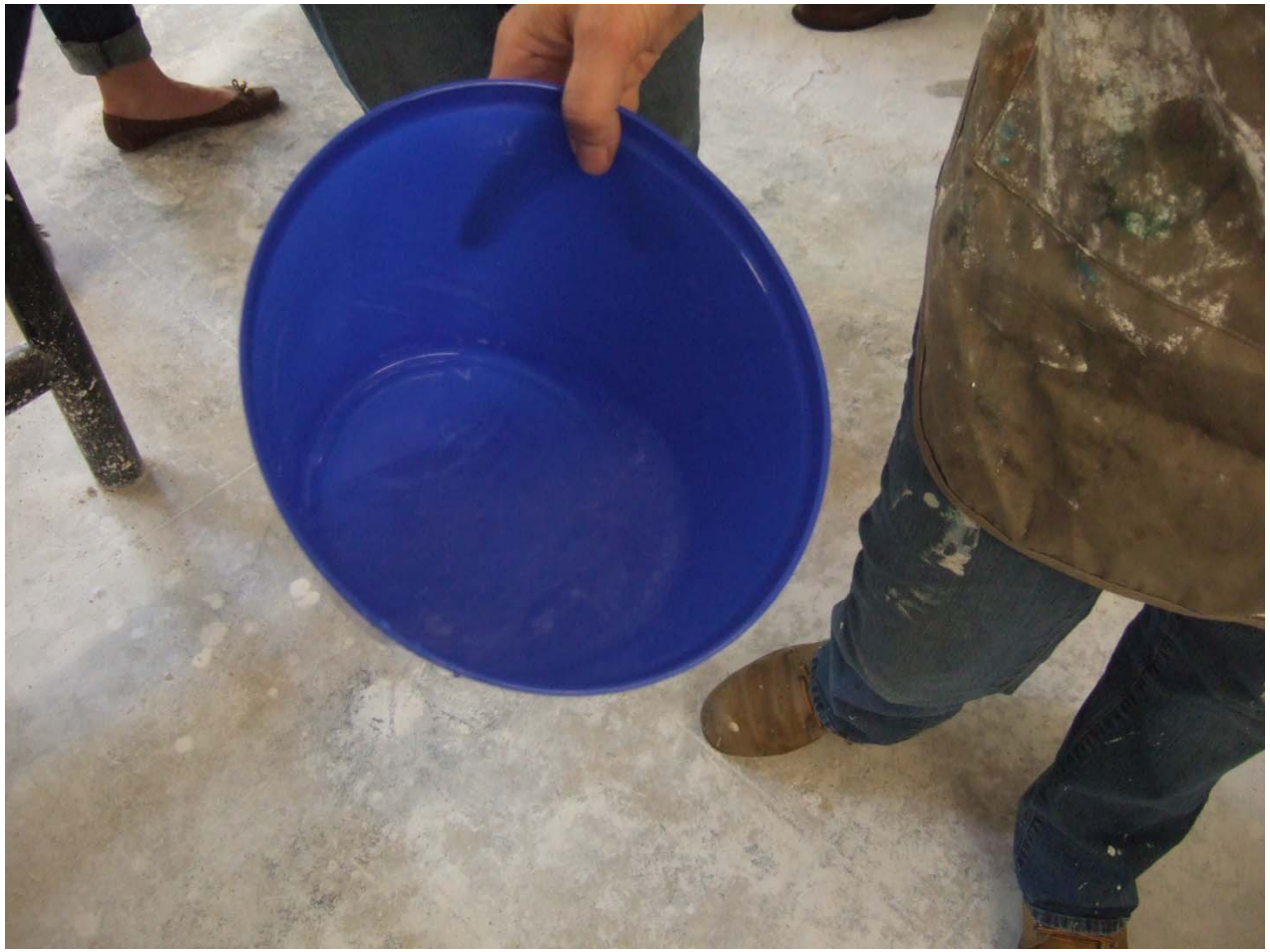
PLASTER MIXING AND CASTING TUTORIAL

Mixing Plaster for Casting:

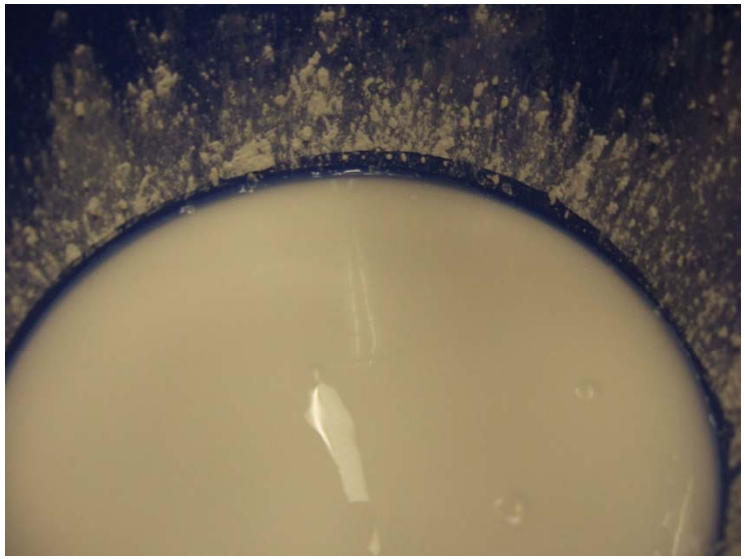
Pro's: Cheap, usually durable, permanent (not for outdoors), can be carved, sanded and painted

Con's: Plaster dust is bad for lungs; wear a mask, NO PLASTER IN ANY FORM IN ANY SINK! Plaster will dry your skin-you may need to moisturize. Dress for mess, plaster is permanent on clothing.

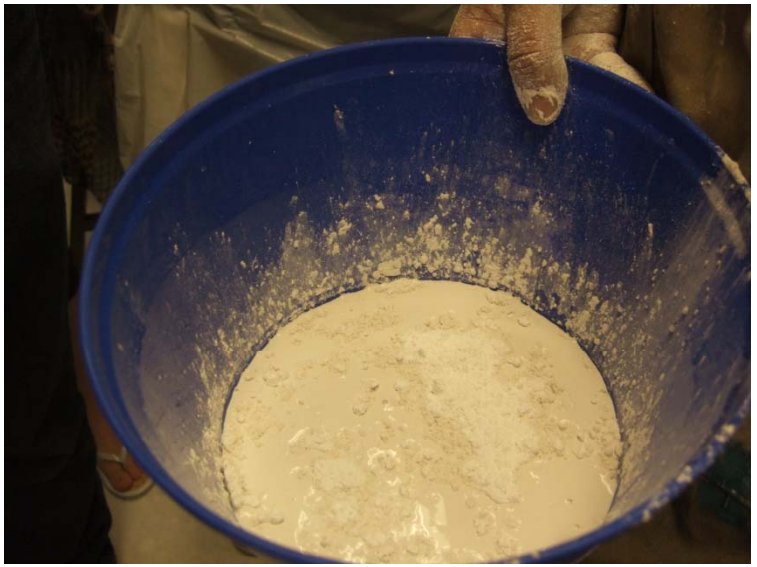
1. Prepare your space. The process will go quickly once you begin so have all of your tools and mold set up in advance. Work on top of plastic or newspaper that can be cleaned up after you are done. Set your mold up so that it is clean and resting stably. The mold opening should be level. Prepare a piece of wire that is twisted on either side for a hanger if you are making your piece hang on the wall.



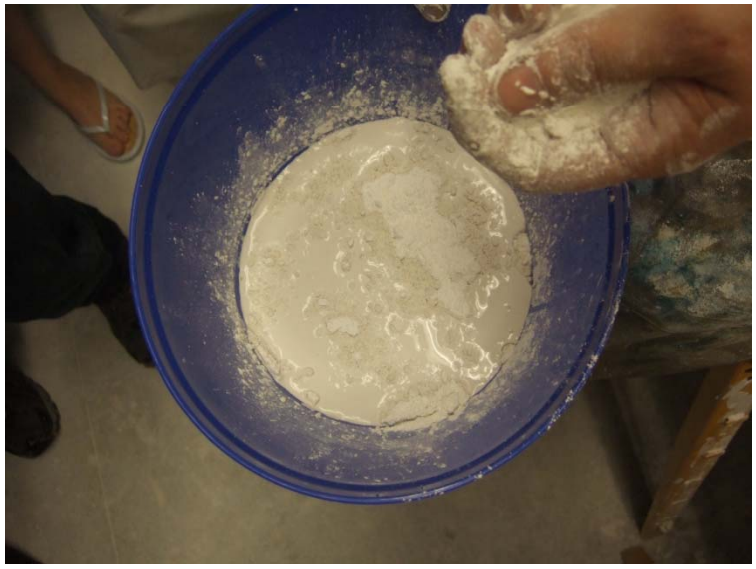
2. Wear your mask when you are working with the plaster in dust form. Fill your clean bucket with water (only about as much as your mold will hold). Hot water will set extremely fast. Cold water will set slower. The chemical reaction in plaster is based on heat. I use warm water-because it is comfortable to stick my hands into.



1. Water is nearly saturated with plaster.

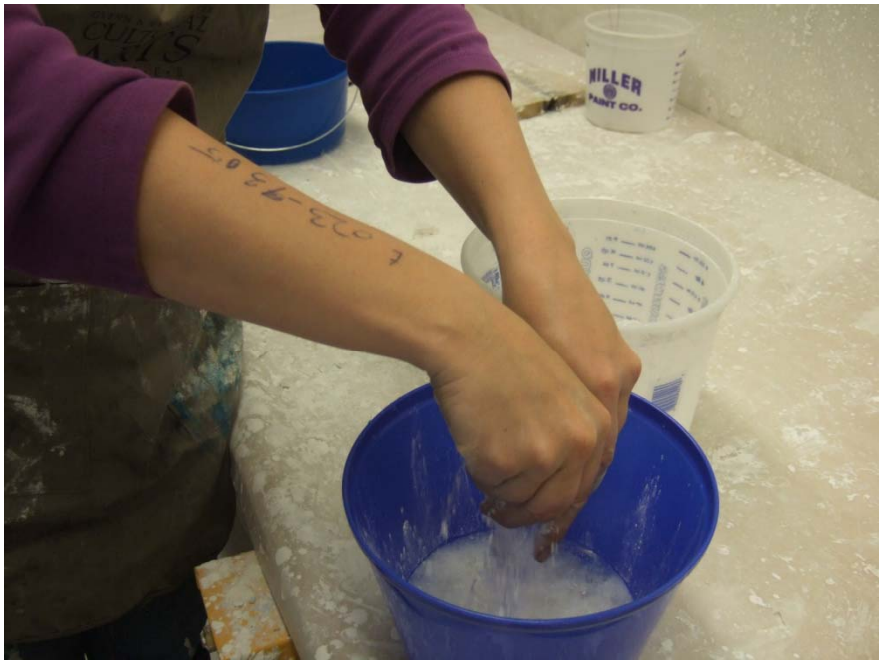


2. Dry islands are forming on the surface.



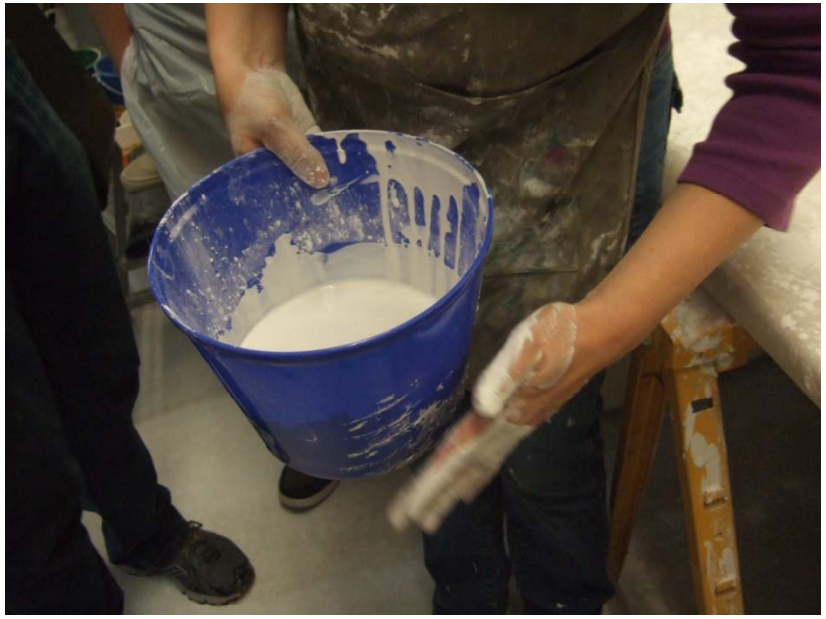
3. Sprinkle a little more plaster evenly on the surface to soak up water.

4. Once moisture is soaked up, surface cracks will form (desert stage)

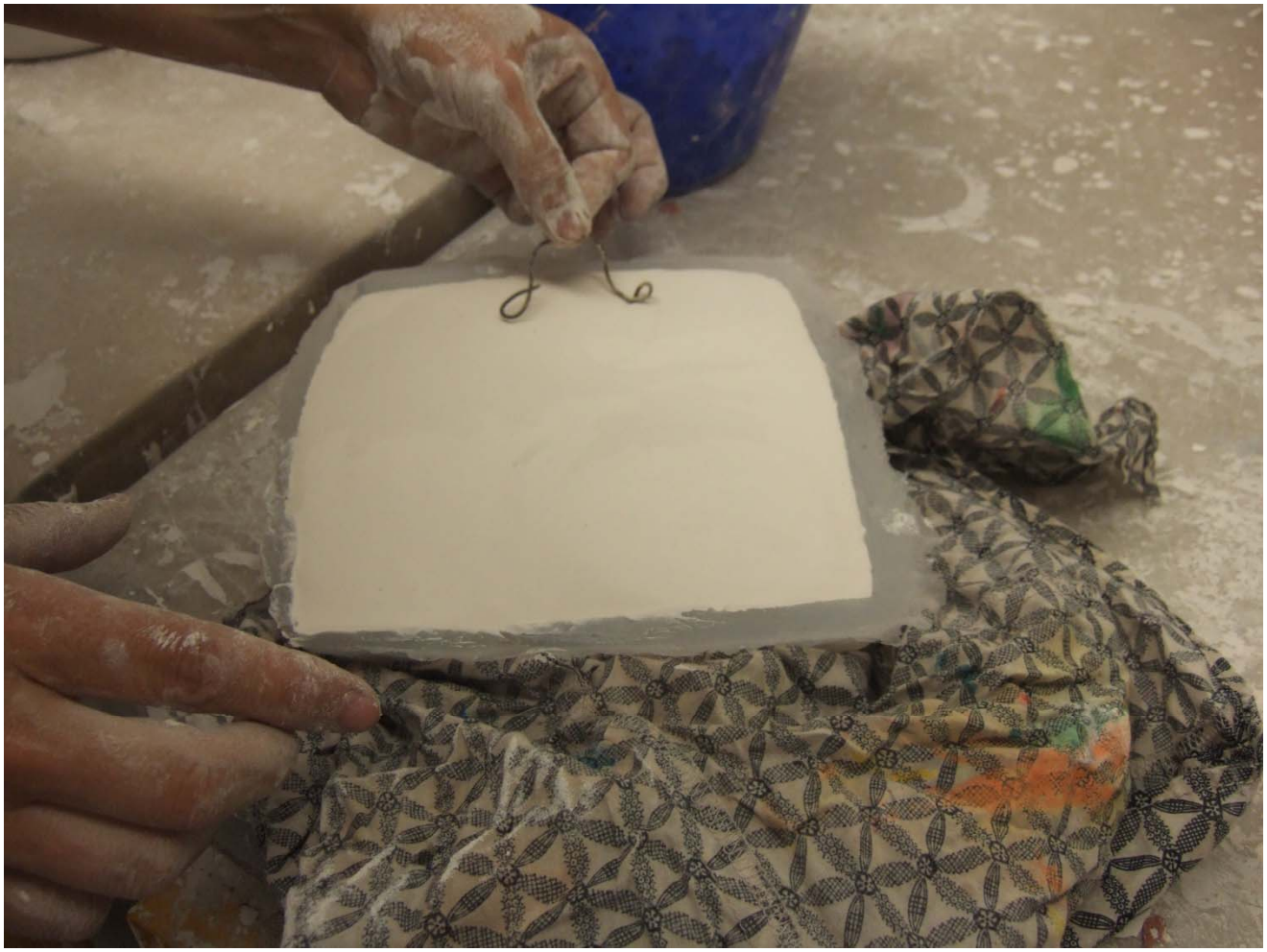


3. Sift handfuls of plaster into the water slowly. Do not dump it in or you will get clumps and air bubbles-neither are good. Continue sifting plaster into the water until you see that the water has become ***saturated*** . The dry plaster is sucking up the water like a sponge. You will see how the plaster sits just below the water line. Sift a little more on and you will notice little islands of dry plaster that linger on top. Once you have dry islands lingering on top, spread a little more dry plaster around the entire surface to suck up excess water. When all of the dry plaster has become moistened the surface will have been transformed into a cracked desert. Now you are ready to mix. DO NOT MIX THE PLASTER UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS SIFTING PROCESS. When you mix or ***agitate*** the plaster it begins the heat reaction that will cause it to ***cure or set*** (get hard).

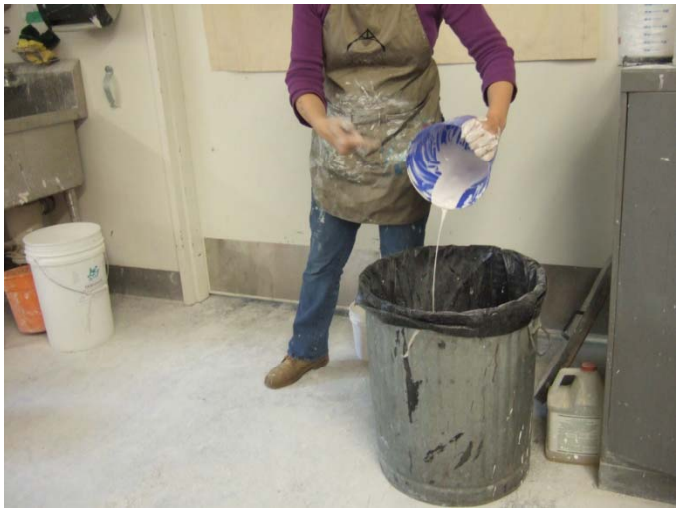
4. Slip your hand into the plaster, try not to splash or take air into the mixture. Mix the plaster, by squeezing the mixture between your fingers, under the surface, until it feels ***homogenized*** (all the same). It should be about the consistency of smoothie or milkshake. Don't drink it.

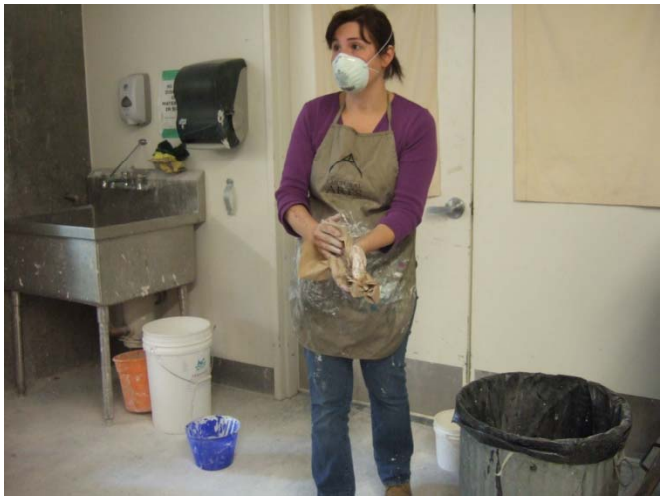


5. Once the mix is homogenized, tap the sides of the bucket to help release any bubbles that are trapped under the surface. Pour the mixture carefully into the mold until it is full.



Installing hanging wires: If you are planning to hang your castings on the wall, you can insert a twisted wire loop into the wet plaster and allow it to dry there. Insert the loop between 1/3 and 1/4 from the top of the relief for the best balance.





6. If you have extra plaster (hopefully not much), let it harden in the bucket or scoop the contents into the garbage. Squeeze the excess from your hands into the bucket or into the garbage. NO PLASTER IS TO GO INTO THE SINK. Wipe your hands with paper towels and then wash your hands in the sink. Once plaster has hardened in the bucket you can push on the sides of the bucket until it releases. Put all hardened plaster excess into the garbage.

7. CLEAN UP ANY AND ALL MESSES YOU MAKE EVERY TIME YOU WORK.

8. Try not to move your mold while the plaster is wet, you may warp the mold and produce an odd casting. Wait for the plaster to fully set before removing it from the mold. The plaster will harden, become warm and then cool again before it is ready. This can take about an hour, however, the longer you leave the casting in the mold, the stronger it will be when you pull it out.