

# The Perfect Pinch Pot

The making requires us to be aware of ourselves, of the clay and of the process. It is a way of spending time, much like going fishing or walking. I love working with a natural material, clay, and each time I make a pinch pot the experience changes. No two pots are ever the same.

Early pinch pots tend to be crude and ill-formed. With practice, I work more tenderly, stretching the clay thinner, taller and with much more control. The clay can lead me in different directions on any given day but the challenge is to direct the process to a desired outcome.

Starting with a small ball of clay I push my thumb into the centre to nearly the base of the ball. Thumb and forefinger are used to pinch and push the clay. Continual turning of the clay after each pinch in a distinctive rhythm will hold symmetry. The clay is pushed outwards with ease but requires more control to draw it upwards and even curving inwards to a final narrow opening. Larger pinch pots with more clay require me to use both thumbs.

In pinching, the clay requires our support. Pressing out with one thumb or fingers into the supportive framework of the other hand or fingers. Both the inside and outside are smoothed with the thumb or fingers either vertically or in a spiral motion. The rim is sometimes left uneven with a natural wave-like finish, or it can be trimmed and smoothed. A wooden paddle is my finishing tool that allows me to smooth out the thumb prints and to finesse the final form. I grow as a person with each pot. I learn that clay is infinitely variable – firm, soft, plastic, gritty with grog – all requiring my skill to create another unique pot. One needs practice to make a good pinch pot. It has taken me many years to get to where I am now. There is so much to learn about clay, form, texture and colour, and how my imagination can take me in so many different directions.

A pinch pot is a primitive vessel and therein lies much of its appeal to many people. Just the hand and the clay, no technology, comprise the process. It is even a form of play. Combined with the ancient method of pit firing, my pinch pots allow us to connect with the earth and to gain reassurance that we can live simple and spiritual lives.

The process is a physical practice requiring a near meditative mind to bring a piece of the earth to life as art. My pinch pots need to be formed slowly, quietly, and with deep attention. That is my form of mindfulness. The process is transformative of both the clay and of ourselves. It is what I need to do. To use my imagination to create. The clay becomes a part of me, and I become part of the clay. I breathe the spirit of my life into what I make. This is my freedom. The result just might be the perfect pinch pot.

## Reference

Berensohn, P 1972, Finding One's Way with Clay, Simon and Shuster, New York.