

Home Studio Best Practices:

Below are a few quick thoughts on working with clay in your home. This will give you a place to start, but you are encouraged to google and find videos on YouTube with more information. The longer the quarantine lasts, the more documentation and videos we will develop, or find and share but this will help get things started.

- **Tools:** With your imagination at work, you can use just about any household object as a tool, texture maker, or mold form. The type of white clay Burnish is providing should not stain, so you are encouraged to use textiles with interesting patterns to press into the clay to leave distinctive marks and designs, but don't use some heirloom lace or special/fancy/expensive item just in case...
 - The kitchen seems like a treasure trove of potential tools, but the clay we use has small amounts of compounds that are safe to touch/handle, but not to eat. To prevent cross contamination, we recommend not using items you will ever use for food again. If you disregard this advice and use kitchen items, then please wash them as thoroughly as you would if an infected person had coughed on it.
- **Water:** It is an essential component to working with clay. Small hand building projects usually require just a pint or so, if that much. Something shaped like a bowl is ideal but see the above bullet about cross contamination.
 - The best way to dispose of the water is in your garden – clay is mostly just dirt and will not hurt plants. Scrape up all the particles that settled to the bottom before you pour it out.
 - If you do not have access to a yard, let water bowls and buckets sit overnight to allow the heavy clay particles to settle out. Pour the water off the top (preferably into a house plant but down the drain is ok as a last resort) and scrape the bottom layer of sediment into the trash or compost.
 - Do not ever put clay chunks or slip/thick clay water down any drain, including storm drains. Heavy clay particles sink and will build up in drain lines causing blockages. It is unlikely to be an issue with small amounts in the short term, but it is better to exercise caution and build the habit from the start since working with clay can be addictive...
- **Work Surfaces:** Clay can be used anywhere. When I was still in the corporate world I loved to make pinch pots while stuck on conference calls when working from home. However, clay is moist. Protect the surface you are working on with plastic and newspaper or a towel.
 - For example, if you are going to work on your nicely finished wood dining or coffee table, put down a layer of plastic, like an unfolded trash bag (before opening the bag, cut the bottom seam off and then along one side to get a big flat piece of plastic from a trash bag) then layer a towel or a bunch of junk mail newsprint, then put the clay on top of that.
 - A left over scrap of plywood, hardie board or drywall make great work surfaces, but tape off the edges of drywall with duct tape to prevent the gypsum dust from getting into your clay.
- **Dust & Ventilation:** Clay dust is not good to breathe. The best way to keep dust down is to wet clean with a sponge or mop rather than sweeping or dusting. If you decide to sand your piece or carve while it is on the dryer end of the spectrum it is best to do it outside while wearing a mask.
- **Storage & Transportation:** Clay goes through a variety of transformations as the moisture content changes. There becomes a point of no return where it becomes too dry to work with or to make any additional changes to it and it becomes too fragile to re-wet it. On the flip side, if you add too much water it will become soggy and fall apart.
 - Clay must remain moist while you are working with it, and tightly covered with plastic if you are walking away from your project for more than 15 minutes. The sunnier/dryer/warmer the day the faster it will dry. Grocery or restaurant to-go bags work well for smaller projects.
 - Tightly seal the bag of clay when you are not using it or it will dry out in the bag.
 - Once you have finished your creation, leave it uncovered so it can dry completely.
 - Clay is at its most fragile when it is dry, before it has been fired. Nestle the completed piece(s) in a towel or bubble wrap in a small box to transport back to the studio to be bisque fired.