CONJECTURES OF
A HOARDER

WHAT DO CERAMICS WANT?

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Ross Mitchell-Anyon \ Peter Hawkesby \ Madeleine Child \ Richard Parker
Chris Weaver \ Richard Stratton \ Andrea Du Chatenier \ Curated by Richard Fahey

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Richard Fahey

Much has been made of the cumulative de-materialisation of our everyday world. The important and equally unimportant ephemera for conducting our lives arrives via the kaleidoscopic glare of a screen. One consequence of our continuous marination within this digital soup is fresh consideration for the durable objects in our lives–and the possibility of assigning new value to all things handmade.

Clay as a medium for fashioning objects both useful and beautiful, is as old as humanity. As some would have it, clay is also the most enduring means of demarcating civilisations and chronicling their achievements. Created from the dirt beneath our feet, the ceramic object comes with a whakapapa of its own, independent of those belonging to the domains of architecture, fine arts and design.

What Do Ceramics Want? is a cursory invitation to consider the ever-changing role and status of ceramic production and a light-hearted allusion to the paucity of ambition demonstrated by ceramic audiences.

I trade in an unerring belief that the ceramic artists referenced here are some of the very best in the world. This unsubstantiated and unashamed assertion represents an immodesty unbefitting to the usual disposition for which our tribe is known. Such incredulous claims emanating from this part of the world are customarily reserved for sublime feats of rugby.

We are a nation blinded by our own condition: A village operating entirely in the capacity of nationhood; a country of cottage industries and agrarian production situated on the periphery of global markets and perilously exposed to tectonic shifts within global geo-politics. The appropriative paradigms that mark our recent colonial origins and the testy relationship still being worked out with tangata whenua provides the crucible for creative practitioners to perform in exemplary fashion.

Stoneware Teapot
Ross Mitchell-Anyon
circa 2005
Photo Sam Hartnett

Three interrelated social conditions circumscribe our distinctive cultural landscape; diversity complexity and proximity. Complexity in the sense that in walking to the dairy, it is possible to casually encounter all manner of individuals whose capacities can effectively help realise a creative practice. The means of physically accessing and assembling the necessary practical resources, having support in kind that comes from a small community of advocates and possessing the gumption to pursue creative aspirations in a compressed space where every other competing points of view can equally be judged, is how practitioners are able to rehearse and hone performance. The local aphorism, 'four seasons in one day', vernacular for the volatility of our weather patterns, may also aptly describe the course of a day where it's feasible to go shopping across town for clay supplies, write and submit an exhibition proposal for a public gallery, make physical preparations in the home studio and attend a local opening of ceramics in the evening.

Proximity, in the sense that we have all encountered someone who has said, 'I have a mate who can fix that' is commonplace. 'Six degrees of separation', a cliché referring to the increasing inter-connectedness of the world we inhabit is more accurately determined as zero degrees in this country. A pocket-sized population has little tolerance for indifference. One is either not very capable, and therefore persuaded to pursue something else, or very good which comes with every inducement to perform better. The size of the population doesn't permit much in the way of a middle ground where mediocrity resides.

Diversity, means a social network where strategic alliances can be easily forged. In this petri dish, traditional roles and stereotypes may be relatively easily reconfigured. Membership within a diverse community demands mutual co-operation, active participation and collaboration. The cultivation of 'trust' cannot be institutionalised, but is a value accrued over time from many casual interactions. Artistic innovation can be understood as a social, as much as a technocratic process, and consequently a performance of interactive, incremental learning.

Complexity, proximity and diversity inadvertently bequeaths its constituents a sense of social agency and efficacy that may be all but invisible to them, yet empowers them with the necessity to cooperate, reciprocate and assume responsibility for one another. The case I am making in general and certainly in relation to these ceramic practitioners, is an idea of social capital and agency being uniquely constituted from cultural conditions specific to Aotearoa. Recognition for mana whenua, the authority having legal and spiritual guardianship over this land, offers us conducive grounds in which the stewardship and cultivation of cultural resources can be assured to have some demonstrable and productive effect.

The silent teapot– craftivism in the face of curatorial clamour

There is a little understood property of ceramic material. Once vitrified, through exposing clay material to extreme high heat, the atomic bonds of ceramics, are unlike any other man-made substance. They are utterly inert, impervious to the vagaries of heat, friction, material corrosion and degradation. One of the reasons why

ceramic as a material is deployed in space technology and also used for significant components of a heart pacemaker.

The thought of ceramics immutable opposition to environmental conditions brings to mind this innocuous and diminutive teapot. The maker Ross Mitchell-Anyon, I would consider to be at the forefront of producers in handmade utilitarian tableware.

In his inimitable way, Mitchell-Anyon subconsciously plied his own trade of 'craftivism', refusing to position his teapot as anything beyond a pot to brew tea in. His usual congenial demeanour would easily expire at any attempts to fetishize this work or any other. Persistent enquiries as to what, why and how he thought of his work, were met with displeasure–they were just pots.

This particular teapot can hardly be considered a fine example in the ancient practice of wood-firing. Possibly relegated to an under-privileged part of the firing chamber, the markings denoting flame flashings are barely discernible. There is no evidence of what is ingloriously referred to as 'kiln snot', the highly fancied kiss of the kiln made from fortuitous droppings of over-heated ash and salt residues from the kiln roof. Instead, an ungainly trail of glaze, that hadn't warranted enough care and attention to be removed prior to firing, spills from the interior to the unglazed exterior.

Veiled in rudimentary modesty, the assured deftness of a master craftsman is nevertheless evident in the finial on the lid, and the faceting of the belly. The shape of this teapot recalls the ubiquitous *Brown Betty*, the English design named for an anonymous maid servant attending to the ritual of 'high tea' and later adopted wholesale by the British working classes.

In the 1960s and 70s middle class New Zealanders were in the thrall of an Anglo-Oriental model of studio ceramics they mistakenly identified as a home-spun, primitive expression of national identity. A generational desire for an imaginary colonial authenticity was channelled through a glut of handmade brown pots. This teapot is a feeble mascot to this last gasp of the romantic nationalistic aspirations being traded around the cultural landscape in the latter half of twentieth century New Zealand.

While its origins and practice are Chinese, 'taking tea' is synonymous with British culture and therefore embedded within the spectacle of New Zealand's colonial origins. However, we might contemplate for a moment, the nefarious history of the genteel consumption of tea, implicated as it is in a tale of British malfeasance from which the term 'gunboat diplomacy' derives. China required payment in the form of silver bullion to service the insatiable demand for tea, porcelain and silk, leading to an unsustainable drain on European coffers. The British retaliated by commissioning vast quantities of opium to be cultivated in India, to then be unleashed on the Chinese market. Custodial displeasure from the Chinese Emperor ignited the Anglo-Chinese wars of 1839–1860, dubbed the 'Opium wars', which ultimately enforced the legalization of opium and the symbolic dismantling of economic power and autonomy of China during the 19th Century.

This particular teapot is a little too puny to shoulder the weight of east-to-west-to-east meta-narratives of appropriation and re-appropriation. Neither does it provide much succour to more nuanced, but nonetheless fashionable preoccupations with the social transactions that objects are caught up in. Yet this teapot may still prove instructive. Once all the theorizing and conjecture is over, a question remains, what sense can we make of our often irrational sympathies toward the objects we inadvertently or knowingly surround ourselves with? How can we account for the manner in which objects circumscribe human experience and bring routine to an everyday life?

Some time ago I had an opportunity to put a question to a Senior curator at Te Papa Tongarewa. Hypothetically they were to be presented with a question of what to purchase for the national collection, one of two items. The first, a supreme example of the indigenous Polynesian craft of woven fine mats; a historical taonga in absolute pristine condition carried down through generations who had revered it for its flawless craftsmanship and exemplary status. The other artefact was also an old fine woven mat, not particularly notable and very tattered and frayed. The provenance testified to how this mat had been used in many ceremonial occasions and a significant number of prominent dignitaries had availed themselves on this mat. The Senior curator, without a moment's hesitation, opted to purchase the latter adding the codicil, that mat holds important cultural narratives which can be written about.

As we look to reveal new conditions of 'thingness', the notion of the aesthetic, with its undesirable associations of connoisseurship, may need to be considered anew. Where the aesthetic once solely stood for a transcendent and universal ideal, it may also now accommodate the unexpected, the mundane and the visceral, as a way of elucidating our understanding of material life.

This teapot's anonymity and seeming lack of artistic heft may provide an avenue by which to contemplate a more productive conversation with material culture. Ultimately questions of the naïve, kitsch, anonymous and mediocre, will remain at large, in any such endeavours. If this teapot is 'to make meaning' it is most likely to do so in paradoxical fashion, by remaining implacably mute in the face of the current crop of narratives being trafficked about.

Two Ticks at the beach
Peter Hawkesby
2018
Photo Sam Hartnett

Slip Slap & Slop: Where can I sign up for pottery class?

Glenn Adamson, a notable commentator on International craft, coined the phrase 'sloppy craft' which he defined as the unkempt product of a post-disciplinary craft education. Adamson used the phrase to comment on the current global phenomena of art galleries, private and public being overprovided with ceramic objects in ways not seen in recent times. We can harvest two different understandings of Adamson's sloppy craft.

Those practitioners, mostly professional artists who parachute into the world of ceramics because they dig the low rent, non-digital, elementary technology and fashionable attention paid to the 'other', the dirty and disavowed cousin craft. The appeal in squeezing brown clay matter may be in some part therapy for those suffering conceptual art malaise and fatigue or some kind of cognitive rehearsal for alleviating post-infantile trauma. In any case, this work is not so much craft but a commentary on craft–its sentimental and ingratiating persistence. Nevertheless the misnomer here is that casual crafting, or as Adamson has recently updated, 'approximate craftsmanship' is a manifestation of sloppy craft that is simply that, sloppy–as in fundamentally inept.

Then there are those practitioners who are deeply submerged within the craft of their medium and whose desire in skilfully manipulating the medium is to give every demonstrable appearance of being effortless, which of course, demands vast reserves of material knowledge and skill. I would consider Peter Voulkos, the behemoth of American avant-garde ceramics in the 1950s–60s as a practitioner who typified this modernist approach of 'truth to materials'. In the absence of much in the way of ceramic precedence, Voulkos was often tied to the New York School of Abstract Expressionist painting and would occasionally exhibit his paintings in conjunction with his ceramics. To the initiated these paintings were, at best enthusiastically amateur, at worst bungling–nothing of the dexterity with which he would manipulate clay as a material.

In our own context I would advocate Peter Hawkesby, as an admirable example of this approach to the medium. His works are deeply ceramic-centric, the material sensibility is highly attuned to the affordances of clay as a medium coupled with an expert awareness of the fortuitous workings of various kiln environments when clay is fired.

The art market neither cares nor is interested in being discerning about this distinction in sloppy craft, as long as there are artefacts to move and an audience favourably persuaded to pay for it. My own approach to this scenario has been to think–the more the merrier. Whatever the circumstances–the greater the circulation in ceramics the more the conversations there are to raise new questions. But whether I think the recent marriage between ceramics and the world of contemporary art is going to be a lasting union–I am not so convinced.

It is when I consider the work of Peter Hawkesby do I see some tangible evidence of clay being effectively used. The work pictured, *Two Ticks at the Beach* (2018) harks back to an impulse Hawkesby had in the late 1970's. Overly tired of the heavily encumbered 'cross' symbol in contemporary New Zealand art, (Maddox, Mc Cahon, Hotere) Hawkesby threw in his own elegant reprise, the 'tick'. Since then it has been something of a talisman for him and repeatedly used in his work.

Hawkesby's clay artefact is an event of its own materialisation, every physical compression, slightest indentation, crevice or fracture, is inhabited by its history. Hawkesby's tangible pleasure in slapping, squidging, crimping, creasing and perforating raw clay is edifying. Preoccupied with a palpable sense of intimacy they are designed to be viewed close up and in the round. With close scrutiny, we are able to feel the silky suppleness of an unglazed porcelain tick or the grainy matted texture of a blistered brick. The eye becomes squeezed in and between the fissures, feeling the sharpness of the crack and sensing the teetering of one form as it gingerly touches another. As it traverses the contours, the eye becomes quickened by the shiny slipperiness of a glaze and slowed by the implacable weight of a thick slab. Pleased or deceived, the eye has re-enacted an obstacle course and, in so doing, translates in purely abstract terms a bodily experience that performs that internal or 'felt' image of the body.

Hawkesby has an ability to simultaneously court the ritual and the casual, where preciousness and serendipity comfortably coalesce. No matter whether we catch these clay objects in an act of loitering or levitating, we find a material equivalent for what could be described as the 'livedness' of the body–a recognition within our nervous system that these objects, at their most profound, talk to our corporeal reality as sentient beings.[1]

'Neither Fish, Nor Flesh, Nor Good Red Herring'
Madeleine Child
2020
ceramic, gold leaf
Photo Sam Hartnett

The smart pot: A last train stop in ceramic redemption.

Madeleine Child has long been a protagonist in the intellectual ceramic conversation that has transpired in this part of the world. Putting aside the tiresome spectre of art/craft debates, Child nimbly uses her experience and knowledge in clay to find redemption in dirty humour and in-house clay capers that signal a ceramic artefact's capacity to provoke us. Perhaps best known for her sparkly overscale renditions of popcorn, Child elevates the prosaic into broader considerations of how we might think about chemical additives in our food and the tawdry ploys with which we distract and reward our children.

In a series of works, titled *Mudplops*, Child takes on Rotorua's iconic tourist Geyserland. The brown plops can be seen as exemplifying a pathology of primordial procreation. Sticky substances welling up and being secreted from deep within the earthy cauldron. This primal ooze caught in a clumsy statuesque pose and frozen for all time. These plinthed plops are decorated with a brown crystalline glaze, a glaze treatment highly sought after in the Asian tourist circuit but maybe considered kitsch in another vernacular.

The last decade of every century is often supplied a fin de siècle moment which is commonly thought of as dark and despairing. In the recent case, the 1990s ushered in an intellectual precedent for Glenn Adamson's notion of sloppy craft. Revived interest in the renegade surrealist writer George Baitaille and the writings of cultural theorist Julia Kristeva popularized the notion of the 'abject' in contemporary art. Kristeva's anthropological and psychoanalytic analysis added some extra bite to our mothers exhorting their infants to not play with their poos or stick fingers into disgorged entrails of possum roadkill. Andre Serrano's

Vase
Richard Parker
1989
Photo Sam Hartnett

infamous photograph of a crucifixion submerged within human urine and Mike Kelly's tableaux of preloved, soiled and discarded soft toys did little than inflame communities chastened with the crisis of Aids and arguing over abortion rights. Scatological references abounded. Bodily fluids leaked everywhere. Works of art clung to the floor in abject resignation. It was if the final resort was to appeal to our most debased animalistic realities as some last-minute measure of atonement for the failure and impotence of the artistic avantgarde to fulfil its unfulfilled promise of emancipation and improvement in our human condition.

The recent series, from which this image is taken, *'Neither Fish, Nor Flesh, Nor Good Red Herring'*, Child manages to reverse the tables on the abject, taking lighted-hearted pleasure in the perverse. Drained of the usual existential angst associated with forays into abjection, Child's mismatching of male and female genitalia are a Freudian sinkhole. Coloured in carnal pink, hot red and sunflower yellow, these are sumptuous elegies to promiscuity gone awry—a feast celebrating fecundity resplendent with tumescent protuberances and labial forms gilded in gold leaf.

Obdurate décor or decorous cool: The rugged existence of the ornamental

Why would an architect countenance a decorative intervention within their architectural statement? Trinkets and baubles are excess to requirements. Magazine pages are assiduously swept clean of all signs of the detritus of life. A highly cultured form of visual impoverishment passes as a decorative schema recognized by only those seeking an alternative to aesthetic monasticism. Should an ornamental item enter the edifice of residential minimalism, it helps to have some kind of ironic subplot; a white Crown Lynn swan serves as chic nod to the embarrassing riches of nostalgia. The place and status of ornament has always prompted a troublesome response by those assailed with memories of grandmother's heavily ladened mantlepiece.

For 40 years Richard Parker has practiced a unique craft. In the early 1980s, tired of the repetitive demands of producing tableware, he made two changes in his practice that were audacious, entirely contrary to the prevailing winds of the time. He moved from stoneware to low-fired earthenware, normally considered only fit for therapeutic hobby crafts and children, and he began producing ornamental vases. It wasn't long after this that the tariffs and import restrictions providing a haven for New Zealand producers of handmade pottery were lifted and the country was inundated with third world manufacture of cheap mass-produced tableware. This wasn't so much a remarkable instance of clairvoyance on the part of Parker, but an irrepressible desire to follow his own nose. The decision to forsake the 'bread and butter' wares of studio pottery in pursuing his own decorative oeuvre wasn't without great risk. The audience and patronage for appreciating such were yet to be generated, but nonetheless his timing was propitious. A small but influential coterie had become strong advocates for craft practice as a distinctive and significant aspect of New Zealand's contemporary cultural practice, providing Parker with just enough incentive to chase his decorative legacy.

The vase pictured is one from Parker's earliest period; a raw and robust yet exemplary example at a formative phase in search for a new mode of expression. The elements are rudimentary, a two-colour glaze made from iron and copper oxides. The form is excised from a block of earthenware clay using the most economic means of 3-dimensional drawing, cutting through the slab using a taut wire. As a child, Parker recalls his eye was always drawn to the stain on the wallpaper, the visual disturbance within the floral pattern. His fascination is with the way in which the eye constantly seeks variety within uniformity. As a species we are highly attuned to anomalies within the visual field that signify either impending peril or pleasure. Our visual perception is hardwired to make assumptions about what is seen. Any minor deviation in a repeat pattern has the eye continually returning to seek confirmation. In effect, what Parker proposes is a physiological rationale for ways in which the decorative and ornamental endow human agency.

There are a number of properties that activate these vases. They function like an 'extra', privy to conversations within the domestic realm that would normally be considered privileged. Parker always got a kick out the idea his ornamental vases would contribute to the goings on within the household. His endless riffs on the serpentine profile, created by the intersection of convex and concave curves, are a habitual ploy. His forms are games of symmetry and asymmetry, always slightly askance in defiance of predictability. Any shift in the viewer's perspective causes this serpentine line to vacillate in space, petitioning the mind's eye to continuously check what it is seeing.

Parker's decorative glaze schemes appear like purposefully ill-fitting sets of clothes, worn to create a visual discrepancy by playing havoc with the form. Vases that model a Bogart lean or an Elvis hip swing are not in search of any classical or ideal notion but represent a productive entanglement with uncertainty. Parker is an ornamentalist, wired to the language of decoration. A consummate practitioner in the precarious art of nonchalance, he possesses a rare and ultimately disarming sense of the 'offhand'. For Parker the ornamental facilitates a mental state of wellbeing that nourishes the mind's eye with pleasure in variety.[2]

The civil union of craft and design: meditations on a teapot

There is perhaps no one better at consummating a marriage between design and craft than ceramic artist, Chris Weaver, who gained a Diploma of Fine and Applied Arts at Otago Polytechnic in the mid 1970s. Ever since, Weaver has been plying his trade from the remote town of Kaniere beside the Hokitika river on the west coast of the South Island.

While Weaver's repertoire encompasses other utilitarian items, it is teapots that are his magnum opus. Precision and perfectionism are the key conditions driving these meditations. The attributes Weaver brings are ultimately subjected to the forces of nature; the way a glaze will cut away from a sharp edge during the firing; the variegated effects of sodium imparting a tell-tale orange peel texture when salt is introduced into the kiln at high temperature; and the indelible marks left in the clay body from tools used in the creation of form. Control over the relationship between exacting details within the work and the overall composition achieves a harmony that also reaches an accord with the sympathetic accommodation of native timber handles within the design. These are virtues that transcend time and place, in synchrony with the aesthetics of mid-century Scandinavian design and equally at home upon a 15th Century Chinese mandarin's console.

An operational definition of craft as much as design is reimagining the familiar in surprising ways derived from the successful interdependence of form and materials. Weaver's considered deliberations on the design of the teapot serve to expand our appreciation of what elegance and insight can be achieved through sustained practice.

Colonial shino: A reimagined authenticity

When ideas get uprooted from one historical time and place to another, they often take on a greater pervasiveness and veracity than they had where they came from. Such was the case when Len Castle, a leading pioneer in New Zealand's studio pottery brought back the recipe for Shino glaze from a trip to Japan in 1966. 'Colonial Shino' is a euphemism for the manner in which this simple glaze recipe became implicated in a ceramic cult of, brown, artfully misshapen, dribbly-glazed, nature-inspired faux primitivism that stood for an aestheticized ideal of national culture. This recipe was exchanged up and down the country and what emerged were countless variations many times removed from the late 17th century Momoyama period Japanese original.

Richard Stratton is a ceramic polymath. Upon finishing his formal education in ceramics at Otago Polytechnic in the early 1990s he left the womb of the brown(ish) pot and threw himself into the gamut of global ceramic history for his own cranky satisfaction. Stratton is driven by an obsession with the passage of ceramic technology to Nineteenth Century New Zealand, where in the absence of indigenous clay traditions, local variants of ceramics hitched a ride on the back of industry. What had been the hallmarks of aesthetic invention were applied to ceramic water pipes, bricks and lavatories.

Stratton's delight in the lush variegated brown and yellow lead coating of utilitarian wares produced in the South Island's pioneering industrial potteries led him down a rabbit hole tracking the provenance of tortoiseshell glaze. First applied to Jizhou ware in the Jiangxi province of China in the 12th–13th Century, the glaze became fashionable in Eighteenth Century England as one of the signatures of affluent tableware produced in the Stoke-on-Trent ceramic factories of Thomas Whieldon and Josiah Wedgwood. By the Nineteenth Century the recipe had made its convoluted way to the South Island via Staffordshire trained immigrants who applied it to some of the earliest ceramic biscuit barrels, jars and crocks manufactured in this country.

Captivated by historic patterns of global trade and exchange Stratton's applies himself to technologies no longer extant. *Enjoyment of Freedom Teapot*, (pictured) offers a mismatch of ornamental registers. A Chinese *Sang de boef* glaze, a gold lustred Tudor rose rondel moulded off some inexpensive discarded tat sourced from a local op-shop. The teapot lid, a four-headed gold baby lifted from a child's pre-loved doll, topped with a pointy inverted screw shape. The rainbow liquorice handle, a homage to the Bassett's liquorice wheels Stratton devoured as a child. This amalgam of disjointed ceramic references belies his deep interest in the ways history is continually being reinterpreted.

Retrieving recipes from the internet isn't sufficient for Stratton. He is compelled to honour the historic integrity of his craft by figuring out how to emulate his ceramic fixations using raw substances and cheaply sourced local materials without the resources of a factory workforce. A fastidious technocrat immersed in the challenges of how to make, he uses arcane methods to drive fresh innovation within his work. Richard O'Brien, creator of the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* is an artist of dual New Zealand and English citizenship infamous for publicising the cause of trans-gender identity in the 1970s. Stratton is more than likely to be found bopping to O'Brien's iconic soundtrack in his backyard studio.

> It's just a jump to the left
> And then a step to the right...
> With a bit of a mind flip
> You're into the time slip
> And nothing can ever be the same
> You're spaced out on sensation
> Like you're under sedation
> Let's do the Time Warp again

Stoneware clay with kauri timber handle
Chris Weaver
2017
Photo Sam Hartnett

Enjoyment of Freedom Teapot.
Richard Stratton
2002
Photo Sam Hartnett

Yellow Stack No. 2
Andrea Du Chatenier
2020
Photo Sam Hartnett

Ceramic Hijinks: Clay callisthenics in yellow lycra

Andrea Du Chatenier is known for working in all manner of materials; homemade carpets, sculptured polystyrene, sewn textiles, a range of mixed media–all of which have been deployed under a number of different thematic guises. I was curious to know why she now chooses to work exclusively with ceramics. She avoided the tenor of my question and with her usual wily candour, replying congenially. "Well you know Richard, it's just me and the clay now." The remainder of the conversation was devoted to how enthralled and frustrated she is at wrangling and willing clay into far-fetched and fanciful poses.

Du Chatenier regards the rich and varied history of ceramic production not as an impediment but a reservoir from which to conduct new experimentation. Chief ally in her arsenal is a deep infatuation with the visual dynamics of colour. Her palette draws redemption from the confectionary shop rather than native bush walk and invites us to riot and swoon under the undue influence of sugar over-load. The gobby forms in iridescent colour that characterise her recent output are a rude retort to serious, intellectual cool. There is no little local precedent for such idiosyncratic clay objects. Du Chatenier is more aligned with the drug crazed encounters of Sponge Bob Square Pants with the architectural musings of Piranesi. Her ceramics revel in their material condition and tug away at those cerebral recesses where phantasmagoric dreaming and the imaginative doings of Dr Seuss still lurk.

Suspended fluid, in some form of arrested entropy, has many latent bodily associations, yet the visual levity and effervescence of these works prevails. The sense of the artist chuckling to herself throughout her day is palpable. Du Chatenier's inscrutable wit eschews the heft of irony or sarcasm. Her ceramics not so much 'kiss the eye' but pillage and sack it of all righteousness. The artist's ultimate goal is to induce a sense of synaesthesia, where neurological wiring becomes crossed: Colours smell and tastes become sound. Some suffer this clinically identified malady continuously, but within the psychically-insulated world of cultural production the result is merely a benign and incorrigible desire to lick one of these ceramic confections.[3]

Du Chatenier's career trajectory began at a time when the formative world of contemporary art was diffuse with prognostications about interdisciplinary practice. Her progressive move in the direction of disciplinary expertise is a judicious reminder of the value specialisation offers cultural production.

Collectively, these seven practitioners do not signal new directions in New Zealand ceramics, nor do they demonstrate a unique and privileged understanding of what can be achieved in ceramics. What they do exemplify is how great performances arise from a demographic in which diversity, complexity and proximity are compressed–and different cultural propositions are forced to rub shoulders with one another.

1 Adapted from. Tender Brick: The material Epiphanies of Peter Hawkesby. Published by Objectspace. 2020

2 Adapted from. RIchard Parker Objectspace Masters of Craft. Published by Objectspace. 2010

3 Adapted from. Ornery and Opulence: In the thrall of Andrea du Chatenier's ceramics. Published by Sargeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua. 2020.