

**CLAY WORK: A  
HANDBOOK FOR  
TEACHERS, PP. 16-95**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649423439

Clay Work: A Handbook for Teachers, pp. 16-95 by Katherine Morris Lester

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Cover @ 2017

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# CLAY WORK

A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

BY

KATHERINE MORRIS LESTER



THE MANUAL ARTS PRESS

PEORIA, ILLINOIS

152906

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## PREFACE

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**I**N many of our most progressive schools clay-work is receiving marked attention as a means of hand training and art expression. But the progress of such work has been somewhat retarded owing to a lack of available information on the subject.

The object of this book is: first, to help teachers in acquiring the technique of clay-working; second, to offer several types of clay-work from which selection may be made. Detailed description of the processes of working, with numerous illustrative photographs are given; also photographs of finished models which, with a few exceptions, have been modeled by pupils from ten to twelve years of age in the public schools.

The author is indebted to Charles A. Bennett, professor of manual arts, Bradley Polytechnic Institute, Peoria, Ill., for many valuable suggestions; also to Fred D. Crawshaw, principal of the Franklin School, Peoria, for encouragement in developing many of the types of clay-work illustrated.

KATHERINE M. LESTER.



plied by nature—the thumb. In the earlier stages of a model, the fingers and thumb will give the general form desired, and the tool will only be needed in refining the work later on.



FIGURE 1.

A—A simple wooden tool shaped like a sharpened pencil at one end and cut to a broad flat edge at the other.

B—A broader tool cut to resemble a chisel.

C—A tool similar to A with a hook of medium-sized wire secured to one end. This tool will be found especially useful in pottery building.



FIGURE 2.

A boxwood tool, used by professional modelers. This tool can be secured from any dealer in art supplies.

For pottery work a number of plaster bats<sup>1</sup> of different sizes can be made very easily. These, being circular in form, will be found most desirable for pottery building, since the piece as it grows can be readily turned about from time to time, and the form studied with far more ease and satisfaction than when being built upon a board or slate.

The matter of firing pottery has been most satisfactorily solved in the advent of the portable kiln. These kilns are quite reasonable in price, ranging from sixty dollars upward.

It is hardly to be supposed that children will do anything with glazing beyond, possibly, the selection of color. The mixing and grinding of glaze is a very delicate matter

<sup>1</sup> *Directions for making plaster bats*:—Secure a variety of sizes of the ordinary baking tins; one-half dozen small size, 2½ inches in diameter; and one-half dozen larger size, 3½ inches in diameter; two or three large-sized pie pans. Dissolve soap in water, making it a little thicker than cream. Brush this quite generously over the inside of the pans just before filling them with plaster.

When ready to mix the plaster have a good-sized bucket half filled with water. The plaster is sifted through the fingers over the surface of the water. This is stirred slowly, the plaster continuing to be added until it begins to appear at the surface. Now the mixture is stirred more thoroughly. After resting a moment, it is ready to pour into the tins. Fill the pans to a level surface and leave them to harden.

After twelve or fifteen hours the pans may be turned over and tapped upon the table, the plaster bat readily falling out. The process may be repeated until a sufficient number of bats are obtained.

and should not be undertaken by the uninitiated. To meet this necessity, however, a number of pottery shops mix and grind glazes of good color at reasonable prices.

The best prepared clay can be readily obtained from potteries direct, or pottery supply shops at the rate of one-half cent to five cents per pound. Local clays may be used and when found either too porous or too plastic may be remedied by the addition of fine sand.

A large plaster-lined or zinc box with close-fitting cover is a necessity for keeping the clay in the proper condition for working.

