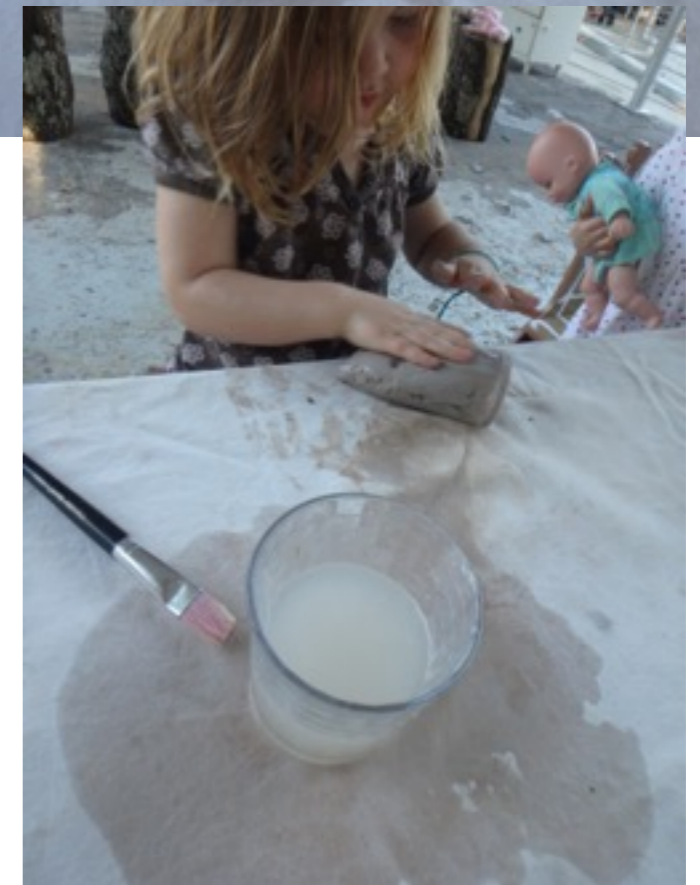


Manipulating Clay with Water

September 20th, 2016

Our past experiences with clay have revealed to me the children's interest in making impressions on their slabs of clay: digging with nails, poking with fingertips, pinching, and even hitting the clay to leave marks. So, I decided to add water to the experience to see how this would allow us to more easily manipulate the clay. I offered paintbrushes for the children to apply the water to the clay, thinking it to be a good tool for the children to be able to control exactly how much water they apply to their clay slab. Aleita immediately began to paint the clay with her paintbrush, noticing tiny ridges where the brush strokes were. Eleanor slapped water onto her clay with her hands, but then decided to fold up the whole thing and dip it directly into her cup of water. Josie and Jonah were more hesitant to add water to their clay and they both did a lot of observing (of the other two) before beginning. After they started, they continued to observe the other two but also each other.



Eleanor removed her clay from the water and started patting it.

“It’s a burrito. I’m making a burrito for you!”



Josie then became very bold with her mark-marking. She stippled with the end of her paintbrush and eventually moved on to use her fingertips as well, making tiny craters across the surface of her clay slab. She then poured the rest of her water over her clay and flattened all of the impressions out. Jonah followed suit and the two giggled as they flattened out their clay.



Eleanor enjoyed watching Josie and Jonah having so much fun with this process so she then began to make fingertip craters on her clay.





Eleanor realized she could make a different kind of mark with her fingertips: nail marks!



Aleita, who had made some fingertip marks herself, became interested in twisting bits of her clay off and rolling them around in her hands. She later declared the rolled up clay to be a "snake" and she started using the paintbrush to water him down.



"I'm squishing the snake down!"

Josie became so comfortable with the clay, she decided to go one step further with her mark-making and dig her nails through the clay. The small bits of clay she dug up, she then placed in her water jar.



Thoughts...

This group of children really warmed up to the clay during this experience. I would definitely like to continue using water when working with clay, perhaps in spray bottles.

I wonder what the elimination of the paintbrush would look like in such an experience. Would the children be reluctant to start off directly using their hands?

Eleanor was the only one who immediately touched the clay with her hands and not the paintbrush. Perhaps a tool is needed, but if not a paintbrush, then what?

I would like to compare these examples of the children's mark-making to other work each child has done with mark-making: do they make the same types of marks across all mediums?