

A piece of white paper with two brown patches, resting on a textured, reddish-brown surface. The paper is irregularly shaped and has two distinct brown patches: one in the upper left and one in the lower right. The background is a mottled, textured surface in shades of brown and tan. The text 'typecast 2' is overlaid at the bottom in a white, serif font.

typecast 2

typecast 2

Addiction Clay Recovery

Put a lump of raw clay in someone's palm and in seconds they'll be working it – pummelling, squeezing, smoothing, stretching, pinching. The clay begins to warm and give, coating the skin with a cool red stain, taking the fingers back to the child's enjoyment of the slimy and the claggy, of digging and sinking into yielding stuff, the primal pleasure of rolling small bits of world around in the hand. Clay takes us back to where we started; it grounds and earths us.

But clay is also provisional, unstable, primed for transformation. Worked clay brings earth together with its fellow elements of air, water and fire to become a thing of morphing states and stages, an unstable shape-shifter. A wedge of clay slapped down on a wheel or a workbench has an unpredictable potential that makes working with it a messy excitement.

Planning the *Typecast* sessions, we wanted working with clay to have a dynamic, reflective relationship with the experience of moving from addiction to recovery. We started from Helen and Joe's excitement about clay as a medium where process and transformation is of the essence, and the possibility of exploring how that might resonate with the transformation of selves in recovery. That connected to Barry's sense of how we might use poetic language – and specifically metaphor – as a way of finding links between these apparently unconnected areas of experience. We would collect sensations, thoughts, and feelings as we went along, building a word bank to support a collective poetic reflection, capturing the unpredictable process as it unfolded.

An unpredictable process, and, coming together for our first meetings, an unpredictable group. There was the familiar collective awkwardness and uncertainty in the face of new situations and people, shot through with powerful experiences of pain, damage and vulnerability. A rich and volatile mix of histories and skills, expectations and anxieties. It didn't take long to see that the other transformation we'd all be undertaking would be turning this haphazard collection of individuals into a group that worked, in both senses. As the workshops developed – and in particular through the experience of the central four-day 'residency' – this interpersonal transformation came into synch with another: the flowering of one chilly corner of the semi-derelict Spode factory into a buzzing workshop and studio.



Clay as ground – clay as transformation

Typecast 2 unfolded in the space – and the tension – between these potential meanings of the material. As the group resolved into its core membership and found its way of working, we explored the connections between these two poles of the clay-work process and the dynamics of recovery. Settling into the four-day residency phase, we realised that the three clients in recovery who were staying with the project – Angie, Dave and Steve – all had some kind of background in craft- or construction-based industries in the region; Angie in silk-screen production, Dave as a builder, Steve in machine casting and moulding. These personal histories seem to have provided bridges into the *Typecast* experience and its emphasis on investigating materials, processes, and production methods. They certainly informed how we shaped the residency sessions around a model of workshop production, with research and development sessions on materials and processes, feeding into the making of components, which were then assembled into constructions on our improvised production line.

As we worked more closely together as a team, we also found out about the tension between the artists' appetite for exploration and open-endedness, and the desire of our colleagues in recovery for places of safety and security. If you're working to build a new life in the aftermath of addiction, you may not instinctively be looking for open-ended explorations of creative uncertainty. Maybe clay as ground is where you need to be, or at least have available as a refuge or retreat. Making that tension explicit, and available to be discussed and worked with, became one of the key experiences of the core group as it developed through the project. The workshop itself – the co-created physical space, the mutual trust and reliance of the working team – became the safe environment where risk-taking and recovery could cohabit.

The words and images that follow evoke this shared story of travelling through unknown territory to find the ground where you might build a new place to live.

Q t s r o e q y t

Material

Raw clammy
sticky glacial
crumble fudge

Take time (no rush)

go with the clay (the flow).
Growth, change happens
very very

slowly
stepping out
into another world

pliable
imperfection
malleable
individual

cool smooth tranquil
transformation



Mary – This poem is made from words that everyone came up with after our first week at Spode. I hope it might be a reminder for you of some of the sensations, thoughts and feelings that working with clay has brought up for all of us in our different ways during the project. Thank you for your contribution.

Barry

Launch



In the high white room,
a lunar landscape:
gravity looser, more
forgiving here, the usual
things weighing down
all bouncing a little
at the ends
of invisible strings.
Limbs lighter, a touch
more play, more reach,
and each small step
a take-off, flight,
safe landing.

slip / mould / construction



... animated communal space, with people also settling into their own stations and setting up shop. Some intriguing, unexpected, resonant pieces emerged, starting off from moulded pieces added to each other in a spirit of modular construction, some building from there with a rhythm of repetition and variation...

Dwelling

Cut from the same block.
Straight, face tight
to face. Aligned
and levelled. Spirit-
levelled. Four-square,
bonded strong. The angles
true. No bullshit
between bricks.



Tension

Quite hard to let go,
let go and start again.
To lose yourself easily
in the clay. Not always
does it have to have
a meaning or a name;
not always does
there have to be
a certain way; not always
does it have to be
anything.
It's hard
to let anything
just be.

Sandie/Sam







Steve



Dave



Angie

Into Unknown Territory

1

the sharp straight line from a drink
to a drink from fix
to fix

from the room the sofa the screen
and out to the corner
where the fix and the drink
stand waiting

the lines are straight
as the bars of a cage
that is keeping you safe
like a home

the bars are the lines
on the map to the corner
and back to the sofa
the screen the room

from the pain as it builds
to the corner and back
to the pain as it drains
and then builds and then
back to the corner
and back

2

this is wide open
no lines no rules no bars
no safety it seems

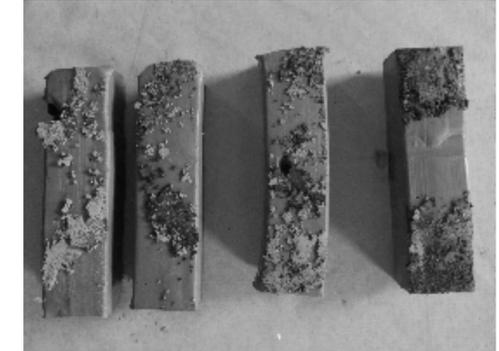
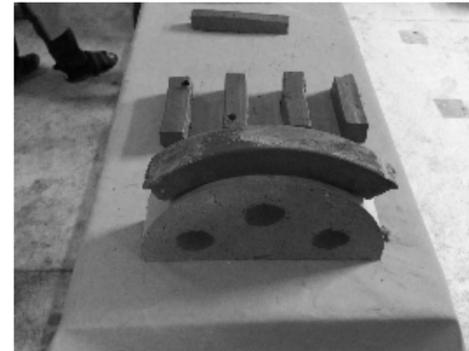
the one path
is the path we make
by walking it

but there's air here
in the empty spaces
where the maps give out
we could make things here
from scratch, from nothing

we could make things
from this unbroken earth,
sharp air, clean water, fire

sift, grind, stir, mix, mould,
and throw, and build here –
rest in the place we build,
break bread, and talk

Production Line



The stripped away, simple nature of the process was important:

extrude - hold - place - cut
- lift - place - collect - lift
- place

How to hold? Not to grip too hard, how to place, cut decisively, roll over, lift and place onto the oxide.

some kind of ruin
left gutted
along a secret

unknown new home
a soft bulging shell
untried life there
struggling

a peeled-open house
flopped inside-out
a dark ground-hugger
unfolding

heavy laden book
the unread page
turned over
ready

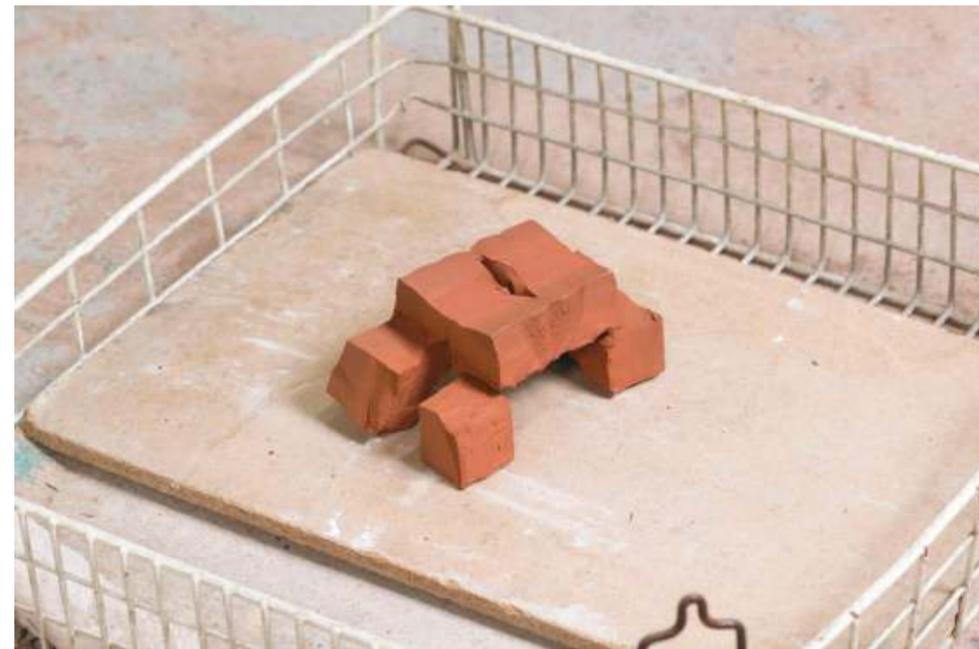
blasted flat
and splayed
an ancient fault

birth-creakings
earth-tremor cracks
a flexing
beneath the skin

moist walls subsiding
on soft meaty hinges
flower, fat petals
reaching for light

wrenched open
a sun-dazzled field
all harrowed
for planting

Hinge



What I Think About Clay

love art
love to paint
love pottery
love history
(which dates and entwines
with pottery)
love craft
love 'art and craft'
love the qualities of clay

it being malleable
hydrate and rehydrate
remould and mould
pour carve

create anything
imagine my self
experience
my creativity



Steve – I've hardly changed your words at all, just rearranged them on the page, but to me that brings out something very striking. On the right hand side is you experiencing, working, getting stuck in with the clay, with your experience, with the world. And on the left is the spirit you bring to all that. Thank you for sharing that with us.
Barry

Wedge



This is like cutting
into a mountain
and finding your safe
haven there. Like
you have made
the inside of something
hidden, then exposed it,
to find another
world there
you have made.

Josie

Typecast 2

Typecast 2 was the second of three projects completed within the recovery community in Stoke on Trent. The project was delivered in partnership by the British Ceramics Biennial and Portraits of Recovery, and was part of a two-year European Lifelong Learning Grundtvig project, delivered by six other leading cultural agencies from five countries.

Participants

Dave Sweetmore
Angela Keele
Steve Griffith
Josie Griffin
Mary Boon
Lee Woolridge
Kevin Rastery
Peter Lawton
Sandie James

Ceramic Artists

Helen Felcey
Joe Hartley

Poet

Barry Taylor

Photographic Artist

David Penny

Production & Partners

Dena Bagi BCB
Kate Leonard BCB
Sam Clayton: Brighter Futures
Mark Prest P.O.Re (Portraits of Recovery)

Archival Image Credit

Page 1: No2 Alfred Meakins, Royal Albert works,
Courtesy of Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

For more information, including links to artists project blogs, a digital version of this publication and audio interviews with participants, visit:

www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/content/typecast-iii



(from left to right) Helen Felcey, Angela Keele, Dave Sweetmore, Barry Taylor, Steve Griffith, Joe Hartley

Typecast 2 is supported by

British
Ceramics
Biennial



MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF ART



