MATeRiAL MATTErs
5 - 28 AuGUST 2011

School of Art
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences
Over its long history, and through many changes over decades, the ANU School of Art has maintained a commitment to the practice of ceramics. Ceramics has been taught continuously at the School since its prehistory as an outpost of the NSW TAFE system, and the first formal art classes taught in Canberra in the early 1940s. Ceramics at the School of Art is the regional hub of the practice and a national leader in the field.

As this exhibition demonstrates, Ceramics is a diverse and dynamic discipline here. The Ceramics Workshop has been innovative in its teaching on campus, and in reaching out to students through the philosophy of the ‘Distributed Studio’ that its present Head, Janet DeBoos, has developed and implemented. This has meant that the Ceramics Workshop has supported learning off campus, and engendered strong international networks through regular student exchanges to countries in Asia, North America and Europe, often supported by ongoing agreements to host residencies like the US based National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts. They have delivered intensive graduate courses in China, and developed collaborative projects with remote Aboriginal Community Art Centres. At the same time, links with the local community in the ACT have been fostered through joint projects such as community wood firings at Strathnairn Arts Association, workshops with the Canberra Potters Society, and ‘Kitchen Garden/ Kitchen Pots’ projects with public schools.

Enjoy the exhibition. It is a joyful celebration of the possibilities of ceramics, and a bold assertion of its importance in the twenty-first century.

Gordon Bull
Head, School of Art
Research School of Humanites and the Arts
Material- does it really matter? Do the works we see in this exhibition tell a different story to that which they would tell if they were plastic- or glass- or wood- or even more challenging- if they were digital renderings in a virtual reality environment?

These are questions that are often asked, and that artists working in clay have frequently been called on to address. The answers always seem to reside in the resistance of the material itself to completely transit the porous boundaries of contemporary art practice. It has an insistent – almost stubborn- need to be identifiably clay (either the ‘raw’ in Claude Lévi Strauss’ anthropological demarcation*) or ceramics (the ‘cooked’). Even if the intent is trompe-l’œil, it is the heft/ the density, the feel of the work that is part of its meaning….the fact that it is what it is and not just what it looks like it is, is part of the story.

In responding to clay, ceramic artists enter into an engagement that is both seduction and frustration. The siren indeed has her own voice- but it is a demanding one. Anyone who has ever fallen in love with the medium will testify to that.

Perhaps this almost obsessive love is because of the considerable technical demands of the medium- if the artist does not fully understand the ‘stuff’- the material- the vocabulary is meagre, the grammar is poor and what love sonnets were ever written with a limited vocabulary?

The works in this exhibition represent a poetic connection between material and idea- but not always the poetry of conventional beauty. They utilise the material qualities of clay to many different ends, and they talk of place, of alchemy, and of process. They all tell stories- some of these stories a clearly articulated narrative- some only implied, taking us to quiet places where our own imagination is the story teller.

But the consistent voice throughout is that of clay- the material itself. And it does matter.

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* “…to show how empirical categories—such as the raw and the cooked… the moistened and the burned… can (nonetheless) be used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions.”

Claude Lévi Strauss: The Raw and the Cooked -vol 1 Mythologies 1964 (Eng translation 1969 Weightman)
Clay – the stuff of our practice- is ubiquitous on the earth’s surface, and it is the product of the weathering of the earth itself. The word ‘earth’ is often used interchangeably with clay and this contributes to a metaphoric weight as heavy as the actual weight. Clay can be not only redolent of specific geographies, but associated with our very existence, as the stuff of our origins and our endings.

The works in this section look at how clay can evoke place, describe a quality of ‘groundedness’ and through individual histories can be associated with a single country.

Some of the works are titled or described to indicate their relationship to a particular place (Ernabella terra sigillata, Stony Hole Creek granite clay) and some develop the relationship through suggestion of place and of the weathered geology from which the material is derived.
The single act that transforms raw clay (nature) into hardened ceramics (culture) is firing. Although there have always been practices that did not rely on firing (adobe, performance, clay pigment paintings), it is the magic in the transformative power of heat that governs much of what we are drawn to.

This reversal of the processes by which clay comes into being (ie the weathering of igneous and metamorphic rocks) is part of an act that is both in awe of, and fed by, the power of extreme heat.

Slight changes in firing temperature can completely change both the colour and the texture of glazes, the clay body used will exert an impact on glaze colour and melt, and the length of time that clay objects are subjected to heat can work wonders or wreak havoc. It is this contrapuntal pull that is at the heart of firing, and when each factor at play in the firing process is in harmony, then for a moment music results. The quality of being ‘fired’ gives this fleeting beauty a permanence of sorts.

Transformations
- the alchemy of firing

Jeff Shapiro,
*Hidasaki Bowl*, 2003, wood fired, high alumina slip, 17 x 30 dia. cm

Antje Scharfe,
*Domestic Setting*, 2002, salt kiln refractory fire bricks, pigments and inks dimensions various, 22.5 x 7.5 x 10 cm (each unit)
Repetition seems fundamental to existence - the very earth is a repetition of crystalline forms, the living world a replication of cells. We respond to the familiar, and we seek repeated experience. And similarly, craft practice is predicated on repetition, but not the precise replication of a silica crystal or a DNA molecule. In repetition each iteration will seemingly be made up of a certain percentage of sameness, and a certain percentage of difference. It is in this divergence from replication that the interest lies.

Once more with feeling
- repetition and its role in craft

John Cage said “If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all.” And so in ceramics we see repetition in patterning, repetition in form, repetition of hand processes and repetition using industrial mass production methods. We also see history being repeated in the use of familiar, traditional forms or styles. But closer examination reveals not only that easy-to-pick similarity - but also a more subtle difference. A difference that is frequently only visible through the closest attention to the work.
High fired ceramics was first developed in China, and the first true porcelains were being used over one thousand years ago. Although there were a number of centres that produced ware from kilns that were able to reach high temperatures, it was the confluence of the right raw materials (kaolin and china stone) with those firing technologies that saw the fine, white, hard material called porcelain emerge.

In Europe, in the 18th century, imports of this ware caused a frenzy of excitement, with sabotage, secrecy and alchemy all being brought to bear in the race to duplicate its exquisite qualities. The first European ‘hard paste’ porcelain was developed in Meissen, with Sèvres becoming a major centre shortly after, and ‘soft paste’ porcelains were produced in various other centres including northern Italy.

In Britain, a very particular kind of soft paste porcelain- bone china- was developed, where the body was made dense and glassy by the addition of the burnt bones of cows. It had a hardness and whiteness that exceeded that of porcelain, and became the basis of the British fine china tableware industry. Thus this material is quintessentially British, as porcelain is quintessentially Chinese.

With changing world economic balances, China has now become the major manufacturer of porcelain and bone china tableware, although eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Russia and Hungary) and Japan still produce for the higher end of the market.
Kilns are heated with electrical energy produced by power stations, by gas produced as a petroleum byproduct, by natural gas, or directly heated by burning carbonaceous material such as wood, straw, cow dung, olive pips, coal or charcoal in the kiln itself.

These direct burning methods need oxygen for the heating reaction to take place, and by controlling the amount of oxygen, colour changes and various special effects can be created.

Many of these effects had their origins hundreds of years ago in traditional firing practices that were often unavoidably smoky. Over time, and sometimes in contemporary practice, these traditional firing methods have been reclaimed, made more reliable, and utilised for decorative or symbolic effect on both glazed and unglazed wares at all temperatures.

When a firing is starved of oxygen, or just has insufficient oxygen to completely burn or 'oxidise', we say that the firing has a 'reducing' atmosphere, and various changes in glazes or in the colour of the clay body take place. The wares in this section illustrate some of the dramatic and remarkable- as well as subtle- effects possible.

The Air we breathe
- the influence of the kiln atmosphere

Greg Daly
Platter (detail)
decorated silver lustre glaze on glaze, earthenware
7 x 56 cm Ø

Alan Watt
Cut Pinnacle, 1999
black fired earthenware, gold leaf,
63 x 12 x 10 cm
Classical sculpture has always used maquettes (scale models) made in clay (or sometimes wax) to work out proportion/form before starting a larger work. The Italian word plastico is probably a more accurate term in many cases, meaning something like a ‘first draft model’. Maquettes are also used in architecture and large scale public sculpture to visualise a finished work—particularly for the client, whether public or private.

The process by which people who make the final work in clay arrive at solutions is more in the nature of a series of sketches and notes—perhaps an Italian word bozzetti (sketches) or annatazione (jottings) again fits the bill. Realising a work in clay often entails much material and process research—glazes, clay bodies and firing methods. These are often done through a series of smaller scale ‘tests’, which can then be ‘imagined onto or into’ the form. Material regularly drives ideas in this field—and if it doesn’t actually drive the ideas— it keeps a stern watch over them. Often the finished work is like the tip of the iceberg—the seven eighths that is testing is submerged, and the one eighth is visible. But in that one eighth will be the embodiment of all that material knowledge and understanding, and it will be essential to the finished work.
The stories we tell
- the ceramic narrative

The narrative impulse is part of human nature, and is essential to what makes us human. The capacity to conceptualise, to imagine the past, imagine the future and contextualise our present is all part of story telling.

The word narrative is -not surprisingly- intimately rooted in the idea of knowledge or skill (latin -gnaritus-skilled) and so story telling mediated by ceramic objects is very fitting- combining the ideas of embodied knowledge and skill with story.

The stories that are told in ceramics are many and varied- some explicit narratives- some implied. What does unite them are those characteristics germane to all good stories- a central thread and a kind of mycelial connectivity to things not explicitly stated, but necessary to further the story. (The mycelium is that unseen part of fungal structures like mushrooms that spreads underground and throughout the host body and which, when conditions are right brings forth fruiting bodies to further the life cycle of the fungal organism.)

In this section we see stories in ceramic about the human condition, we see stories about history, and we also see stories about the act of fashioning things from clay and about the history of the material itself.

Trudy Golley, *The Princess* series, paperclay, press moulded and constructed, 1200 x 23 x 19 cm

Sergei Isupov, 2008, slab build porcelain, stains, glaze, 44 x 16 x 8 cm
A ceramics community wood firing in the famous Olsen kiln at Strathnairn built in 1996 during the National Ceramics Conference is to be fired up again in conjunction with the symposium Material Matters Clay month in Canberra.

Expressions of interest are invited for a limited number of places to take part in this exciting firing and mini symposium on wood fire conducted by leading local ceramic artists and wood fire experts Ian Jones and Moraig McKenna.

Schedule will be:
- July 30th-31st: Wood chopping (with the wood splitter) and stacking
- August 6th-7th: Kiln packing supervised by Ian Jones and Moraig McKenna (tutorial)
- August 12-13-14th: Firing on a roster system with tutorials with Ian and Moraig (time TBA)
- August 19-21st: Kiln unpacking and selection of work for exhibition/sale
- Friday 26th August: Proposed reception, exhibition and sale in the woolshed at Strathnairn with many of the international visiting artists here for the Material Matters Symposium

Expressions of interest to: office@strathnairn.asn.au
Or phone: 02 6254 2134
http://www.strathnairn.asn.au/workshops/
“Relationships between human persons have been the core theme of my ceramic sculpture.”

Mother and Child

For the last several years, I have addressed in my work the central relationship between my mother and myself. Seventeen years ago, she fell into Parkinson’s disease. As the only son in my family and in accord with the tradition of Chinese culture, it comes to my role to take full responsibility of her and be strong. As a result, my relationship with my mother has grown. I encourage her with love and warmth. May 7th, 2003, my mother has left her physical body and she is in God’s hand. Her love has been around as always and she has more to offer. My sculpture is also then, the testimony of my faith.

My sculpture exploration of form, space and line has become my outer language to embody my inner feelings about this experience. I value form, space and line between internal and external – one cannot exist without the other. It has also expressed the crossed boundaries between Eastern and Western culture and aesthetics as well as the physical distance between my mother and myself.

‘Tintelingen’ means ‘sparkling’, as in the flickering luminescence of stars, and Netty van den Heuvel (1956, Zevenaar) chose this title for the current show as she describes herself as “working with light”… “It also says something about mind and spirit, a verb which says something about the process”... Recently, she has introduced new elements into her work, combining found items to which she adds her own distinctive, twig-like accretions. In ‘Alice in Wonderland’, for example, a still white rabbit seems to have acquired a crown of brambles. Unlike the wily character Brer Rabbit, however, van den Heuvel’s sculpture suggests that the diminutive creature is at ease with its incongruous but fitting accretion...

She is exhibiting experimental “…pieces which she calls ‘white poems’ … including ‘Moon’, a porcelain ball wrapped around with lacy silicon. Smaller works in their own right … these also have a quiet presence, the visual equivalent of haiku.”.

“Tintelingen” (extract)
© Siobhan Wall 2011
Anton Reijnders is a visiting ceramicist from the Netherlands. His work stems from a fascination with questions of meaning and how we make sense of what is around us. “I want my work to offer an opportunity for concentration and to provide an alternative to images that are increasingly subservient to quick effects.”

He is the author of *The Ceramic Process*, (A & C Black, 2005, London) which has become a seminal text for ceramic artists. This book derived from research done by Reijnders during his time as studio manager of the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in s:Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

Christina Bryer began her career as a jeweller. In 1998, she studied ceramics in London. When she came across Penrose’s aperiodic tiling, she began incorporating the principles into her porcelain mandalas. Her work is therefore based on the highest forms of geometry, yet the same patterns are found in unicellular organisms, and a cross-section of a strand of DNA, and has been called the geometry of life. Aperiodicity also describes a slice through 5th dimensional hyper-space - the geometry of the cosmos.
EASS 2011 | Elizabeth de Koke, Sylvia Marris Henrietta Norris, Rose Walker
14th July to 7th August 2011

Opening 6.30pm Thursday 14th July by Janet DeBoos, Head, Ceramics workshop, ANU School of Art

Join us to celebrate the work of four 2010 ANU ceramics graduates presented with this exhibition award by Canberra Potter’s Society:

10am - 4pm Thursday to Sunday & most public holidays unless stated otherwise.
Aspinall Street, Watson, ACT 2602
Ph: 02 6241 7800
http://www.canberrapotTERS.com.au

Clouds

Venue: The Singapore High Commission,
17 Forster Crescent,
Yarralumla
ACT 2600

Official Opening: 9th August, Singapore National Day,
12noon, (by invitation)

Meet the Artist : 18th August, 6pm
Over Drinks

Exhibition Opens to Public : 10th August till 23rd August
Opening Hours : 10am to 5pm daily
(except Weekends)

Watson Arts Centre

Emerging Artist Support Scheme

The Australian National University School of Art’s Emerging Artists Support Scheme (EASS) has been operating for over twenty years. Through this scheme, Patrons can award prizes, scholarships and commissions, and acquire artworks for their own collections. The residency and exhibition opportunities offered by many local galleries are particularly valuable to the School’s emerging artists.

The ANU School of Art Emerging Artists Support Scheme continues to provide much needed support for artists as they graduate, establish an independent practice and contribute to the lively and growing visual arts and craft community from which we all benefit. The ANU School of Art expresses its sincere appreciation and thanks to all EASS Patrons.
Elaine Bradley | Harvest [Crucible Showcase]
19 August to 24 September 2011
Opening 6pm Thursday 18 August 2011
The fifth award exhibition in the Harvest series highlights the work of ceramicist Elaine Bradley. Bradley is a graduate from the Australian National University School of Art Ceramics Workshop.

Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm; Saturday 12 noon - 4pm
1st Floor, North Building, 180 London Circuit, Canberra ACT
Ph: 02 6262 9333
www.craftact.org.au

Anton Reijnders Masterclass | Thinking through Making
Monday to Friday 15 - 19 August, 9am - 5pm
(enrolled ANU graduate coursework students only)
Please visit the Material Matters website to register for the symposium and workshops.
http://soa.anu.edu.au/materialmatters
(Note that all workshops are subject to minimum numbers to run, and will be cancelled with less than five participants.)

Ray Chen | Material expression (presentation and demonstration)
Thursday 4 August 10 – 4pm
Cost: $66 GST INCL
Visiting Artist Ray Chen (USA) will lead students to examine the potential of clay to describe emotion and feeling, whilst considering the sculptural requirements of 3-D objects. His work on the theme of Mother & Child will also be discussed and aspects of its making explained. Demonstrations will include extending wheel throwing techniques to develop sculptural forms, slab work monotypes/image transfer technique/s into sculpture form will be introduced.

Joanne Searle | Transferring - transfer printing on clay
Saturday 6 August 9 - 1pm
Cost: $33 GST INCL
This one day workshop will cover various ‘print on clay’ techniques including plaster monoprints, fabric & tissue transfer as well as low-tech etching. These printed surfaces will be applied to both wheel thrown and hand built forms. Various methods of treating the surface at the raw, bisque & high firing stages will be covered. Tiles and materials will be provided at cost.
WORKSHOPS

Janet DeBoos | I can see clearly...
Sunday 7 August 9 - 1pm
Cost: $33  GST INCL
A good clear glaze- although often seen as the simplest of ceramic surfaces- is frequently difficult to achieve. This workshop will examine the reasons why a glaze is not clear, how to make it clear, and how clear glazes can be adjusted for different temperatures. Demonstration materials and tiles supplied at cost.

Greg Daly | Transferring - transfer printing on clay
Saturday 6 August 9 - 1pm
Cost: $33  GST INCL
This one day workshop will cover various ‘print on clay’ techniques including plaster monoprints, fabric & tissue transfer as well as low-tech etching. These printed surfaces will be applied to both wheel thrown and hand built forms. Various methods of treating the surface at the raw, bisque & high firing stages will be covered. Tiles and materials will be provided at cost.

Anton Reijnders | Thinking through making (terra sigillata)
a workshop open to the public
Tuesday & Wednesday 9 & 10 August, 9am - 1pm
Cost $66  GST INCL
In this workshop- the renowned Netherlands author of ‘The Ceramic Process’ (A&C Black) will ask “What makes a good terra sigillata? On the basis of practical tests students will find out how to make and apply terra sigillata and moreover learn about the mineralogical makeup of clay. Materials supplied at cost. Student should bring no less than 100gs of dried, pulverised clay to the workshop- preferably gathered locally- but could be any dried commercially available body.

Christina Bryer | Working with porcelain from a non traditional angle
Thursday 18 August 10 – 4pm
Cost $66  GST INCL
This demonstration workshop will attempt to unravel the three interwoven aspects of Christina’s work and examine them in the light of the following themes: Art & Design (inspirations and influences), Geometry (Aperiodic Tiling and Sacred Geometry, from Plato to Penrose and back again) and Technical Explanations (working with porcelain in a non-traditional way).

Netty van den Heuvel | Dialogue in 3 Dimensions - mixed media workshop
Thursday & Friday, 11 & 12 August 9 - 1pm & 2 - 4pm
Cost: $110  GST INCL
An exploratory workshop in three dimensions, using clay, and found objects, as well as an enquiry into the potential of combining clay with other materials such as silicone. Students will be invited to go through a series of structured exercises in finding, looking and making
Presentations by students, faculty and artists on the nature & meaning of their material research.

Submissions for papers (20mins) are invited - please contact Janet DeBoos | ceramics@anu.edu.au

Friday 19th August 6-8pm | Exhibition opening / Reception
Saturday 20th August 10am - 5pm | Keynote speaker Anton Reijnders
Sunday 21st August 9am-12pm & 1 – 3pm | Open Studio

Cost
$55^* GST INCL (includes reception & Saturday lunch)
$30^* GST FREE (Full-Time secondary and tertiary students)

This project has received funding from The Research School of Humanities & the Arts, ANU

**Programme**

**Friday 19 August**
18.00 - 20.00 Reception drinks & refreshments
Janet DeBoos: introductions & welcome: Anton Reijnders, Netty van den Heuvel, Ray Chen and Christina Bryer

**Saturday 20 August**
10.00 Janet DeBoos: opening talk
10.15 Anton Reijnders keynote speaker
11.15 Morning tea
11.45 research paper (see website for title/presenter)
12.10 Rodney Haywood keynote speaker (Research fellow, ANU)
13.00 lunch (provided)
14.00 research papers (see website for titles/presenters)
17.00 drinks
18.00 dinner (confirmation & prepayment required for Chinese banquet)

**Sunday 21 August**
09.00 Janet DeBoos: opening talk
09.15 research papers (see website for titles/presenters)
10.40 Morning tea
11.00 research papers (see website for titles/presenters)
11.55 closing talk and thanks
13.00-15.00 Open studio- Ray Chen, Christina Bryer
Coursework degrees are structured from semester length courses comprising - depending on the award - individual studio practice projects, core theory, research, masterclasses, field studies and other courses. This enables different patterns of study at postgraduate level to suit a student’s individual needs and interests.

Study leads to the awards of Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Master of Visual Art (MVA) and MVA (Research)

Contact the Graduate Coursework Convenor  patsy.hely@anu.edu.au
Anton Reijnders’ and Netty van den Heuvel’s travel and participation in Material Matters is supported through funding from The Research School of Humanities & the Arts, ANU