

Clay Charms Refresh My Life

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At the completion of extracurricular courses, my busy life seems to have lost its focus. That day, I was casually strolling down the street and I saw some ceramics pieces in the shop window. The people in the shop invited me to go in for further examination. The instructor is a woman who appears to be about my age. She has curly long hair and a sweet smile as she talked about how she made the ceramic pieces. Looking at the lively ceramic dolls, I was attracted to the thoughts of hand building ceramic pieces.

Self-Developed Hobby and Accomplishment by Hand

Clay does not have to be fired. It can be shaped and sculpted. When clay is not kneaded and rested for a long time, it will harden like gummy candy. It has

to be constantly kneaded to squeeze out the air in the clay. Your muscles gain strength as you use your hands to knead. I always do well in testing the strength of my handgrips when I have my annual physical examination.

When you try to create miniature pieces, you are testing the sharpness of your eye and the artistic quality of your hand building techniques. I remember the first time I was making the hands of a person; I had to add water to the clay constantly to flatten it into the shape of a hand. I was so focused that my eyeglasses slipped many times onto my nose bridge. I was not even aware of the squeaking sound from my chair as my body continuously leaned forward. When I was not quite



satisfied of the results, I decided to stay behind class to repeat the process. My neck and shoulders became stiff like rocks and my eyes were heavy and sore. Although this is only a hobby, I realize pain precedes happiness. I would not be able to earn a sense of achievement and happiness unless I work hard.

Using basic methods such as rolling, water dripping, slab building, coiling and extruding, hand-building clay can be manipulated into different shapes and forms. Glazing further offers a broad range of colors and effects. When I see a picture or design, I visualize all different types of geometric diagrams in my brain. After many attempts to think through the compositions, I still do not have a good sense of the final form. People may see me sitting there and staring into space. I was actually concentrating hard to connect with the process and the product.

When the product was displayed, and I heard the numerous praises and compliments on my pieces, I felt encouraged, satisfied and fulfilled.

Confidence Aroused with Teaching Certification and Compliments

I ran out of room to display my ceramics pieces as I kept accumulating them. I had to ask my partners in the Chemotherapy Room to give me some additional space. The Chemotherapy Room display windows became the showcase for my finished artwork.



I gained a lot more confidence as I received compliments from patients and colleagues who had viewed the displays in the Chemotherapy Room. I eventually completed the teacher-training program and was certified to teach a Hand-building Clay course.

In 2008, the local government office invited my teacher to host a joint hand-building with clay exhibition of teachers and students called “The Art and Love of Clay Building”. The exhibition was well received. The tax collecting office starts to promote tax collecting via art activities. They offer free clay building classes. I became my teacher’s assistant and began teaching Clay Hand-building.

I was nervous to be a new teacher. I had to smile and walk back and forth in the classroom. Fortunately, my nursing background helped. It was not the first time I taught other people. Because of my practical public health and teaching experience, I was not a stranger to teaching.

After this experience, my teacher encouraged me to start a class at the hospital. My colleagues also encouraged me to do so and expressed interest to enroll their children for the class. However, because of time, space and difficulty in getting supplies, I declined. Though I did not have the chance to develop my secondary skills, it is good to play with hand-building with clay at my spare time and forget about the daily trivial.

This all happened some seven or eight years ago. Hand-building with clay has become my hobby and it helps to moderate the pace of my daily living. I can never forget that day when I strolled down the street and became acquainted with hand-building with clay.