With its wide sky and warm earth, Princess Gie Gie’s kingdom is a beautiful land. But clean drinking water is scarce in her small African village. And try as she might, Gie Gie cannot bring the water closer; she cannot make it run clearer. Every morning, she rises before the sun to make the long journey to the well. Instead of a crown, she wears a heavy pot on her head to collect the water. After the voyage home, after boiling the water to drink and clean with, Gie Gie thinks of the trip that tomorrow will bring. And she dreams. She dreams of a day when her village will have cool, crystal-clear water of its own.
The Makonde vessel in the Carlos Museum was made using red clay and a combination of pinching and coiling techniques. The shiny surface was created by burnishing, or rubbing the clay with a smooth river stone when it was almost but not completely dry. After the vessel was burnished, alfalfa designs were incised, or scratched, into the surface with a sharp tool. Then the vessel was fired using animal dung, grasses, or branches as fuel, turning the clay black. Some of the red clay body is still visible. A white slip, a mixture of kaolin and water, was poured over the vessel right after it was fired and then wiped off, highlighting the designs.

Learn more about this vessel here.
Make it!  
CLAY WATER VESSELS

To build confidence and a sense of ownership in their art, it’s important that children have autonomy. Lead by example by making your own water vessel and let them do as much on their own as they can. The instruction videos are guidelines. Children should make their water vessel the way they want it to be.

What you need

- A flat surface covered with fabric or heavy paper
- A small board or heavy piece of fabric, such as canvas or heavy paper to use as a movable work surface, approximately 6 x 6 inches
- A fork, pencil, ball-point pen, or barbecue skewer
- A wooden paddle or spoon
- An old plastic gift card or membership card
- Clay
  You can use standard ceramic clay like this, which can be fired.

  Alternatively, you can use air-dry clay, such as Crayola Air Dry Clay or Amaco Air Dry Clay.

  If you use air dry clay or are unable to fire standard ceramic clay, you can coat your vessels with Elmer’s White Glue diluted with water to add strength and water resistance. However, they will not be able to hold liquid.

- Kaolin clay like this, for making slip
- A small container and a little water for making slip

What to do

Watch these videos of Atlanta ceramic artist and museum educator Ana Vizurraga making pinch pots and coiled pots and make them along with her.

How to make a coil pot

How to make a pinch pot
Clay
Naturally occurring material made from the decomposition of rocks combined with water to that is pliable when wet, making it a good for constructing objects.

Ceramic
Objects made of clay and permanently hardened by the firing process.

Vessel
A hollow container.

Pinch pot
A simple vessel made from a ball of clay by pinching between the thumb and fingers. Pinch pots have been in cultures around the world for many thousands of years.

Coiling
A method of hand-building where the clay is rolled by hand into long coils or “snakes” and then stacked one on top of the other to build up a vessel or other form. When the vessel is the desired height, the coils are smoothed out.

Burnish
Rubbing or polishing clay with a smooth stone or other object before it is fired, compacting the clay to create a shiny surface.

Incise
A method of decorating by design by cutting or scraping into the clay surface.

Kaolin [KAY-uh-lin]
White clay found naturally in many parts of the world including right across the middle of Georgia! Sandersville, Georgia is known as the “Kaolin Capitol of the World.”

Slip
Clay mixed with water to make a liquid used for decorating and for joining clay parts together.

Firing
Heating clay to a high temperature in order to remove moisture and sinter, or weld together, the clay particles, turning clay into ceramic.

Kiln
A furnace or oven made especially for firing pottery.
**People and places**

**Burkina Faso**
[burr-KEE-nuh FAH-so]
A country in West Africa. Over 60 languages are spoken in Burkina Faso, but the most common languages are Mossi and French. Did you notice any French words in *The Water Princess*?

**Mozambique**
[moh-zum-BEEK]
A country in Southeast Africa. Mozambique has more than 1500 miles of coastline along the Indian Ocean.

**Makonde**
[muh-KUN-day]
An ethnic group (people who share the same language, history, and traditions) who live in the northern part of Mozambique, as well as in Tanzania and Kenya. The Makonde have a long history of art-making that continues today.

**Georgie Badiel**
The *Water Princess* is based on the childhood experiences of Georgie Badiel. She is Burkinabé, which means she’s from Burkina Faso. She is an international fashion model. Georgie created an organization that builds wells and brings clean, fresh water to villages in Burkina Faso and other countries in Africa, just like she dreamed about when she was a little girl. To find out more about Georgie’s work, check out the Georgie Badiel Foundation.
Experience all this and **so much more at the Carlos Museum!**

![Image](image_url)

**Vessel.**

Click here to learn more.

**This vessel is from Burkina Faso,** where *The Water Princess* is set. Large water jars like this one might be placed prominently under a tree, or on the veranda of the home, where they are easily accessible for serving visitors a cup of cool water. As objects on public display, water jars are enhanced with incised lines, impressed textured surfaces, and smooth burnished surfaces. Older examples will often have an animal shape—snake, turtle, lizard, crocodile—molded onto the surface. Today, many African women prefer to cook with more durable metal containers. However, the preferred water jar is still made of clay because of its ability to keep liquids cool.