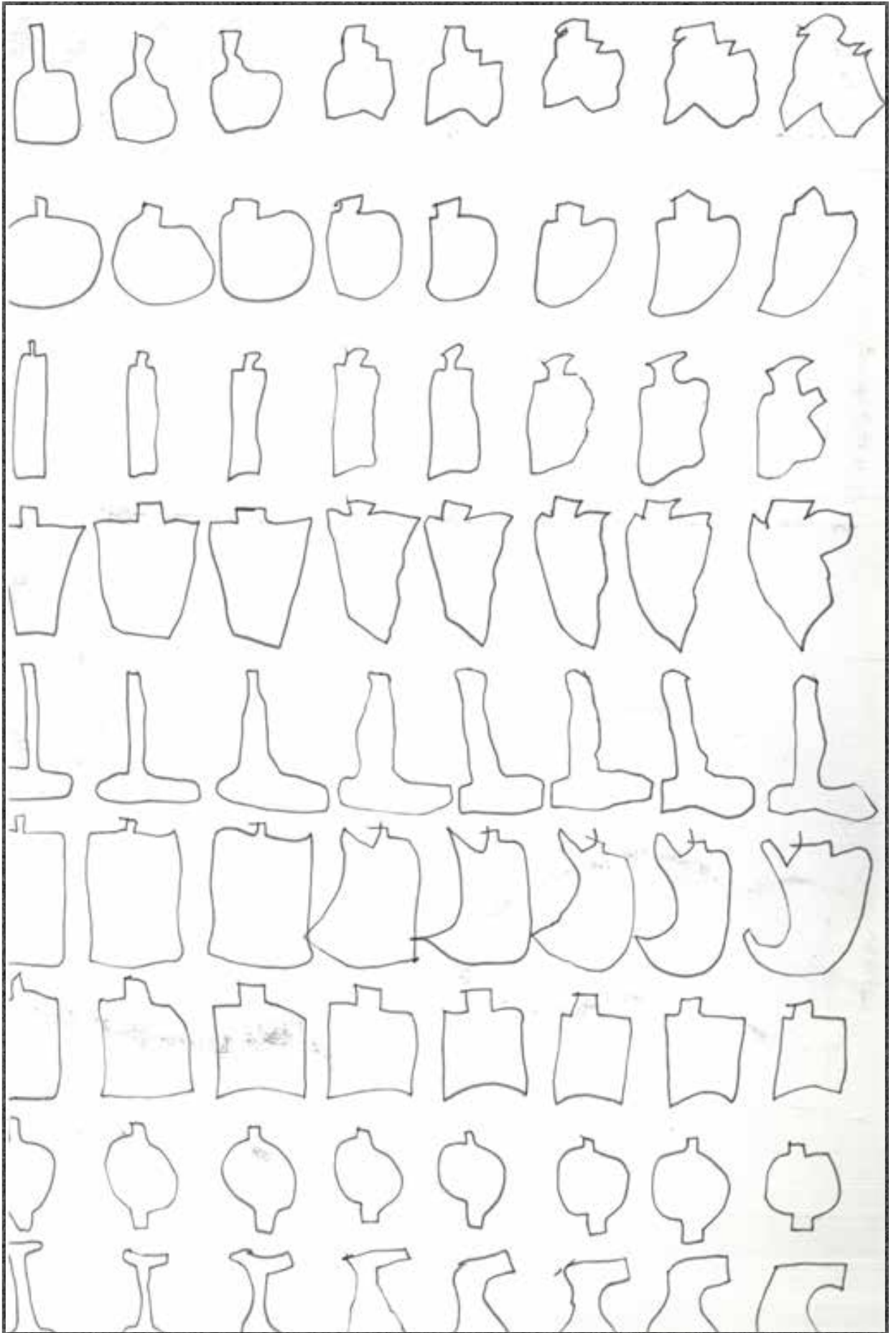


CLAY FIELD



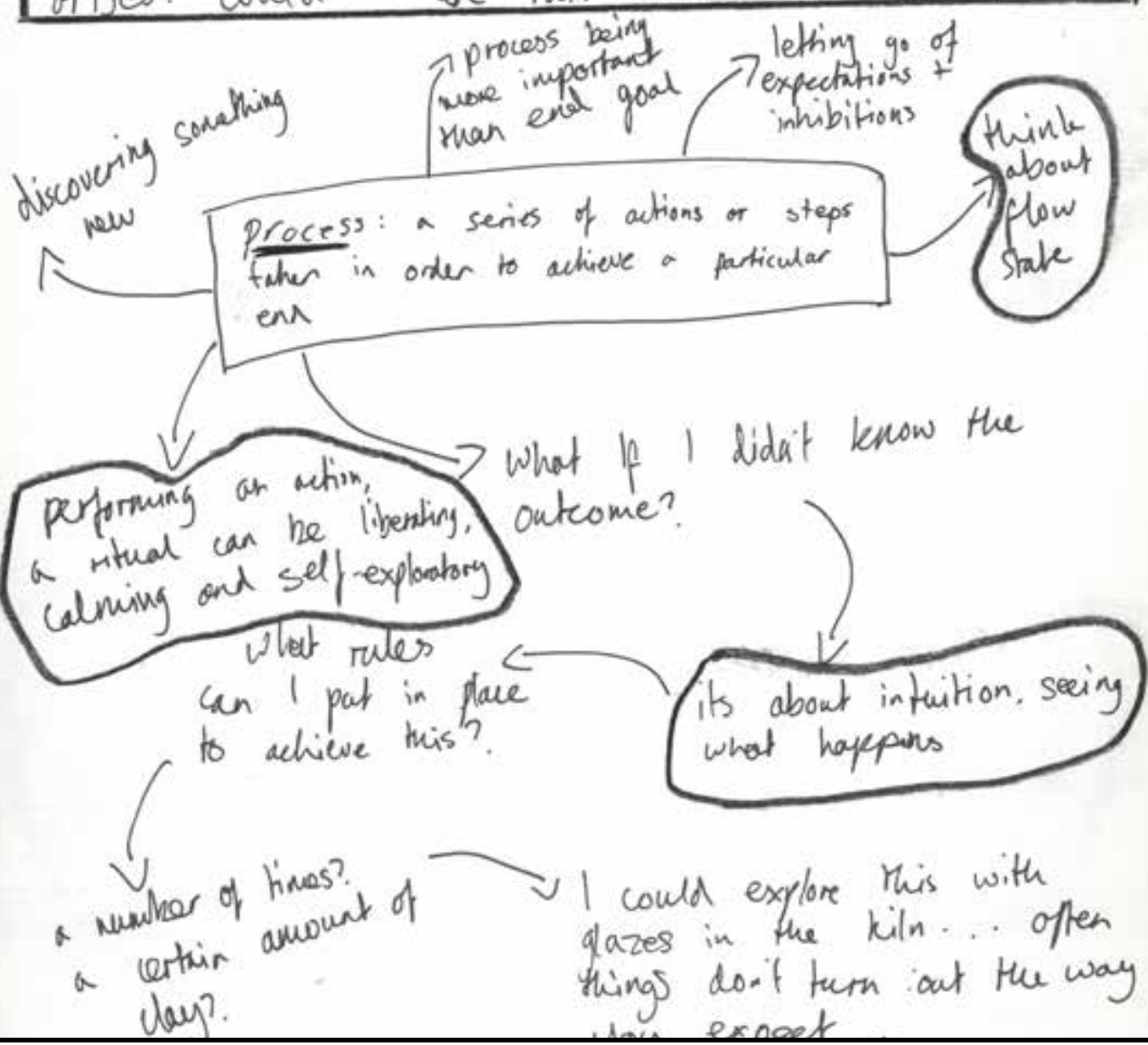
THERAPY.

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PROCESS

In this drawing exercise I start with a shape (in this case a vessel form). I then copy the drawing with my left hand, then my right and so on... the shapes evolves into something more abstract. I don't worry or focus on perfection but rather following the flow & outcome as it arises. Could I use this method in 3D form?





I.

2.



*Fig 23, 24, 25, throwing and warping a vessel form,
petra grog, stoneware, 2022*



3.

PROCESS

MISTAKES

REPETITION

PROCESS

MISTAKES

REPETITION

PROCESS

MISTAKES

REPETITION

PROCESS

MISTAKES

REPETITION

Findiy PEACE In The TEMPORARY

Large rocks remain in place for years, however the carefully raked patterns last for only few weeks. It is a form of meditation whilst performing the motion. Natural forces disrupt the pattern. There is no permanence, you learn to let go of the temporary.

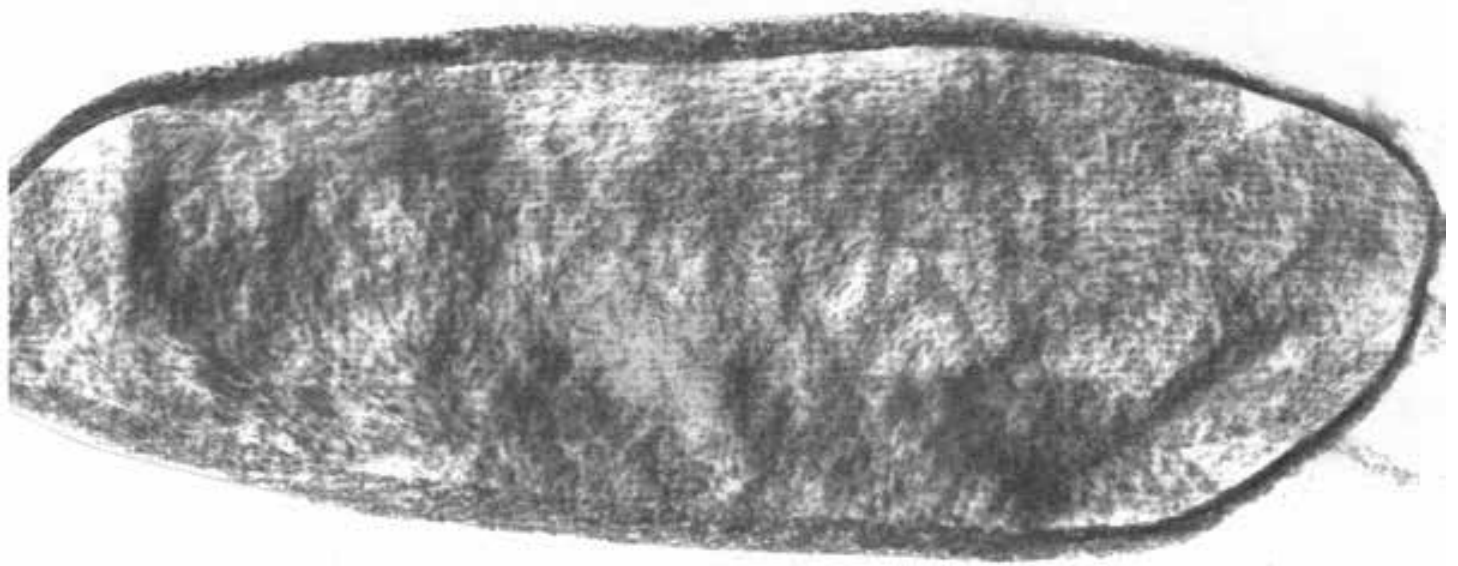


JAPANESE ZEN GARDEN.

"Through zen ascetic practice, an emotion of the mind is found that can't be directly understood or exposed. One must therefore discover ways to communicate this emotion to others. That is, 'the expression of oneself.'"

What you are feeling may be temporary. Once erased, you start again.

Masuno Shunmyo
18th C Zen Priest



1. Slab



2. Design/pattern



3. Begin again

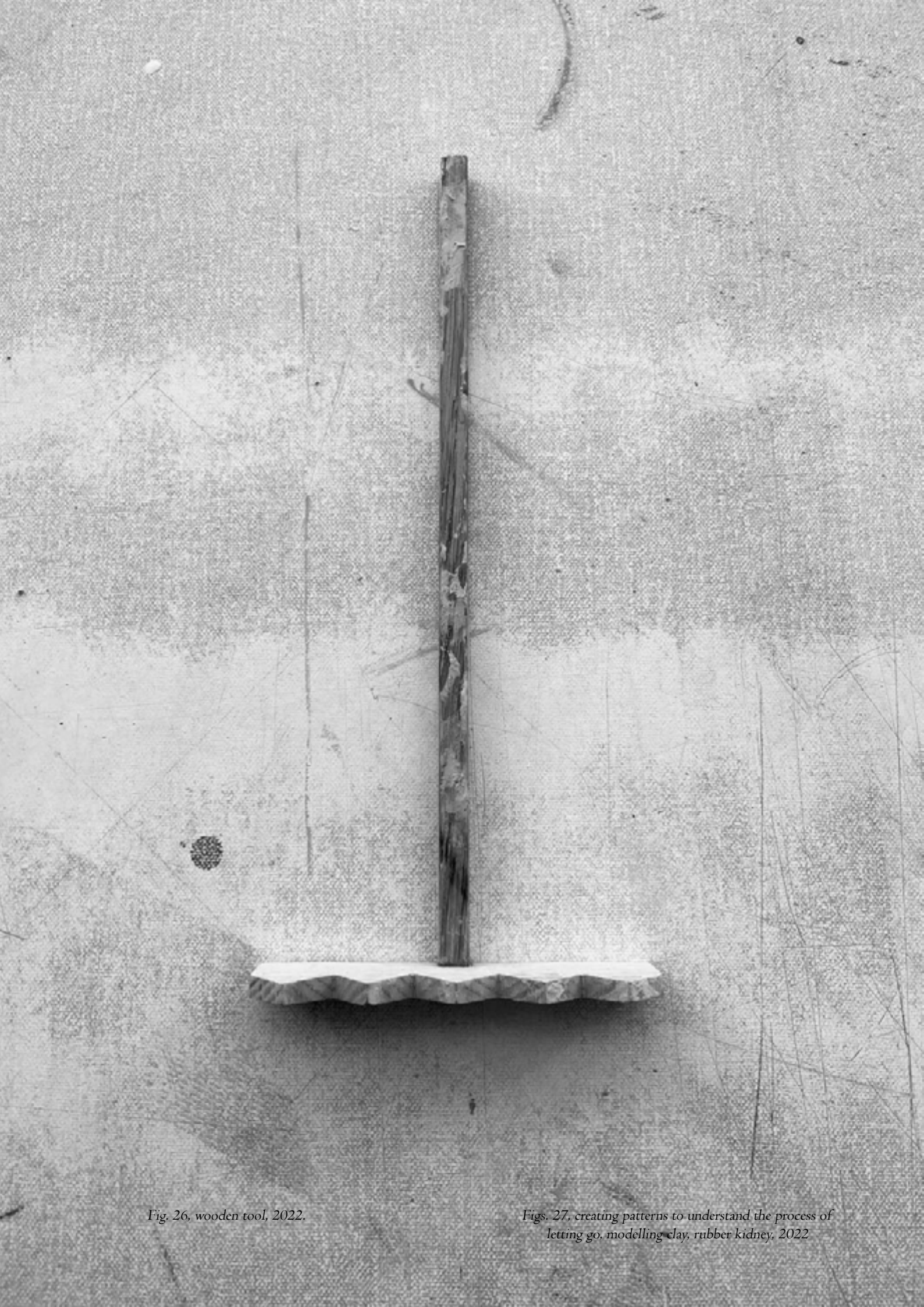
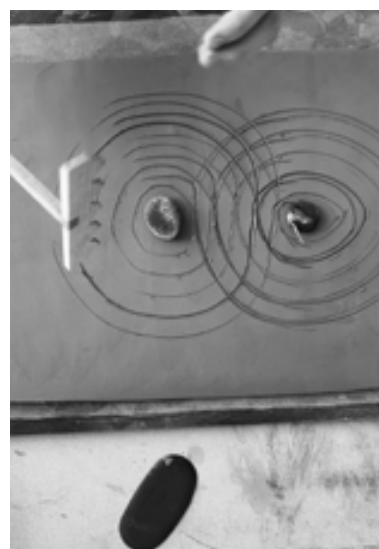
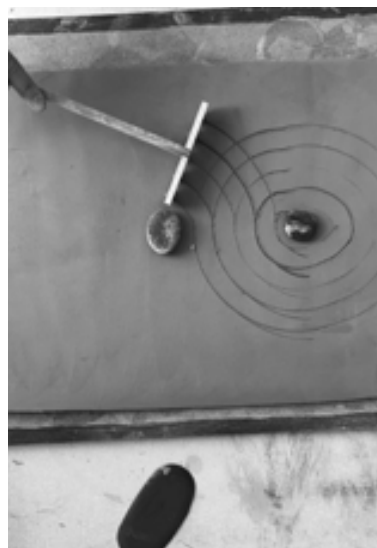
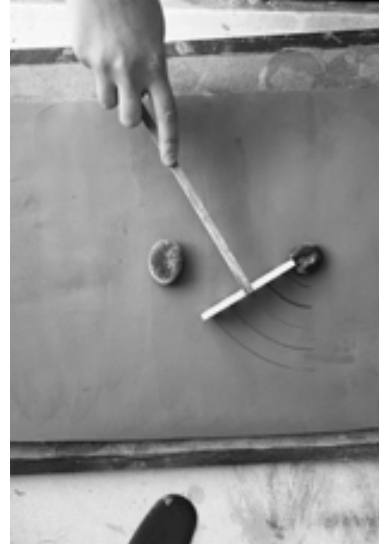
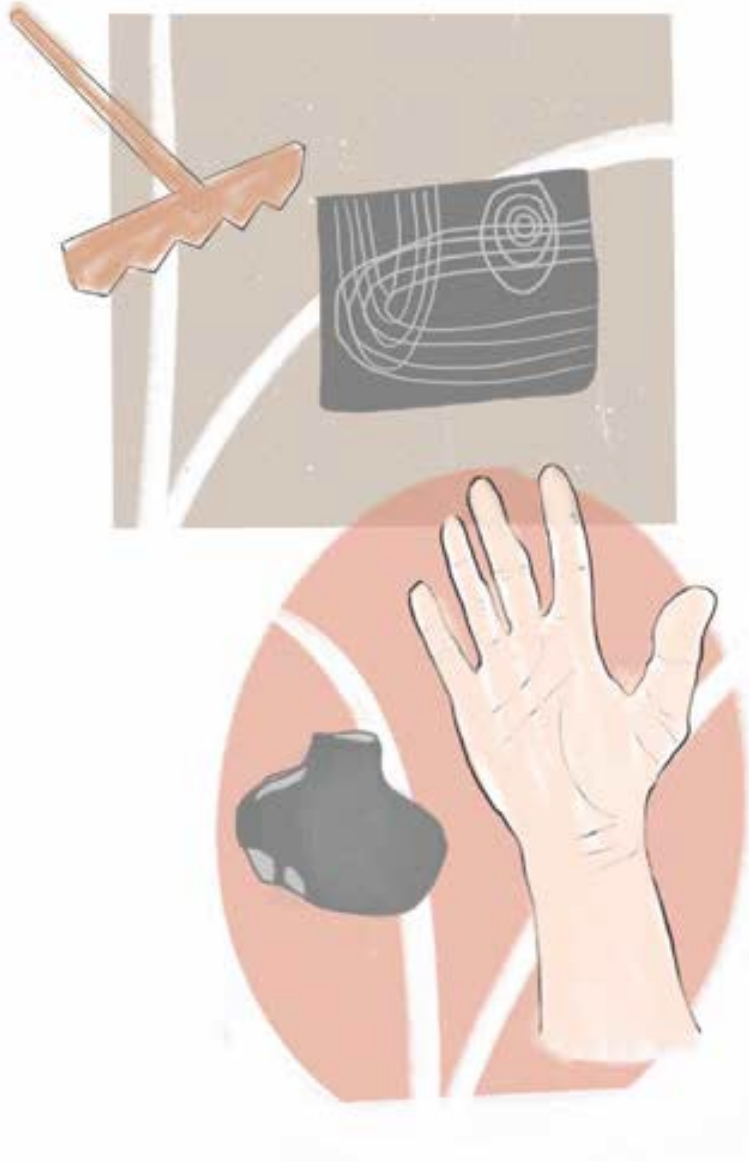


Fig. 26, wooden tool, 2022.

Figs. 27, creating patterns to understand the process of letting go, modelling clay, rubber kidney, 2022





This is a drawing exploring the act of making with tools vs. making with your hands. Both require your body, a tool could therefore be an extension of yourself?



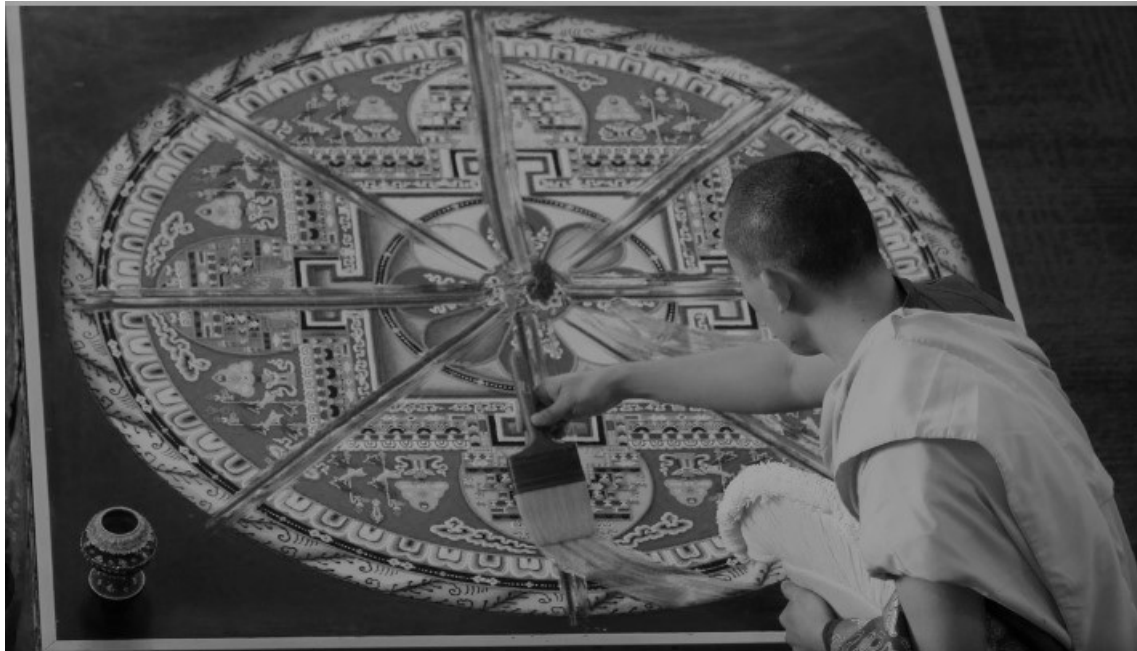


Fig. 28, Tibetan Monks mandala.

Tibetan sand mandalas are works of art created to encourage healing, peace, and purification generally as well as spiritual or psychological focus specifically for those creating and viewing it. A mandala (Sanskrit for “circle”) is a geometric image representing the universe and a sand mandala, destroyed after completion, emphasizes the transitory nature of all things in that universe.

The contemplation of a mandala is thought to enable spiritual awakening and psychological/emotional growth and, in Tibetan Buddhism especially, is believed to quicken one’s realization of the nature of

the world and speed the process of enlightenment. This appreciation of the mandala in Tibetan Buddhism differs from other Buddhist schools which emphasize a slower and more gradual process toward full awakening.

Taken from worldhistory.org.

This emphasis on process can be applied to my making practise. If I film or do an act then completely destroy it. What is its worth? Is it the final piece, or the experience? How can I share that with others? Through photography and film?

MINDFULNESS.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness involves paying attention to what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment.

It's easy to stop noticing the world around us. It's also easy to lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling and to end up living "in our heads" – caught up in our thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are driving our emotions and behaviour.

An important part of mindfulness is reconnecting with our bodies and the sensations they experience. This means paying attention to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the present moment. That might be something as simple as the feel of a banister as we walk upstairs.

Another important part of mindfulness is an awareness of our thoughts and feelings as they happen moment to moment.

How mindfulness helps mental well-being.

Mindfulness for me often comes from making or drawing without putting pressure on the outcome. These quick charcoal drawings were done when I felt an urge to create, and wanted to express ceramic form ideas without any expectation. I used the shape of the charcoal to create joining components in the two square sketches. But focused more on rounded forms balancing together in the drawing on the right. Mindfulness I practise in my daily life, whenever I feel a spike of anxiety. It feels good to transfer this practise into something with an outcome.

Becoming more aware of the present moment can help us enjoy the world around us more and understand ourselves better.

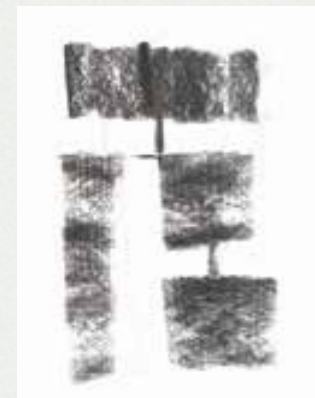
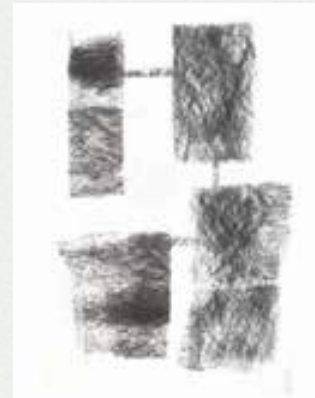
When we become more aware of the present moment, we begin to experience afresh things that we have been taking for granted.

Mindfulness also allows us to become more aware of the stream of thoughts and feelings that we experience, and to see how we can become entangled in that stream in ways that are not helpful.

This lets us stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns. Gradually, we can train ourselves to notice when our thoughts are taking over and realise that thoughts are simply "mental events" that do not have to control us.

Mindfulness can help us deal with issues more productively. We can ask: "Is trying to solve this by brooding about it helpful, or am I just getting caught up in my thoughts?"

Taken from the NHS website.









How can I practise mindfulness with making? When working with clay it's arguably very intuitive. I can form something, then mould it.

I could join pieces together. Create unique organic shapes with different pieces. I like the idea of multiple pieces to really convey the idea of movement, process and touch.

How can I express emotional healing within ceramic forms?

These drawings are free hand drawings and I was thinking about the juxtaposition of harsh lines with curved forms to explore opposing or fighting feelings when you haven't quite

processed something yet.

Or even the journey towards healing, how it moves, flows and changes as you work through it.



Flow State

What it means to be in a flow state

Popularized by positive psychologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Joanne Nakamura, flow state describes a feeling where, under the right conditions, you become fully immersed in whatever you are doing.

"There's this focus that, once it becomes intense, leads to a sense of ecstasy, a sense of clarity; you know exactly what you want to do from one moment to the other; you get immediate feedback." Csikszentmihalyi said in a 2004 TED Talk. Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura reached this conclusion by interviewing a variety of self-actualized, high-performing people: including mountain climbers, chess players, surgeons, and ballet dancers.

When you're giving your fullest attention to an activity or task that you are incredibly passionate about, intensely focused on, and totally immersed in, you may find yourself creating the conditions necessary to experience a flow state of mind. The mind's usual chatter begins to fade away, placing us in a non-distracted zone. The feelings that would consume you under normal circumstances (boredom, hunger, fatigue, or aches and pains) melt away, and all that matters is your dedication to your craft.

The flow mental state is generally less common during periods of relaxation and makes itself present during challenging and engaging activities. According to Csikszentmihalyi, "The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times... the best moments usually occur if a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile." To that end, engagement and concentration are key in achieving flow state.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, the human mind can process up to 120 bits of information per second. When we're challenging ourselves with a task, our mind reaches full capacity. If the activity at hand happens to be something we enjoy and we're good at, we achieve a flow mental state — and it can leave us feeling ecstatic, motivated, and fulfilled.

How meditation and mindfulness relate to flow state

Being able to achieve a state of flow, and on a smaller scale, being able to achieve even a bit of focus, is essential to achieving goals. But being able to maintain that focus and maintain that stability of mind can be challenging. That's where meditation and mindfulness come in, because a mind that is trained to be more present and at ease with itself — calmer, clearer, and content — is more likely to experience the flow state because we are training in non-distraction and focus. "If we can learn how to apply focus moment-to-moment, then we'll see that play out in our longer-term goals," says Headspace co-founder Andy Puddicombe.

By definition, mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever you're doing in the moment — free from distractions or judgment, and aware of thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them. By engaging in meditation, we are encouraging our minds to become more present, actively creating conditions that help us observe when we get distracted, what gets us distracted, and then return to the object of focus. A flow state of mind combines the two concepts. In essence, flow state is a very active, moving meditation.

The benefits of

The people who were interviewed in Csikszentmihalyi's areas — from dancing to chess, mountain climbing to performing individuals who took on challenges.

Here are the benefits that motivate these individuals to enter a flow state.

- Heavy sense of concentration. Being able to focus on the task at hand, without any distractions or output of the mind.
- Sense of clarity. In a state of flow, your body and mind are in perfect harmony.
- Lack of obstacles. The thoughts and feelings that would normally cause doubt, take a back seat.
- Good feelings. Being in a deep flow state is often a source of joy. No superficially driving this force, it's just the natural result of something that you are passionate about.
- Happiness. The type of happiness one can gain from a flow state is a general sense of well-being and contentment.

How to get

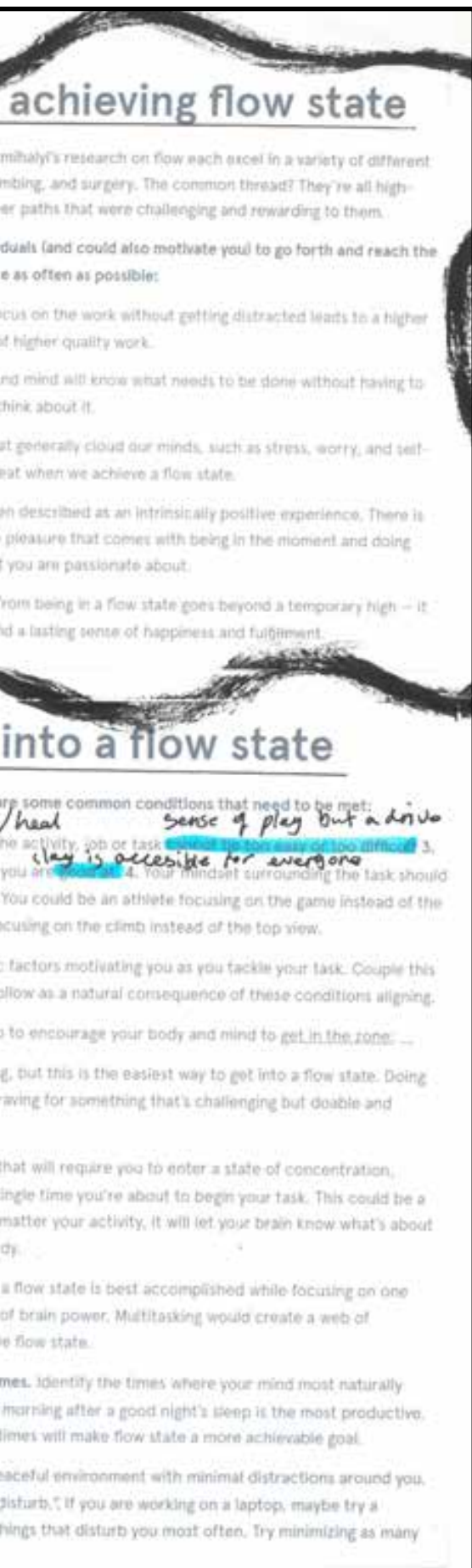
In order to achieve flow state, there are a few things you need to be wanting to be in therapy.

- You need to be interested in the task at hand.
- You need to be focused on the journey, not the destination. For example, a runner should be focused on the medal, or a mountain climber on the summit.

Whatever your passion, think about the intrinsic rewards of the activity, with no interruptions, and a flow state should follow.

Here are some additional things you can do to help you get into a flow state.

- Do something you love. It goes without saying, but if you're not doing something you love, it's hard to get into a flow state. Something that you're good at, and that you enjoy, is a great starting point.
- Create a ritual. As you gear up for activities, create a series of actions that you do every time. For example, meditation, a short walk, or a pot of tea. No matter how small, it's important to begin and that you are coaxing it to be real.
- Choose your most important task. Achieving a flow state is a major task that requires a significant portion of your attention. Eliminate distractions that make it impossible to achieve.
- Identify your peak creative and productive times. Focus on your functions at full speed. For many people, this is during the day. Focusing on the day's main task during these times can help you get into a flow state.
- Eliminate distractions. Focus on creating a peaceful environment. Store your phone away and put it on "do not disturb." Use a website blocker. You know best the types of distractions that affect you, and eliminate them as possible.



the 'FLOW'

Csikszentmihalyi describes The 8 Characteristics of Flow as:

1. Complete concentration on the task.
2. Clarity of goals and reward in mind and immediate feedback.
3. Transformation of time (speeding up/slowing down).
4. The experience is intrinsically rewarding.
5. Effortlessness and ease.
6. There is a balance between challenge and skills.
7. Actions and awareness are merged, losing self-conscious rumination.
8. There is a feeling of control over the task.

In this exercise (photo below) I carved out small sections of a cup I had thrown. I did the first row, then the second, then the third. I was attempting to achieve a flow state through creating a ritual and on something I enjoy, which is creating with clay.

There's lots of elements to it, the original form, the changed form, the excess clay that is left littered on my table.

Is the peace I felt while making it worth more than the final object?

Is it deeply personal, or something that can be appreciated by a different person viewing the final object?



Fig. 29, getting into the flow, thrown vessel, petra grog, 2022.

S O M A T I C E X P E R I N C E

The somatic experience links more to a person's physicality than thought. Because of this there can be an approach to healing where you deal with the physical symptoms first, as trauma is often trapped psychologically, meaning the thoughts dissipate themselves. This approach could be used with clay, I use my body and physicality to explore and release trapped trauma. I learn to trust my body by communicating through it, not stifling physical symptoms but exploring them.

Recognizing bodily sensations

When you enter therapy, you'll start by learning more about your autonomic nervous system and the part it plays in your trauma response. This knowledge helps many people who feel confused about their response during a traumatic event or believe they should have reacted differently. From there, your therapist will help you begin increasing your awareness of bodily sensations and physical symptoms.

Resourcing

SE therapists use a tool called resourcing to help you access your innate strength, resilience, and a sense of peace.

It involves drawing on positive memories of a place, person, or something you love when you feel distressed or encounter something triggering. Resourcing, which is not unlike grounding, can help you stay calm and present as you encounter felt trauma sensations or memories of the event.

Titration

Once you've got resourcing down, your therapist will begin slowly revisiting the trauma and related sensations. This is called titration. It's a gradual process that allows you to come to terms with and integrate each aspect of the event, as you feel ready to do so. It slows down the trauma to allow you to handle it.

As you begin slowly revisiting the trauma, your therapist will track your response and the bodily

sensations the trauma brings up.

They do this both by watching your response, which might involve breathing changes, clenched hands, or a shift in tone of voice. They'll also check in with you about anything you feel that they might not see, such as:

hot or cold sensations

sense of weightiness

dizziness

numbness

Pendulation

In somatic therapy, these sensations, along with things like crying, shaking, or shivering, are considered to be a discharge of the energy trapped in your body.

Your therapist might also help you use specific breathing or relaxation techniques to help you process and release the trauma.

When this release happens, your therapist will help you move from this aroused state to a calmer one using resourcing or other techniques. Eventually, this swinging back to a calmer state will start to feel more natural.

Taken from healthline.com.



Fig. 30, touching clay, modelling clay, 2022

Somatic Experiencing

PETER LEVINE



- Our bodies have a freeze response to trauma. It is our bodies primitive defense against danger, akin to an animal playing dead. Our bodies don't know how to distinguish physical trauma from mental trauma, so the brain can get stuck in believing you are still in danger.
- Somatic experiencing is a body related approach to healing trauma and stress-related disorders. Levine believes it isn't the traumatic event but the overwhelming response to a traumatic event, thus causing an imbalance to the nervous system.
- The 'bottom-up' approach starts with bodily sensations before returning to our thoughts.

COGNITION

How you think within your body (not just thoughts)

IMAGERY

United imagery

BEHAVIOUR

Look at behavioural responses like body language/posture

AFFECT

How you display emotions to the outside world - word choice, tone and speech

MEANING

How you perceive the therapy and what your experiences mean to you

THE MIND & BODY CONNECTION.

Notes:

“I was often surprised by the dispassionate way patients symptoms were discussed and by how much time was spent on trying manage their suicidal thoughts and self-destructive behaviours rather than on understanding the possible causes of their despair and helplessness. I was also struck by how little attention was paid to their accomplishments and aspirations; whom they cared for, love or hated; what motivated and engaged them, what kept them stuck and what made them feel at peace – the ecology of their lives”.

People who have been abused as children often feel sensations (abdominal pain) that have no obvious physical cause, they hear voices warning them of danger. Could “hallucinations” be fragmented memories of real experiences? Patients engaged in violent behaviour – often after a simple request. So much of our profession is geared to helping us stay in control in the face of terrifying and confusing realities.

Notice the stiffness of body, stilted conversations, lacking natural flow of gestures and facial expressions when people talk about difficult events or emotions... trauma is held in peoples bodies.

In the 19th century, a scientist in France and Germany investigated behaviour as an adaptation to the complexities of the world. Human problems (greed, anger, avarice, sloth) were recast as “disorders”. Psychiatrists ditched woolly-headed theories of philosophers like Freud and Jung. This changed our understanding of the cause of mental illness being a chemical imbalance of the brain.

Many traumatised people stay stuck in the fear they know and feel comfortable in. The opportunity to escape does not mean they take it. Our stress hormone cortisol regulates body after stress. PTSD body does not return to baseline after threat has passed.

Scared animals return home, regardless of whether home if safe or frightening. Are traumatised people condemned to seek refuge in what is familiar? Is it possible to get them attached to places that are safe and pleasurable?

Humans can block pain: (men wounded in battle – 75% of Italian soldiers on front did not request morphine). Result of morphine like structures manufactured in the brain. The theory; exposure to stress provides relief from anxiety?



Fig. 3I, vessels series I, petra grog, modelling clay, stoneware, 2022

NOTES.

Trauma changes perception and imagination. Traumatized people superimpose trauma on everything around them.

- We need imagination to create new possibilities/a future.
- Traumatized people lose the ability to make their minds play.
- Imagination is critical to the quality of our lives. It allows us to leave the routine of life, have mental flexibility + hope + creativity.
- Notice traumatized patients had stiffness in the body, lacking natural flow of gestures & facial expressions.

THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE

Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma



2014

BESSEL VAN DER KOLK



TRAUMA IS HELD IN PEOPLE'S BODIES.

- Instead of trying to manage despair - more attention should focus on accomplishments, aspirations ... the ecology of one's life



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF YANAGI SOETSU AND THE MINGEI MOVEMENT

Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961) was born in Tokyo in 1889, and spent much of his formative years in the rapidly industrializing Meiji period (1868-1912), following the collapse of Japan's military government that dominated the Edo period (1606-1868). He took an interest in art and philosophy from a young age. In 1910, he helped form a literary society called Shirakabaha (白樺派), which translates to the White Birch Society. Together, they began publishing a magazine titled Shirakaba. The group also took interest in other art forms, including folk art, something not generally appreciated by contemporary art critics. While the magazine was discontinued after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Yanagi's interest in folk art persisted.

In 1914 Yanagi had been exposed to Joseon Dynasty ceramics in South Korea, and this led to him founding the Korean Folk Art Museum in Seoul in 1924. This inspired him to look more closely at his own country's folk art. He began looking at Buddhist art in various parts of Japan, and developed an appreciation for the uniqueness of each sculpture of Buddha. This resulted in him coining the term "mingei" in 1925 together with Kanjiro Kawai (1890-1966) and Shōji Hamada (1894-1978). The name "mingei" combines *min* (民), meaning the common people, and *gei* (藝 or 藝, the same character used in *geisha*), meaning art, and is also an abbreviation for *minshuteki kōgei* (民衆的工芸), which literally translates to popular industrial arts. Essentially, Mingei refers to the art of the common people. In 1926, Yanagi officially announced the Mingei Movement.

Over the next ten years, Yanagi devoted himself to developing and spreading Mingei philosophy throughout the country, culminating with the 1936 opening of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum. Yanagi himself designed the main hall of the museum, and in 1999 the building became a Registered Tangible Cultural Property of Japan, and still houses exhibits to this day.



The Beauty of Everyday Things
Soetsu Yanagi



Fig 32, Hamada Shōji pottery throwing.

SORI YANAGI



SHOJI HAMADA



- Mingei art should be produced in large quantities by hand. The hand-made nature of this art is at the core of the Mingei Movement, and the fact that it is produced in large quantities is related to the utilitarian aspect of Mingei.
- Mingei art should be inexpensive, simple, and practical in design. Unlike ornate luxury items, the simplicity and inexpensiveness is what should give this art its charm. An expensive, complex item would not be readily accessible to the masses, betraying the fundamental ideas behind the movement. The design should also have arisen naturally over time to best suit the needs of those using it.
- Mingei art should be not only functional, but also actually used by the masses. Yanagi argued that the beauty of these objects comes from their actual usage, not simply being admired. Their use also gives them their cultural and regional authenticity.
- Mingei art should represent the region in which it was produced. This reflects Japanese culture's appreciation for regional variation, and indeed Mingei art often has distinguishing characteristics unique to specific regions of Japan. Each object represents a small cultural legacy that gives it a value beyond its aesthetics.
- Traditionally, Mingei art is anonymous, and individual artists should not expect recognition. However, modern attitudes have changed on this principle. The idea is that they should be appreciated as objects of the masses, not attributed to specific artisans. However in modern times, many people agree that society should embrace and celebrate the artisans and craftspeople who help keep traditions and culture alive and that this should be reflected in how the government designates certain people as Living National Treasures.

H Y G G E M O V E M E N T.

Hygge, pronounced hoo gah, is a Danish movement.

It can be used as a noun or a verb, and best described as a feeling of comfortable conviviality in a warm atmosphere that “promotes well-being.” Hygge applies to both social and individual settings—it’s about being comfortable alone or together with others. Most importantly, hygge is about being offline. Screens are the antithesis of hygge.

Hygge is often credited for Denmark’s #2 spot on the Happiness Research Institutes 2017-2019 ranking of the world’s happiest countries. The concept of hygge is primarily associated with Denmark and is usually cited as part of the country’s soul, or an explanation for how people who live in such a wintry climate for much of the year can stay so fulfilled.

While the Danes popularized the term, the concept of hygge isn’t inherently Danish. In fact, the Danish word hygge is derived from an old-fashioned Norwegian word that meant something along the lines of “well-being.” And its spirit can be found around the globe—anyone familiar with Judaism, for example, might recognize hygge as a sort of secular Shabbat that isn’t limited to the weekend.

What is and isn’t hygge?

Like any widespread trend, hygge has drawn criticism from those seeking to defend its roots. While American stores often brand cosy socks, sweet coffee mugs, and candles as “hygge” in an effort to capitalize on the trend, some Danes haven’t been shy when pointing out that hygge is not about buying things—in fact, it’s quite the opposite.

Taken from bungalow.com.

Hygge is about taking time away from the daily rush to be together with people you care about - or even by yourself - to relax and enjoy life’s quieter pleasures.

The word hygge dates back to around 1800, at least in the meaning it has today. However, various definitions of hygge can be traced back to the Middle Ages, where

a similar Old Norse word meant “protected from the outside world.”

Hygge is often about informal time together with family or close friends. Typically, the setting is at home or another quiet location, or perhaps a picnic during the summer months. It usually involves sharing a meal and wine or beer, or hot chocolate and a bowl of candy if children are included. There is no agenda. You celebrate the small joys of life, or maybe discuss deeper topics. It is an opportunity to unwind and take things slow.

Taken from denmark.dk.

In this sense, ceramic functional objects, such as tableware, would be an interesting avenue to go down when thinking about ceramics and well-being.

Items such as jugs, mugs, plates are all centred around the dining experience which often is communal and can bring about connection and health. This then leads onto a higher state of well-being.





Fig. 33, A Hygge night with friends, shared food and shared love.





*Fig. 34, 35, 36,
37. Jug, thrown
petra grog, stone-
ware. Cup, petra
grog, stoneware,
layered (3) ash*

*glazes. Inspired
by the simplicity
of mingei and
also the cosiness
of hygge.*

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Jennifer Amon.

"Each vessel is hand built, using pinch and coil methods. These ancient techniques produce a different quality to wheel-thrown work. Using only a few simple tools, the process is slow and rhythmic. The form of each vessel grows organically, leaving space for taking risks. The vessels are hand-built from red, black and white stoneware clay, using the coil and pinch methods. Each coil is finely pinched out before a further is added, in a rhythm that creates a distinct pattern. I use simple, wooden tools to slowly expand the form from the inside. I coat the vessel surface with thin layers of slip and glaze. The pattern left by the pinching process is accentuated as the glaze pools into hollows. The colours are subtle, with flashings of vibrant colour, all to be found within nature's palette. Each piece is fired several times until a particular quality of colour and texture is achieved. Clay has a memory. Every mark and impression made in the soft material is preserved in the finished piece. The intimate making process remains."



"As we go about our life, stuff happens, good and bad. Some of it we deal with... some of it, not. Sometimes we handle it well, other times, not... But hopefully we make sense of these challenges." We all have cracks, weak areas, and bruises, partnered with fortitude, stamina and resolute areas of our characters. They all form part of the whole to reveal vital, strong, yet vulnerable, individuals. I liken this to my pots and the way I make them. Fissures and crevices in the clay feature with adventurous joins inventively coaxed into robust features. Some forms are soft, some are bold and rugged. I want each pot to convey its own spirit and character...to have a pulse and a heartbeat. I want the marks to reflect the journey of exploration and learning in each pot, just as a wrinkle or dimple depicts expression and character in a human face - an intrinsic part of each individual character.
- Rachel Wood.



These ceramic artists think about process and interaction with an object while making which then informs the final outcome.

You can see the process, the marks from their hand or body. The simplicity or complexity of the glazes.

It's visually identifiable which is an important thing to note when thinking about my final pieces.

“Into the Embrace.

A woman sits. She lifts a ceramic object, places it on her lap and settles it comfortably across her thighs. She explores the surface with her hands, feeling both its shape and its texture. She holds it against her torso, then placing her arms around it, she embraces it.

These sculptural ceramic objects are cast hugs, created as part of a practice-based PhD that aims to more fully engage the body’s sense of touch in an experience of sensual groundedness, to make viewers into touchers, and to evoke the intimacy of bodily contact.”

Bonnie Kemske, taken from the RCA website.

Is it important for the final object to be interacted with?

In a gallery setting, which is what my final show will revolve around, rather than a functional and usable object.

How can I display this?

Is it through photography? Clear indications of the process to help in aiding the viewer realise the meaning.

But also leaving space for someone’s own individual interpretation.

This balance between the makers mark but also an open narrative so individuals can explore their own feelings and opinions.



Inner Fin Ceramics.

“I feel deeply that the world has become over stimulating for many of us and I seek to offset this a little with my work, offering quiet tactile forms to help you take time out, find a little breathing space and a moment of calm. Objects to touch, love and use. My work is slip cast by hand. I individually and uniquely decorate each piece. I love the slip casting process because it enables me to make repeatable pure forms that either I, or nature get to scribble on in a rebellious fashion. I create in my home studio, a small space, artfully crammed with equipment.”



“It’s freezing cold in the winter but I value it above other spaces for the solitude it provides for me, the restorative calm and the knowing that things will be just where my hands left them. I enjoy the way the sunlight falls across my workbenches at certain times of the day, the sound of birds in the trees outside, and the changing landscape as the garden responds to the seasons. I work towards the pleasure I see on peoples faces when they handle my pieces, the smooth tactility of my work somehow smoothing away their troubles. There’s a little piece of the maker in every handmade piece of work. And as a maker what I’m trying to pass on is that connection with that still, quiet space within, for just a moment, and for you to find a moment of calm in this busy world, to restore yourself just momentarily before you move on to the next thing. I hope you find that.”

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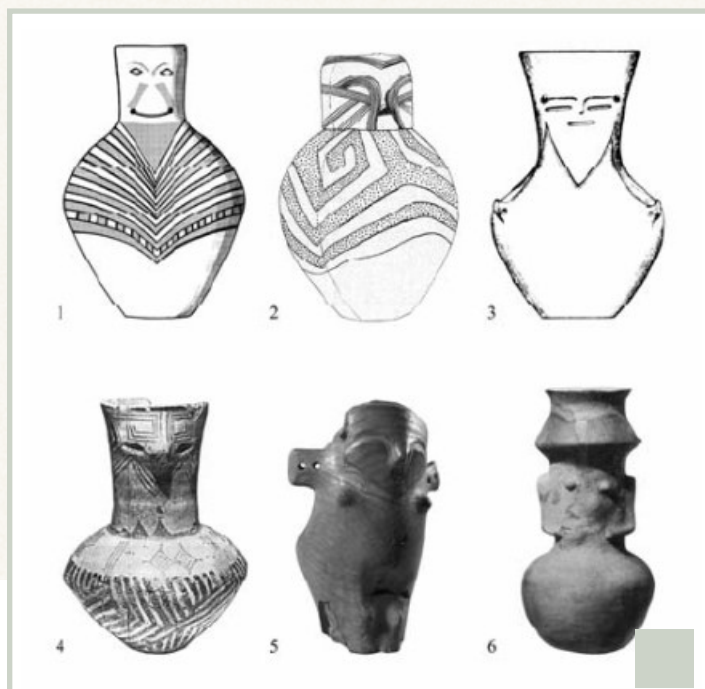
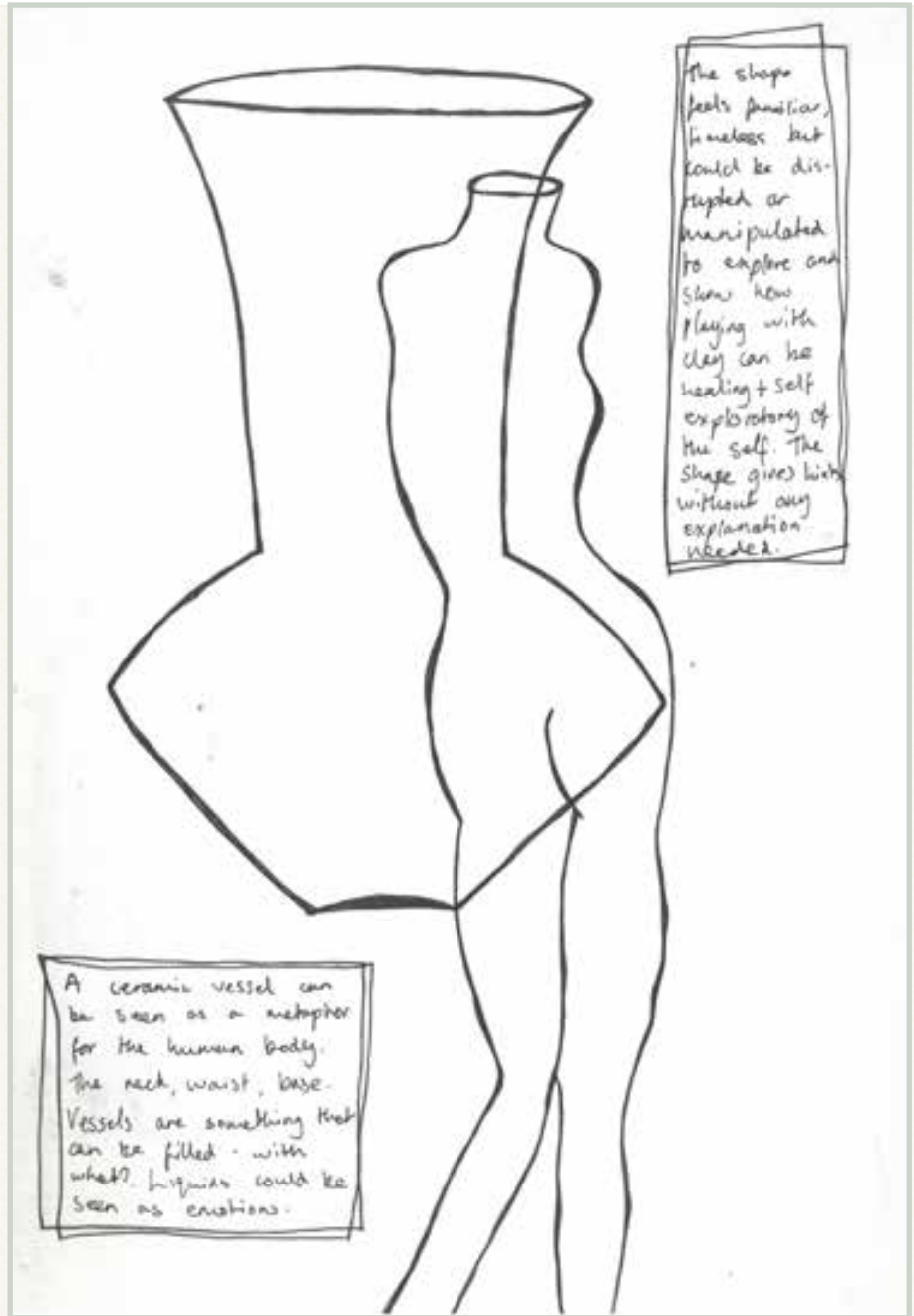


Fig. 38, anthropomorphic vessels.



In this series I threw five vessels which initially look similar. I then proceeded to change each one with a finger each time. The first is one finger mark, the second is two and so on... I wanted to explore touch and growth visually. The first three were thrown with petra grog, hence the more rough sandy texture. The last two are smoother, with modelling clay, perhaps indicating even though are more visually warped they also hold more emotional clarity through there smoothness. I did not glaze these, instead firing them from bone dry to stoneware. This is to emphasise the shape and the message I'm trying to convey without any distraction of glaze colour.



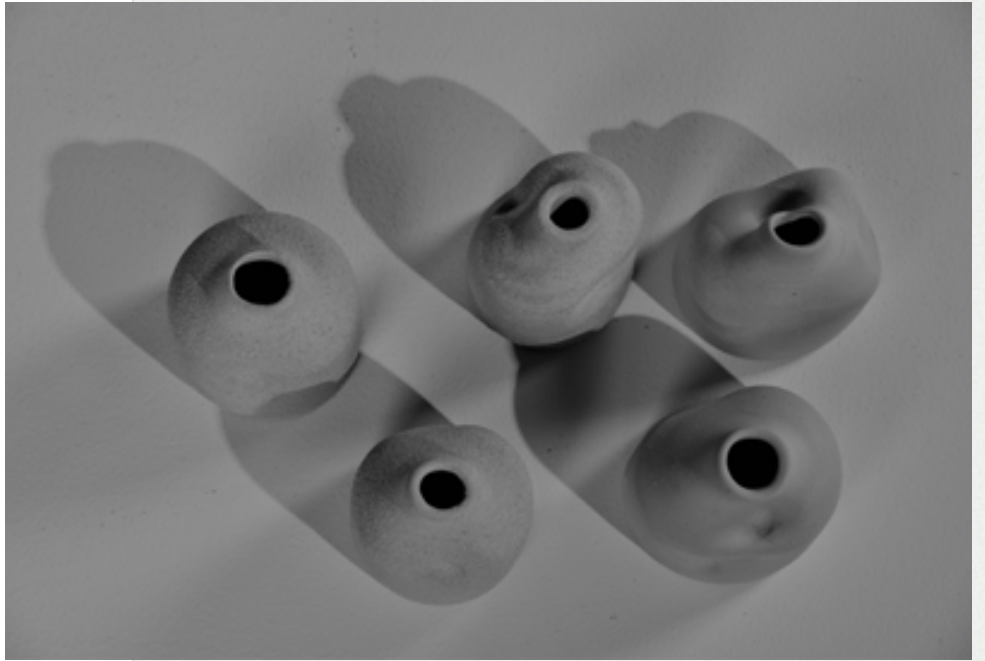


Fig. 39, vessels series I, petra grog, modelling clay, stoneware, 2022.



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Here is some local Sussex clay I dug up, which I then let dry, soaked in water and sieved out any rubble stones or rubbish from the mixture.

There was lots of debris, including bits of plastic. It would be interesting to also use these 'off cuts' as well as

Fig. 41, clay dug in Brighton. Fig. 42, washing the dug clay. 2023.



the main body of clay. Could this be useful to demonstrate wild clay and our connection with the natural world in a gallery environment? To create the

connection between Earth and final piece of ceramic?



WHAT IF I DUG MY OWN CLAY? THE PROCESS DOES NOT START WITH A BAG OF PRE-BOUGHT CLAY, BUT I START FROM THE NATURAL SOURCE. H

HOW DIFFERENT IS MY LOCAL CLAY? WHAT COLOUR IS IT? IS BEST FOR SLIP CASTING, THROWING OR HAND BUILDING?

I CAN ACHIEVE WELL-BEING THROUGH THIS PROCESS. IT INVOLVES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BEING OUTSIDE AND FEELING CONNECTED TO MY LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.



INTRODUCTION

WHY WILD CLAY?

Looking for local clay and materials isn't by any means a new thing. The ability to share information, similar to the knowledge of how to process materials, has had a huge hand in the resurgence of using local clays to either enhance or replace the use of commercial materials. Getting back to the source is fairly mainstream American ceramics scene and one of a niche thing in recent memory.

The history of ceramics is intertwined with that of agriculture, so wild clay has roots in almost every culture, with the detachments we have from materials around us fairly new. Industrialization about material purity and homogeneity, and allow potters to bypass the labor and risk of process materials in favor of mixing pre-processed slips like fettlers, slips, and glazes. Suddenly, making clay could be approached much like cooking in a prepared meal kit where you simply follow the recipe and everything you need comes from a box.

While there's a trade-off in that the person using commercially processed clays, they end up missing many of the unique qualities that exist in raw clays. There is also a level of learning and awareness that comes with sourcing and processing your own clay that makes wild clay a great educational tool. So, who are willing to move past the idea that clay comes from a bag and who increase themselves in the art of processing found materials gain insight into the individual character of a clay and begin to understand what it takes to make a strong, plastic clay body.

Hitachi: In this super-convenient internet world where almost everything online and it doesn't matter where we live and where we work, Clay comes in cardboard boxes or a plastic bag. Clay companies have their own recipes for their clay products. If we're concerned about what materials are in these clays, can we figure out what they are and where they're from? We have to choose which materials will be used for pottery work. Using wild clay locally for our pottery growing heirloom vegetables in the garden for food. There is a lot of waiting time. We need to wait



© Jeff Wilson/istock.com

for many mistakes and false starts. If we want to make more money in our pottery business, then why would we use commercial kiln clay? It could be a waste of time or effort that might not be an ideal option for the business. I think it's the same as how we select what we eat every day, and how we pursue happiness in our life. We know there are many necessary steps to get the answers we are looking for and also there is a choice in our hands. As a pottery maker, I simply want to make beautiful clay works from materials that I know the origins of. These materials are important parts of the body of my clay work. I love pots that have lots of unique and interesting stories about the potters, the materials, and the processes. That's the big difference between the industrially processed, mass-produced, machine-made ceramic products and the hand-made, wild clay pots.

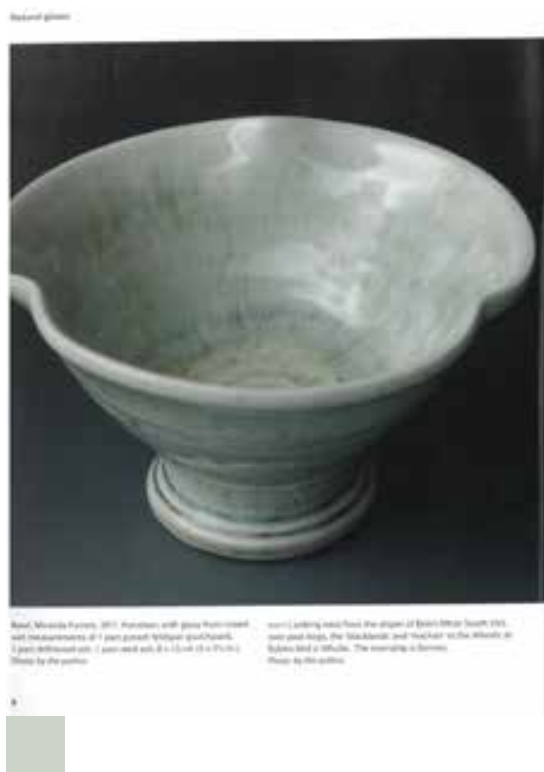
Takara: In this book, I would like to share information about my personal experiences with clays and why I became interested in wild clays, as well as my process for finding, testing, and using them to make pottery and sculpture. My choice to use wild clays is not to seek out the perfect clay, but to learn about their unique characteristics and use them to create a clay body that showcases their properties. Because wild clays are not perfect in the commercial sense, they may contain impurities that, when fired, exhibit unexpected but beautiful results. Contemporary potters often look at ancient pottery as a reference for their own creative work. Today, we have an immense amount of information available to us through technology, and we use power equipment to make laborious tasks easier. Does that mean we make better pots than those potters throughout history? Sometimes we may feel that the older pots seem more special, perhaps because the potters of old adapted their materials with little processing, accepting the resulting irregularities as a natural part of the making and firing cycle. All clays



© Jeff Wilson/istock.com

come from the surface of the earth. They are the result of the gradual breaking down of rocks into tiny particles containing alumina, silica, and water, as well as impurities such as organic matter, iron, calcium, etc. From its natural state, wild clay can often be used as it is or mixed and processed commercially, producing a consistent, homogeneous, and predictable result. I prefer to focus on the natural clays as they exist in the ground, with little or no processing. A clay found in its natural state is rarely perfect for making pottery, but it may be combined with another clay to make a good clay body for pottery production. As you dig, screen, blend, and then test the clay, you will notice its unique properties and characteristics. Clays that cannot be used for forming pottery may be perfect when used as a slip or glaze ingredient. It is up to the individual to determine their own. Some readers of this book may have different philosophies or perspectives about clay, so my ideas and my story may not apply to all. But I hope this book inspires you, in some way, to get your hands deep into your own wild clay.

GLAZES.



Basel, Mexico (1990). Bowl with green glaze made with natural glazes of 1 part green feldspar and 1 part wood ash. It is a mix of 1 part wood ash and 1 part feldspar. Photo by the author.



Introduction

When I moved to South Hill in 1989 I felt such a powerful connection to my surroundings that I wanted to bring them literally, as well as metaphorically, into my ceramic work. South Hill is one of the Western Isles of Scotland, also known as the Outer Hebrides, and is composed predominantly of Lewisian gneiss, a 2.8 billion-year-old metamorphic rock.

Initially I was not hopeful of bringing to life anything so new. The only natural glaze I knew about was a mixture of clay and wood ash, but South Hill has been used and I could find nothing. However, after some original research and experimentation, I was amazed at the glazes that could be achieved with locally collected materials. Instead of wood as a source for ash, I used Lewisian sand plants and marine mammals, and replaced clay with other forms of gneiss rock. The majority of these made a glaze of some kind. It came to realize that the fundamental principle of making natural glazes was not so much as finding a specific rock or plant, because several would produce a particular kind of glaze, but a mixture of a rock. These glazes originated for artists the world over, in China, where the native materials are significantly different to those on South Hill, but my results were it appears that in essence they contain similar elements. It is worth noting particularly a high firing one, was only one finding a specific level of deposit that the choice for glaze materials is far wider.



ASH GLAZE RECIPES.

(cheery wood ash glaze washed and prepared for glaze mixtures by me)

1. 50% Wood Ash + 50% Potash Feldspar
2. 60% Wood ash + 30% Potash Feldspar + 10% China Clay
3. 33% Wood Ash + 33% Potash Feldspar + 33% China Clay
4. 70% Wood Ash + 30% Potash Feldspar
5. 80% Wood Ash + 20% Potash Feldspar

All will produce a clear or white tone glaze where I can then add pigment or oxides to create colour. They are a mix of matte glazes and shiny.

I would like to explore Natural Glazes further, perhaps incorporating seaweed or other items from my local Brighton environment.



Fig. 43, ashe glaze test tiles, chrome oxide, nickel oxide and rutile dark.

Fig. 44 (right), mixing glazes.



E C O T H E R A P Y.

Ecotherapy can take place in both rural and urban settings, including parks, gardens, farms and woodlands. It involves varying amounts of physical activity, depending on the type of programme. It can include activities that focus on:

- working in nature, such as a conservation project, gardening or farming
 - experiencing nature, such as enjoying the views on a walk or cycling through woodland
 - spending time with others in nature, such as preparing and sharing meals together.
- Some ecotherapy sessions follow a set structure. Others can be more informal, or vary depending on the time of year and what work needs doing. People in the group may or may not have experience of mental health problems, but the main focus is usually working together on the shared activity.

Taken from Mind.org.

Studies:

While direct contact with nature has many benefits, individuals need not spend time in a green environment to experience the positive effects of nature. Several studies have found that a mere glimpse of nature from a window or even photographs of nature can improve people's overall mood, mental health, and life satisfaction. For example, in a study conducted by Roger Ulrich, a prominent researcher in this field, heart surgery patients in



Fig. 45, making shapes in clay with pebbles on Brighton beach, modelling clay.

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A VITAL PROTOCOL - EMBODIED-RELATIONAL DEPTH IN NATURE-BASED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Hayley Marshall

Introduction

I knew I would become an outdoor psychotherapist when, with the sea on one side, and the mountains on the other, the wilderness immersion group I was a member of began to reflect on the powerful happenings from the previous two hours. We had just experienced a turbulent journey by canoe around a headland where the sea had become a bit rougher than anticipated; and although there was a lot of anxiety and anger being expressed in the group about the practicalities concerning this, people were also directly in touch with some very profound personal issues. At the time, I was in contact with a sense of my own physical inadequacy and vulnerability in the world in a way I'd never quite managed to access in the many years of personal therapy I'd undertaken by this point. I was both disturbed and amazed at the immediacy of this process.

As I write this now, I realize just how much I have assimilated the learning from this experience within my body. Essentially, I think this was because of the group's live focus on physical engagement with the landscape and the resultant group process. This seemed to offer a direct route into what I would view as the fundamental aspects of my sense of self. I am also conscious of how much I associate this life-changing experience with the landscape it took place in; this is very much part of the embodied learning that happened for me at the time.

My decision to go on the immersion trip was prompted by a desire to breathe new life into my work. After many years as a Transactional Analysis psychotherapist, I was struggling with the sedentary nature of the work – I knew I wanted to get moving. There were also aspects to the therapeutic process that felt frustrating to me, specifically in terms of helping clients access and transform what I would term the deeper aspects of their personal process – their intrinsic 'ways of being' in the world. I knew I needed to work in a more relationally active way.

A VITAL PROTOCOL – EMBODIED-RELATIONAL DEPTH 149

The experience I had on that trip firmly laid the foundations for my current outdoor clinical focus, which essentially contains two strands. Firstly, an interest in the way we organize our personal experience in the somatic (of the body) non-conscious domain; and how these aspects may be evoked and worked with in outdoor psychotherapy through an emphasis on movement and vitality. And secondly, the dynamics that come alive in the relational matrix when working with nature – what I would term a living third. Both of these aspects relate to the notion of embodiment in therapy, that is, giving a shape or form to personal experience that didn't have this before.

In this chapter, I follow the first of these two interweaving paths and attempt to shine a light on the process of outdoor therapy as viewed through an embodied-relational lens. Referring to some of the subtleties and intimacies from an actual outdoor therapy case, I explore how taking therapy out into nature offers potential to evoke early relational experiences and traumas through the sensory impact on the body-mind and the increased physical movement within the therapeutic relationship. In addition, I link findings from environmental psychology concerning our innate responses to nature to how the natural setting can both aid the process of affect regulation (soothing) in therapy and facilitate an expansion of internal space for reflection on and assimilation of emerging experience.

My Outdoor Therapeutic Space – Setting the Scene



intensive care units were able to reduce their anxiety and need for pain medication by viewing pictures depicting trees and water. Another researcher, Rachel Kaplan, also found that office workers who had a view of nature from a window reported higher job and life satisfaction than those who did not have such a view.

Many other studies help to demonstrate the positive effects of nature on both physical and mental health. Studies have shown, for example, that children who live in buildings with a nearby green space may have a greater capacity for paying attention, delaying gratification, and inhibiting impulses than children who live in buildings surrounded by concrete. Children who have been diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity (ADHD) display fewer symptoms after spending time in a green environment than when they spend time indoors or in non-green outdoor environments. The addition of flowers and plants to a workplace can positively affect creativity, productivity, and flexible problem solving, while the presence of animals may reduce aggression and agitation among children and those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Taken from goodtherapy.org.



“The Centre for Ecotherapy is a community space based in Brighton’s Stanmer Park, providing nature-based therapies, opportunities to de-stress and practical activities.

Available to anyone who would benefit from being in a healing natural environment, we offer regular therapeutic activities for groups and individuals.”

THE CENTRE	OUR AIM IS TO...	OUR SERVICES
<p>Established in 2014, the Centre for Ecotherapy has been delivering nature-based services to the local community in a sustainable, organic way for over 8 years.</p> <p>The Centre prides itself on valuing the non-human and human community equally and believes that all living creatures benefit from respectful proximity and communication with each other. We believe that, in sharing our time, energy and physical space with our non-human neighbours, humans can grow towards greater physical and mental balance, developing our ability to support and maintain the wellbeing of our local environment, and ourselves at the same time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enable people to connect with their local natural environment in a non-challenging, informal way • support people to understand and enhance their personal wellbeing through contact with the natural world • reduce people of low nature knowledge and skills a risk of misinterpreting and overlooking their lives • inspire people to join our natural, local community, to inspire the thinking and sustainability within the changing landscape of our lives • ensure that all people feel included and welcome to participate in our environmental education at background, level of environmental issues, climate, gender or sexual orientation <p>MORE INFO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotherapy and Social and Therapeutic horticulture activities for adults and young people • bespoke sessions and programmes for groups • Team building days for organisations • Training for therapists, students and practitioners • Community placement opportunities for student practitioners • Opportunities for research into the effectiveness of nature based therapies • Informing and Community Engagement opportunities • Site Hire <p>MORE INFO</p>



These are the result of a mark making exercise I did in Stanmer Park amongst the trees. The first and third are shapes of the trees and the knots in the woods. The middle is a meditative exercise I tried to get into the flow of whilst being in nature. It was quiet, except for soft rustling sounds. You can feel the serenity in these drawings.



The language of the trees and the emotions I felt.

This blends the concept of Process Art with eco-therapy. Can I transfer process art so often found in drawings into the 3D material of clay?

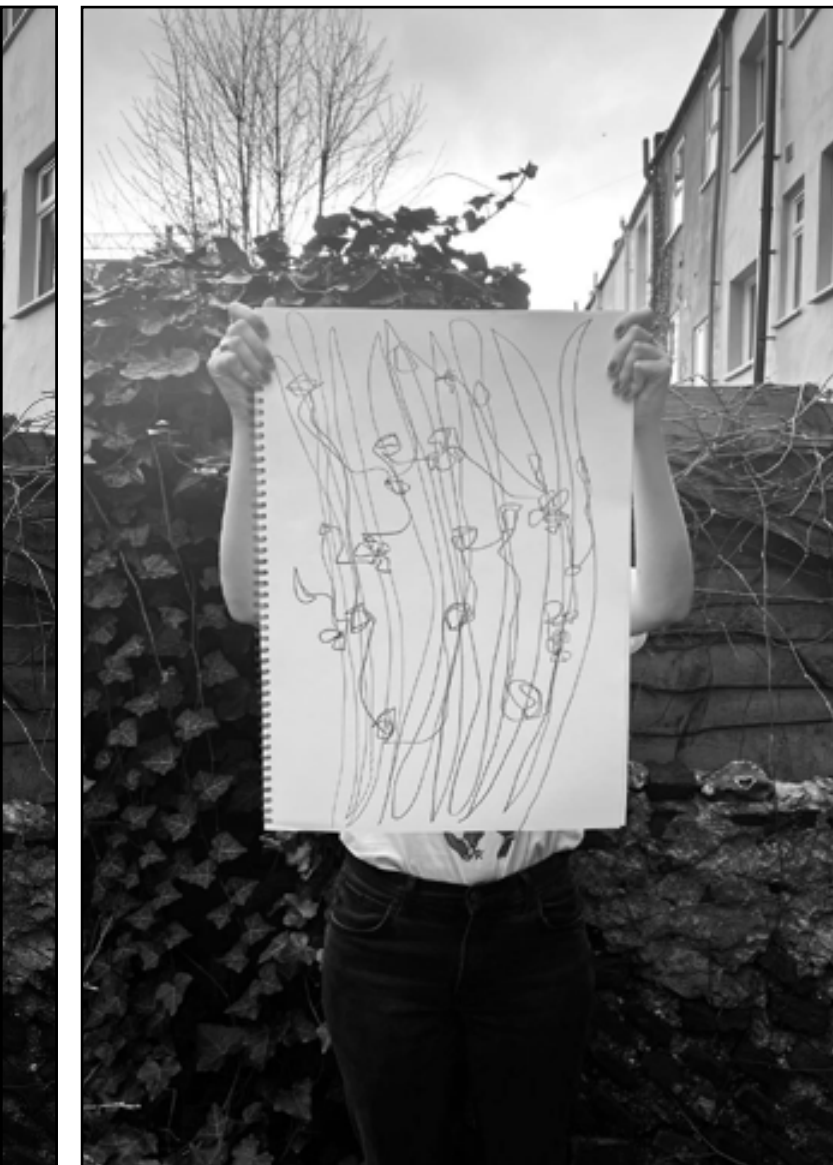


Fig. 46, 47, 48, pencil on paper, A2.



PEBBLE THERAPY

by Sara Darington

When people are in therapy, they can sometimes find it difficult to express themselves in words. Furthermore, because they have learnt to block off their feelings off as a learnt protection mechanism, they also find it difficult to access them or even know what they are feeling. They will say they don't feel anything, or they just don't know.

Suggesting art or music therapy may also make them feel threatened if they consider themselves not musical or artistic and make them feel even more anxious and threatened for fear of doing something "stupid" or "wrong".

This is where the idea of using pebbles comes in. By offering a wide basket of pebbles, and asking them to pick one, is, as an initial act, relatively straightforward. The questions behind this are the ones that would be useful for the therapist and patient to be curious about. For instance, asking, after asking, "Pick one that you like?" The therapist could ask "Why that particular pebble?" The person may still not know, but this is where the therapist can be creative, by being curious and probing further, such as, "What made you identify yourself with that one and not this one?" "What does it feel like to touch it?"

And then to ask; "Pick one that reminds you of X" (someone they feel strongly about). Similar questions could be asked, and then the therapist could ask the patient to place them down and ask things such as "Why this far apart? Why place them there? If they were nearer together, what would that feel like?" All of this would help to encourage the patient to talk, in the here and now, about what they are currently feeling and thinking and the therapist can use the pebbles as a basis to engender this.

Placing and choosing pebbles is a lot less daunting than facing a blank piece of paper, a lump of clay or a drum that one is expected to create something on. By lessening the anxiety of fear of failure, this gives an opportunity to create a physical mode of expression that can allow for feelings to be opened up and begun to be talk about.

Furthermore, pebbles are free and easily accessible; come in many different shapes, colours, patterns and textures; do not need a special storage space and can be carried to any appropriate room; including some in a bag for a community visit in the home.

Sara is a mentalization treatment based practitioner at the Richmond Personality Disorder Intensive Treatment Centre. Here are some photos of her own pebble collection at home. There seems to be something simple in the act of touch where you become aware of your physicality, thoughts and feelings. How could I incorporate these themes and ideas into my practise?



Fig. 50, Some of Sara's pebble collection, in baskets at her home.

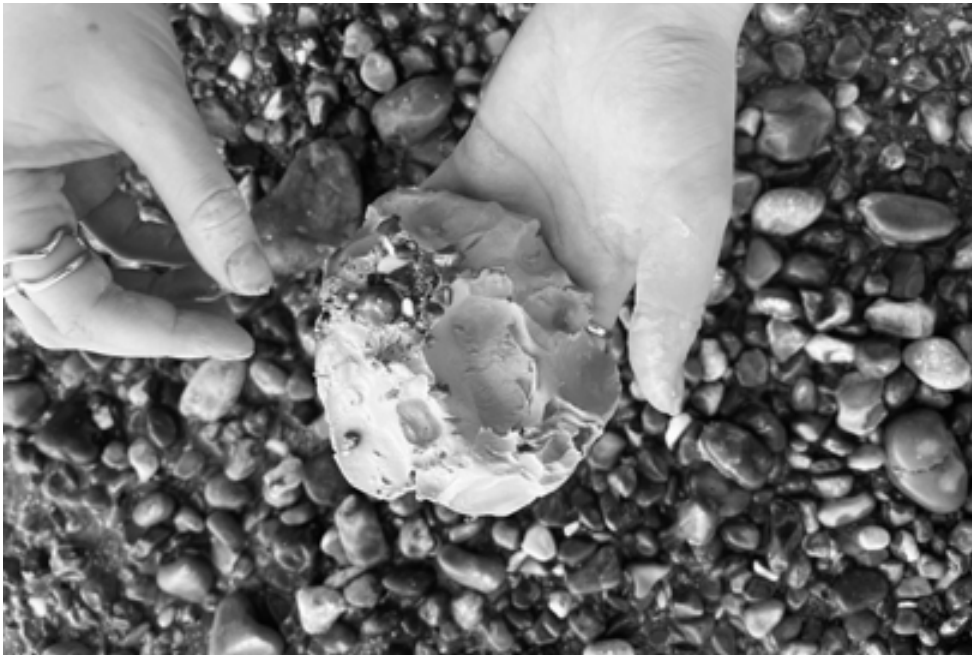


Pebble dishes, moulded around pebbles from Brighton beach. There is an instinctual nature to touch, feel and caress them.



Fig. 51, 52, 53. Modelling clay, ash glazes, stoneware.

I press the clay into the pebbles with the palm of my hand. I feel the clay mould around the pebbles, absorbing the moisture of sea water so it becomes colder and





wetter. I turn it round to see all the pebbles it's collected. Removing them reveals unique shapes to create an entirely new form. I compress the clay and start again.



What shape have I Made? As it slowly starts to wash away, I see the face of a man disappearing; willing to start over again.









And so I gave the clay back to it's original home; back to the Earth. Nothing remains but the experience.





PERMANENCE

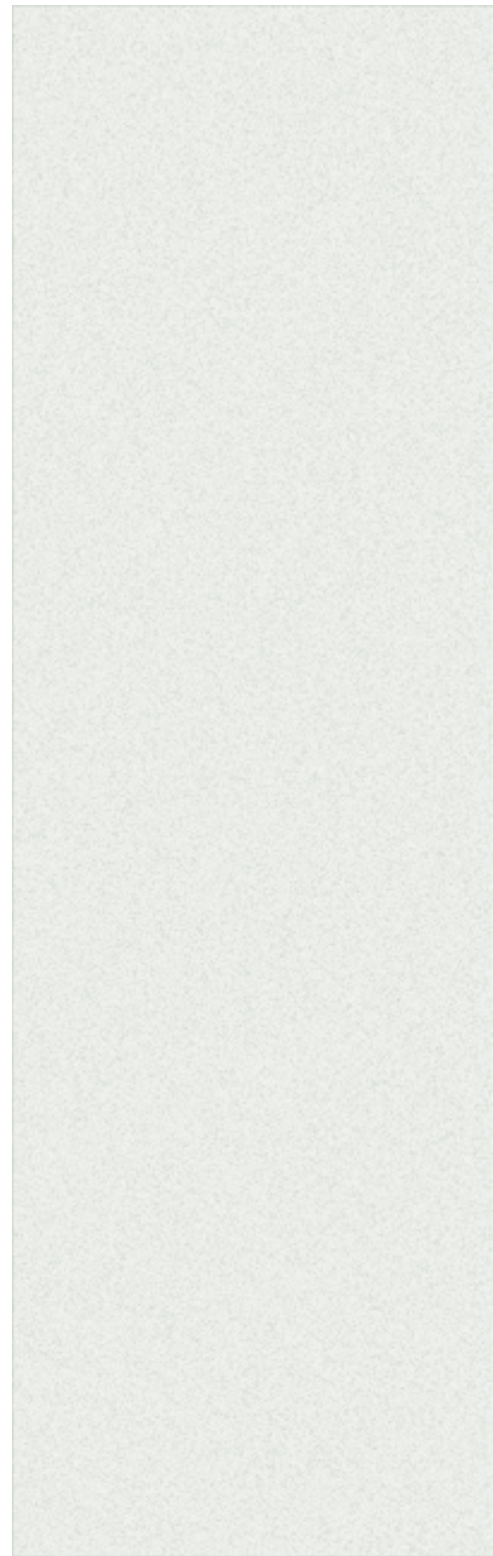
*im*PERMANENCE

OR

IS THE PERMANENCE OF AN OBJECT THE EMPHASIS, OR THE PROCESS OF CREATING IT TO BEGIN WITH? CAN IT BE BOTH? FEELINGS COME AND GO, WE EBB AND FLOW...HOW CAN I DISPLAY THIS IN WHAT I MAKE WITH CLAY?

THIS NOTION OF PERMANENCE & IMPERMANENCE

EXPLORES THIS. I'VE SEEN THIS IN MY EXPERIMENT OF WATCHING CLAY SLOWLY SUCCUMB TO THE SEA; CAN I DO THIS WITH AN UNFIRED POT? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENT EMOTION EVOKES IF I WATCH THE WAVES CRASH AGAINST A FIRED POT?



EXHIBITION: STRANGE CLAY.



Fig. 54 (top left) Emma Hart, Fig. 55 (top right) Klara Kristalova, Fig. 56 (bottom left) Liu Jianhua.

I visited this exhibition and it really inspired me to think about how one can display and consume ceramics. Using the walls but also space to move in and around the pieces. A personal favourite was Emma Hart's wind-screens, which allowed light to flow through these flat pieces; and depending on which side you looked at it from one side was different from the other.

Pieces on the wall, or installations that you can physically move around completely change the way we traditionally consume ceramics (in tableware for

example). On their website, with the exhibition they also have an article (right) about how ceramics is beneficial for healing! I'm definitely onto something here...

It was very emotive to walk through and experience ceramics on a much larger scale. Using the floor, wall and ceiling. Edmund De Waal vessels were in a box so you actually walk under them. It was incredibly engaging and unique.

Hayward Gallery, 2022.



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

5 ways in which ceramics can improve your mental health

WED NOV 23, 2022



Featuring work from 23 international artists, *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* is the first large-scale group exhibition in the UK exploring the more out-of-the-box usage of clay.

during the pandemic. There are many reasons for this; the antidotality of air dry clay, the community around arts and crafts, as well as having something to do during lockdown. And also, something that's especially true to ceramics, the feeling that participating in arts and crafts can actually help improve your mental health. Here are five ways how.



Installation view of Shaohou Puyan at *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* at Hayward Gallery. Photo by Mark Blower. Courtesy of Hayward Gallery

It can reduce stress and release tension

According to the BBC Arts Great British Creativity Test, over 75% of respondents said that creativity can help with stress and anxiety, with 25% listing some form of craft. With ceramics being such a hands on craft, it's no wonder that it can reduce stress and release tension, as you can get all of your frustrations and annoyance out in handling the clay.

In an increasingly digital and non-physical world, having something tactile can be incredibly comforting and grounding

Our lives are becoming more digital as time goes on. This was especially true during lockdown, when people were having to connect and interact with others online and had either limited or no in person interaction with people. We all know how harmful this limited interaction can be, so having a craft as tactile and palpable as ceramics can



Installation view of Lindsey Mendick at *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* at Hayward Gallery. Photo by Mark Blower. Courtesy of Hayward Gallery

Ceramics can be a great way to express yourself, especially when you can't articulate how you're feeling

Art can be a great way to express yourself when you are struggling to articulate your feelings. Having a creative outlet, especially one as versatile as clay can act as a vessel to get your thoughts and emotions across in a productive way. A study conducted by a Hong-Kong art psychotherapist found that in depressed patients, those who were taking clay art therapy (CAT) had lower levels of depression as well as having improved emotional regulation and holistic well-being. Therefore, ceramics can be a great tool to express yourself.

When dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation, finding community in a form of art can be powerful

In recent years more people have been finding solace and community in areas they may have not done previously. Crafts as a whole had a massive increase in popularity on social media from 2020 onward, with many people trying it for the first time. There are so many ways for people to connect with others with similar interests ranging from blog posts to in-person pottery workshops and social media. Having a shared hobby can be an amazing way to start and grow friendships which can help beat feelings of isolation.



Installation view of Betty Woodman at *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* at Hayward Gallery. Photo by Mark Blower. Courtesy of Hayward Gallery

Engaging with arts and culture can help improve your overall well being

There is extensive research that shows that engagement with art and culture (such as going to galleries and museums) can improve your mental health as well as your general well-being. For example, a study carried out by a Singaporean Professor showed that engagement with arts and culture improved multiple aspects of people's mental health, such as an increase in life satisfaction and lower mental distress. Additionally, ceramics in particular is a great way to interact with both contemporary and past cultures (such as ancient Roman, ancient Greek, Chinese and Korean) due to the number of different styles of ceramics.

ESTABLISHING PRACTISE.

With all this research into establishing the benefits of making with clay and making in general, what are my next steps in terms of my studio work? What is my intended direction after all my research? As Andy Warhol says... So what? This is a map of all the different direction I would like to continue exploring, with all the possibilities that clay has to offer. There is no right or wrong way to make when it's the process you go on as an individual in order to heal. A diversity of outcomes, and presenting them as a collection, would present this notion effectively.

I. TOUCH

The notion of touch is a theme running throughout my research, and is pivotal to the idea of healing through hands on making.

I think it is important to have objects that people themselves can interact with to truly be immersed in all my research, like my Jar of Touch which is meant to be handled personally; not just viewed in a distant gallery format. It is about being hands on, facing your emotions and letting your body

do the talking. I feel touch is vital to suggesting the question of, how can clay be used to heal? In this sense, my objects will be narrative driven. Including this booklet with all my research for them to skim through, to give further context, will also be important. Research is essential to my project. Not just a final incredibly well made craft object. I am opening the floor to discussing the value of art in improving peoples well-being. Specifically, why clay is a unique material to do so with.



2. NATURE

Being connected to the natural world brings healing in itself, and as clay is of the Earth the theme of nature is important to emphasise and explore.

It is a hands on activity, that creates a flow state and allows room for mindfulness and meditation. Being at peace in nature

achieves a similar result.

Material wise I'd like continue to use local Brighton clay or materials for glazes.



3.

VESSELS

Vessels as a visual metaphor for the body when articulating through objects the idea of well-being and healing I think is a good avenue to keep exploring.

Series I think are important here, to show different ways of healing and all the modes that may entail.

I think my vessel series with hand imprints are successful in communicating the act of

making, but how can I express the healing aspect of it, not just show the makers mark? I want to look into spirituality and throwing, looking at books such as 'Centering, In Pottery, Poetry and the Person by M.C. Richards and 'The Soulwork of Clay, A Hands On Approach to spirituality" by Marjory Zoet Bankson. I can then explore healing directly with how making with clay can be spiritually beneficial, and thus improve well-being.



4.

FILMING/ PHOTOGRAPHING PROCESS

When I think of curation for my final show I envision large A2 photos hung on the wall, showing process of the themes of touch and nature. Perhaps it will be the process of making, to give context to the final objects. I also envision a large collection of objects exploring my different avenues of healing through making so that as a while, you can see all my research

flowing together. I also like the idea of projection, being able to move through and block the projection; inviting the audience to participate in the making, giving them a sense of value as a creator. This could further connect the dots between object and making. As an act of making in itself. I need to emphasise the act of making not just the final outcome. It is all of it together.

5.

CERAMICS THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER (TABLEWARE)

I want to continue building my skill in throwing, and learning more about form and shape around ceramic tableware could be a good guideline to then add in touch or nature themes to objects used when dining and being together. This stems from Hygge movement as well

as the context of traditional ceramics. How can I add my own spin on it to emphasise the healing aspect?



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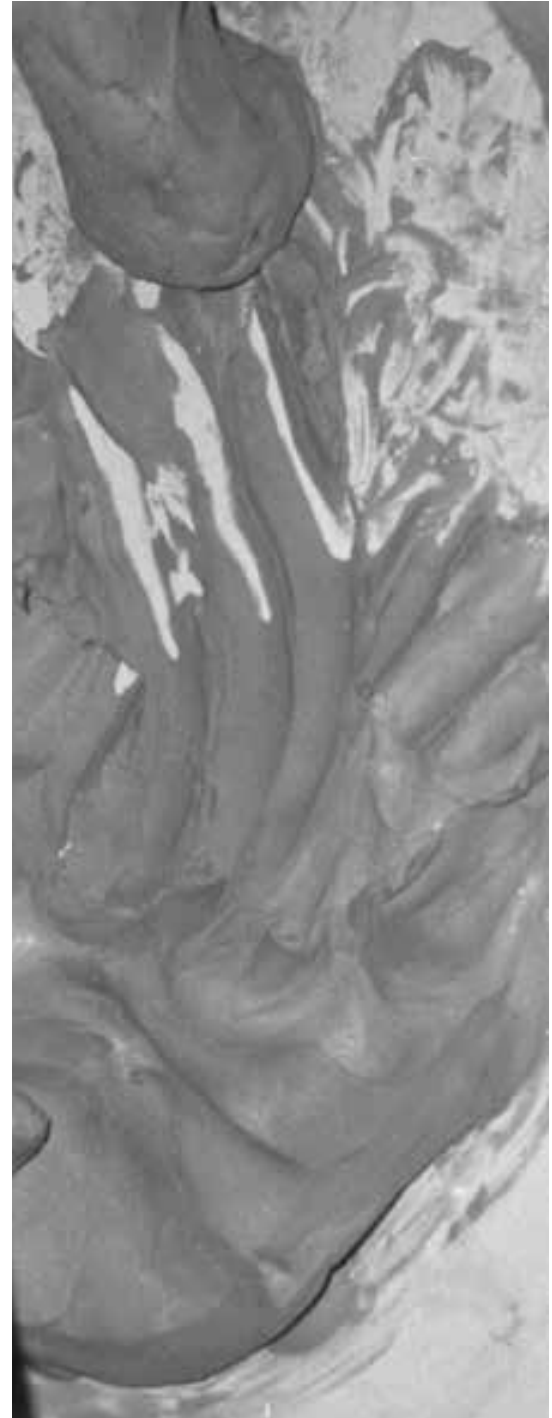
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