

KILN



VOLUME 1

KILN

A celebration of ceramics

VOLUME 1

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WHO WE ARE

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Min Jung Tsai

Norman Yap

Robyn Yeang



FROM the EDITOR

My own throwing abilities peaked at a half-term crash course where I created an object that only loosely resembled a vase. However, ceramic is still something interspersed around my living space, evoking memories and enhancing my daily life. Describing the hodge podge of possessions shown here as a ‘collection’ might be a bit aggrandising: Mexican and Portuguese tiles, a Japanese pencil pot, a Polish mug. But they are things I will hold on to, that will follow me wherever I go. Even my recently broken plate, destined to be superglued, which cost no more than 50p from a charity shop. There is something undeniably sentimental about ceramic.

From functional to beautiful via activist and unsettling, we chose the work in this publication to reflect the huge potential of the material. Some of the artists featured continue long traditions – the technicality of their processes still a wonder in this digital age. Others use the material to evoke themes urgent in contemporary society, be it climate change or the hostile environment. Still others take their own particular experimental approaches, combining ceramic with other materials or contorting it into unfamiliar forms.

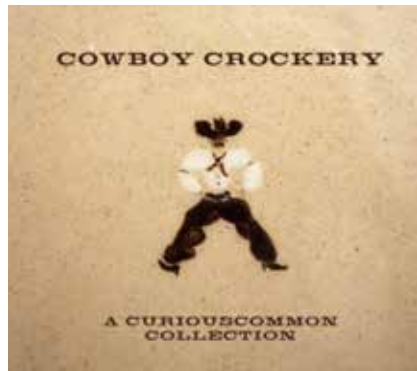
We are hugely grateful to all the contributors for entrusting us with their work. We hope that you find this celebration of ceramics inspiring.

Elsa Kenningham

Editor

Cowboy Crockery

Adorned with hand-painted horses and cowboys, this collection captures a free-spirited sense of joy and adventure, bringing the 'Western Daydream' to life. Each piece is lovingly shaped by hand, embracing natural imperfections that give it a rustic, one-of-a-kind charm.



Robyn Yeang

@curiouscommon

Robyn Yeang is a London-based artist whose work is deeply influenced by Westerns. After transitioning from a career in fitness to embrace a more intentional and creative way of living, she discovered a passion for pottery. This journey led her to a work exchange at Mud Gang Pottery Studios, where she continues to explore self-expression through clay.

Robyn practices hand-building and the pinch pot process, creating pieces with an organic, naturally touched feel, painting them with fine details, inspired by Western and folk art.



Artist Q&A: Norman Yap

The Making of My Stoneware Bowls



How would you describe your particular aesthetic?

I'm very much a follower of modern British studio ceramics in the sense that I make in a city, I buy rather than gather my ingredients and most of all, my pieces are one-offs which I hope will occupy the space between art and craft. My inspiration has always come primarily from the pieces and the ethos/aesthetic of Lucie Rie, Rupert Spira and Colin Pearson. The technical aspects of my work also refer to practices that have mostly gone out of fashion but to me represent a basis on which to continue researching.

How do you achieve the colouration of your pieces after firing the clay?

My stoneware pieces begin with clay being stained with black and red iron oxides, manganese dioxide and copper oxide. I add generous amounts by eye, depending on the amount of clay to be treated, and the clay is wedged and repeatedly pugged till the oxides are sufficiently blended as to be invisible. The theme of handing over control is introduced in this early stage; the oxides that end up on the surface will determine the final colouration when they react locally with the glaze in a reducing atmosphere. In my work, recipes and techniques have been created or modified to enable me to better realise my intentions.

How do you form the shape of your stoneware pieces?

The pieces are thrown, turned and left to dry under thin plastic wrap (the kind used for dry cleaning, available easily on the internet). If a piece is to be altered after throwing, it is wrapped in the same plastic thus holding the tension without overdistorting or distressing the clay. My pieces tend to have a simple, possibly severe, form as I hope their identity will be defined more by the glazes, the form being more of a backdrop to the final result.

How do you raw glaze your pieces?

Once the piece is dry enough to handle, the outside is raw glazed with my matte glaze rich in cobalt oxide. I like the intensity of the final blackness and that after firing the surface often shows flashing from the flames, adding to a sense of movement against the matteness of the black and the stillness of the form. After about an hour of drying, I glaze the inside with my matte glaze containing barium carbonate and just enough copper carbonate to impart a turquoise hue after firing. My bowls always have bevelled edges which now need to be wiped clean, thereby creating a division between the colours and the spaces they occupy. The glazes are

always applied with a wide soft-haired brush in long, even strokes. They are applied thickly, usually just once as subsequent applications tend to pull off the first coat from the raw clay surface.

What is your firing process and what happens if your pieces change after being put through the kiln?

When ready for their once-firing, the pieces are arranged on kiln shelves dusted with silica hydroxide which act as little rollers to allow the bases to shrink with as little distortion as possible. My personal aesthetic relies on the piece taking on its final look during its transformatory firing; I begin processes which are then handed over to the kiln to continue till the piece is finished. Therefore if I set this pattern, then I must accept that the piece might undergo some unforeseen changes like a changed foot or the bending of a line. I see these as part of the essence of the piece and if I can appreciate them, then my collectors might too.

What is your involvement during the firing process?

My firing cycle begins with one lit burner of my gas kiln and all peepholes and the vent open to allow moisture to evaporate. I control the rise of the temperature to 200°C within the first two hours. This is to prevent any thermal shock to the pieces until the last of the moisture is thoroughly driven off. At 200°C, I light the second burner, close the peepholes but keep the vent open and adjust the flames to make the kiln atmosphere take four hours to reach 600°C. The flames need constant supervision and micro adjustments to prevent any spikes in the heat. A twenty-minute soak ensures all the organic matter is burnt off before the temperature is allowed to rise to 900°C, this taking another four hours and requiring the same care and observation.

At 900°C, reduction begins with both the vent and the burners being carefully adjusted so the flame appearing in the flue is orange, indicating a reducing atmosphere in the kiln. The temperature of the kiln should now rise 1°C per minute and, again, micro adjustments keep the atmosphere in reduction whilst allowing a steady rise in the pyrometer readings.

When the temperature reaches 1,205°C, the propane bottle taps are turned off, then the gas taps, then the vent is closed and the peepholes plugged – all in this order to minimise the risk of fire. The kiln is now left to cool for at least thirty hours before it is opened and the pieces are revealed. When the firing is a success, the outsides are richly black with some flashing and the insides are full of colour, movement and texture. Each piece is unique but still belongs to the same family of work.



Norman Yap

@nornmanmakespots

Norman Yap is a studio ceramicist who throws stoneware or porcelain bowl, bottle and vase vessels which are simple in form but use glaze and texture for their identity.

Initially self-taught, Norman went on to exhibit widely including at the Tate and Kew and is a published writer on ceramic matters. He was the Editor and Vice Chair of London Potters for nine years. Norman lives in France, teaching masterclasses and writing.

How did you start learning how to work with clay?

To be able to describe the making of my work succinctly, decades of reading, practice, copious note taking, courses and master-classes were fundamental in my journey as a self-taught potter. I devoured textbooks, set myself assignments and sought the feedback of professional potters in my earlier years.

Would you say there is a community amongst ceramics artists?

The kindness and generosity of these people at the start of my career reminded me of how knowledge and wisdom are sometimes not just gained by one's efforts but also enhanced and focused by the giving of the same from others. The community of artist makers that I am fortunate to be a part of understands the importance of sharing, of discussion and are bound by the profound appreciation that we are part of an ongoing continuum of developing and refining the knowledge that goes into a collective ceramic history.

What do you think new ceramics artists struggle with most?

It is with some concern that I now meet people who, in the early steps of their journeys, rely on apps and YouTube videos to rapidly attain the results they seek. Their impatience and expectations of instant gratification mean books and courses are shunned for not delivering instant results. Recently, while



working in somebody else's studio, a group of visitors observed me throwing a piece in porcelain and enquired of the owner if they could throw like that after one of her introductory courses. Her reply that I'd been doing it for thirty years was met with instant disappointment and we both plunged into a sense of despair; it seemed our journeys were now deemed part of an ancient practice, possibly even defunct!

Do you think there is a way this issue can be addressed?

I see several possible solutions to this situation that might recharge the curiosity that is essential when working towards an artistic and technical goal. One is the celebration of living makers and artists using various media to chart biographies of the ilk that had inspired me (Susan Peterson's biography of Shoji Hamada, Emmanuel Cooper's of Lucie Rie). If books no longer hold the same value of importance in the acquisition of knowledge, then visual media might help bridge that gap. Various foundations, museums, galleries and relevant organisations might work together to celebrate some of their members and their work by giving them much needed publicity not just to other artists and makers but to a much wider, and in our internet-driven era, international audience using technology.

When one seeks instant results, it is easy to overlook the activities that need whatever time is required for an idea to reach its final result. If the medium is to be video, then some thought leadership is required to produce more useful content with a

focused view. If the trend is that of becoming more reliant on being self taught, then tools, sources and resources could be available to offer a reliable and responsible online presence.

What about for people who rely on the accessibility of new media platforms for information?

Beginners tend to post questions on social media platforms which then solicit answers (from strangers) that, in spite of their being assertive and adamant in tone, might actually be dubious in content. An authoritative source structured to help resolve their queries would be a good alternative resource.

Structured courses in the form of apps can help in avoiding bad habits especially in one's early years, in developing a constructive attitude of curiosity, encourage patience that could pay off in the long term and help with that eternal quest for aesthetic development and growth.

In an imagined film, an artist might talk of their beginnings and training before proceeding to illustrate how their work is made before continuing to the gallery accepting the piece and finally its sale. This could be made available through various media platforms (perhaps even books!) in a context of blended education.

We must retain the richness of our history of art and craft and save it from being forgotten or worse still, becoming extinct. We can do it, we have our collective minds and our varied experience – what better tools could we ask for?



1.



2.

Bringing Hamtaro to Life

1. Using white stoneware clay to sculpt the base figure, Hamtaro.
2. Hamtaro after his first bisque firing, before painting the details with underglaze.
3. Painting Hamtaro's details on with underglaze, before dipping the figure in transparent glaze for a second firing at 1,060°C.



3.



Kesiah Ide

@kesiah__

Kesiah Ide is a 3D artist with a passion for ceramics, blending childhood inspirations into polished, expressive forms. Embracing the 'cute' aesthetic, she elevates its place in fine art through meticulous craftsmanship, creating joyful, sentimental pieces that bring warmth and delight.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:

Chantal Powell





Chantal Powell

@chantalpowell

Chantal Powell is a multidisciplinary artist exploring the intersection of psychology, symbolism, and materiality. Through mixed media, she engages with archetypal imagery and alchemical processes to examine the unconscious mind. Influenced by Jungian theory, her work invites reflection on the deeper narratives shaping human experience.

From Left to Right:

This matter is you and I, 2024, hand blown glass, glazed ceramic

Trees Like Seraphim, 2024, glazed ceramic

Fragmentation and Dissolution, 2022, raku fired ceramic

Previous Page:

In Utero, 2022, glazed ceramic, underglaze pencil



Chantal Powell creates art in response to her understanding of the symbolic language of the unconscious, informed by her PhD in psychology and an ongoing study of Jungian theory and alchemical symbolism.

Living and working in West Dorset on the Jurassic Coast, Chantal's practice is inevitably shaped by the elemental cycles and forms spiralling within time. Over recent years she has also been researching first-hand the imagery in alchemical manuscripts and notebooks from the 15th and 16th centuries. Combining archetypal symbols and metaphors from these sources, with those from mythology and personal inner work, she uses a Jungian art-based research approach to facilitate our understanding of the human psyche.

Materiality and process are key to her practice, and she embraces a variety of mediums that include ceramic, glass, metal, textiles and painting in order to express the symbolic material within archetypal imagery. Clay has been a constant and prominent material of choice.

Drawn to its elemental nature and transformative quality she creates glazed works in an electric kiln, and also embraces the alchemy of traditional smoke firing techniques that utilise the elements of fire, smoke and natural materials. Recently she has been making pieces that combine ceramics with blown and flame-worked glass elements as she further expands her skill set.

Reflections on Ale Bowls

Ale bowls are a rural Norwegian festival vessel with a long and meaningful history. As brewing ale was costly for farmers, their use was reserved for significant events such as weddings, festivals, burials, and during harvests. They symbolise warmth, comfort and solidarity as farming families, their friends and neighbours gathered to share the contents of the bowl.

By continuing the ancient craft, Eric Ordway builds on the work of Carol Hasvold, former Registrar at the Vesterheim, the National Norwegian-American Museum and Folk Art School, who has researched the use and significance of ale bowls within Norwegian culture, while connecting to his own Norwegian roots. This exploration evokes memories of the artist's great-grandmother, who practised rosemaling – a traditional Norwegian style of decorative folk painting – on plates and furniture made by her husband. The artist has memories of Christmas at his grandmother's, when she would wear traditional Norwegian clothing and the family would crowd around the living room singing Christmas hymns in broken Norse.

Eric says: "Given the breadth of clay works from all over the world, ceramics sparks questions within me, and I answer that curiosity with my hands. As I feel, pinch, turn, lift, and heft, I gain a unique understanding of the human experience."

This rural, communal spirit is reflected in the artist's use of clay. Hand crafting the bowls is reminiscent of working the land. The soft-formed, curving clay walls are reminiscent of rolling hills. Carved ridges, akin to plow-scraped fields, meet with gentle, undulating wave-like rims on these forms. Eric says: "My feet propel the potter's wheel, capturing the rhythmic movement of my legs juxtaposed against the sharp vertical textures in the form. As I labour with my hands in the clay, I contemplate my ancestors toiling with their hands in the earth, wood, and stone, bringing us together through time."

Eric Ordway

Eric Ordway was raised in the corn and soybean fields of Missouri, USA where he was first exposed to pottery at university. His work focuses on functional and sculptural vessels inspired by the Midwest's cultivated landscape. He currently works and teaches at the University of Missouri.





*"As I feel, pinch, turn, lift, and heft,
I gain a unique understanding
of the human experience."*



The decorative motif used in the artist's bowls is a reference to the Norwegian craft tradition of ship building. The adornments on these different vessels include carved horse and dragon heads, stiff bows, and pinched Nordic spirals to honour this Viking-era tradition.

Eric first became interested in Viking-era grave goods when he stumbled across an image of the whalebone plaque from the Lilleberge burial mound. The off-white flat square shape with two dragon-like heads coiling off the top and facing each other inspired him to craft two small dragon heads on top of one of the pots he was creating for his ceramics degree. Later, when teaching with clay at a local college, Eric's mind went to that "dragon pot" and with a little more time and care the Lilleberge Vessel took shape and a new series of work opened up in the shape of these sculptural vessel forms. This led the artist to the Oseberg Ship, a well-preserved relic from the Norwegian Viking Age. This inspired the Nordic spiral that adorns some of his pieces.

Eric says: "I connect to both the craft of the material in the clinker-style form, and also the mystical, protective ornamentation found on the vessel. Just as these ships were originally used to transport people and goods safely across rivers and seas, so too did this vessel give safe passage for two women into the afterlife. Integrating my thrown and altered forms with these hand-built, sculptural Nordic symbols, connects me with the roots of my artistic heritage and my imagination. Each methodic kick of the potter's wheel initiated an intuitive and meditative encounter. With each pinch and turn of these meticulous and delicate spirals, I unite with my ancestor's creative spirit. In telling the story of this vessel I evoke a timeless truth: the glorious can be found in the mundane and the divine in the common. In this work I honour the spirit of my great-grandparents and the generations of crafts people before me as I find my own path in this material of the earth."

The Sea in Women

These sculptural forms use shapes found in nature to explore the interconnectedness of femininity and the forces that shape existence. Drawing parallels between the sea, where all life begins, and human birth, invites contemplation on how our bodies, identities, and life cycles are intertwined with the rhythms of the natural world.

Sea snails or shell-like spirals map onto lines curled like bodies before they enter the world. The waves of the ocean are soft, embracing everything gently. The ebb and flow of their tide reflects the rhythm of breath, the periodicity of menstruation, and the cyclical nature of life itself. It embodies the endless cycle of creation and destruction: swallowing and accommodating, expelling and pushing away.



Mengya Li

@mon_for_moon

Mengya Li (Mon) is a multidisciplinary artist and illustrator exploring themes of femininity, nature, and cultural identity through ceramics, sculpture, and digital media. Currently pursuing an MA in Illustration at UAL, she is creating works that blur the boundaries between myth, personal memory, and contemporary narratives.



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:

Malene Hartmann Rasmussen

Malene Hartmann Rasmussen studied at the Royal Danish Academy in her native Denmark before relocating to London and receiving an MA from the RCA in 2011. She weaves notions of memories, daydreams and childhood nostalgia into a fairy tale of her own making.

Growing up in Denmark, Malene was surrounded by Scandinavian folklore. Traditions such as making corn-dollies during the harvest season, the annual Lucia processions in school, looking after gnomes at Christmas, and *Julebukken* (the yulegoat, a sinister predecessor of Santa Claus) were all features of her childhood. Her grandmother gave her a book called *In the Troll Woods* which had alluring images of trolls and other fantastical creatures from Scandinavian lore, and the stories took place in dark misty forests with tall fir trees. These characters and settings continue to provide inspiration for her work.

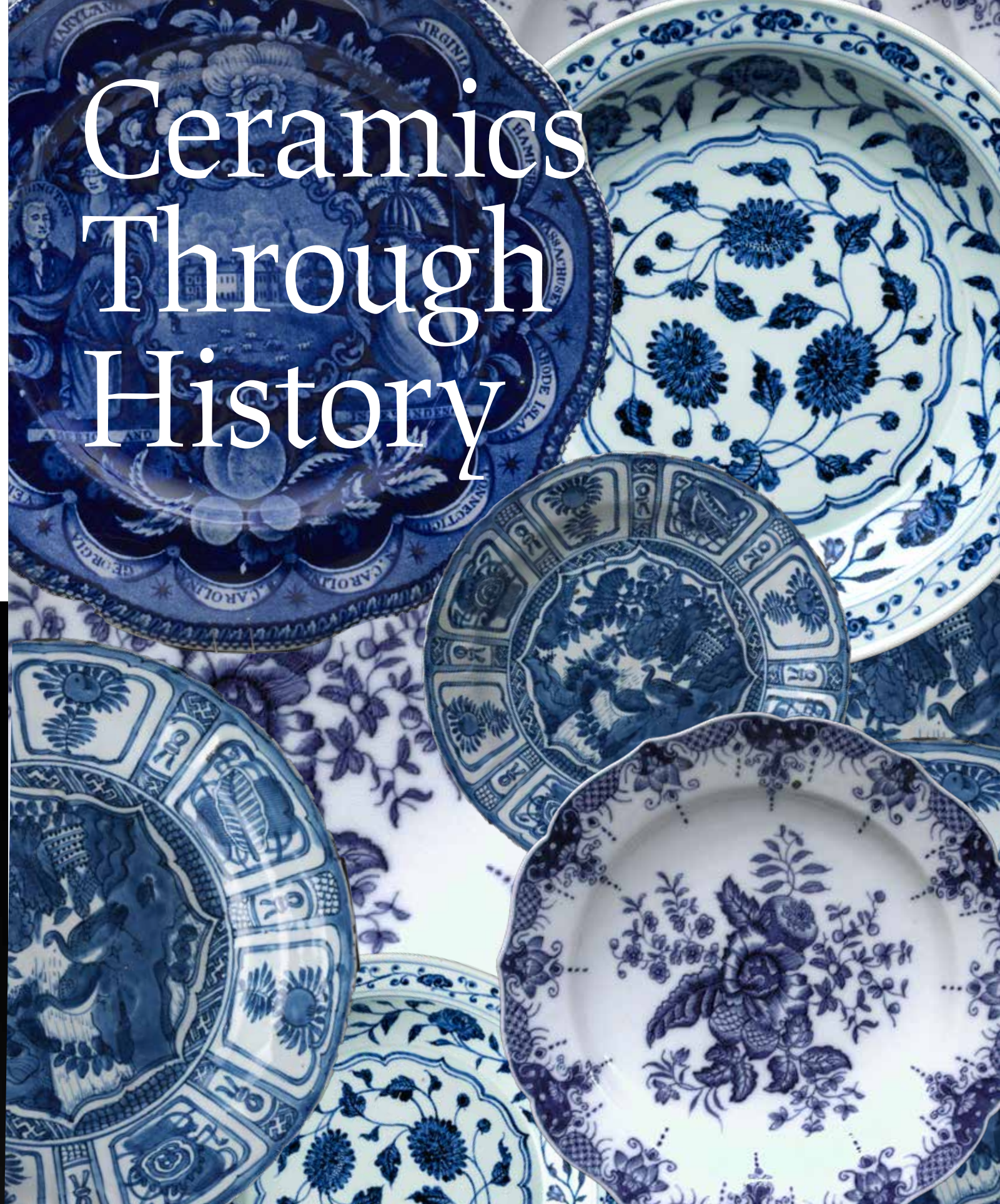
Intuition and good craftsmanship are key to Malene's practice. Most of her work is hand-modelled rather than slip-cast, using basic coiling and sculpting techniques. She sometimes adds details using small sprig-moulds, but tries not to touch the clay or leave fingermarks. Her aim is to achieve the impression that her work materialised on the spot without human intervention. This means each individual piece must be constructed perfectly – a time-consuming approach. Malene often makes the same objects over and over again, discarding the first ones and only firing the best.

She says: "I often construct pieces from smaller parts, so a lot of time is spent fabricating small objects like leaves, snails and berries before actually making the piece. My aim is to indicate movement in the individual objects and make them look as if they were alive. When working with ceramics you enter a world of frozen objects; the clay that once was soft and malleable is transformed into a static and hard material through the process of drying and firing. In my work, I try to capture this moment and preserve the idea of softness."

"I like taking things apart, deconstructing them and then reconstructing them to create a new meaning. In a way I see my art more like a poem than a novel. There isn't a set narrative or story, more a composition of words and images that indicate a mood or feeling and, if I succeed, that can create a narrative in the mind of the viewer. At least that is what I aim towards: an emotion distilled into a sculpture."



Ceramics Through History





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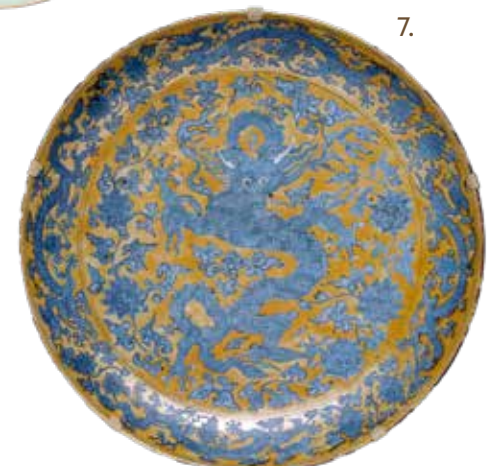
10.

CUPS

1. Skyphos (Drinking Cup)
410-400 BCE
Athens, Greece
2. Cup with feather decoration
Meroitic Period, 30 B.C.
Nubia (Sudan)
3. Cup
Qing dynasty, 19th century
China
4. Cup
1850
Vermont, United States
5. Cup with design of waves
Qing dynasty, Yongzheng mark
and period 1723-35
China
6. Stem Cup with Florets
618 CE-906 CE
China
7. Cup and Saucer
Imperial Porcelain Manufactory
1804
Vienna, Austria
8. Rhyton Cup in the Form of a Hare
1775-1785
Staffordshire, England
9. Miniature cup
Factory: Worcester factory
England
1760-62
10. Cup
Edo period, 1780
Japan

PLATES

1. Fish Plate
400-370 BCE
Athens, Greece
2. Plate
1840
Mexico
3. Plate
Maker: Imperial Porcelain
Manufactory
1755-60
St. Petersburg, Russia
4. Plate
Félix Bracquemond
for Haviland & Co.
1875
Paris, France
5. Plate
18th century
Japanese
6. Hispano-Moresque Lusterware
Plate with Griffin
1475-1500
Valencia
7. Large Plate with Dragons, Clouds
and Floral Sprays
Ming dynasty, 1522-1566
China
8. Plate
Minton(s)
1880
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire,
England





TEAPOTS

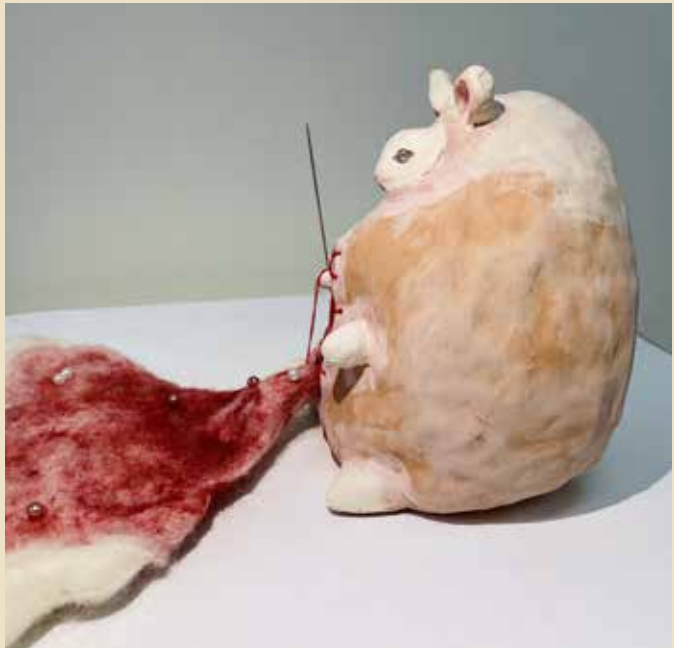
1. Fluted Teapot
Goryeo dynasty (918–1392)
Korea
2. Terracotta side-spouted jug
2600–2400 BCE
Minoan
3. Teapot in the form of a Rooster
1700–1725
Germany
4. Teapot in the Form of a Squirrel
1745
England, Staffordshire
5. Teapot and Cover
Early 18th century
Japan
6. Teapot
Early 19th century
Japan
7. Teapot
Maker: Factory of Arij de Milde
1671–1708
Dutch, Delft
8. Teapot
1750–60
British, Staffordshire
9. Teapot
Maker: George E. Ohr
1897–1900
Mississippi, United States

Exploring Ceramics and Mixed Media

Self-Binding combines the traditional medium of ceramics with modern materials to address the human condition. Incorporating wool, thread, and beads shifts pottery beyond utility, transforming it into a medium for storytelling and social critique.

In many cultures rabbits are associated with fertility, vulnerability and instinct. In Self-Binding, the rabbit form is sculpted using hand-building techniques, emphasising its organic features and subtle details. This retains the natural traces of the material, symbolising the vulnerability and authenticity of the subject.

Here, the rabbit's body is sewn-up. The contrast between the softness of the wool and the hardness of the ceramic body highlights the tension between societal control and individual expression. The overflowing "icing" symbolises the repression of human desires and instincts in the face of societal expectations. The piece pays homage to the tactile and enduring nature of ceramics while challenging its static perception.



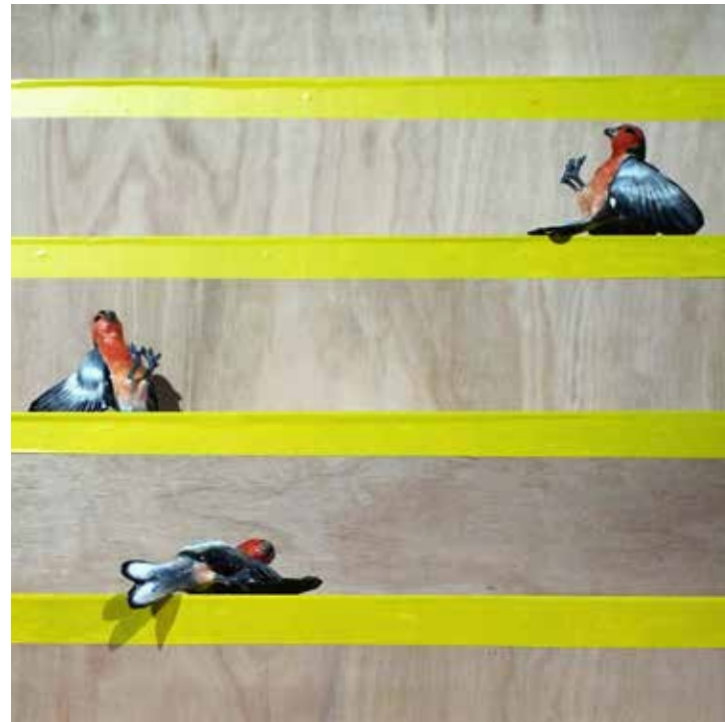
Min Jung Tsai

@alicetsai_

Min Jung Tsai is a designer and artist who works across time-based media, interactive installation, projection mapping, performance, ceramic, sculpture, and drawing. Her practices explore themes of sociology, mythology, and gender politics. She specialises in crafting visually compelling works that balance creativity with functionality.



Alarm Call



Alarm Call uses the distress call of the chaffinch to examine how human and other species' experiences of crisis intersect.

The work was inspired by the artist's discovery that a chaffinch's distress call can be likened to the sound of a person falling down the stairs. The work, consisting of slip cast chaffinches and a plywood emergency staircase, brings the often disassociated human and 'more-than-human' worlds together into one shared space. It draws parallels between the desensitisation which can arise as we respond to catastrophic media cycles,

and our misunderstanding of everyday distress signals emitted from the 'more-than-human' world. Foregrounding the language of birds challenges the complex history of human exceptionalism, which complicates humanity's relationship with nature and has been used to justify the exploitation of many forms of life.

Lucy uses humour as a tool when depicting or processing crisis or catastrophe to make it more palatable, and to create space for hope. In Alarm Call's uncanny narrative, for example, the birds appear dazed, but not dead.



Lucy Mulholland

@lucygm_art

Lucy Mulholland is an emerging sculptor based in Belfast. Her practice playfully investigates connections and exchanges between humans and other species, focusing on seemingly insignificant or futile gestures and presenting them as catalysts for potential future action.





The Ceramic Effect

A study using our relationship with materiality to re-evaluate the way we view household objects and encourage sustainable behaviours.

Ceramic holds a significant tangible value, one that we associate with very particular objects within our homes. This series plays with the concept of flipping our material associations. Suddenly our throwaway plastic objects are turned to ceramic.

This collection is made up of household objects – chosen to demonstrate ceramic's range and because of their interaction with the home and regular use by its inhabitants. By making these interactions more intimate, the artist invites us to rethink our attitudes and take better care of our possessions. The nature of ceramic would extend the life expectancy of the objects and encourage more sustainable behaviour. But what happens if ceramic breaks?

Eilidh Mairi Macleod

@eilidhmairi_creative

Eilidh Mairi Macleod is an artist dedicated to demonstrating how creativity shapes lives. Through ceramics, she bridges the gap between artistic expression and sustainability, challenging how we perceive the objects in our homes and inspiring us to reconsider our relationship with waste and consumption.



A Heart in Exile

A Heart in Exile was inspired by Roman votives: human organs that people in ancient Rome made out of clay. During illnesses these would be offered to the Gods in hope of healing and relief from pain. Taraneh uses this ancient tradition to draw a parallel between her helplessness at being forced to leave her native Iran, and the helplessness that people living thousands of years ago felt in the face of great pain.

The temple draws inspiration from the building of Saadieh in Shiraz, where the artist spent time with family during childhood. It holds many beautiful memories for her.

Taraneh Dana

@taraneh.dana

Taraneh Dana is a visual artist. She connects to the universal and accessible material clay. She starts conversations about things that often go unnoticed to bring people together, create understanding, and help imagine a world where everyone has a place. Her work mixes personal stories with history and culture.



A Ceramic Melting Pot

MUD GANG POTTERY CIC



Photography: Gabriel Dean

Besides the occasional train rattling overhead, the roomy railway arch that is home to Mud Gang CIC feels like a gentle trip into ceramic Wonderland. Shelves heave with ornate sculptures, delicate crockery and, ahem, more visibly hand-made pieces. A few Mud Gang members are quietly pottering around the two floors: moulding, painting and doing something to some clay with a hair dryer. It immediately feels like a welcoming space – one imbued with care and creativity.

Elsa Kenningham sat down with director and co-founder Rachael Nilsson to discuss its origins, successes, and whether she still manages to make anything herself alongside the admin required to run a Community Interest Company.

What drew you to ceramics?

I was an illustrator and I love drawing, but was looking to do something new. It can be quite isolating, drawing by yourself and not having a shared space, so I was interested in making alongside other people. I do just love making things and learning crafts myself so I can show other people how to make stuff. It's nice to share your craft and share how you do things.

I still use my illustration for the Mud Gang branding and I illustrate quite a lot of my ceramics. I'm more into making figures and things out of clay at the moment, and am actually into fabric stuff too.

Do you have a favourite kind of ceramic?

I love functional things, but when you can tell they're handmade. A nice functional mug of a good size – small to medium size with a comfortable handle. No funky handles!

I also like playful illustrative stuff. That's the kind of thing I make. I actually like the things that I made in my first years of making. When you're learning something new, at least for me, I don't take it too seriously. Then the more I learn about things, the more I hone in on certain details and it can ruin it in some sense. It's not like that for everybody!

Where did the idea to start Mud Gang come from?

Mud Gang started because my friend (Imogen Bellotti) and I met at a ceramic studio in Peckham. It was great, we both learned loads there. I was a work exchange person – I did jobs in the studio instead of paying for a membership because I couldn't afford it at the time. So I learned how to do all of the behind the scenes stuff, it improved my confidence and I made a lot of friends.

I wanted to move on because the studio wasn't very diverse. I saw an opportunity to do something a bit more community focused. Also I'm an illustrator and Imogen is a graphic designer, so we wanted to make some flyers and cool window graphics and stuff, so it was also an opportunity for us to do that kind of thing.

How did it grow from those beginnings?

We started at a space called Hart Club, just around the corner. I was working a four-day-a-week cleaning job, then during the pandemic I was furloughed, so that's how I was able to start Mud Gang. After being in isolation for so long a lot of people wanted to get out and learn things, make stuff, which helped us at the beginning because lots of people booked workshops.

We moved into a bigger space (Old Paradise Yard) after I got a business loan. We had about 20 members there, and did some off-site workshops with a few Lambeth-based charitable organizations: Mosaic Clubhouse, a charity for people on the verge of a mental health crisis; Coin Street, who do over sixties art therapy; and the kids from Roots and Shoots. Since moving here we've worked with Bankside Open Spaces Trust who have free gardening sessions for families. They came here and made some plant pots.

I applied for funding from Lambeth Council so that we could afford to move here in 2023. That paid for the mezzanine floor and additional wheels so that we could run workshops for organisations and have members in at the same time. It's important for us that this is an affordable workspace and we're one of the cheaper studios to get membership from.



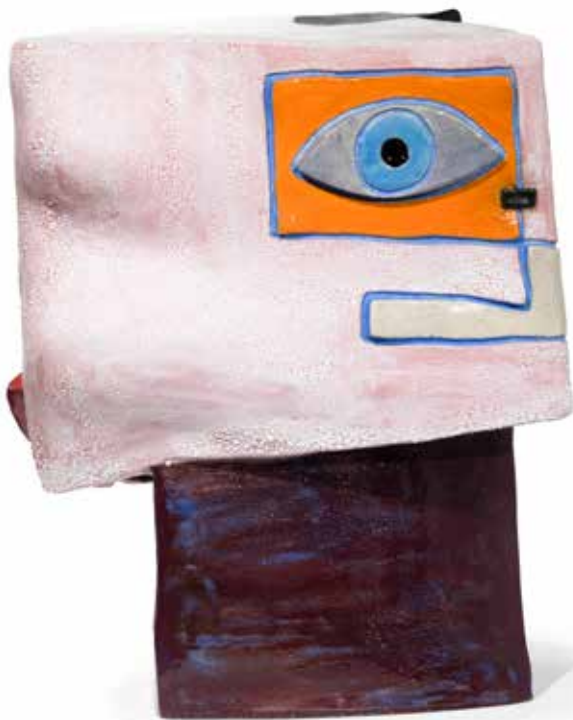
“I was interested in making alongside other people.”



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:

Bruce M. Sherman

Bruce M. Sherman is a modern ceramicist based in who has been practicing for over 50 years. Sherman studied dentistry at NYU and would later take a part-time job as a professor at NYU's College of Dentistry to subsidise his creative practice. His colourful ceramic sculptures are playful and witty. Bruce lives in New York and continues to show his work around the world.



Do you still manage to find time to make stuff yourself alongside running Mud Gang?

I do still make things myself, although I haven't for a while now because this year's been particularly busy.

There's a lot of admin and that's what I do, but then the workshops here are mostly run by people in the studio or members. It's nice because it gives them a chance to improve their teaching skills and get a bit of experience being facilitators so they can go on to do that elsewhere or start their own kind of thing.

Have you known people to go on and start other projects?

I have. Lots of people go on to do different things which is nice. A girl called Tabitha who came a few years ago now runs another CIC called Communal Clay in East London.

Is it mainly your community engagement that ensures diversity is at the heart of what you do?

Pretty much. I think also because people know that about us, people who also share those values are more likely to join this studio than other studios.

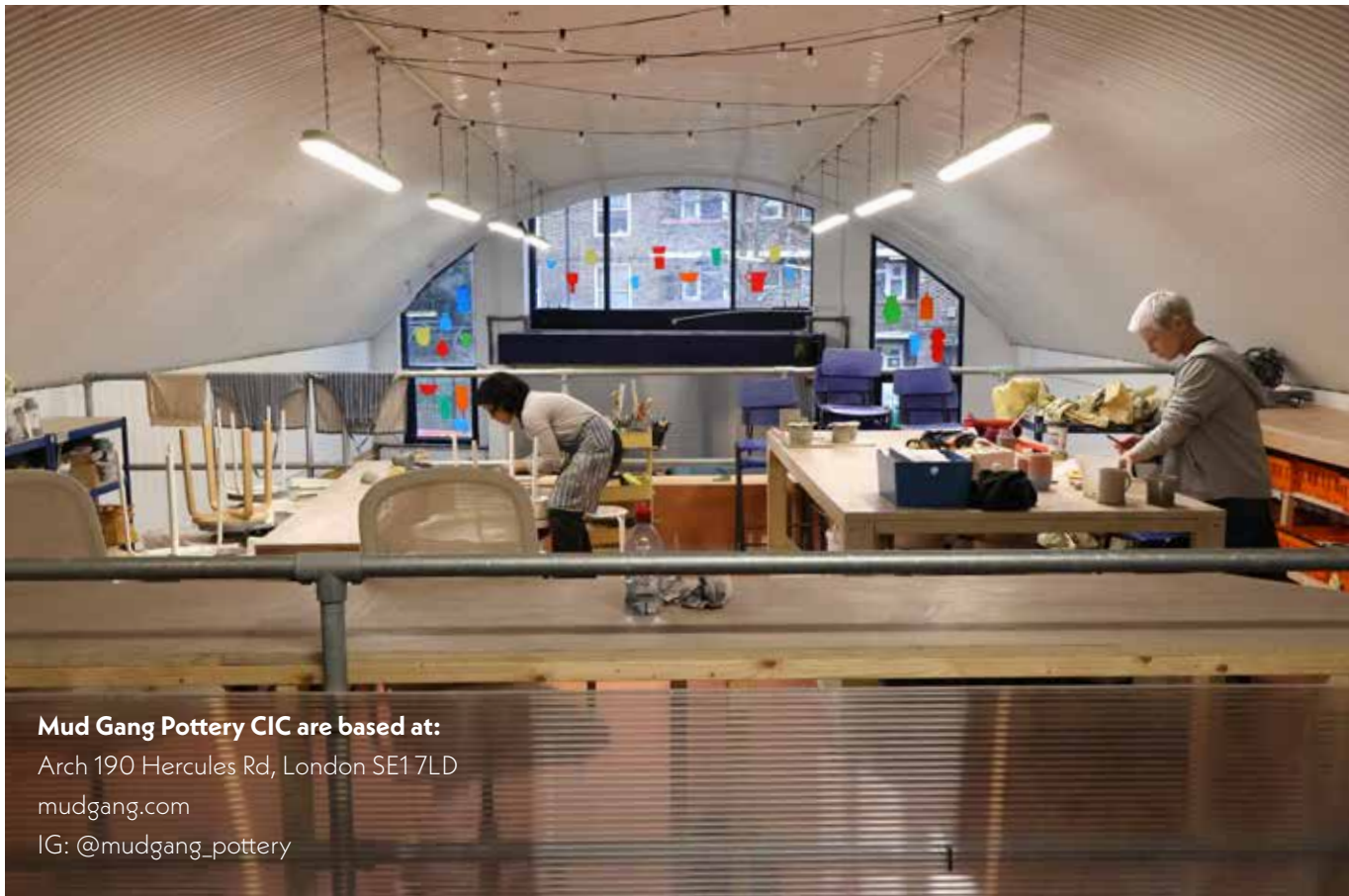
What achievement are you most proud of?

Probably the workshop we did with the Serpentine Gallery.

Theaster Gates built this big architectural structure based on the kilns from Stoke On Trent and we did a workshop in the space in summer 2022 with a couple of other ceramic artists, Phoebe and Freya. It was featured in a book and when I was on a holiday in Paris, I found a copy in one of the bookshops. That was a big moment because I had never been published in a book, let alone in another country.

Have you got any exciting projects in the works?

Yes. We're doing a project at the moment with a property developer in Southwark who have given us lots of clay from their foundations. They want us to make it into cups that they can use in their cafe once it opens. So that's quite exciting.



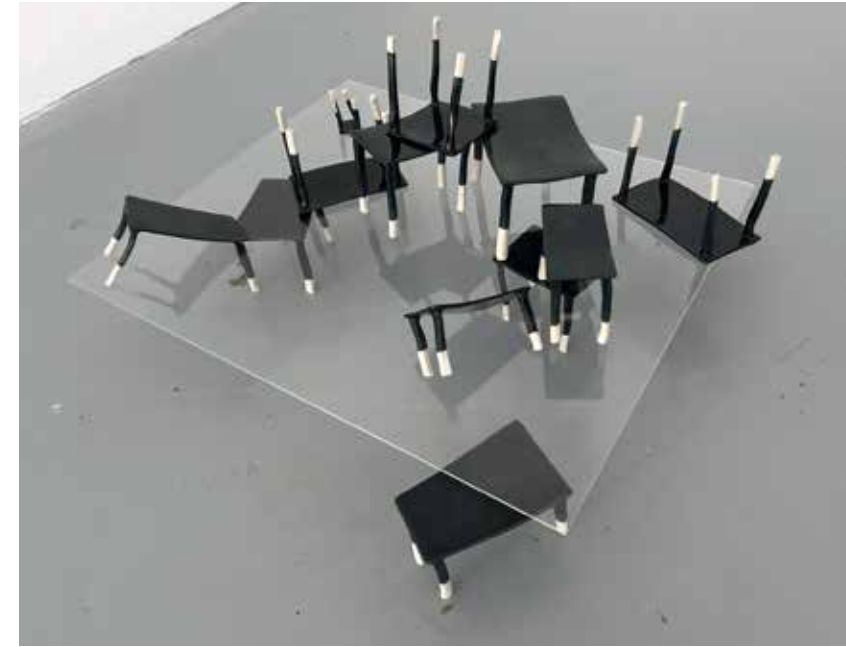
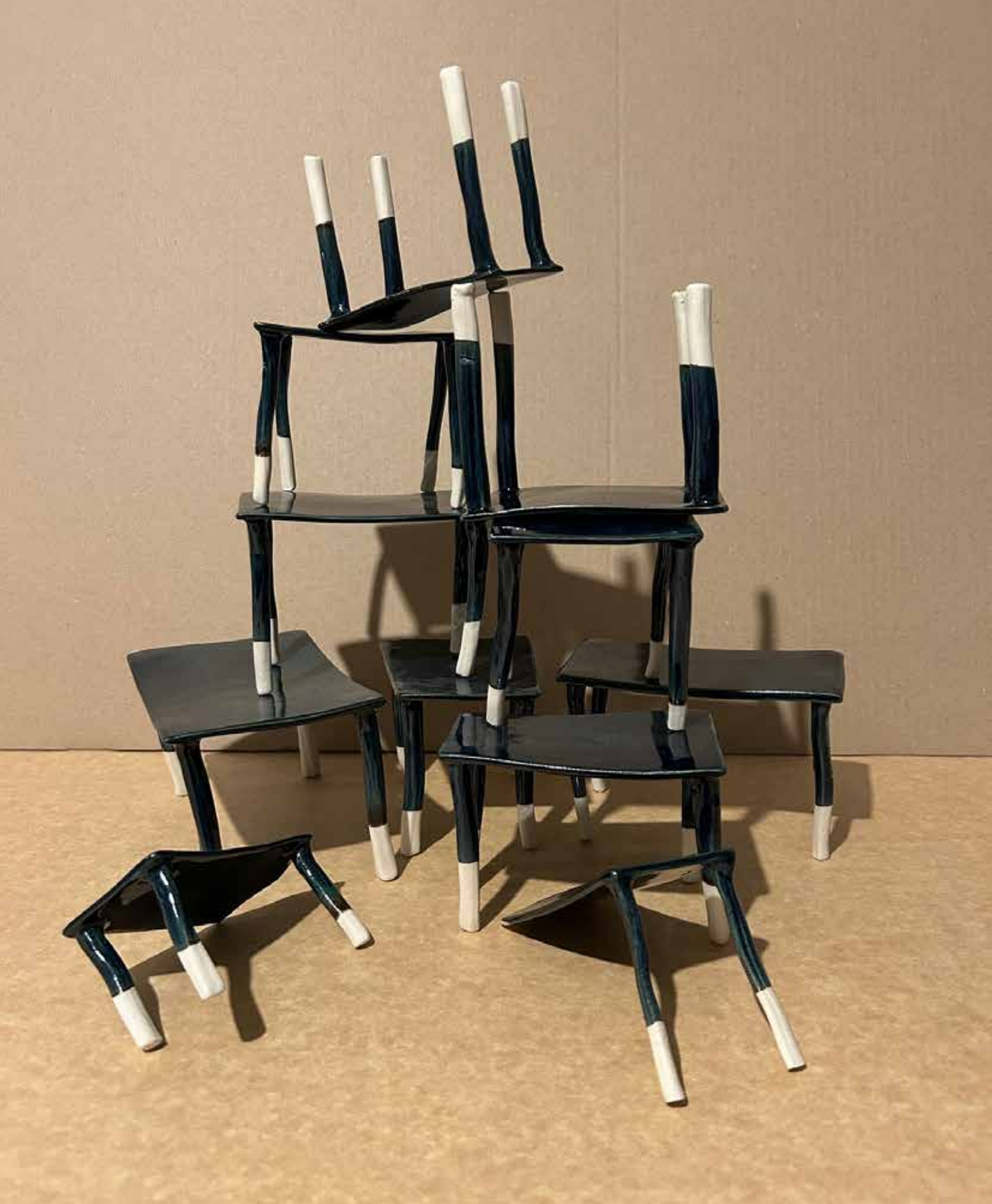
Mud Gang Pottery CIC are based at:

Arch 190 Hercules Rd, London SE1 7LD

mudgang.com

IG: @mudgang_pottery





Negotiation

Negotiation is a small experimental model made up of a stack of abandoned ceramic tables.

While the world is super connected by technology, there is also evidence of a serious breakdown in communication and collaboration. This atomisation, along with bad choices made by our elected leaders, slows down reactions to emergencies such as global warming or pandemics. Having explored different metaphors for 'power' and 'failed leadership' Orly decided to work with ceramics, partly because they are breakable and fragile but also because they have existed for millennia and are present in every society. In this work, the tables are impossible to use.

Orly Howard Smetana

Orly's first degree in theatre design and subsequent job at the Jim Henson organisation reflect her fascination with objects and materials that tell stories. Her ceramics are an attempt to create 3D drawings and ask questions about the future of communication. She is currently studying MA Fine Art at CSM.

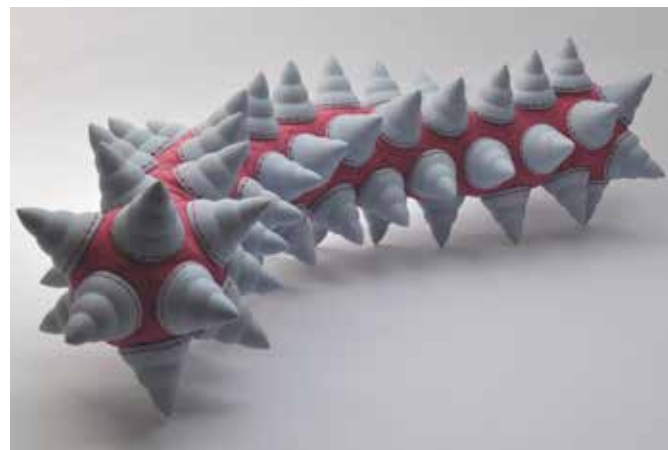
How Porcelain and Crochet Came Together

Since graduating in 1991 with a masters in ceramics at the Academy of Applied Arts in Budapest, Beatrijs van Rheeden has been working as an artist in the Netherlands. For the majority of her career she has focussed on working with porcelain. It was during a stint at the International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemet (south of Budapest) that Beatrijs was opened up to the wide world of ceramics, as artists from all over the world came there to do residencies. Many came to Kecskemet expressly because of its wonderful porcelain.

Having grown up in the 1970s and '80s, Beatrijs was first drawn to modern art such as the work of Dutch and American minimalists Jan van Schoonhoven and Carl Andre. Through friends she was exposed to other forms of art including sculptural textiles. Then in 2015 an exhibition at the Coda Apeldoorn featured work by Felieke van der Leest, who creates jewellery combining several materials: plastic toys, silver, gold and crochet. These impressions and ideas led Beatrijs to combine her porcelain practice with textiles.

“As any artist, I take in the world around me, and shape it into something that makes sense to me.”

Beatrijs says: “I first carved some smaller porcelain objects to see how I could combine this with textiles. Because of the holes that the carving causes, my first thought was to stick something finger-like through the holes. This reminded me



of my very first ceramic experience, when I was 17 taking a course with a local potter. I created a hand-like sculpture with the index finger pointing skyward. Looking back this is a significant piece, because as a person I am modest, but as an artist I do want to stand out and be noticed.

My first experiments all had little fingers sticking through the rasterlike porcelain. Crochet is a logical choice, because it allows you to shape your forms. Making the crochet work fine and firm was another necessity in my eyes, because I want my forms to be very defined, and not too obviously needlework.

Form and structure are the main formal themes in my work. My imagination revolves around abstract form and as my preferred technique is hand building, this form can be anything. Being formed by the 20th century modern art world, this form must be clear cut, relatively simple and strong. As any artist, I take in the world around me, and shape it into something that makes sense to me. My emotional inner world is the one that desires structure and order into my work.”



Beatrijs van Rheeden

@beatrijsvanrheeden

Beatrijs van Rheeden is a ceramist whose work blends minimalism, abstraction, and a deep fascination with repetitive patterns and structures. Primarily working with porcelain, she explores form, rhythm, and texture, often integrating organic structures inspired by natural formations.



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:

Bumble Stubbs

@bumblestubbs

Bumble Stubbs is a ceramic artist creating installations and sculptures with ceramic and metal. Her work explores primal emotions and physical connections through intimate interactions with clay. Through gestures like pressing, hugging, and even biting, she shapes expressive and tactile forms.



Ceramics of London

STUDIOS:

- 1. Studio Pottery London
SW1W 9NF
- 2. Clay Club London
SW1V 1RY
- 3. Sotis Studio Ceramics
SE1 9PH
- 4. MUD GANG Pottery C.I.C.
SE1 7LD
- 5. Urban Potters
SE5 0BH
- 6. Maison S.Sommet (studio)
SE15 6SB
- 7. Ceramics Sculpture Studio
NW6 2JG
- 8. Earthworks Ceramics Studio
SW9 8BP

MUSEUMS:

- 9. The Victoria and Albert Museum
SW7 2RL
- 10. The British Museum
WC1B 3DG.
- 11. Contemporary Ceramics Centre
WC1B 3BF
- 12. County Hall Pottery
SE1 7GP

