

Clay- horse (animals)

Information and ideas with thanks to Arts Care Gofal Celfs ceramicist Rebecca Buck:

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Clay

Until it is fired Clay can easily be recycled endlessly until the end of time.

If needing to purchase clay:

1 x 12.5kg bag of Hand-building clay with grog. Scarva Earthstone ES70 Architectural Body Clay a gorgeous, professional quality white clay from Scarva Potters Supplies

OR

Bath Potters Supplies are the most helpful, and they will give you great advice. Just tell them you want a white (non-staining, easy to clean up) medium grogged (grog gives the clay much better handling qualities and the greater dry strength needed for self-hardening use.) hand-building clay.

'Air drying' clays can be more difficult to use than a lovely quality hand-building clay.

However, if that is more accessible and convenient then it will do the job, go for it.

Re-using the Clay

- -At the end of a clay making, drop all the clay back in the bag.
- -Put bag in Bucket
- -slowly pour a cup or so of water over the clay in the bag to soften the clay.
- -Close bag securely, air tight.
- -leave over night or longer.
- -place bag on floor and step on it a few times to "knead" the clay, turning bag a few times.
- -Voila! It is ready for use. You can re-cycle your clay endlessly.

What if??

Bag goes rock-hard = Allow to dry completely, drop lump on floor to break up, put pieces in bag and recycle

Bag goes quite hard = Knock holes all over lump (hammer + screw driver= surprisingly satisfying task!) Return to bag and add water.

Bag goes too squishy= Tip clay onto a board and allow to dry until usable. "Knead" a few times over the day (or two) so that it dries evenly.

Storage

- Always close bag tightly
- Ideally store in a handy frost free place but it doesn't matter if the clay freezes.
- Have all the kit together for quick access by everyone.

Air drying clay will need to be stored air tight too to keep moist for modelling.

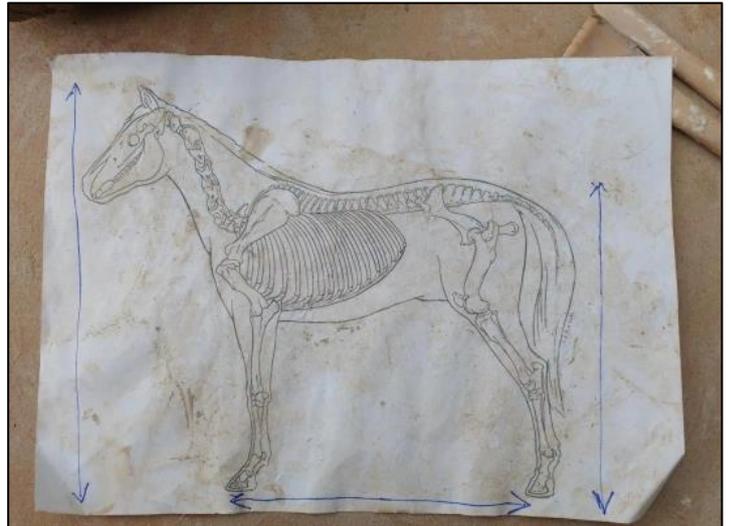
Have fun moulding, making and reuse again and again.

Some step by step guides to follow...

Making a horse (or any animal) out of clay.

1.

Print your chosen animals skeleton to A4 or less size. This is half an A4 sheet. It gives you your height and length for this small sculpture.



2.



Measure the distance between the feet and make a slab-base 1-2cm thick. Guess the width. This base will hold the legs steady until you are sure where to put the pose.

3.

Lay clay over the skeleton diagram to copy the basic shape and sizes.

Cut between the legs.

Make a Temporary Support. This will bear the weight and keep the form steady while you work on it. At the end it will be carefully removed.



4.



Photos of the chosen horse will help you place the feet in a good place. They are surprisingly close together, set under the weight of the shoulders (like ours) and hips.

Fix them down by blending the clay into the base. This can be changed right up until the piece is dry. You could cut off a leg or any other part and redo it at any time. That's one of the great things about working in clay.

5. Do a little improvement to every part of the form by adding /removing clay. And repeat! Layers and layers of work will allow the form to develop evenly.

Focus only on the essentials: the proportions NOT details.

Each bit affects how the other bits look: you might think the head looks wrong but actually the head is good, it is the neck that is wrong and so on.



6.



The movement of working will cause the clay to slump. Check the height regularly by measuring your skeleton diagram. Squeeze the temporary support to make it higher. Work on the legs. Use a hair dryer to stiffen it up a bit if necessary.

7.



Measure repeatedly from your invaluable diagram to get the proportions that will make it look like horse not a cow or dog, unless you are making a cow or dog!

The tip of the tool marks one point, your finger makes the other: hold this and transfer it to your clay.

8.

Mark the measurement on the clay.
Add or subtract clay. Measure the next bit. etc



9.



Sketching on the bones after measuring them will improve your sculpture, speed up your progress and increase your learning hugely. You are expanding your knowledge, challenging your habitual ideas, developing your eye for detail and improving your concentration. It is hard, fascinating and massively rewarding skill-building that will enhance your life. Seriously.

Notice and model which bits go behind: the bones and muscle of the legs go over the chest and hips.

The joints show you where the bendable bits are. Muscles can shrink or stretch.

10.



Once your form has stiffened up a bit use tools if you have any for better control and a better bond in the clay: pick up a small bit of fresh clay with the tool, dab it on a piece of damp sponge in a dish of water and model it onto the form.

Use very little water or you will get a mushy, sticky mess prone to cracking later.

11.



Double check the height, lengths. This one has sagged a bit so I fixed that. Focusing on the placement of the bones is much easier than trying to capture the gentle curves of a specific animal.

12.

Now you have a clear framework for your creativity to play with!

Once you have the proportions right you can create the pose, type, age, character and mood of your animal.

A simple turn of the head brings it alive!



13.



As you bend the form into your chosen pose look from above and use the spine to guide you so it doesn't get distorted.

14.



Blow-dry it a bit if necessary.

Now walk away and look at something far away for a few minutes to clear your eyes. Turn back: what is the first thing you notice? That is probably a bit that needs fixing or it might be the best bit. Sort out any problems now.

Add details like mane, ears and tail. These parts are very expressive so take time over them in rough and they can be refined later.

15.



Play around with textures.

Keep the style consistent over the whole form: don't over-do the face unless your whole animal is very detailed or it will look like a mask. Keep the features in proportion to the skull.

Use the tail and add plants on the ground to reinforce the legs. Work on the base to make it look as good as the animal.

16.



Make additions of clay where ever you spot the need. Change tool and do a rotation of subtraction of clay. Then a rotation of adding etc, until you hit a rotation where you can't see any more you could do. That means you have done your best on this piece.

If the legs are firm enough gently remove the Temporary Support in small pieces and touch up the form.

17.



Trim the base nicely and under-cut it a bit to catch a shadow that will lift the whole piece and guard against ugly chipping.

What now?

Dry your sculpture slowly or the legs may crack as they will shrink faster than the rest of the form. A cardboard box placed over the top is ideal to slowly allow moisture to escape.

Self-hardened this will be delicate but last forever so long as it doesn't get wet. Firing will make it stronger and water-proof. When it is dry/fired paint/wax/stain the surface : a simple all over bronze colour always looks great.

OR

Take a photo then squash work up and recycle enabling the clay to take on a new form next time 😊

Special thanks to Arts Care Gofal Celf's artist Rebecca Buck for this guide.

For more info visit ospreystudios.org or www.acgc.co.uk