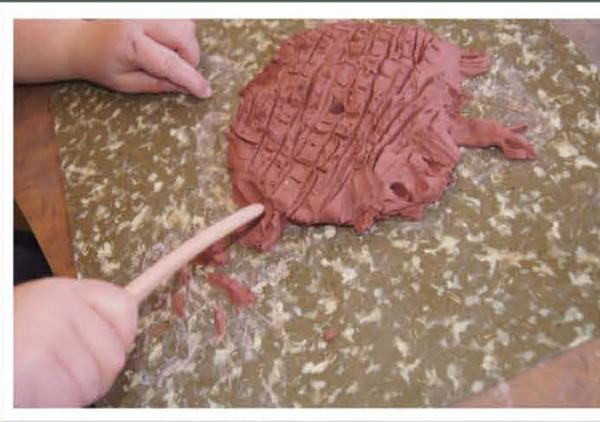




# Mud Clay

*Can I make it with "Mud Clay"!*

*Zac aged 5*



## Intergraded Arts Project

Sally-Anne Merrick

The following Integrated Arts Project originated from Henry's visit to the NSW Art Gallery and his desire to make his own sculptures. Henry was provided with Clay to sculpt. The initial experience has led to the following "big Idea" of mastering what the children call "mud clay".

*"Art is great fun, you don't get to see kids doing art everyday"*  
Henry aged 4

# Molding Plasticine



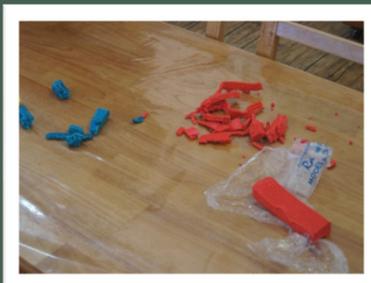
"It's a different type of clay... a harder clay!" - Henry

"Why is the play dough really straight? It hurts my Fingers"  
- Isabella



"I want to make a rabbit but its too hard, I can only twist and break it. I want to make a rabbit but not with this stuff can I make it with the other mud clay, its easier" - Zac

Children sourced scissors to cut the hard medium. →



← Presentation of the art space and materials offered can attract and invite participation, or do the opposite.

→ Plasticine did not attract much participation today



**Art Goal: To Remember the environment is the third teacher**

Observation Day

## The Experience

Clay was offered last week as a one off for Henry to sculpt after his delight at being allowed to add to an artist's sculpture exhibition at NSW Art Gallery. Today Plasticine has been presented to mould.

## Review of Learning

Zac attempts to mould the plasticine lead to frustration and the request for "Mud Clay".

Children didn't attend this experience.

Plasticine tends to be brittle and does not mix with water so its texture is hard to change and manipulate with our moist fingers. Offering it as an art medium doesn't respect children right as artist to engage and manipulate 3D mediums.

## Future Plans

To present Clay as an authentic 3D art medium, as rather than a "Cinderella" activity (Ursula Kolbe p.4 1997).

## Later that same day...



Zac has returned to mould his rabbit, he discusses his plans with Isabella "Roll a Ball Make a body you can pinch the ears ... poke you fingers for the mouth." - Zac



Isabella and Zac continue collaborate on their masterpieces. Isabella shares patterning technique she is using for her turtles shell. Zac applies this new marking technique to his T-Rex



Zac's T-Rex →  
← Isabella's Turtle



Zac attends for a long time creating his rabbit (pictured above) and then a T-Rex.



Continued...

Observation Day

### The Experience

Clay has been set up on the verandah during outside play at the request of Zac who wants to make a mud clay rabbit. This is the second time only that clay has been presented for children to manipulate.

### Review of Learning

Children and staff have been attracted to the sensory, intuitive and responsive elements of clay.

Clay lends itself to being manipulated in a variety of ways, squeezed, flattened, poked, thumped, scraped pinched etc.

Exploring these changes is "magical and leads to a fascination and a motivation to keep experimenting with clay." (Bartel p.1 2006).

Natural materials have a strong interest appeal for both children and adults

## Later that same day continued...



Children enjoyed thumping, pinching and poking the clay exploring its responsiveness.

The sensory element of clay even attracted a teacher who commented " I loved clay as a child, I'm not sure what to do with it but I just love the feel of it on my skin"



The natural appeal of clay drew a crowd of artists, Even Henry returned to "sculpt"

← "you have to make sure its balanced, it doesn't have to look like anything, not an animal not nothing"- Henry



**Art Goal: To develop mastery and automaticity with clay**

### Future Plans

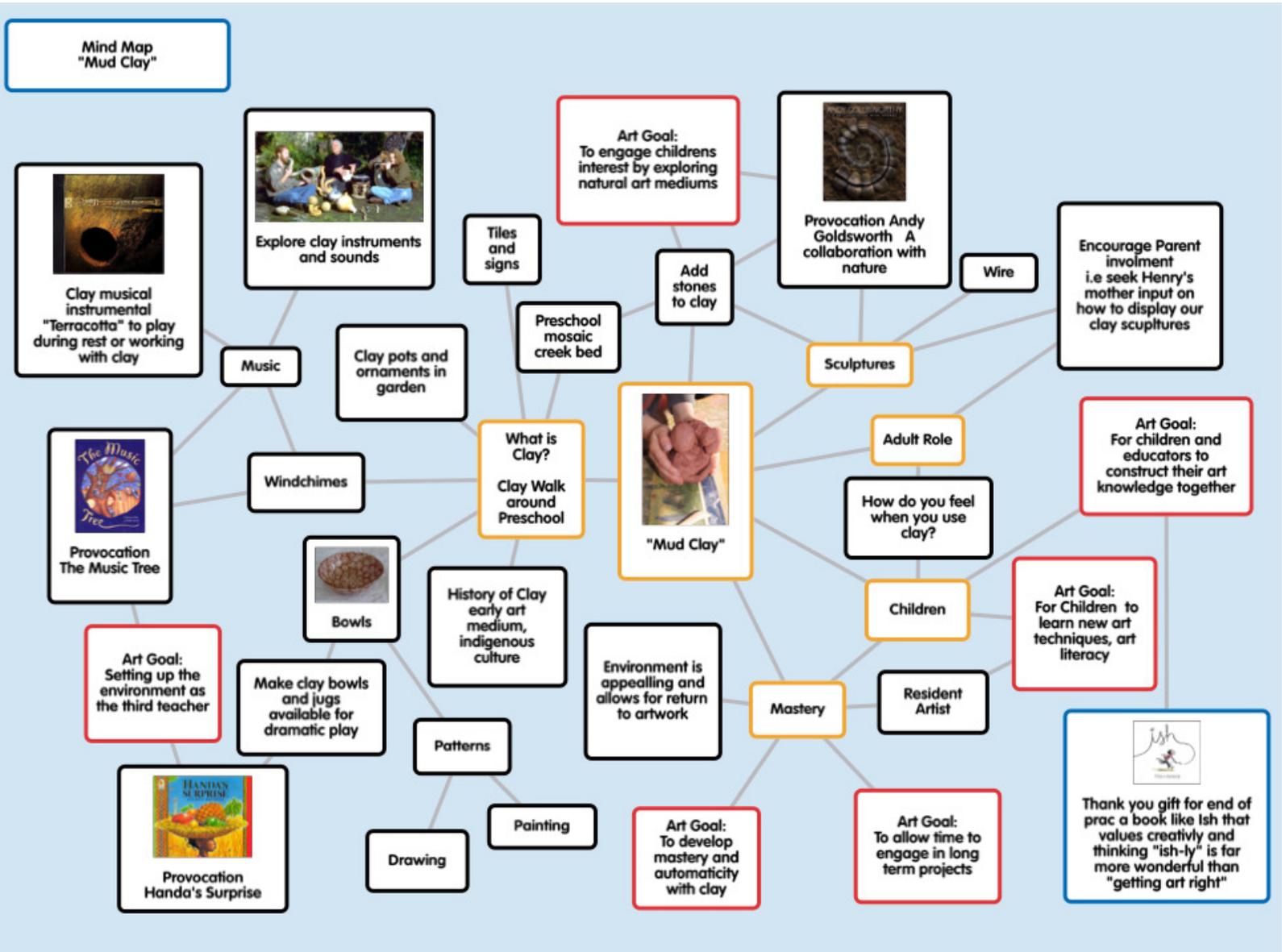
For children to move beyond the discovery phase that occurs when manipulating clay. To learn new art techniques, and develop art literacy of clay, (i.e. slurry).

For Teacher to view themselves as fellow learners constructing their knowledge with children together.

To continue to provide natural material to be creative with.

Provide time and materials for Henry to continue to explore his interest and understanding of sculptures.

To have time to develop mastery and automaticity with clay



**This mind map depicts possible extensions of our Integrated arts project Mud Clay**

Art Goals

- To engage children interest by exploring natural arts mediums
- For children and educators to construct their knowledge together
- For children to learn new art techniques, art literacy
- Setting up the environment as the third teacher
- To develop mastery and automaticity with Clay
- To allow time to engage in long term projects

# Reflection of Art Goals

Around Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

- **To engage children interest by exploring natural arts mediums**

Natural materials invite touch and engagement, children are innately drawn to nature (Cadwell 1997). Koster (1999 p. 22) believes that as clay was probably one of the first arts medium and playing with "natural clay fills a basic need in us all to touch the earth". Koster states clay introduces children to sustainable art practices of reusing an art medium, children are fascinated that once fired clay can last thousands of years. Lankford (1997) believes the arts can promote ecological stewardships. **EYLF Outcome 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD** aims to develop children who become socially responsible and show respect for the environment (DEEWR, 2009). By providing children with access to a range of natural materials in their environment, this journey of connectedness to nature and respect for the environment can begin.

- **For children and educators to construct their knowledge together**

Encouraging educators to view themselves as more than "just art material dispensers" (Kindler p.13), and join children in the journey of inquiry is the aim of this goal. **EYLF Outcome 1: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY**, encourages children to respond to ideas and suggestions from others, increasingly co-operate and work collaboratively, as they experience the benefits and pleasures of shared learning exploration (DEEWR, 2009). As educators are mindful of their role in starting conversations of enquiry with children akin to the Reggio Emilia approach, knowledge is developed in together (Kennedy 1996).

- **Setting up the environment as the third teacher**

The philosophy of creating an aesthetic, supportive, plentiful environment for arts has been long held (Kolbe 1997 , Wright 2003). Pela (2003 p.7) calls the environment a studio space where as the name implies materials will be specific for the arts, the space should be "beautiful and invite lingering, artwork will be honoured and displayed,... it's a space that nourishes the senses". Remembering the Reggio Emilia philosophy that the environment is the third teacher will remind adults to be respectful when creating spaces for children's learning (Gandini. 1998). **EYLF Outcome 4: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELL BEING** originates with a sense of belonging and comfort in their environments (DEEWR 2009). When educators provided diverse and rich resources within the environment they are creating respectful spaces for children to learn.

- **For children to learn new art techniques, art literacy**

Wright (2003 p. 15) comments that “while we may all speak the English language we may not all communicate in the language of the arts” hence there is a need to be taught art literacy from an early age. By learning the language of music, drama, art and dance children develop the discourse to express ideas and making meaning using a range of arts media. Which links to **EYLF Outcome 5: CHILDREN BECOME EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS** (DEEWR 2009). There is an assumption that leaving children to discover art mediums their artistic abilities will naturally unfold, however, current arts theory suggests the need for instruction in arts techniques (Gunn 2000, Kindler 1996, Wright 2003). **EYLF Outcome 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS** whose leaning is enhanced when they are introduced to appropriate tools, technologies and media and provided the skills, knowledge and techniques (DEEWR 2009), supports this theory that children should learn art techniques.

- **To develop mastery and automaticity with clay**

Kolbe (1997 p.4) advocates developing a “clay culture” where children can return to and build upon knowledge. Children need space and time to develop automaticity. **EYLF Outcome 1: CHILDREN HAVE STRONG IDENTITIES**, Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities as they develop mastery. Children experience pride and confidence when they engage independently with tasks (DEEWR 2009). Gardiner (as cited in Gunn 2000 p. 115) suggest that ability in arts is only limited by the knowledge of the media with which children work, knowledge should be supported by time, space and adult discourse about artistic techniques.

- **To allow time to engage in long term projects**

Koster (1999 p.19) recommends that “clay needs to be introduced over a long period of time” as it can be moulded in a variety of ways that takes time to explore. Engaging in long term projects allows children to investigate and test their own theories (Helm 2001). **EYLF Outcome 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS** requires that children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, enquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating (DEEWR 2009). When educators provide opportunities for children to revisit their ideas and extend their thinking, including wonder, curiosity and imagination, this EYLF outcome is achieved (DEEWR 2009). The main point to remember for this art goal is that all learning is a journey and it take times.

# Clay Hunting



We found lots of terracotta clay in our preschool today. Isabella noticed one of the pots had patterns like she had scratched on her turtle last week. Sophia liked the little chick garden ornament and thought she could make one herself, Ben thought he could too.



Ben was worried about the empty clay bird bath, "what would the birds drink?". Although empty for a while he hadn't noticed this before the clay walk.



The children focused their hunt down low around the garden beds and didn't notice the clay wind chime on the verandah until it was pointed out at story time.

Day 1

## The Experience

To build on children's awareness of clay used in their environment by going on a clay walk, hunting for clay items.

## Review of Learning

Noticing details in their environment helps children to connect to and develop a respect and appreciation for their environment. The empty bird bath led to a discussion about caring for animals as well as people. The "water me" sign also was a reminder about water wise practices.

**EYLF Outcome 2:** Children are connected to and contribute to their world.

## Future plans

Bring the little chick to the clay table as a provocation for Ben and Sophie. Continue to discuss sustainable water use with the children. Instruct children in clay storage techniques so clay is kept as a sustainable resource able to be used again and again.

# Clay Provocations



Isabella continues to examine marks in clay and Sophia suggests the yellow pot would make a good honey pot.



An educator points out that coils have been used to make this pot. Supporting art literacy.



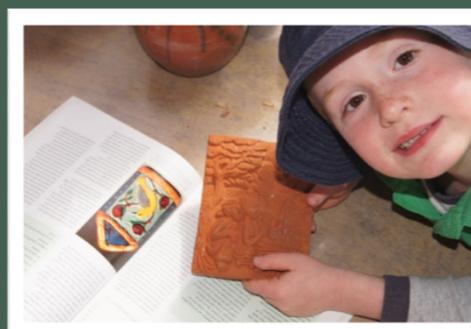
Max explores pot making techniques and enjoys matching pots to pictures in the art books.



"Hey lets play shops" Oliver suggests a dramatic use for the clay objects.



Max was also interested in how the flat tile was similar to one in the book



## The Experience

Day 2

Clay products were made available for children to examine. After examining the provocations clay was made available inside for children to manipulate.

## Review of Learning

Children enjoyed comparing pots to illustrations and hypothesising how the artworks were made. Suggestions were also given for using pots in dramatic play. Discussions about the reusable nature of clay as an art product verse paintings single use was also commented on by an educator.

**EYLF Outcome 4:** Children are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning

## Future plans

Make the pots available for dramatic play experiences. i.e. isn't it funny how bears like honey,

Encourage Isabella's exploration of mark making.

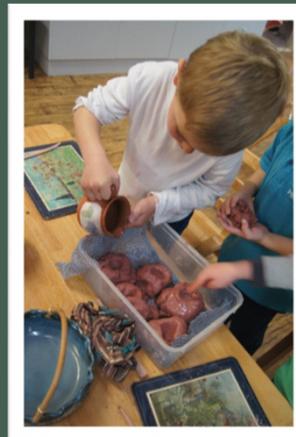
## Clay Provocations continued inside with clay at the table...



Lots of discussion about coils and pinching techniques and sharing of knowledge between the children.

Examining how our hands dried out lead to the use of a damp cloth for cleaning and moistening our hands being added to our art tools.

Attaching handles and hypothesising about the thickness and strength of handles was much debated.



Day 2

### The Experience

After examining clay items they were brought indoors to the clay table as provocations.

### Review of Learning

Lots of discussion between children about clay techniques & attaching handles. Educators were noticeably absent during children's conversations leaving them to engage in discovery learning collaboratively.

A damp cloth for cleaning and moistening our hands was added to the clay art tools.

**EYLF Outcome 5:** Children interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, clarify and challenge thinking, negotiate and share new understandings

### Future plans

Research avenues for firing our clay items, continue to offer clay as a valued art medium and encourage other staff members engagement in co-constructing learning with children. Invite clay artist to preschool.

## Clay Provocations continued inside placed in home corner...



Lots of Dramatic play around shop, buying the precious clay items, They were being sold for "record prices" due to the children valuing the clay "costs lots to make clay ... all breakages had to be paid for " stated Levi.

and Clay books were also available ...

Isabelle continues to examine patterns in clay. Looking at pottery techniques, she identifies a layered pattern she wants to attempt.

### The Experience

After examining clay items they were brought indoors to home corner as provocations and the clay art books were also available inside

### Review of Learning

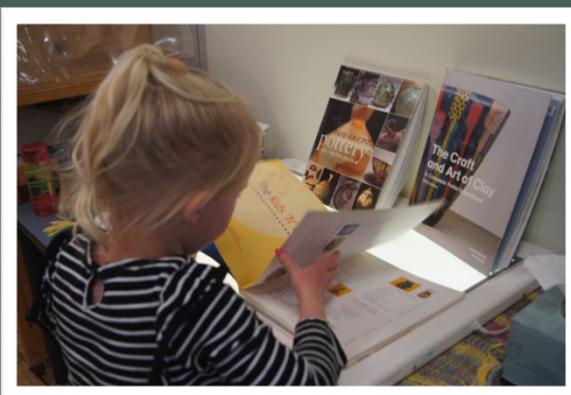
The inclusion of the clay items into home corner attracted a lot of boys into the area.

Despite clay being a breakable item nothing was damaged. The children responded with respect and care when handling the items. Language used during the play, reflected children's valuing of the items.

**EYLF Outcome5:** Children use language and engage in play to imagine and create roles, scripts and ideas.

### Future plans

Continue to use natural material in dramatic play rather than plastic items to encourage children's respectful play.



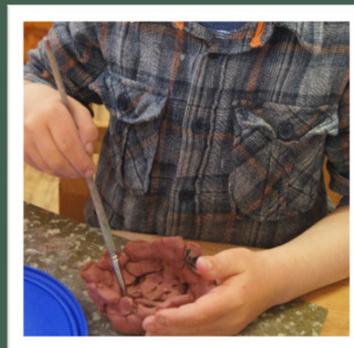
# Art Literacy Developing



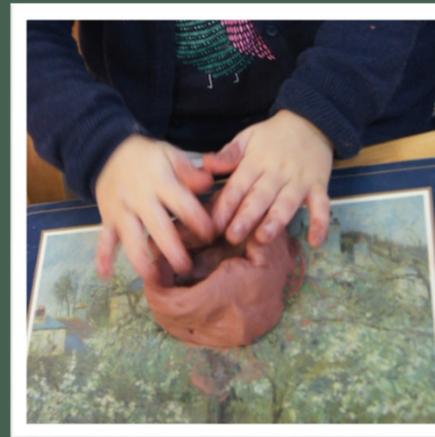
Look at my snail  
"coils" they go  
small, big, big,  
bigger biggest.  
- Marley



Henry who at first was reluctant to return his clay creations into a ball to reuse, now "polices" the size of the thumb hole that needs to be filled with water.



Using slurry has become an automatic part of the clay culture  
" I need slurry to join my tail onto my Kangaroo" Archie



Pinching clay to make pots has been discovered

Day 3

## The Experience

Clay is becoming a regular activity and educators are now equipped with terminology to support children's learning. Experiences like the clay provocation developed children's art literacy around clay.

## Review of Learning

Reviewing the clay provocations, coils were a new technique used and a slurry to join the clay was revisited. Children also experimented with pinching clay.

Clay storage techniques for sustainable reuse were shared, between children and educators

**EYLF Outcome 4:** Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural materials

## Future plans

Extend on children's art literacy around clay by inviting a clay-pottery artist to share their skills with the children.

# Handa's Surprise

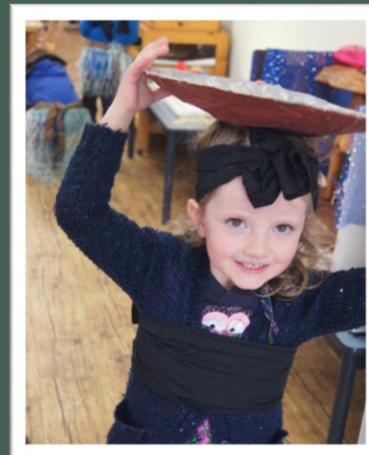
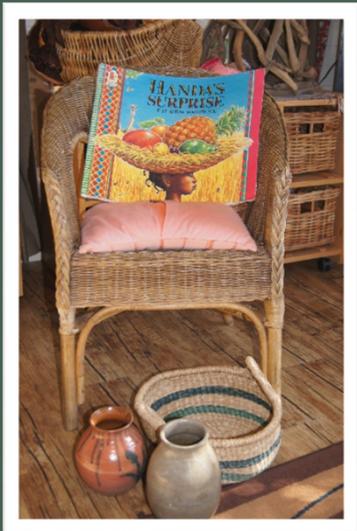


Photo credit preschool parent jangraystone Instagram © 2014

Using clay jugs and additional props, children experimented with balance and dramatised cultural carrying techniques. The actual clay items were not carried on heads for fear of breakage. A parent's photograph was the stimuli for our discussion at group time, where the benefit of using clay over woven basket to carry water was discussed "clay wont leak" - Henry.

"She's strong!. I couldn't do it." – Oliver referring the lady in the photo. →

Day 3

## The Experience

After clay pots, bowls and jugs were added to home corner last week. The book Handa's Surprise by Eileen Browne with additional props to support dramatizing the story were presented attractively in the environment.

## Review of Learning

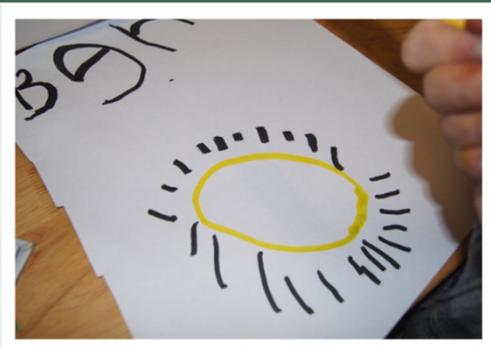
Children explored different cultural experiences through dramatic play. They used drama to express ideas and make meaning of texts read and to gain an understanding of jug basket carrying.

**EYLF Outcome 2:** Children respond to diversity with respect

## Future Plans

To continue to reflect on water wise sustainable practices, reflecting on third world use of jugs to carry water from wells. How precious water must be when you don't have a tap.

# Mark Making...



Isabella and other children spent most of the afternoon repeatedly drawing the patterns of the clay pots. Language used include swirls, circle and stripes.



Day 3

## **The Experience**

An opportunity to explore patterns and mark making on clay items and encourage children (Isabella) to draw their own representation of these patterns.

## **Review of Learning**

Children are beginning to explore symbolic representation in patterns.

This appears to be an interest area for Isabella, continue to develop further.

**EYLF Outcome 5:** Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work

## **Future Plan**

Continue to explore patterns in the environment Focus on the language used when describing and creating patterns:  
before, after, follow, next, start, finish, between, copy, same, different, middle, again, repeat.

# Artist Visit



The visit of a pottery artist was cause for great excitement, Henry never left his side.

“where does clay come from ? – Matthew

“Can we dig up our own clay...how deep do we dig ? - Oliver

Art vocabulary like Kiln, slab, firing and coil were introduced.

“I know what a kiln is ! It’s a special oven for cooking clay” – Henry



Day 4

## The Experience

A local pottery artist was invited to share his knowledge and skills with the children and educators.

## Review of Learning

Children were able to source answers for their questions, and have their own knowledge base validated. Flat clay work and pattern marking was demonstrated. Using real artist tools installed a sense of pride and achievement.

**EYLF Outcome 1:** Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities

**EYLF Outcome 4:** Children use feedback from themselves and others to revise and build on ideas.

## Future Plans

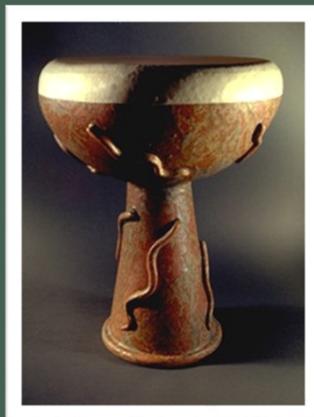
Continue to offer clay as a long term art project.

When the fired flat clay works are returned, seek the children’s inspiration for turning them into a wind chime for our music tree.

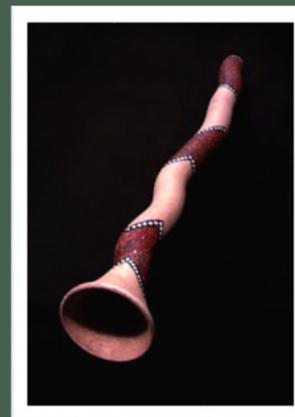
# Clay Instruments



Conundrums



Dombek



Horn



Huaca



Marimba



Ocarina

Day 5

## The Experience

Not having been able to source actual clay instruments. An internet site The Burnt Earth Gallery of Ceramic Musical Instruments was used to view and listen to clay instruments. [www.ninwstones.com/begallery.htm](http://www.ninwstones.com/begallery.htm)

## Review of Learning

After a music session children were questioned what were the instruments they were using made of ?

Then they were questioned could you play instruments made of clay?

After which the sounds of the clay instruments pictured were played and the children spontaneously began dancing to the music.

**EYLF Outcome 3:** Children respond through movement to traditional and contemporary music, dance and storytelling

**EYLF Outcome 4:** Children explore their environment

**Future Plans** (see next slide)

## Children's Reflections about Clay Instruments & Music ...

Educator: Can you play a clay instrument ?

Oliver: "No it's too mushy"

Ben : "No they'd break"

Henry: "Maybe ... You could but I, but I don't know how?"

Educator shows a picture of the conundrum and says its made from clay,  
She asks "how do you think you would play it?"



Conundrum

Max: " You could blow it" and mimes a harmonica action

Oliver: "Or tap it...but not too hard"

Educator: "Lets listen to the sound it makes", Lots of Children call out "its tapping,...you tap it"

This enquiry process is repeated for the doumbek, horn, ocarina, haca and marimba.  
Afterwards instrumental music from the burnt ensemble is play and children dance and comment.

"this is floating music"

"I can hear a didgeridoo"

"it sounds like lots of flutes"

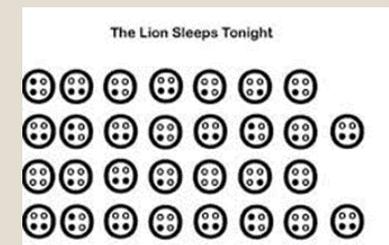
"that's tapping, yes that's tapping is it the drummy thing?"

Day 5

### **Future Plans (continued)**

Play the Burnt ensemble instrumental music during rest time, dance and as background music during further clay work

Continue to source clay instruments for children to use preferably an Ocarina to play the ocarina music below for "the lion sleeps tonight"



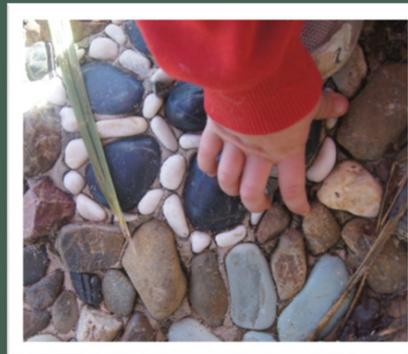
# Clay, stones and Andy Goldsworthy Sculptures...



"This looks like a rock volcano". Henry

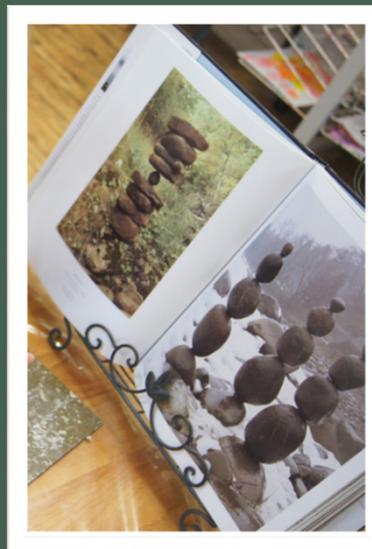


Stone murals in the preschool creek



Reflecting on the book Collaboration with Nature by Andy Goldsworthy and our own stone mosaic in the creek, has inspired children's discussions and ideas about using natural materials in art sculptures.

"Lets use this one!" - Oliver selects a page to be displayed at the clay and rock table after being asked to find a rock sculpture image for a provocation.



Day 5

## The Experience

To continue the use of natural mediums in art smooth stones will be added to clay later today.

As part of a stimulus prior to art, Andy Godsworthy's book a Collaboration with nature was made available. In addition to reflecting upon the books images, children were also encourage to reflect on the stones in the preschool creek.

## Review of the learning

Lots of discussion about the images in the book. i.e. How the natural items were used and why they like particular images.

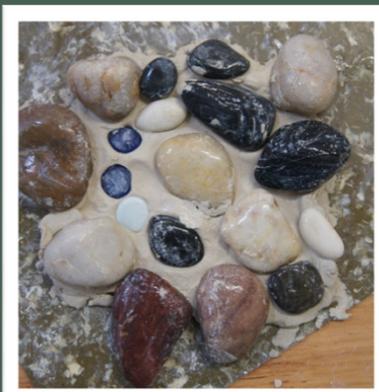
A page was selected by the children to have open during the rocks and clay experience,

**EYLF Outcome 4:** follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration

## Future plans

Present stones with clay. Continue to make the Nature Collaboration book available to children

# Clay, stones and Andy Goldsworthy Sculptures...



Less discussion and lots of concentration at the clay table today.

Children were interested in how the clay acted like glue holding the rocks firmly in place.



Day 5

## The Experience

Stones were added to the clay along with an image from Andy Goldsworthy's book *Collaboration with Nature* as a provocation.

## Review of Learning

Everyone was very engrossed in their sculptures and experience was well attended all morning.

Once again no other adults engaged at this experience apart from myself.

A new technique of using a string to slice under the clay to help remove it from the tile base was introduced.

**EYLF Outcome 5:** Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

## Future plans

Continue to offer stones with clay. Expand into mosaic's

## Branching off



Ben decided he would make his own clay after hearing the artist say it was made from fine crushed rocks. He spent a lovely morning exploring his ideas and theories about water to rock ratios when making "mud clay".



The same day that the artist visited woodwork was offered in the afternoon. A child made his own clay cutter with the wood construction.



Artist clay cutter

The yellow clay pots which had been identified as a "honey pot" has been used as the dramatic prop in the circle game "wake up little bear who stole the honey?"



### The Experience

Other clay influenced experience evolved during the integrated project that were not planned. This branching off is a natural extension of project work.

### Review of Learning

Although educators can plan learning experiences as shown in the earlier mind map. These experiences still remain "opportunities and possibilities".

How children "toss the ball" (Oken-Wright, & Gravett 2002) or ideas around and extend play is endless. Children branched off with their own ideas i.e. making clay and building clay tools.

As educators our job is to observe where the ball/idea is tossed and to keep the ball/idea in play.

### Future Plans

Continue to offer clay as a long term art project and document "opportunities and possibilities" even though the practicum has finished the project has not. Keep the ball or "mud clay in play."

# Clay Reflections

Not all planned experiences were able to be integrated over the 5 day practicum. Being flexible and following the leading of children will mean that a project evolves at its own pace (Helm & Katz 2001). Even though the practicum has finished this does not mean the integrated arts project should cease. Thus the art goal **-To allow time to engage in long term projects** means the mud clay project should continue. A possible next step could be dictated by the Pottery artists return of the fired clay items which could extend into a new project around wind chimes. Or an investigation into mosaics, that is if children are accepting of the "tossing" of these ideas into their play (Oken-Wright, & Gravett 2002).

The natural sensory beauty of manipulating clay has definitely held the interest of children achieving the art goal **-To engage children interest by exploring natural arts mediums**. Clay has only just begun to be discovered by children in the service and the children have an interest in pot making, that should be respected. But as Klobe (1997) claims children and staff need to learn that working with clay involves "more than making pots", thus continuing to offer clay in the play environment is required.

Acknowledging this need the art goal **-To develop mastery and automaticity with clay** has begun to be viewed as an authentic practice by educators. Just as Pela (2007) recommends discussion are now being undertaken as to where the clay studio will be located within the environment and what materials are needed to equip this space.

Conversely the goal of **- children and educators to construct their knowledge together** has only scratched the surface. Observing the educators role, it has been apparent that the prevailing theory of leaving children to explore materials without intervention runs deep in this service (Kindler 1993). Further discourse and research around this practise is recommended (Kennedy 1996). Yet despite the limited adult role, children have actively collaborated in constructing their knowledge with each other. This collaborative learning may be due to the goal of **- Setting up the environment as the third teacher** being implemented. As children engage with the provocations within the environment they expanded their knowledge base together (Gandini 1998).

Finally the last art goal **For children to learn new art techniques and art literacy** around clay has commenced mainly due to my involvement in the integrated arts project. As I am not a regular employee in this service the extent to which the new art techniques and art literacy is retained will need supporting. My thank you gift will be to leave a copy of the ACEA Resource book "Clay and Children more than making pots" by Ursula Klobe.

As Kosta (1999) states "clay and children belong together" what a wonderful culture to impart to a service.



"My snail family" - Marley age 4

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