

EXPLORING CLAY

IT IS A BASIC HUMAN EXPERIENCE TO
MODEL AND MOULD AND SHAPE THINGS
IN THE HAND.

John Scott and Eric Fisher



CLAY IS THE MOST WONDERFUL MATERIAL IN
THE WORLD...WHEN WE ARE ABSORBED IN IT
WE ARE BOTH AT PLAY AND AT WORK...MAY IT
GIVE YOU AS MUCH JOY AS IT HAS GIVEN US.

John Scott and Eric Fisher



First Fingerprints taken 1859/60 by
William James Herschel (1833-1917)

BEFORE YOU START...

Relax your hands by massaging them with a good handcream, rubbing it in well until it has all disappeared. If working with a partner a short hand massage can be very helpful.

TAKE THE CLAY

- knead it, pound it, shape it, sculpt it. Pull it about, stretch it out, see how it responds. Play with the clay, push it, poke it, add little bits to it. Mark it with the tools, giving it texture and pattern.

CREATIVITY IS...SEEING SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T EXIST ALREADY.
YOU NEED TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN BRING IT INTO BEING...

Michelle Shea

Is the form you are creating something you already have in mind?
Something you are striving towards?
Or are you just letting the clay decide?
Seeing what comes as you work?
Seeing what is suggested
By the material itself and
The sensations it gives you?

Are you reminded of something?
Is that what you then start to model?
Does that, in its turn, most unexpectedly,
Become something else?

Is it like working with dough?
Does it remind you of cooking?
Or of gardening?

What shapes and sensations occur?

Anger, frustration, sadness, joy?

You can make a flat shape and press objects
into the clay.

You can roll clay into thin 'strings' and lay
these on the flat clay, pressing them in at
certain points.

You can cut the shapes out, leaving the
'holes', you can add cut shapes, building up.

You can, you can...

**CREATIVE WORK IS PLAY. IT IS FREE SPECULATION
USING THE MATERIALS OF ONE'S CHOSEN FORM.**

Stephen Nachmanovitch

**THAT IS WHY ART AS
MEDITATION IS SO
DEMOCRATISING A MOVEMENT.
IT RETURNS RESPONSIBILITY TO
EACH OF US FOR THE IMAGES
WE BELIEVE IN.**

Mathew Fox

**CAN YOU
EXPRESS
YOUR
FEELINGS
THROUGH
CLAY?**



Vessel to cure vomiting (gando), Cham-Mwana peoples, late 20th century.
Ceramic. Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

ALL THE ARTS WE PRACTICE
ARE APPRENTICESHIP. THE BIG
ART IS OUR LIFE.

M.C. Richards

TAKING PART...

You can encourage your companion to watch you working with the clay, sharing with them your idea and thoughts as you are modelling it. Remember the aim is not to get people to model great ornaments! It is the taking part and the communication between you that counts.

TAKE YOUR TIME...

Ten minutes modelling with plasticine kept in your pocket can yield some surprising conversations. A longer time with clay can be even more satisfying, especially with a small group, as people relax into the activity and start to share their thoughts and feelings together.

It is important to practise encouraging others to share their insights and reactions. Most of us are delighted to discover the world of imagination, memory and emotion that lies at our fingertips. We can learn from each other.

Using our hands and fingers to shape and play with the clay may release memories and feelings which are quite unexpected.

Joys can be shared. Anger or sorrow expressed. Working together helps to create companionship, understanding and community.



Roman
votive
offering:
two clay-
baked hands,
200 BC - AD
200. Wellcome
Library, London

ART IS NOT JUST ORNAMENTAL, AN ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE, BUT A PATH IN ITSELF, A
WAY OUT OF THE PREDICABLE AND CONVENTIONAL, A MAP TO SELF-DISCOVERY

Gabrielle Roth

MATERIALS & METHODS

Clays of all kinds, air-drying, oven-drying, Plasticine, Fimo, PlayDoh, Bread Dough. Art shops and early-learning centres online or in real streets, are full of interesting possibilities.

It helps to work on a plastic bag, so that clay can be moved easily. Plastic food boxes, the deeper the better, can be used to store clay between sessions. When a piece is finished, it can be dried and kept for decoration and display, or returned to the clay storage box for use another time.

**THE MAIN THING IS
TO ENJOY WORKING WITH CLAY.**

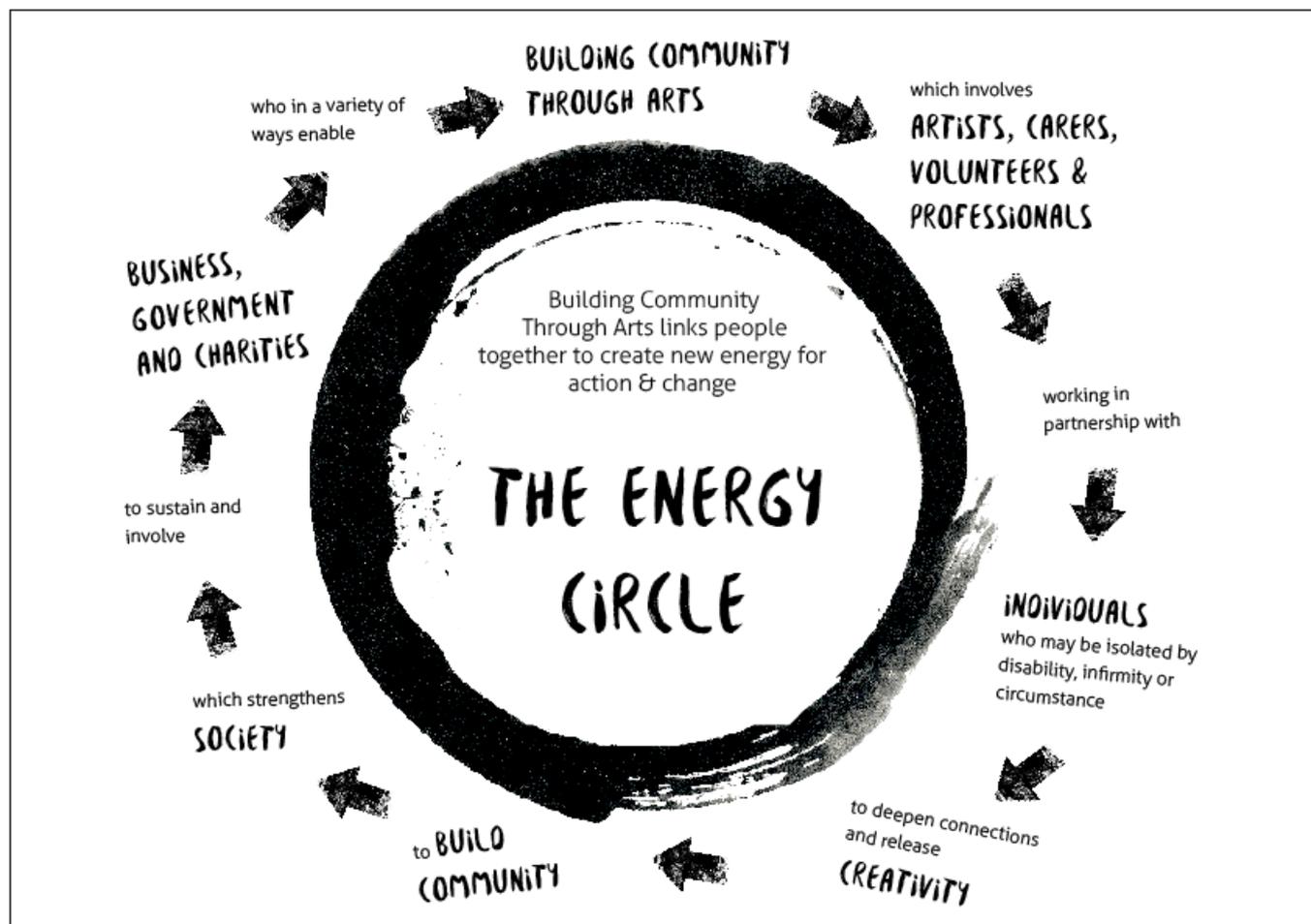
John Scott and Eric Fisher



Ritual vessel from the Kwoma culture of Papua New Guinea. From the collection of Reg and Judy MacDonald.

ABOUT BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS

Building Community Through Arts (BCA) was developed as part of Kew Studio's outreach work in a series of projects from 1993 – 2002. Toolkits and programmes have been recently updated and are presented as a set of free tools for use by anyone wanting to develop a community using arts workshops and encounters. Visit kewstudio.org/explore-creativity for more.



REFERENCES & CREDITS

Quotations from *Approaches to Modelling Clay* by John Scott and Eric Fisher (1975, Evans Brothers); and *The Vein of Gold* and *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron (1996 and 1992, Tarcher Putnam)

Further reading:

Central Nigeria Unmasked, UCLA . Lesson 8: Figurative Vessels of Transformation

http://www.fowler.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/curriculum/CentralNigeriaUnmasked_Curriculum_Lesson8.pdf