



a natural state

Artist: Stephen Ferrell

Video 4: Process C. Molding Clay

Here we start with a clay back here. (Stephen smooths some clay on the spinning potter's wheel.) The first thing we have to do is stick some clay down here. A small amount of moisture applied to the wheel head. When the clay starts to grip your hand and is dry enough, that is when the clay will stick down well. (Stephen places ball of clay on potter's wheel, and engages motor.) Water is the essential element here, providing lubrication for your hand to cruise across the potter's wheel and across the clay cone. I use a technique called coning to center. Once we have it centered, we can bring the cone down. Here I'm running out of water. (Stephen dips his hand in a bucket of water.) At that point, we start to make it hollow, bring your thumb and finger to the center and find the center and apply pressure with the fingertips and drill a hole, stopping at approximately a quarter inch from the bottom here. Now we are going to open the pot out. And here you come, creating the floor of the vessel, at the same time as we are opening the pot up. Then we bring the clay up. First time we are using fingers on the inside, and a knuckle on the outside. Trapping the clay between these two forces, the clay has no where to go but upwards. As it comes to the top, you level it out and set the lip. Repeat this pull from the bottom to the top two or three times until we have an evenly consistent wall and have brought this up into a cylinder. Now you have to decide what this is going to be. It can be an open-mouthed jar, or a narrow mouth jug. Here I think I'm going to make a buttermilk pitcher. (Camera pans to a selection of tools...) Potters use a lot of tools called ribs. These are made out of wood, some rubber, some metal and these are what we shape the vessel with. We will do the rough forming with a wooden rib.