

Small head clay sculpture

with Tomos Sparnon



Hello! I'm Tomos and I'm going to be guiding you through the steps to make a small head clay sculpture!

I want to encourage you to express yourself in this workshop. Everyone has a unique style and I want this to come through when you make a clay head.

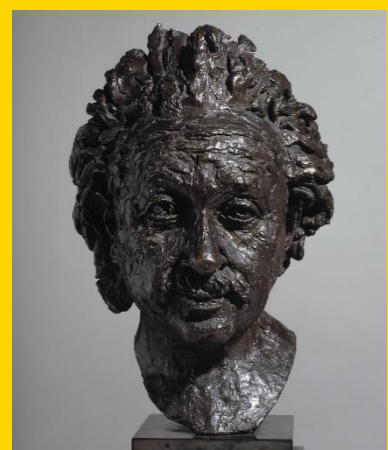
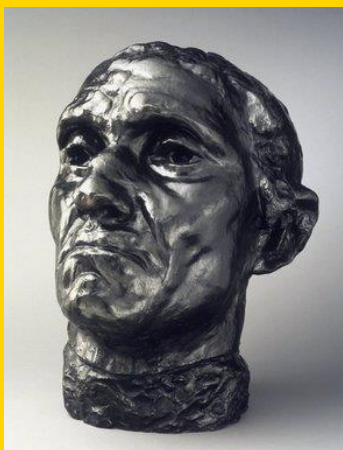
Included in this pack are the following:

- Terracotta clay
- Nail pusher tool
- Mat
- Rubber gloves (in case you don't like handling clay)

Things to consider before you get started:

- Knead and massage the clay before working with it. The heat from your hands will soften the clay, making it easier to handle.
- Use water to soften the clay as you work if you need to.
- Capturing your model's likeness with clay can take time, so keep at it. Don't give up on the sculpture you've started. One of the beauties of clay is that you can rework it.
- Remember to look at your model, making sure you're sculpting what you see, not what you know.
- Don't worry too much about getting the proportions perfect. It's possible to capture the personality and character in a greater way sometimes through exaggerating aspects of the face like a nose or mouth.
- Don't be too precious while using the clay – enjoy working with it. It might not be easy at first but keep at it. Go for it!

Some artists who have made head sculptures you could look at for inspiration are Auguste Rodin, Franz Messerschmidt and Jacob Epstein. Notice the differences in these sculptures – the expressions, detail/lack of detail and the roughness/smoothness of the surfaces.



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Step 1

Choose someone from your household to model for you and somewhere comfortable for you and the model to sit and work.



I have chosen my brother to model for me – I feel he has good facial features to sculpt. He's patient too so wouldn't mind sitting for me for a while!

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Step 2

Look closely at your model's face and head.

What makes him/her that person and not anyone else?

Consider the shape of the head, its features and characteristics.

Walk around the model's head and observe its length and width.

Every part of the face is connected and important. If the eyes are too wide apart in relation to the nose, for example, or if the mouth is too big, it will not look like the model.



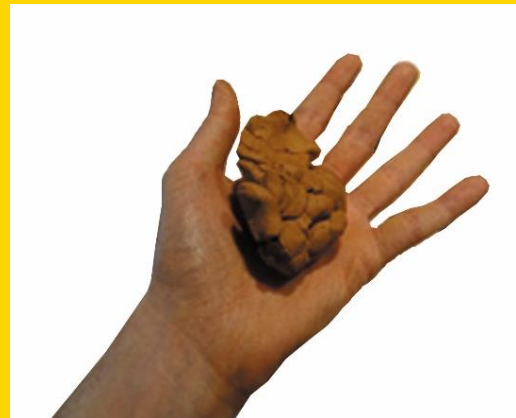
Observe the width between the eyes, between the eyes and the nose, how wide the mouth is in relation to the eyes, how low the mouth is from the nose, the depth of the chin from the mouth and where exactly the ears are located.

Drawing the model's head on paper before sculpting the head might help you. You don't have to do this though. I like getting straight into the sculpting!

You are not making a 2D image (like a painting) but a 3D form. It's important you work on the sculpture from every angle.

Step 3

Remove some clay (about the size of the palm of your hand) from your packet of terracotta clay.



Form a ball (about the length of your thumb) from some of the clay you removed from the packet.



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Step 4

Shape the ball to create a similar form to the model's head. Look closely at the profile of the model's head and its unique shape. Walk around the model's head to look at it from a 360° angle. I recommend you do not sit down for longer than 3 minutes at a time as it's important to look at the whole head as often as possible. Every angle and part of the head is important.

Step 5

Using the nail pusher tool, carve lines into the clay ball, indicating where the eyes, nose and mouth are meant to be.



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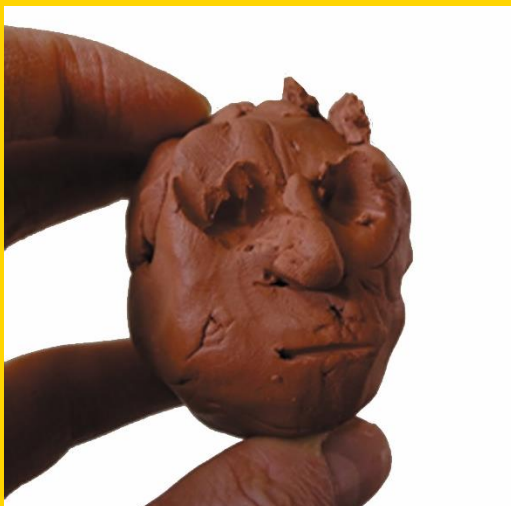
Step 6

To create the nose, take a small amount of clay from the packet of clay and place it on your clay sculpture in the appropriate place. Shape it until you've captured the correct length and width of the model's nose. Don't worry about the detail of the nose at this stage – the important thing is that it's in the appropriate place and roughly the correct shape and size.

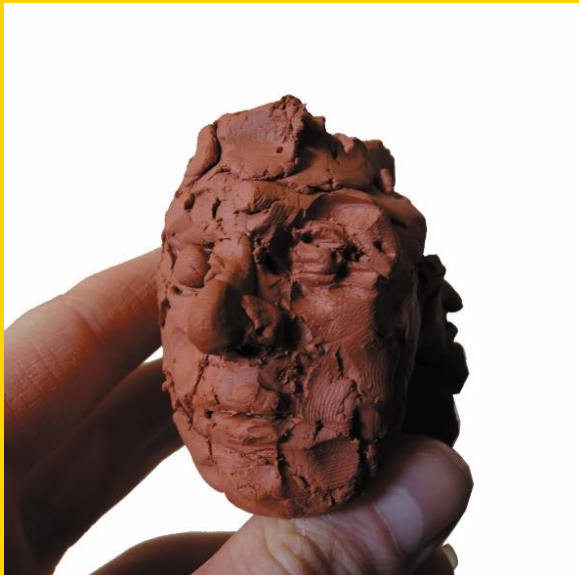


Step 7

To create the eyes, make two circular holes in the appropriate locations on your clay head. These holes will be eye sockets. Make two eyeballs to fit in each eye socket.



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Smooth out the edges of the eyeballs with the nail pusher tool and you will notice the shape of the eyes forming. Use the sharpest end of the tool to make details in the eyes. I decided not to make the eyeballs of my clay head detailed as I wanted a mysterious expression in my sculpture. You can use the nail pusher tool to make wrinkles around the eyes and on the face in general if you wish.

Step 8

Using the nail pusher tool again, draw a line which will be the gap between the model's lips, in the correct location. When drawing the line, consider the width of the mouth. Use the flat end of the tool to form the shape of the lips. Consider the areas around the lips as the mouth area is varied in terms of depth and is not flat.



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Step 9

In a similar way to the nose, make the ears through adding a small amount of clay to the appropriate locations. Form the bit of clay, following the shape of the model's ears. Add details to the ears using the sharpest end of the nail pusher tool.



Step 10

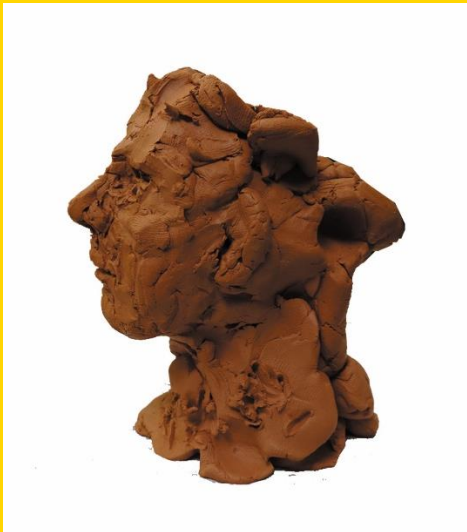
If you want your sculpture to include hair (including a beard), add relatively large bits of clay, rather than strands, to the desired location. Shape the bits until they look like hair. The hair doesn't have to be detailed to look life-like. Too much detail in the hair can take away from the face. I decided not to add hair as I wanted the concentration to be on the face.

Step 11

You can add a neck if you wish. The neck can act as a stand for the head, allowing it to stand upright.

You can also add any other details at this stage too if you wish – to the nose, eyes and mouth for example.

Once you're happy with the sculpture, leave it to dry for about 5 days.



Finally, make sure you show your head sculpture to your family and friends 😊