

# Clay Self-Portrait Activity

Make a plate, bowl, or pinch pot cup that represents you!



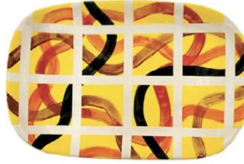
CANADIAN  
THE CLAY GLASS  
GALLERY

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This Clay Self-Portrait activity is inspired by the Voices exhibition at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery (September 24, 2022 to January 15, 2023), which invited artists across Canada to share their views on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Canada.



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# Voices

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION  
IN CANADA

CANADIAN  
THE CLAY & GLASS  
GALLERY

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Canadian  
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Foundation

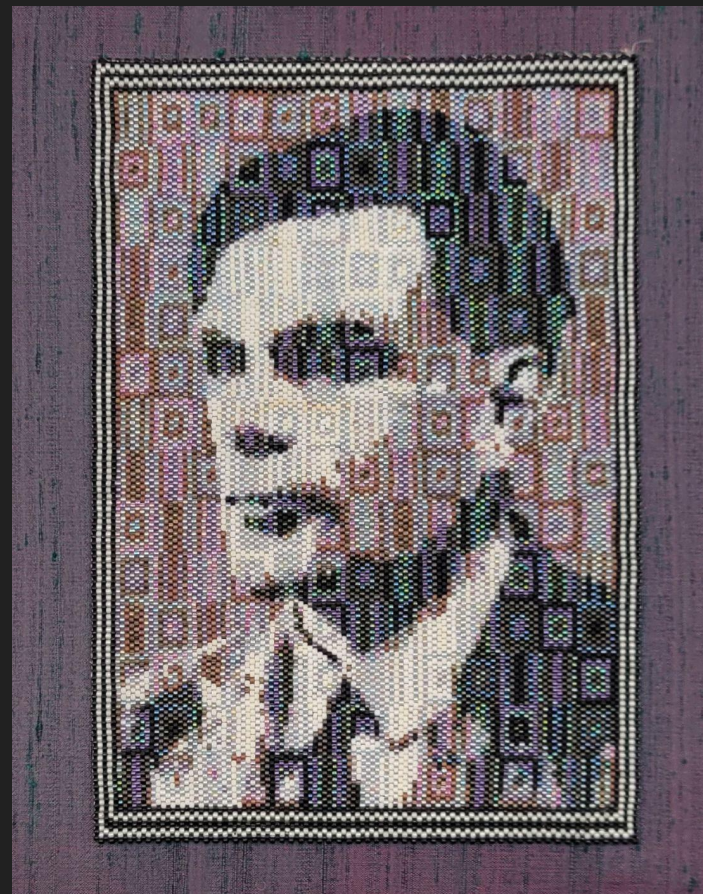
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# Sometimes portraits have faces

When we think about portraits, we often think of faces. Artists use all kinds of materials to bring faces to life. William C.G. Hodge uses glass beads, woven together like fabric on a loom.

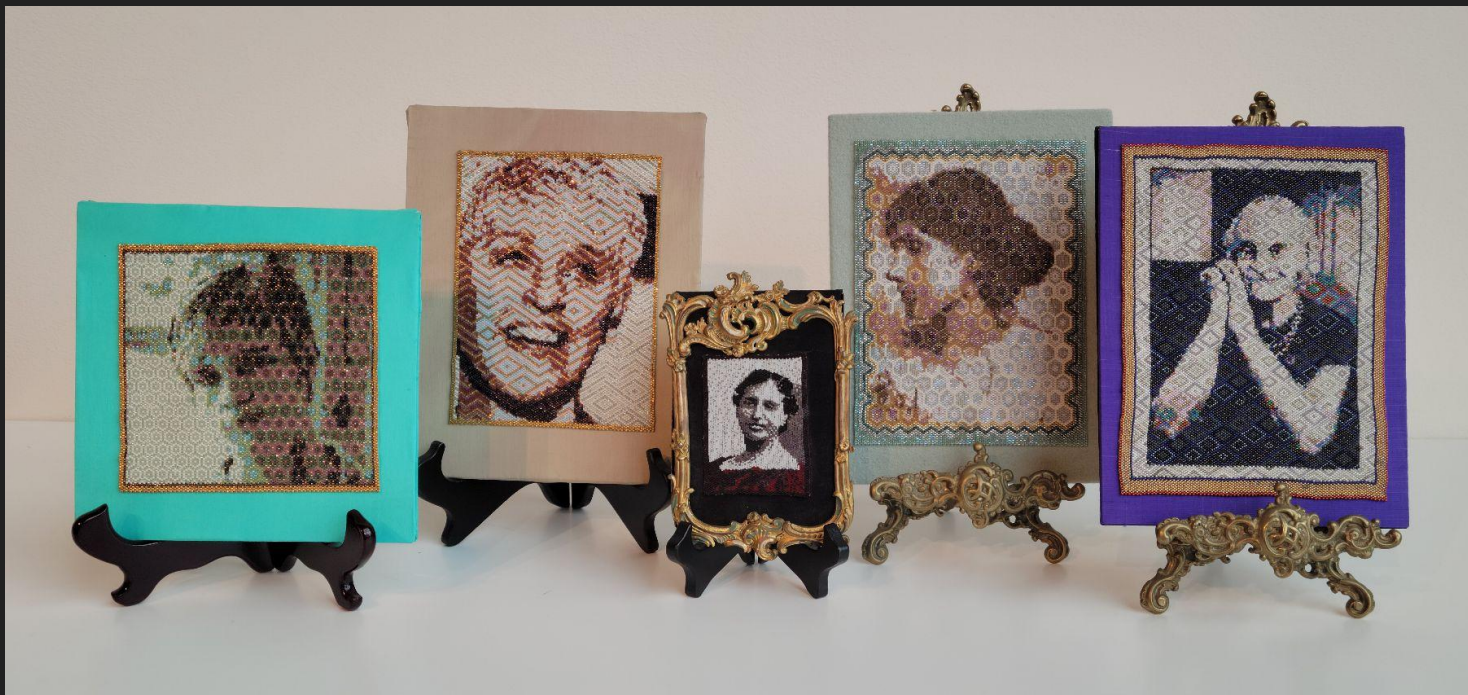
William C.G. Hodge,  
*Universal Man: Alan  
Mathison Turing*. Glass  
beads, 21 x 14 cm.



“The slowness of the technique allowed me to dwell on each character and think about them as I did the work. Working with beads is somewhat like watching an inkjet printer; it works line by line slowly revealing the image.”

- William C.G. Hodge





William C.G. Hodge, *Incidentally, Before I Forgot* (detail), 2011–2022. Glass beads, textiles. Dimensions variable.

Names from left to right: Matthew Wayne Shepard, Ellen DeGeneres, Alice Babette Toklas, Virginia Wolf, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf

## About the artist:

William C.G. Hodge is a long time teacher at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) in Toronto, inspiring generation of students. He is an LGBTQ+ rights activist and supports the idea that everyone should have the freedom to be themselves.

The beaded portrait series celebrates LGBTQ+ icons the artists admires. The portraits include prominent cultural figures from the last 100 years, including inventor Alan Turing and actor Ellen DeGeneres. The series invites us to reflect on the persecution of the LGBTQ+ community and the work that remains to be done.

# Sometimes portraits are objects or symbols

Portraits don't always have faces in them. Artists use objects and symbols to represent people. A symbol is when one thing is used to represent something else.



Art historians think the three ravens on Ann Beam's 'Medicine Ravens' bowl might be a family portrait, representing the artist Ann Beam, her husband Carl Beam, and her daughter Anong Beam. The bowl was made in 2004, and Carl Beam passed away in 2005.

## Side view of the bowl



Ann Beam  
*The Medicine Ravens*, 2004  
Stoneware & glazes. 43cm  
diameter x 19cm high.

Inside of the bowl



Text written inside the bowl: *The limitless light  
... the medicine raven*

Bottom of the bowl



Text written on the Bottom of the bowl: *From the Galactic centre  
of the universe in  
M'Chigeeng Ont.*

“I use my imagination as a tool to take me forward. To pull out of spirit a unique synthesis of who I am and what I can envision. I work in a nonverbal area of image and archetype. All human progress is the result of imagination.”

- Ann Beam



Do you think this bowl is a family portrait?

Ann Beam

*The Medicine Ravens*, 2004

Stoneware & glazes. 43cm diameter x 19cm high.



What object and symbols would you use to represent your family?

Ann Beam

*The Medicine Ravens*, 2004

Stoneware & glazes. 43cm diameter x 19cm high.

## About the artist:

Born in 1944, Ann Beam is a multimedia artists based in M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island (pronounced Shi-geeng). Ann taught at the Art Gallery of Ontario and managed the Neon Raven Art Gallery on Manitoulin Island. Ann married Canadian artist Carl Beam (born 1979 - died 2005), and their daughter Anong Beam is also an artist.

Ann's artwork explores the infinite possibilities that can come from the bowl shape. A circle may represent the eternal cycle, or the interconnectedness of our world. Ann frequently decorated all surfaces of an object - concealing stories on the bottom of an object. Mirror are used to display her works so the the top and bottom are visible at the same time.



*Your turn!*

## **Make a Clay Self-Portrait**

**Make a plate, bowl, or pinch pot cup that represents you.**

# *Inspired by:* **Place at the Table Project**

Everyone in your the class will make 1 clay item. Your items will come together to make a class set of tableware that you can display in school or use to have a party!

Inspired by the 'Place at the Table' community project in the Voices exhibition. Plates were painted by community leaders with messages about diversity, equity, and inclusion in Canada. The plates celebrate how we all bring something unique to the table.



'Place at the Table' community project



## Examples of clay self-portraits

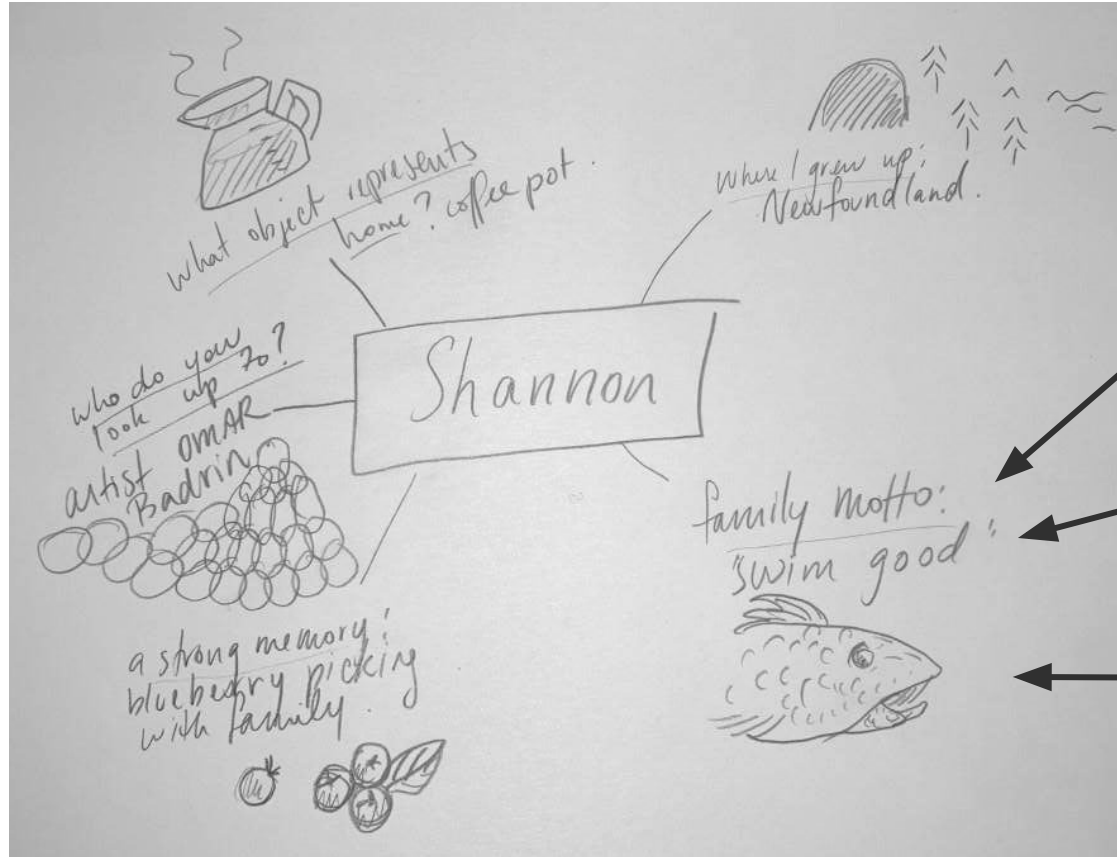
*Shannon's Artist Statement:*

"My self-perception is connected to memories of land and nature. I remember frying fish caught that morning with my grandmother, or picking wild blueberries during long hikes through the hills of Newfoundland. These are moments when I felt my best. I used underglazes, scratching, and embossing to make symbols and words."

# **Step 1:**

## **Make a visual mind map**

Write and draw things about who you are



**Prompt**

**Written  
answer**

**Drawing**

# Step 1: Visual Mind Map

## Instructions:

1. Write your name in the middle of a page.
2. Pick 3 to 5 prompts and write them down around your name.
3. **Write** your answers beside each prompt.
4. **Draw** your answers beside each prompt.

## Prompts:

- Where I grew up
- A food I like to share with friends and family
- A place where I feel I belong
- A favourite activity
- I feel my best when...
- Someone I you look up to
- A strong memory
- A family motto (or personal mantra)
- An object that represents 'home'

# Step 2:

## Thumbnail Sketches

Test your ideas on paper before working in clay



# Step 2: Thumbnail Sketches

A thumbnail sketch is a small, quick, imperfect sketch.

Artists use thumbnail sketches to test out ideas on paper before working in clay or other materials.

Testing ideas (more than one!) is an important part of the creative process.

## Instructions

1. Circle 1 idea on your visual mind map (pick something about yourself you'd like to share and celebrate). This will be your design idea.
2. Test your idea. Draw 3 quick thumbnail sketches: turn your design idea into a plate, a cup, and a bowl.
3. Select your favourite thumbnail sketch for your clay project. Everyone will make 1 object in clay.

# Step 3:

## Create it out of clay!

Use the pinch pot or slab method to make clay artworks.  
*(instructor will demonstrate during in person clay workshop)*



# **Step 4:**

## **Write an artist statement**

Tell people the story behind your self portrait!



# Celebrate!



Use your clay portraits to create a display, with your artist statements.  
Or use these fully functional portraits to have a party!

Your clay self-portraits will be brought to the gallery to be fired in a kiln  
(a hot oven that goes up to 2200F) and glazed (coated with a thin coat  
of glass).

They will be ready to pick up at the gallery 3-4 weeks after your  
workshop (you will receive an email with pick up instructions).

