

Design Resource

## Miniature Clay Toys of Lucknow

Toys Made and Sold as Sets Based on a Theme  
by

Sakshi Gambhir  
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/miniature-clay-toys-lucknow>

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/miniature-clay-toys-lucknow/introduction>

## Introduction

The art of toy making is practiced in most of the regions in India. Where, only difference with each is the materials used and types of toys. These toys are not just made for playing but also for ritual and auspicious patronage.

To keep these traditions alive in the quaint lanes of Lucknow, Mahesh Kumar and his family make miniature toys of clay. The unusual thing about these miniature toys is that they are made and sold as sets based on a theme. There are sets on the leaders of India, brides of India, a set of bhangra dancers, a band of musicians etc. There are variety of interesting themes for which the toys are represented.



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## Place

Lucknow - the capital of state Uttar Pradesh is situated on the the banks of the river Gomti. Having the most spectacular gardens, palaces, fine architectural mosques and temples, this 'golden city of east' is also regarded as one of the finest cities of India. Most karigars of chikankari, mukaish and clay crafts live and work in the older parts of the city. Amongst them is a really talented toy maker, Mahesh Kumar, who makes miniature clay toys in the bylanes of Khajuha.



A glimpse of Old Lucknow.

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A glimpse of Old Lucknow.



Khajuha (area) where Mahesh Kumar lives.



Narrow lanes of Khajuha.



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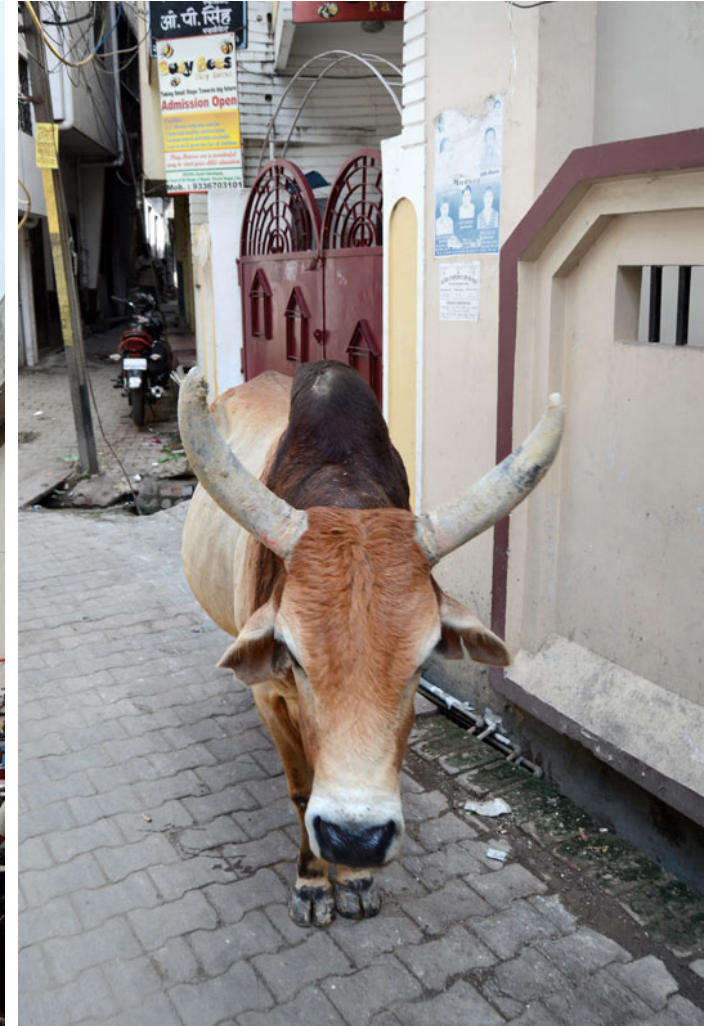
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Narrow lanes of Khajjuha.



Narrow lanes of Khajjuha.

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Narrow lanes of Khajjuha.



A Temple in Khajjuha.



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Mahesh Kumar's house.



Mahesh Kumar's firing area.



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Mahesh Kumar's terrace where he works with clay.



Packaging storage.



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A glimpse of Old Lucknow.

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## People

Mahesh Kumar 'Murtikaar' as he is popularly called, is an extremely talented, dedicated and fine craftsman. He has been making miniature clay toys since he was ten years old. His father used to make these toys several years ago and passed on the skill to him in his early childhood. Mahesh Kumar's brother, Manoj Kumar, and his wife, Sunita, also help him in making the toys.



Mahesh Kumar at work.



Mahesh Kumar at work.



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Manoj Kumar (Mahesh's brother) at work.



Manoj Kumar's wife and daughter.

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Manoj Kumar's daughter.



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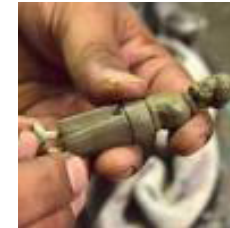
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### Process



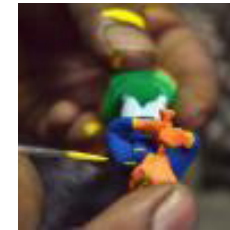
Preparing Clay



Casting



Firing



Painting



Packaging

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## Preparing Clay

Special black clay is used for making these toys. This clay is procured from the mud collectors who source it from a special area of Lucknow called the Kaala Pahaad (black mountain). Pieces of solid clay are broken down and mixed with water. This is sieved through a fine mesh to remove tiny stone pieces and then left to dry for two days. This makes it of the right consistency for casting.



Pieces of solid clay being broken down.



Pieces of solid clay being broken down.



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Clay pieces being mixed with water.



Clay pieces being mixed with water.



Clay pieces being mixed with water.



Watery clay sieved through a fine mesh to remove tiny stone pieces.



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Watery clay sieved through a fine mesh to remove tiny stone pieces.

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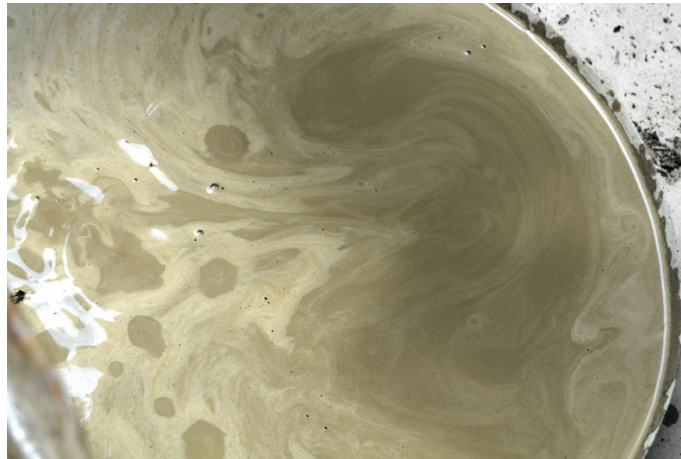
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Clay being mixed well.



Clay left to dry for two days to make it of the right consistency for casting.



Clay being mixed well.



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## Casting

The moulds used for casting are either of clay or of Plaster of Paris and are crafted by the artisans themselves or by specialists in clay modeling. The making of a mould is an expensive and time-consuming process requiring detailed and painstaking work. These toys are in miniature form and getting the right expression, the correct stance and individual detailing requires careful attention and immense skill. Most artisans pay great attention to the making of the mould since this is the basis of their craft.

Once the mould is ready, a small piece of clay - about one inch in diameter and two inches in length - is rolled and placed between two halves of the mould. This is firmly pressed and a figure is formed.

The figure is only of the upper part of the body. The arms are attached separately by simply wetting the clay and fusing them to the main body. The legs are made in the same way but have a wire running through the centre. One end of this wire helps to fix the legs to the body and the other end fits into a stand on which the figure rests (this wire is not affected during firing).

A knife (or fine pen) is used to give the final touches to the body and to the costume: like the folds of a dhoti, loincloth or turban. The toys are then left to dry in the sun for two days.



Clay (of the right consistency) to be used for casting.



Legs (of the body) with a wire running through the centre.



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Moulds used for casting.

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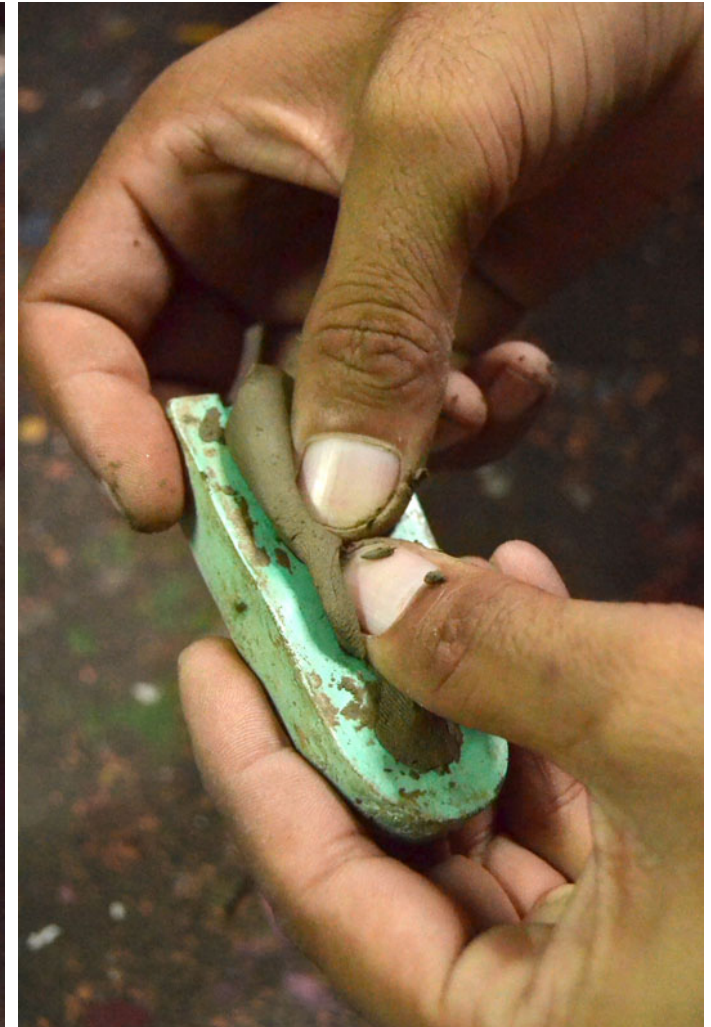
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Small piece of clay to be rolled and placed between two halves of the mould.



Small piece of clay to be rolled and placed between two halves of the mould.



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Small piece of clay to be rolled and placed between two halves of the mould.



Small piece of clay to be rolled and placed between two halves of the mould.

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Clay being firmly pressed to form the figure.



Clay being firmly pressed to form the figure.



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Clay being firmly pressed to form the figure.



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The figure is formed.



Figure being removed from the mould.



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Figure being removed from the mould.



Figure being removed from the mould.

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Mould and the figures cast from it.



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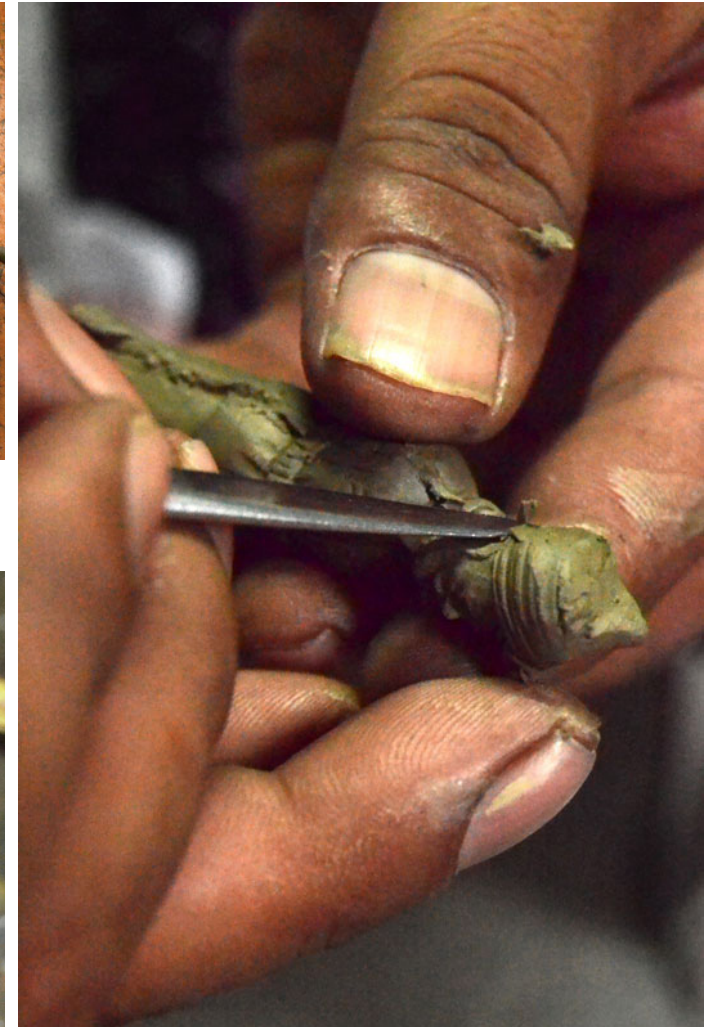
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Bunch of arms and legs to be attached to the body.



One end of the wire fixing the legs to the body (other end will fit into a stand on which the figure rests).



A knife being used to give the final touches to the body and costume.



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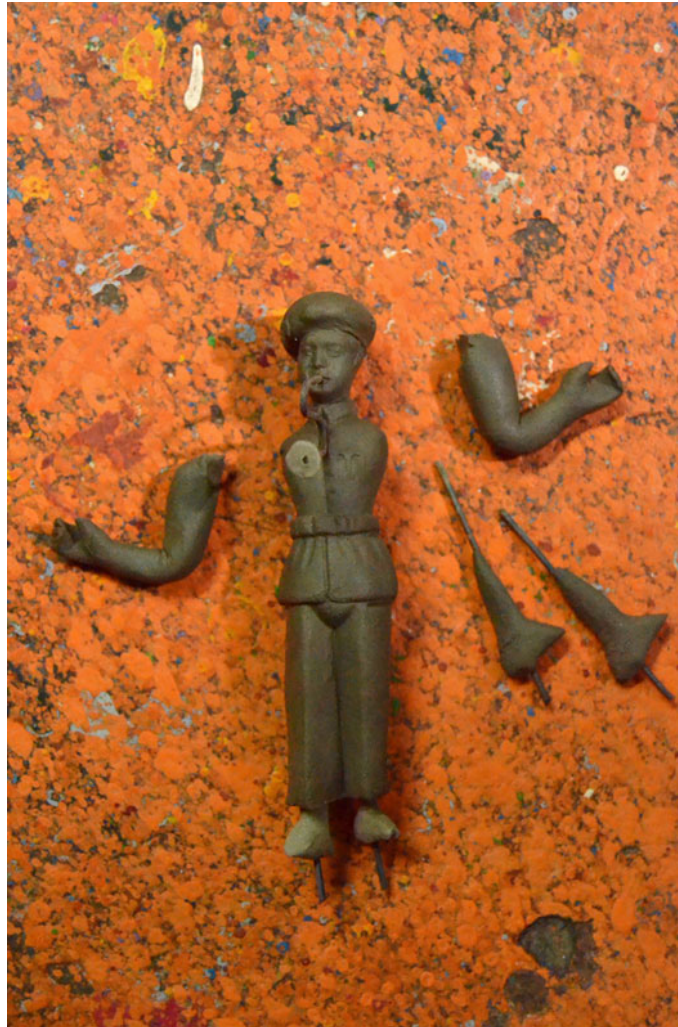
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The body and its parts (to be attached).



Moulds and the figures cast from them.



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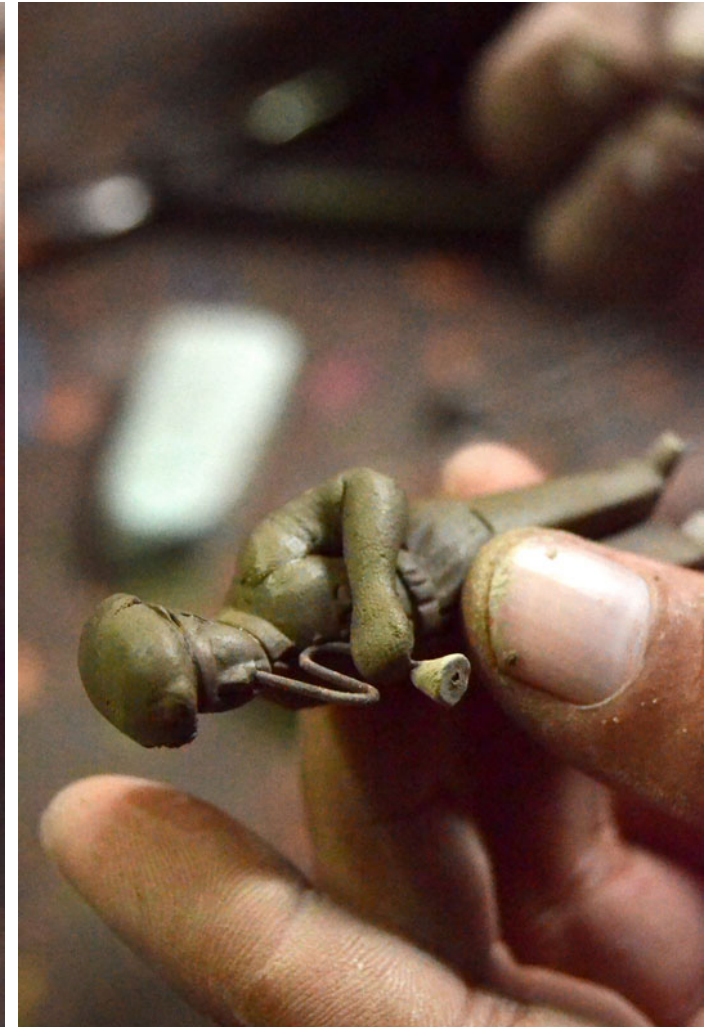
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Arms being attached separately by simply wetting and fusing them to the main body.



Arms being attached separately by simply wetting and fusing them to the main body.

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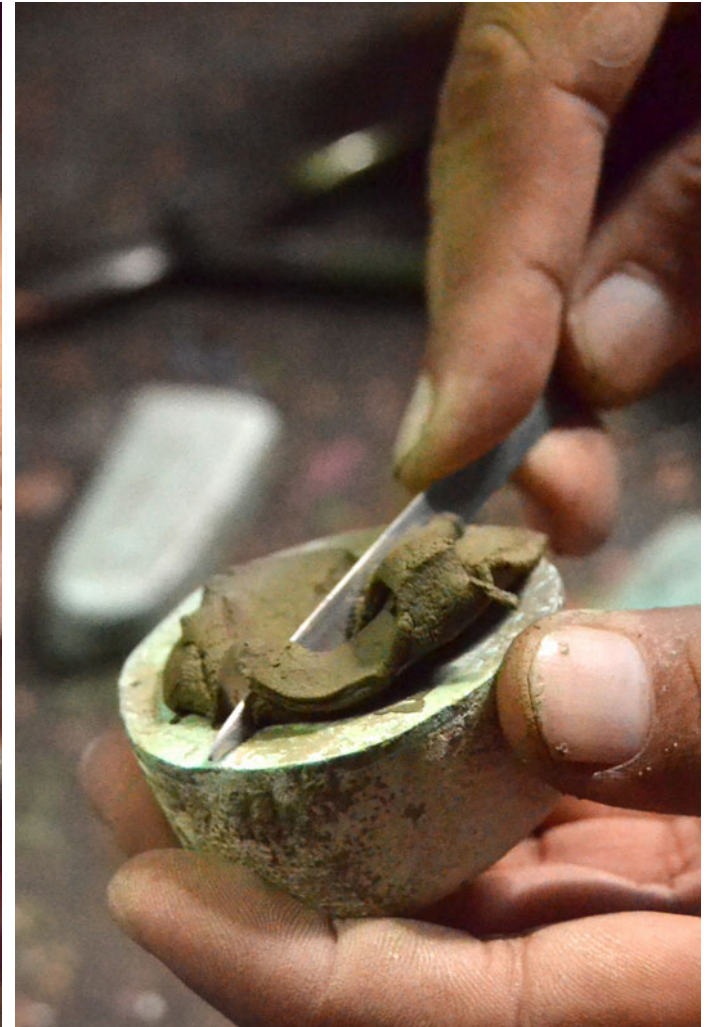
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Musical instrument and other detailing being done.



Stand being made.



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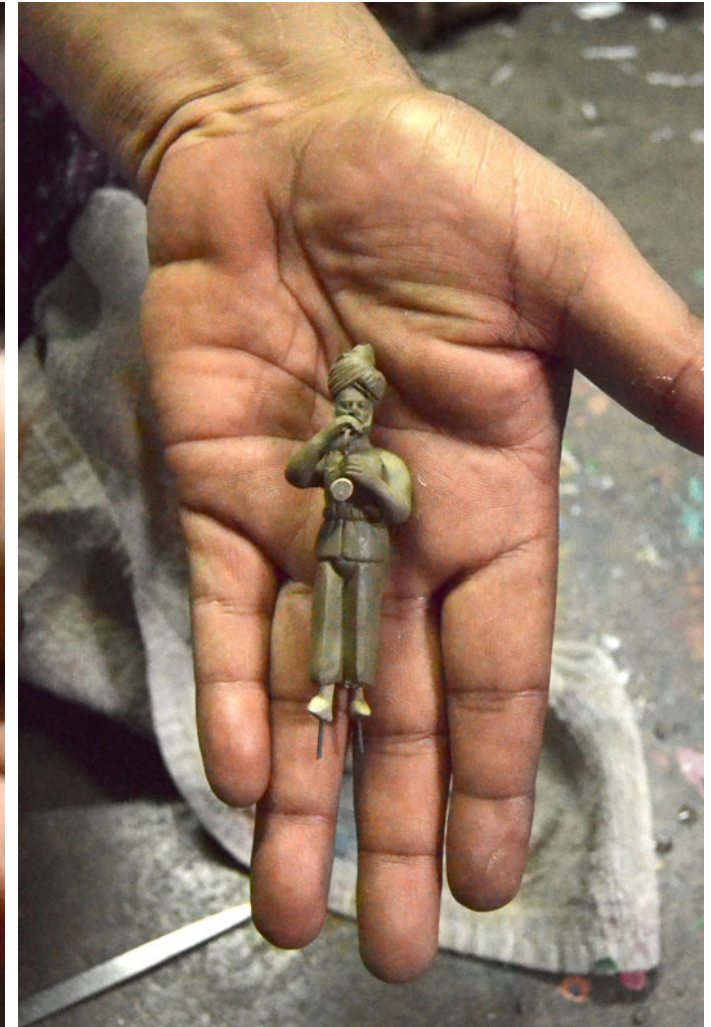
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The stand on which the figure will rest.



The figure ready to be placed on the stand.

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The figure being placed on the stand (with the open end of the wire from the legs).



The toys are left to dry in the sun for two days before firing.



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## Firing

Most toy makers bake the clay toys themselves. Mahesh Kumar uses a large kiln that can bake upto 1000 to 1200 pieces at a time. Wood is used as the fuel and the firing time is about three hours. The temperature and the height of the flames are closely monitored during firing to ensure that all the toys are baked evenly, especially those placed at higher levels in the kiln.



Wood used to fire the furnace.



Figures in the furnace (after firing).



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The furnace on the terrace.



Figures in the furnace (after firing).



Figures in the furnace (after firing).



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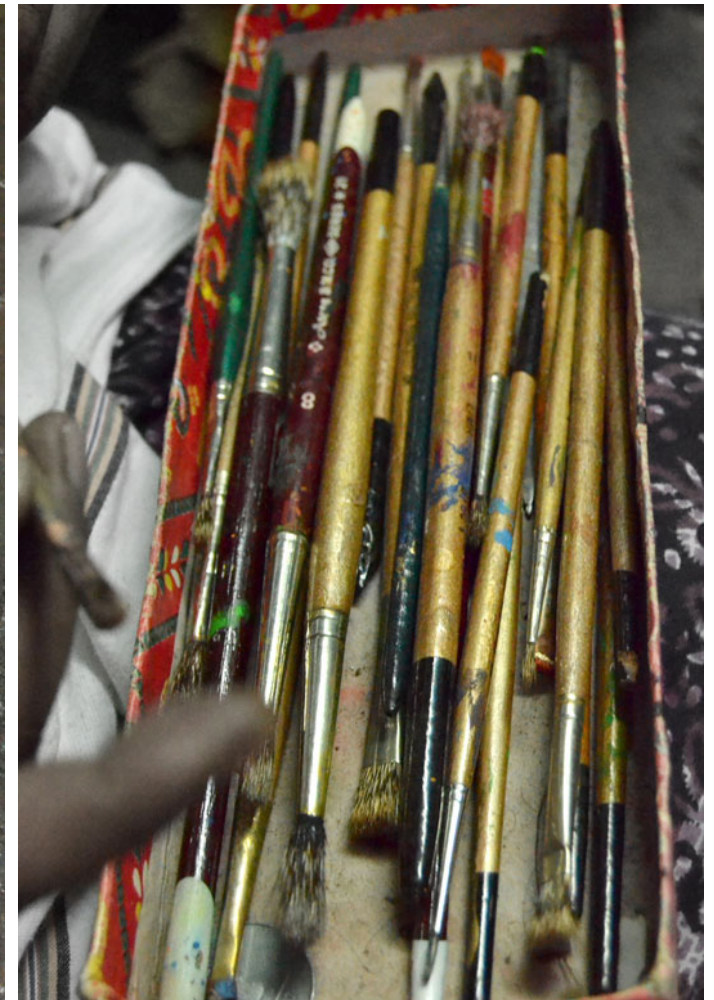
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## Painting

After baking, all the toy and figures are painted a skin color. The eyes are painted first, after which the stand for the figures is completed. The lips are colored red and the hair black. The costume with complete details are painted last. The brushes and paints used are the ones commonly available in the market. The colors are however mixed with dhoo ki gond, a locally made glue, before being used.



Blue paint.



Brushes.

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Sakshi Gambhir  
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/miniature-clay-toys-lucknow/process/painting>

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  - 4.3. Firing
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The eyes of the figures being painted black.



Paints.



Black paint.



Design Resource

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Figures painted in skin color.

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Eyes being painted black.



Mahesh Kumar painting the costume.



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Costume being painted blue and white.



Costume being painted blue and white.

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Costume being painted blue and white.



Stand being painted green.



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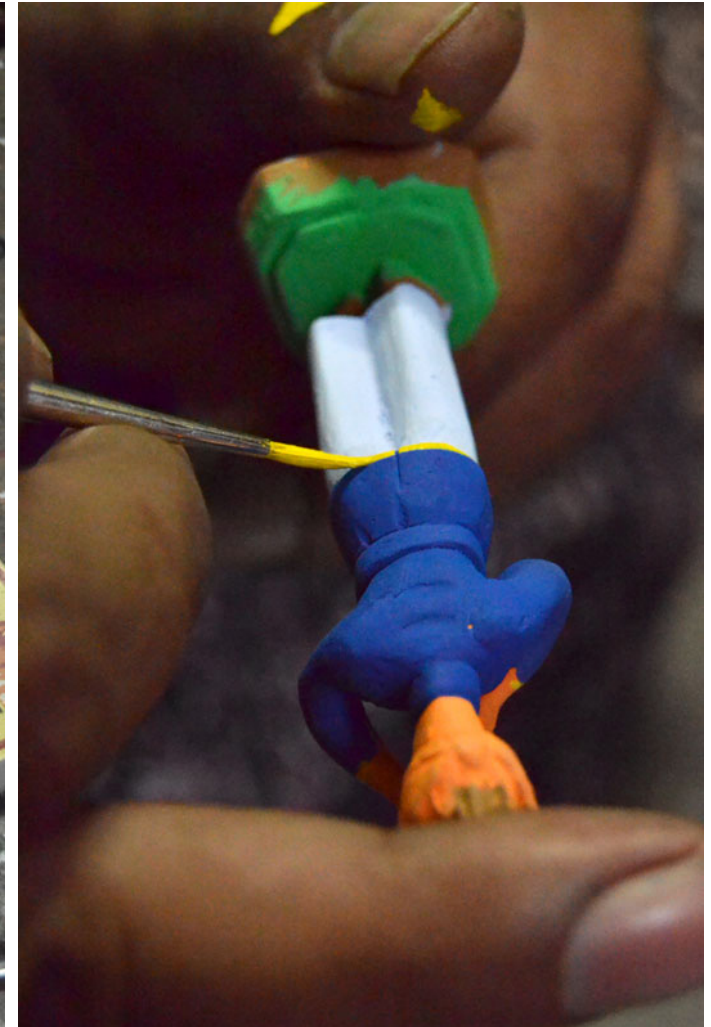
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Yellow paint being mixed well.



Costume being detailed out with yellow.

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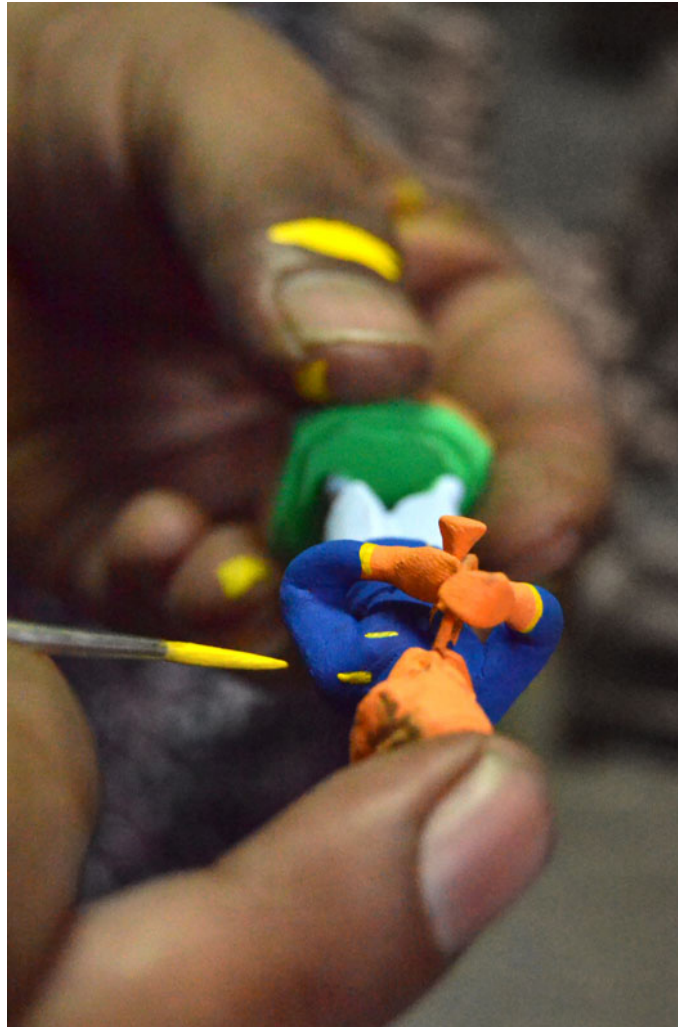
Sakshi Gambhir

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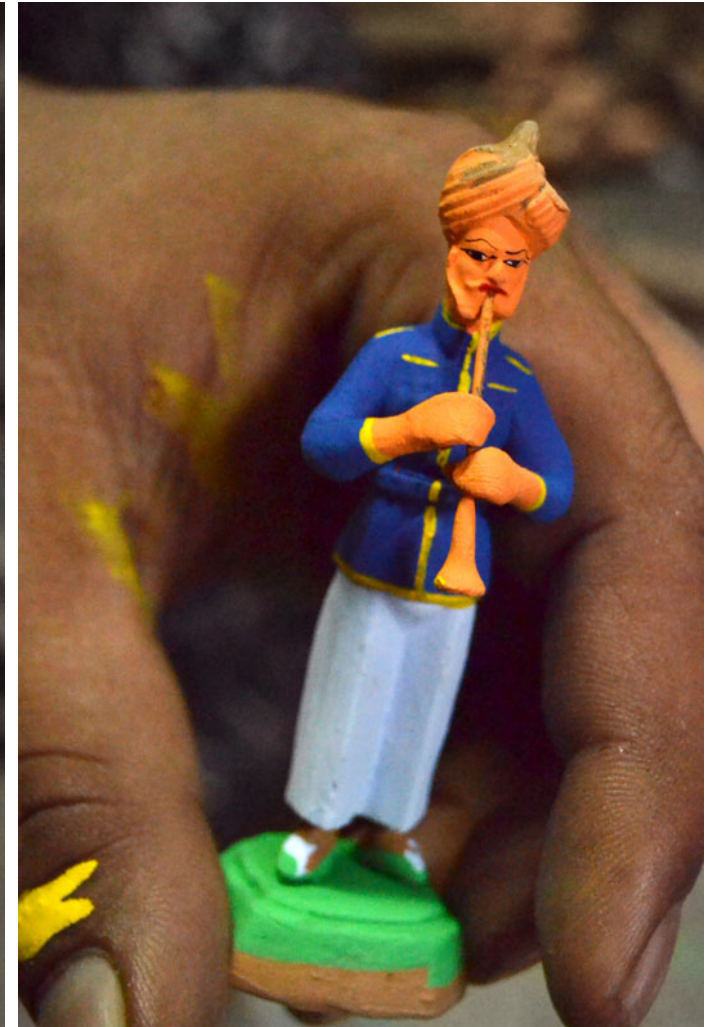
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Costume being detailed out with yellow.



Costume being detailed out with yellow.



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Costume being detailed out with yellow.



Shoes being painted black.

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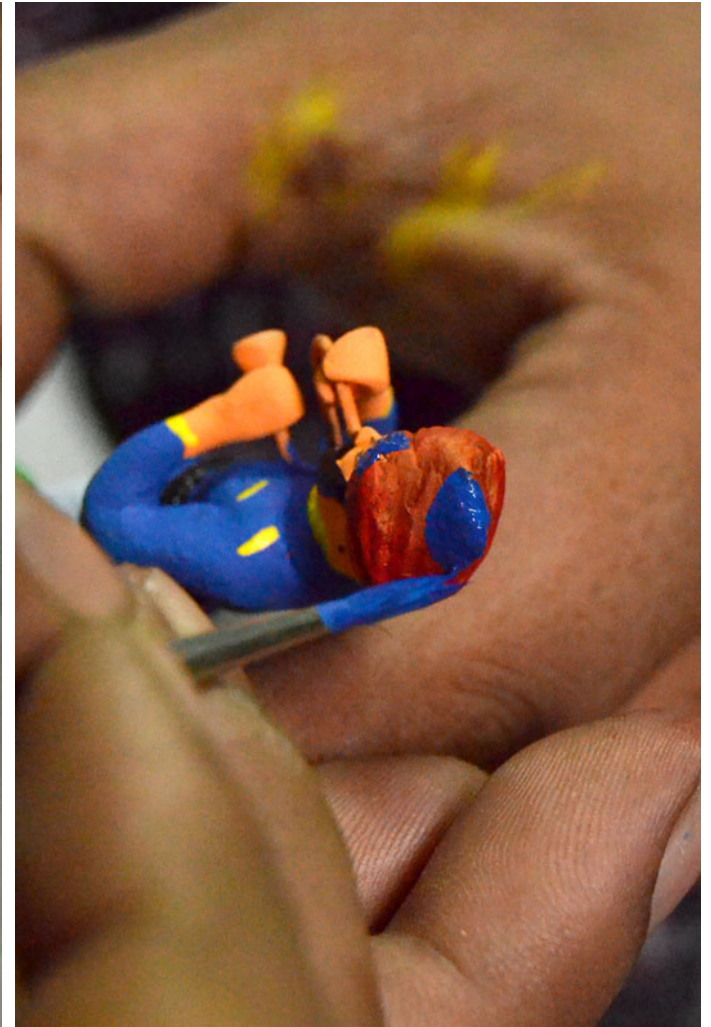
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Turban being detailed out with blue.



Turban being detailed out with blue.



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Ready to be packed.

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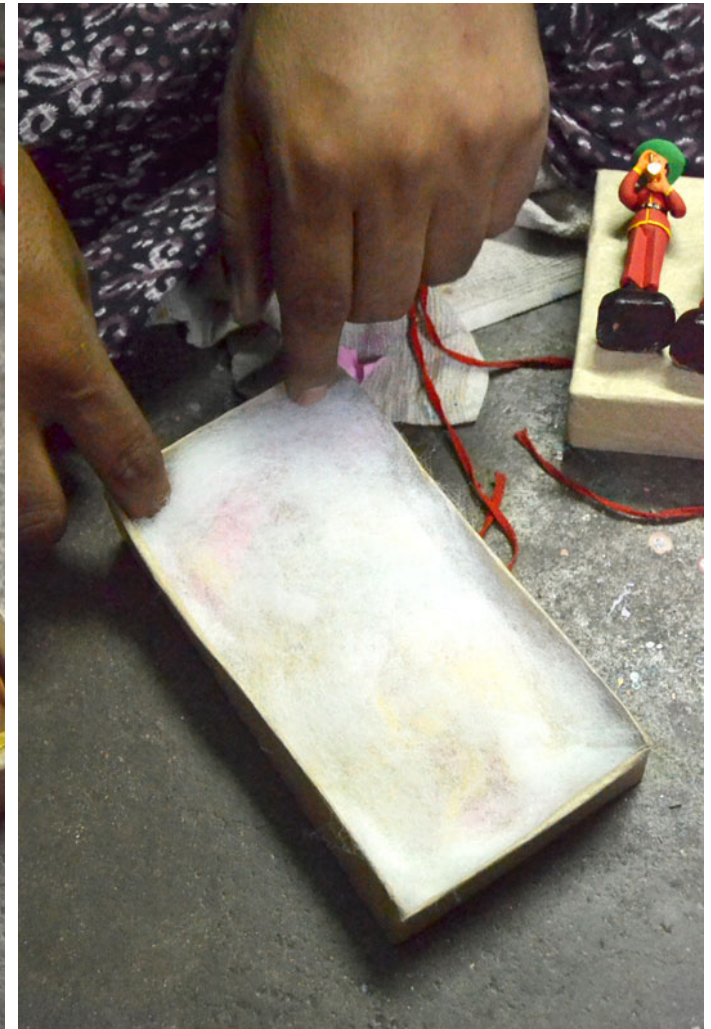
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## Packaging

All the toys are carefully packed in appropriate boxes that contain shredded paper and lots of poly-cotton for padding. These are then sealed with a transparent cling-wrap.



Shredded paper kept in the box for padding.



Poly-cotton being kept in the box for padding.



Design Resource

## Miniature Clay Toys of Lucknow

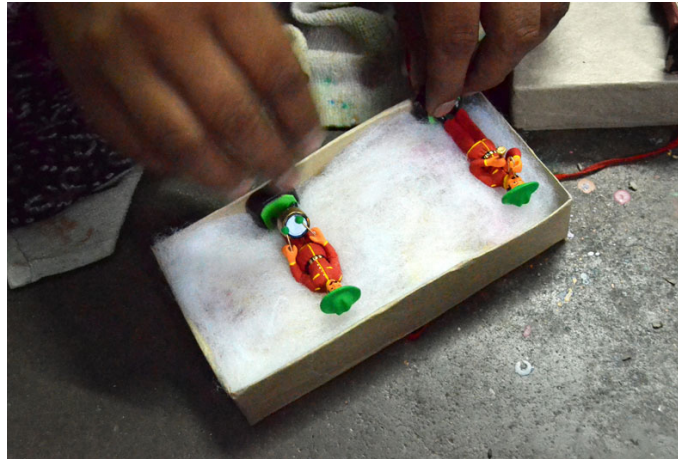
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Figures being packed in the box.



Figures being packed in the box.



The box is sealed with a transparent cling-wrap.



The boxes ready to be stored or sent to shops.

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/miniature-clay-toys-lucknow/products>

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## Products

The toy sets include series on the sadhus of India, Gods and Goddesses, the people, musicians, national leaders of the freedom struggles and brides of India, among others. Vegetables, fruits and musical instruments for decorative purposes are also being fashioned out of clay. Most of these items are retailed through hotel shops, government emporiums or exhibitions.



Box-set of Gods and Goddesses.



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Shiva-Parvati.



Ganesh-Lakshmi.



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Krishna-Radha.



Bhangra dancers.



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Box-set of people of India and Bhangra dancers.



Box-set of people of India.



Box-set of Gods and Goddesses.



Box-set of musicians of India.

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Bhangra dancers.



Bhangra dancers.



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Box-set of musicians of India.



Box-set of musicians of India.



Musicians of India.



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Box-sets.



Dancing-head figures.



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Dancing-head figure - male.



Dancing-head figure - female.

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Dancing-head figure - male.



Sample figures displayed in Mahesh Kumar's house.



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Sample figures displayed in Mahesh Kumar's house.



Sample figures displayed in Mahesh Kumar's house.

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### Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/miniature-clay-toys-lucknow/contact-details>

## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sakshi Gambhir, M. Des., IDC, IIT Bombay.

You can get in touch with her at [sakshigambhir\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:sakshigambhir[at]gmail.com)

You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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