

Contactless Creativity - Light

Welcome

Hi, welcome to this weeks Contactless Creativity project. My name is Cáit Gould. I am a potter/ceramicist based at The Base in Greenham. I have lived in Berkshire for 5 years, although, as you may be wondering from my name (and my accent) I'm not from around here! My parents are Irish, I grew up in Scotland, and I was born in Zimbabwe.

I think clay has always been a part of my life from a young age and I have always loved making things from mud and fire! So I was very lucky to get to study a BA(Hons) in ceramics at Glasgow Art School and after spending time travelling, working abroad and primary school teaching I returned to my first love of clay about 3 or 4 years ago and had the honour of being selected to participate in BBC2's Great Pottery Throw Down (which is the British Bake Off for clay and potters!).

I'm currently spending my time teaching pottery to people of all ages both at The Base and at Reading College, and when I can I make my own work and commissions. I love the tactility of clay and being able to share it with others. This year I have enjoyed making pieces that are inspired by the landscapes of my childhood in Zimbabwe and Scotland.

Introduction

At this time of year, as it gets darker and the nights draw in, I thought creating some light might be a positive theme to work with. So this week we'll be making lanterns from air-dry clay.

You'll create patterns with dots and by piercing holes through the clay. I encourage you to enjoy the feel of the clay and let it absorb your attention. You can take this time to consider light in all it's forms, its different sources and what it means to you. Stars, Sunshine, Fires, the Moon, lighthouses etc...

I thought the well-known quote from Leonard Cohen may be one to consider this week,

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."

We'll be letting light in by creating holes in our clay forms, and will need to be managing cracks in the clay! Don't worry about them. I'll explain how to repair the worst of them, and remember that it's how light gets in! The main thing is that you enjoy the experience of working with the clay and take your time with it.

Inspiration images



Day 1 - dots

Today's exercise is to warm up and create paper hanging shapes. We will be expressive dotting! We'll look at different dot density to prepare us for creating designs and patterns with dots of light later this week. If you start to see star constellations or familiar objects in your dotty sheets great. Equally if you enjoy creating random dots with no pattern also great. Just enjoy it.

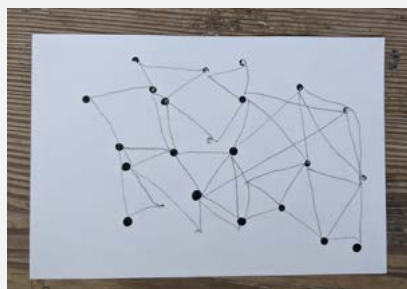
You will need:

Paper	Acetate
Paint	Scissors
Chopstick	Toothpick
Pencil	Wool
Sharpie	

1. Dip the end of your chopstick in a tube of paint and dot your paper. Create at least three different sheets with different dot densities. Choose any colour of paint and paper for this.



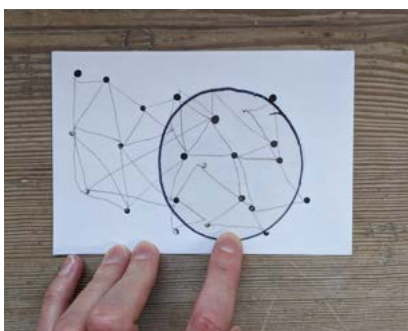
2. Draw lines to join some or all of the dots using a pencil. You may like to create areas of pattern if you wish.



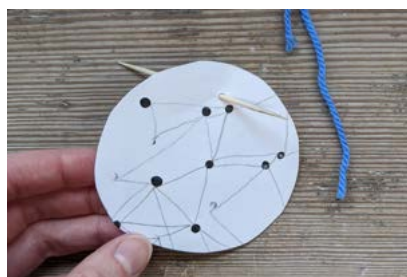
3. Use the sharpie to draw a shape on the acetate sheet. Eg. Star, triangle, bell, circle etc. You will use this shape tomorrow too as a template to cut around paper and clay, so it's best kept reasonably simple in form. Cut it out.



4. Select an area on your dotty sheets with your acetate shape. Draw around it with your pencil and cut it out.



5. Use your toothpick to pierce a hole through the paper about 1cm from the edge. Give the toothpick a gentle wiggle to make the hole a little bit wider.



6. Thread your paper shapes with lengths of the wool provided and hang on the tree for Christmas or in your home. You may wish to write a nice message on the back and send to a loved one?




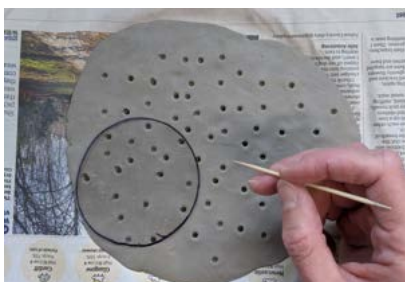




Day 2 - Clay Shapes

Today's exercise is to start working with clay and familiarise ourselves with it on a smaller scale before starting our lanterns tomorrow. You can use this time to let the clay absorb your attention and think about things you associate with light and comfort. Step 2 can take a while, but take your time with it, split the clay into smaller pieces if that helps you.

You will need:

Smaller lump of clay	Toothpick
Newspaper	Acetate shape (from yesterday)
Chopstick	

<p>1. Lay down your newspaper to work on.</p> <p>i. Make your lump of clay into a ball shape</p> 	<p>2. Squash your clay flat using the heel of your hand. Keep turning the clay over as you go to evenly work it.</p> 	<p>3. Once you have a very thin sheet of clay (About 3-4mm thick) use the chopstick to make a holey pattern in your clay (similar to yesterday's exercise). Holes do not need to go the full way through the clay.</p> 
<p>4. Using your acetate shape from yesterday as a template, cut out your shapes using a toothpick.</p> 	<p>5. Once you have your clay shapes, you can use the end of your chopstick to add more pattern to your shapes. You can make them abstract or represent items of light or comfort for you.</p> 	<p>6. You can reuse any scraps of clay simply by squashing them back together, add a <i>bit</i> of water if too dry, and follow steps 1-5.</p> <p>Final step: pierce a hole 1cm from the edge using your toothpick</p> 







Leave your clay shapes on the newspaper to dry on a windowsill. If you would like to keep them flat, you can put a sheet of newspaper on top of them also and place a book on top to weigh them down. We will paint them on Friday.







Day 3 - Clay Lanterns

Today we'll start making our lanterns. Before you begin lay down your newspaper to work on. By the end of the session today you will have created the rough shape for your lantern. Don't worry that it doesn't look perfect yet. The clay is still soft at this stage, and (like pastry) doesn't like to be worked too much. It is easier to refine the surface and make the shape look more finished tomorrow once your clay has had a chance to firm up a bit.

You will need:

Larger lump of clay and plastic bag	Toothpick
Newspaper	Sponge
Chopstick	Tub of water

<p>1. Use your chopstick to cut a quarter off the end of your clay. This is for the base.</p> 	<p>2. Gently tap this smaller piece of clay into a ball shape in your hands.</p> 	<p>3. Push your thumb into the centre of the ball of clay and smooth outwards.</p> 
<p>4. Keep working your clay until it is about 5mm thick all around. If the base is thicker than this press down a bit further with your thumb and smooth it out flat.</p> 	<p>5. You can smooth any cracks in the clay with your sponge. First wet it in your tub of water, squeeze out the excess water and then rub gently over the cracks and finish by smoothing with your finger.</p> 	<p>6. Now take the other lump of clay and shape it into the rough shape you'd like for the top section of your tea-light holder (Mine is sort of acorn-shaped. You can make yours whatever shape you like).</p> 

<p>7. Push your thumb into the centre of the clay.</p>	<p>*Note* The section you're now working on will form the top of your lantern We'll turn it upside down to sit on top of the base as shown in the diagram.</p>	<p>8. Push all the way down and start pinching upwards to thin the clay. Make sure not to pinch outwards too much so that it can fit on the base.</p>
		
<p>9. If you find that the sides are getting too wide to sit on the base you can gently hold it in both your hands and hug it in to make it narrower.</p>	<p>10. Keep working round and round gently pinching the clay upwards until the thickness everywhere is no thicker than your baby finger (6 - 8mm).</p>	<p>11. Finally leave your lantern base and top to sit separately on the newspaper until tomorrow. If you live somewhere quite warm loosely cover them with plastic so they don't get too dry overnight.</p>
		

Tips

Thinning the walls and managing the shape can be fiddly, but take your time with it and keep turning the clay so you evenly work it. If it gets too dry use a **small** amount of water to soften the clay again. If it's too floppy, let it sit for a short time to dry out a bit. If you have a hairdryer, you can use it to help dry out your lantern slightly, be careful not to use it for too long and make the later too brittle.

Day 4 - Refining Clay Lanterns

Today we'll refine the surface and shape of your lantern and pierce holes in the side to allow the candle-light out. **Lay out newspaper before you begin.**

You will need:

Lantern forms from yesterday	Toothpick
Newspaper	Sponge
Chopstick	Tub of water
Wooden Spoon	Tea-light (and a lighter)

<p>1. Use the wooden spoon to smooth out the inside of the top section. Hold it in your other hand to keep it rounded.</p>	<p>1. 2. If you have cracks on the outside surface rub a damp sponge over them gently.</p>	<p>3. Gently rub to smooth out these areas with your fingers or thumb.</p>
		
<p>4. Sit your tea-light top on the newspaper & hit it firmly & gently with the back of your wooden spoon to even out the shape.</p>	<p>5. If you have any cracks on the base, dampen them with a damp sponge and smooth over with your finger.</p>	<p>6. Check that the top still fits on the base and if not gently ease the base wider or squeeze the top to make it narrower.</p>
		
<p>7. Start piercing the sides with a toothpick. You can create shapes, patterns, or random piercing. Use your experience from day 1&2.</p>	<p>8. You can also use a chopstick to pierce larger holes in the clay. The chopstick holes allow more light through.</p>	<p>9. If you find clay is building up on your toothpick or chopstick wipe it off with your finger.</p>
		

10. Make sure to have holes in the top to allow the heat out.



11. Use a tooth-pick to remove the clay build-up from inside your lantern.



12. You can also use the wooden spoon or chopstick if you like.



13. Re-pierce any of the holes that got covered over.



14. Check how much light it lets through by lighting your candle and placing the lantern on top of the base.



15. Add more holes if necessary. If you are happy with the light it allows out you can **leave the two parts to dry separately.**



Leave your clay lantern to dry with its top and base separate ready for painting tomorrow. **Please don't leave the candle lighting.**

Day 5 - Painting

Today you can paint your hanging shapes from Day 2, and your finished lantern from yesterday. Before you begin put down newspaper to work on.

You will need:

Lantern from yesterday	Sponge
Flat shapes from Day 2	Tub of water
Newspaper	Paint
Wool	Scissors

Use the sponge to dab the paint on. It will go on better if you don't rub or brush it on. If you find the surface starts to get muddy looking let the paint dry a bit longer and work on a separate area or object.

You can paint it all in one colour, or use a range of colours. Squeeze the paint straight onto your sponge as you need. Rinse the sponge in water to clean when you change colours. Make sure you squeeze the sponge out very well so that the paint doesn't get to watery.

Once the hanging shapes are dry you can thread some wool through them to hang them up.

Enjoy your creations!

Inspiration images:

