

On Making Things From Scratch



This exercise focuses on the idea of crossed cultural identities. Being oneself being somewhere else. One of the methods I use to understand a new surrounding or environment is fully engaging with it through a deeply primal and intimate process: the extraction of pure, fireable clay from soil of different green areas, urban and rural locations. With the material that is unearthed, fired clay beads and other basic shapes are created and arranged in a very simple and familiar structure.

Materials

Clay

Cutting tool – it can be a plastic knife.

Leaves, branches.

Graphic documentation.

Wooden tools

Ages 7-15 years old

Soil holds the geologic, climatic, biological and cultural records of the earth. Clay is a representation of genesis and origination. Through the action of making shapes out of clay, I aim to transform myself (and participants) into a basic, elementary and incipient state, both mental and physical in order to gain deeper links between subjects and locations.

This exercise wants to explore different possibilities on the action of making; as a final result and as part of a process. Giving conceptual meaning and importance to a process based work. Using a material that is been taken by granted like clay, in an inventive and unusual ways; Using clay as part of an interactive and collaborative work. Stimulating students to experiment outside the stablished norms and understandings through a multidisciplinary way.

Getting Started

The starting point for this workshop is my own research on self dug and processed clay.

I will introduce the idea of finding and making your own clay through images and personal documentation and actual physical works.

Also, some other artists that work with clay will be introduced supported with documentation.

Although the possibilities of digging one's own clay is totally possible and open if the time allows (we would need 6-8 hours to complete it), it is possible to do this workshop with commercial clay. Nevertheless, the process of how to make your own clay will be discussed and shown in images and examples that I will bring into the classroom. It's good for students to understand the possibilities and the plain-ness of this method.

The Exercise

I will suggest to the students to create a 'walking path' composed by clay tiles (15x15cm each) that they will make themselves. The pavement of one of the main streets in my home town, Barcelona, designed by the artist Antoni Gaudi can work as a good reference point. Gaudí got inspired by the nature around him to design this relevant street in Barcelona. I will introduce the artist with different images and documentation.

Previous to the workshop invite the students to collect leafs, branches and flowers from their local areas. With this material, they can make prints and patterns on the still damp clay.

Follow with a demonstration of the different materials that will be used. Answer any questions that arise on this demonstration. The students will be given a blob of clay and the materials needed to do their own exercise. There is not a specific number of elements that need to be reached, it will be completely dependent on the available time. The finished pieces will be left in a safe place to get completely dry.

With the resulting tiles build a corridor, ideally outdoors. The idea will be to do it in a local green area where the unfired clay can stay, rest and dissolve and be part of this new location. As a final part of the activity, the students, individually and one by one will walk from one end to the other end of this corridor, as a metaphor for moving through cultures. They have to try to do not break the work. Through this process, some of the very fragile

unfired clay tiles will break, creating a certain uncomfortable but exciting feeling. This will work as a metaphor of living in a different country, full of excitement but full of accidentally broken rules. It is not compulsory to walk on the tiles, the students that don't want to do so can just observe. Through time, this clay will dissolve and disappear in the soil where they have been placed. Becoming a part of this new environment, becoming new geologic, climatic, biological and cultural records of the earth.

The workshop intends to widen the understanding of the concepts around ideas of crossed cultural identities through a process and collaborative based work and the importance of being able to create with very simple, cheap and accessible materials. Students can discover much more extended possibilities of the action of making from scratch. They will develop a better understanding of the concept of multidisciplinary and all the potentiality of mixing different disciplines through a very hand made process. The students will be able to create few small individual pieces that will become part of a bigger and group installation. The idea is to create a considerably large installation where the viewer can physically experiment, interact, walk on it and be part of it.