Blake started as a playground chat between our lead artist, Myra Heller and wildlife photographer Sophie Darlington while collecting their children from Colvestone School in Hackney. Sophie also worked at 21st Century Tiger and was an admirer of Myra's dog-light, Onion. Myra was a passionate supporter of wildlife conservation and so creating a tiger cub light seemed the obvious thing to do.

We named him Blake, after William Blake who wrote: 'Tyger, tyger burning bright!'

Sophie introduced Myra to Esther Conway at 21st Century Tiger in their offices at the Zoological Society of London. As well as raising funds, Blake was initiated to raise awareness of wild tiger conservation and 21st Century Tiger's work.

To kick-start the process we have decided to showcase the design and development of Blake online so that people understand who we are, what we are doing and, most of all, why we are doing it.

Initially we spent some time online researching tiger cubs at our studio and discovered:

1. They're very cute.

2. They have pale blue eyes that turn amber as they grow older.

3. Even at a very early age they act tough and snarl at almost everything

4. They're a bit top heavy and have massive paws so look like they're about to topple over most of the time.

These are our favourite Tiger Cub pics:

[Tiger Cub pics]

Having pieced together a better idea of what Tiger Cubs were all about we then thought about design. The options before us were:

Something shamelessly cute and cartoon like.

Something lifelike.

Something stylistic.

The project was to raise funds for charity so at first it really was quite difficult to resist shamelessly cute but after a great deal of soul-searching we felt that this would betray the ideals of 21st Century Tiger which is to see wild tigers thriving in their natural habitat and not in ways and forms that are convenient for us humans..

We went for lifelike. It had its challenges: What about the stripes? We really didn't want to paint Blake as we felt that would have lessened the design and possibly made it a bit cartoon-like so we decided instead to use texture to suggest the striping of the cub.

The initial model was made in wax rather than clay as this bypasses the mould making process and minimises the chance of errors being introduced during the making of the final mould. The downside is that the model is a dark greeny-black which does catch some people by surprise when they first view it. We're still debating on the colours for the final model. Feel free to send us your suggestions.

Blake 1 was born, sitting rather than lying down. Again, this suited the moulding & manufacturing process but also our thinking was that would help emphasise the tiger cub’s slight awkwardness and vulnerability. Here are some pictures of Blake 1:

[ Pics of Blake 1]

We were pleased with Blake 1 but his body was a little too poised and cat-like giving him proportions more akin to an adult than a vulnerable cub. 21st Century Tiger were helpful here, pointing out that tiger cubs have broader shoulders, bigger paws and thinner tails.

So Blake 1 became Blake 2. The proportions were better; Blake suddenly felt more alive than model so it was time to finish him off. Several hours of polishing and texturing later:

[Pics of Blake 2]