

**Contemplations in the natural landscape: Unearthing the
surface in the ceramic vessels of Anda Dodo.**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Art in Fine Art, Centre for Visual Art, University of
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Anda Dodo

Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
 ...Master of Fine Art, in the Graduate Programme in School of Arts, Humanities,
 University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I, Anda Dodo, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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 - a. Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
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Anda Dodo (211547819)



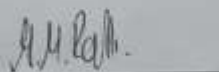
22 October 2019

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Signature

Date

Michelle Rall (838290)



22nd October 2019

Name of Supervisor

Signature

Date

Acknowledgements and thanks

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I would like to convey my sincere thanks to the following people:

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- Professor Ian Calder whose advice has never led me astray
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- My siblings and parents who continue to support me, I thank you for being a positive presence in my life

*This dissertation is dedicated to my late khulu Mrs Zandile Mvusi, may your presence
forever guide me.*

Abstract

This Practice-Based Masters research project comprises this written dissertation together with the creative studio practice of Anda Dodo. The focus of this qualitative research is non-utilitarian nature-inspired ceramic vessels. The theoretical framework of PBR and heuristic inquiry, which positions Dodo at the centre of her research and foreground her insights as a research practitioner, are used together with interrelated theories.

An Art Historical approach is used in a survey of selected 20th C British studio potters which highlights influential potters and the shifts in emphasis in vessel making from utilitarian ‘pottery’ to ‘ceramics’. American studio potters Peter Voulkos, Wayne Higby, Paul Soldner and British potter Ewen Henderson are specifically discussed as to their philosophies and alternative approach to vessel making and non-utilitarian vessels have directly influenced the candidate’s studio practice. Metaphor in art is examined and universal and personal metaphors are used to embed meaning in the ceramic vessels. A discussion of materiality theory is also included to reflect on the chosen materials and studio practice.

A chapter is devoted to technical aspects of ceramics about materials, techniques and experiments conducted. Discussion about how these informed decisions made about both expressive and technical aspects of vessel making and surface treatment is included.

The reflective-reflexive chapter demonstrates how the candidate’s practical work and theory unfolded. A reflexive approach is used to discuss the studio practice which is underpinned by key themes relating to the vessel, metaphor, landscape and memory. Journals are referred to, which together with personal reflection, explain insights into ongoing studio practice as well as the presentation of completed works. This includes the use of metaphor and vessels as carriers of meaning.

The discussion of the exhibition deals with important aspects of display and use of gallery space.

Keywords

Vessel, practice-based research, heuristic inquiry, contemplation, reflective-practice, metaphor, natural landscape, surface treatment, clay, ceramic, studio practice, exhibition, ceramic history, emotive response, form, function/functional, non-utilitarian/utilitarian, material and materiality.

Prefatory Note

1. In this research the creative practice of the researcher, Anda Dodo, is the focus of this discussion, as a result, the first person is used when referring to my work and concepts, and when incorporating my experiential knowledge into discussions
2. The Harvard short form of referencing and citations is used in this text. A list of references cited in the text appear in the list of references at the end
3. In-text images are labelled as 'Figure', while images that appear in 'Appendix 1 (exhibition portfolio)' are labelled as 'Illustration'. Figures and illustrations are numbered consecutively. A list of figures and illustration are supplied after the table of contents
4. Dimensions of the work are included in the captions and measurements are given in cm in the following order H x W x D. measurements are given in metric (cm) wherever possible. In some areas they are given in inches as were found in my source.
5. Vernacular words have been explained in the text
6. Extensive technical discussion is provided in chapter four which includes explanations of specialised ceramic terms
7. All lists are in order of appearance in text and page numbers have been added accordingly
8. Photographs of my work and experiments were taken by me unless otherwise stated
9. I have used the terms 'pottery' and 'ceramics' and 'potters' and 'ceramists' interchangeably except where it is important to make the distinction between the terms for historical reasons for example, 'studio potters'
10. I have capitalised Ceramic Studio when referring to the studio at the CVA in order to distinguish it from other pottery studios.
11. Some of the information about the history of the Ceramics Studios in the background section is as a result of discussions with my supervisor
12. Appendix 1 contains the images of my final exhibition and appendix 2 is my artist statement which accompanied the exhibition

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List of Abbreviations

BAFA: Bachelor of Art in Fine Arts

BAVA: Bachelor of Art in Visual Arts

C: Century

CSA: Central School of Art and Design (London)

CVA: Centre for Visual Arts

DAG: Durban Art Gallery

DSA: Durban School of Art

EC: Eastern Cape

ELC: Evangelical Lutheran Church

JHG: Jack Heath Gallery

KZN: Kwa-Zulu Natal

MAFA: Master of Art, Fine Art.

MAFA-R: Master of Art, Fine Art – Research

MFA: Master of Fine Art

MP: Melting Point

PBR: Practice-Based Research

PMB: Pietermaritzburg

SA: South Africa

UCLA: The University of California in Los Angeles

UK: United Kingdom

UKZN: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

UN: University of Natal

Background

A seminal point in my ceramic studies occurred in my third year when, after doing several projects which emphasized the utilitarian aspects of ceramic making, I made a large asymmetrical, non-utilitarian vessel. I found the potential of the expressive qualities of these large asymmetrical vessels, together with the forms I could create, far more interesting than the work I had done prior this.

It also sparked my interest in the potential of non-utilitarian vessels as carriers of meaning. Thus, the ceramic vessels I made in my Honours degree were influenced by memories of the landscape from home, kuTsolo (Eastern Cape).

My training in the making of utilitarian ware had given me a foundation where I understood the basics of glazing. However, I became increasingly frustrated with the ‘utilitarian’ glaze range that I had as most of these glazes were unsuitable for the sort of surface treatment I was seeking for these vessels. I wanted to create a variety of surfaces and textures that would reflect the natural environment that was the inspiration for my work. I realised that my lack of knowledge and experimentation was hampering the expressive potential of the ceramic materials that I observed in the work of other ceramists.

During that time, I also began to delve into my personal memories and to reflect on these in my work, whilst simultaneously realising the potential of the use of landscape and the natural environment as my source of inspiration. As a result, various related themes started to develop. My intention with this research is to situate the theme of the landscape as a representation of spaces of contemplation, peaceful meditation, and finding solace in both fond and traumatic memories. Landscape serves as a point of reference for my shared experiences with members of my family and becomes an intimate part of my psyche. This theme is significant in my artmaking as it helps me to reflect on my own traumatic childhood memories and the ones I share with them. I find places in the natural landscape that allow me to reflect on and work through these memories. The natural environment also offers me visual stimuli for form and surface treatment.

Landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify (Mitchell 1994: vii). This is particularly significant to me because, as will be explained in chapter five, I rely on nature and landscape to describe

how I am feeling and my personal experiences. In this research, I use the visual characteristics of the landscape as inspiration for my vessels in order to suggest the overpowering, evocative, intense, and sometimes emotional feelings brought on by the memories I have of particular landscapes. The significance of commemorative memories is embedded in the layers during the making of the vessels. Other significant aspects or forgotten and blurry details of those memories are often triggered by the making, the materials, and revisiting the landscapes, whether physically or from photographs. My personal experiences, memories and worldview are important and involve ‘subjectivity and self-reflection which are crucial to creative problem solving’ (Ings 2011: 227).

In South Africa (SA), largely as a result of its history, ‘land’ and ‘landscape’ are very contentious topics with many questions being asked about how these should be interrogated by arts practitioners. A brief discussion of some of the discourse on ‘land’ and ‘landscape’ is offered in chapter one. This will be done in order to highlight some of the key ideas raised around these questions. These are certainly most relevant regarding contemporary socio-political discourse and while some of these are pertinent to my topic, the bulk of this falls outside the parameters of this project. This is not to say that viewers are precluded from their own interpretation of my work which may include a reading of it which differs from my intended meaning.

Before my undergraduate training, I had no experience of working with clay. Thus, the foundation of my ceramic knowledge and approach to vessel making has been formed in the Ceramic Studios of the CVA (Centre for Visual Arts, formerly known as the Fine Art Department). I have, therefore, felt it necessary to briefly outline aspects of its history, teaching, and syllabus in order to give my knowledge of ceramics and approach to this research some context. It will also serve to explain the influence of British and American ceramics in my work. I am of the opinion that the history of studio ceramics and particularly the changes that occurred in the work of the British studio ceramists during the course of the 20th C are relevant to me and pertinent for this research project. The gradual acceptance of the aesthetic of the American ceramists associated with Peter Voulkos which had a major influence on non-utilitarian vessel making is also of great importance in my approach to vessel making. Of interest, yet largely outside the parameters of this research, is the fact that these developments (although they occurred somewhat later) were largely reflected in the work of South African ceramists who worked in ceramic studios. This is recognized by Felix

Gottlieb Ernst Nilant in *Contemporary Pottery in South Africa* (1963), Wilma Cruise and Doreen Hemp in *Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa* (1991) and Wendy Gers in *Scorched Earth: 100 Years of Southern African Potteries* (2015).

During my 3rd year, my core subjects were Ceramics and Art History. Ceramics was project-based and focused on but not limited to, mostly wheel-thrown and electric kiln fired wares, an emphasis on craft, principles of design, and glaze technology. These aspects of studio training were introduced by Hilda Ditchburn (1917-1986) who was trained by Professor O.P.J. Oxley and furthered her studies under Dora Billington (1890-1968) at the Central School of Arts and Design (CSA), London (1947-1949) (Calder 2012: 64). Ditchburn's rigorous instruction emphasised mastering the fundamental pottery techniques while at the same time, creating an environment for creativity (Watt 2016: 55). A similar method of teaching was advocated by pioneers of studio pottery such as Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew whom she respected. The influence of both of these potters on studio ceramics will be discussed in chapter three. Ditchburn admired Anglo-Oriental and Modernist traditions in the arts and had a personal collection of ceramics, which included works of world-renowned potters Bernard Leach and Shōji Hamada (1894-1978). This collection of fine examples of studio ceramics was integral to her teaching (Rall 2014: 27).

Ditchburn was also instrumental in building the first oil-fuelled kiln in SA, which successfully fired to stoneware in 1954. This was a significant advancement in ceramics as it was the first reduction stoneware kiln in SA. Due to the large size of the kiln, she thereafter fired it only once or twice a year. She continued to focus on earthenware firing in an electric kiln (Arnold 2017: 143). Following her original aims to provide basic training in hand-building and throwing, she was also teaching various methods of decorating and glazing earthenware and stoneware. Ditchburn's reduction glaze experiments displayed her interest in classical Oriental stoneware glazes such as 'Tenmoku' and 'Kawai Kaki.' These were often sprayed onto a layer of glaze from recipes that she had acquired from Dora Billington, such as 'Central School Hard' or 'Magnesium Glaze'. Another common form of decorating was with oxide brushwork or wax-resist decoration carefully repeated on thrown and paddled forms. It was around 1971/72 when she acquired a new larger electric kiln and was able to fire oxidised earthenware and stoneware and later porcelain was introduced as a new medium (Calder 2012:64-65).

In 1971 Aidron Duckworth (1920-2001) assisted Ditchburn in converting the once a week pottery classes to a core module in the Fine Arts degree. This module and the teaching philosophy in the department were in line with those in the art schools in the UK at the time. It was geared towards training the studio potter, and many graduates went on to set up their own studios, where they both taught and produced ceramics for the local market (Rall 2014).

Ditchburn included a ceramics chemistry module as she considered it an important aspect of ceramics. Due to the lack of South African technical ceramics publications, she subscribed to notable publications by Bernard Leach, Michael Cardew, and Daniel Rhodes (Calder 2012: 64-65). In 1972, CSA trained Malcolm MacIntyre-Read joined the Ceramics Studio. He specialized in hand-building, onglaze decoration, and silkscreen transfer techniques, as well as industrial methods of press moulds and slip-casting (Rall 2014: 27). Together they expanded the ceramics coursework to include the history of Western ceramics and sculpture. MacIntyre-Read borrowed photographic slides from the British Crafts Advisory Council, which allowed students to view ceramic exhibitions which were hosted abroad (Calder 2012: 65-66). Together they produced highly competent ceramics graduates such as Juliet Armstrong (1950-2012). She joined the staff after MacIntyre-Read resigned in 1976. Armstrong had also majored in sculpture under Henry Davies and this added another dimension to the teaching in the department. Another graduate, Ian Calder, was appointed when Ditchburn retired in 1981 (Calder 2012: 66). When Armstrong became ill, ceramist and printmaker, Michelle Rall, who studied under Armstrong, Calder and Bronwyn Jane (Jinny) Heath lectured alongside Calder.

Most students who graduated had a wide-ranging knowledge of most ceramic techniques. Armstrong's focus was on hand building and she later specialised in bone china while Calder excelled in wheel throwing. His focus for many years was on Maiolica painted vessels as well as thrown and decorated porcelain (Cruise 1991: 140). They both continued to teach rigorously like Ditchburn while emphasising the expressive qualities of clay. Calder lectured glaze technology, and Armstrong's ceramic history lectures were supplemented by the study of the collection she inherited from Ditchburn.

Apart from having her own personal collection of ceramics, Ditchburn had started a teaching collection with works of historical interest that she acquired specifically for the Ceramic Studios. These included examples of local South African ceramics, commercial studio

wares, Chinese porcelain, European ceramics and Egyptian relics. Examples of the best students' work were also collected by Ditchburn and this tradition was continued by Armstrong and Calder, resulting in works by students such as Garth Claassen (1953-), Ian Garrett (1971-), and Clive Sithole (1971-) being in the collection. In later years the collection also grew with the addition of works by visiting artists such as Hwan Cheon-Yong (1974-) from Korea and PJ Anderson from Canada.

Calder and Armstrong conducted field research in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. They realised that it was important for the students to learn about and see the work of the potters of this region. They acquired a fine collection of examples of traditional Zulu pots from, amongst others, the Nala family, Peni Gumbi, and the Magwaza's. These, as well as works of rural potters from Zimbabwe donated by retired sculpture lecturer, Henry Davies, were used for teaching purposes (Rall 2014: 27).

Calder compiled a studio handbook/manual which contains technical information as well as clay and glaze recipes. The bulk of the manual consisted of glaze recipes used by Ditchburn. They included stoneware as well as the lead-based earthenware, which were reformulated by Calder to make them safe by substituting the toxic raw lead with other ingredients. The source for the porcelain clay body and the bulk of the porcelain glaze recipes was Marietjie van der Merwe who was a pioneer in researching ceramic raw materials locally for South African studio potters. She taught in the studio with Calder in 1982 when Armstrong was on leave. Calder and Armstrong added recipes of their own as well as those of other lecturers and students.

Unfortunately, when the BAFA degree was phased out in the late 1990s, the course structure changed, and, due to time constraints, less time was allocated to the teaching of glaze chemistry and ceramic history. They were no longer examined as separate modules but incorporated into the studio practice. I felt that these were both areas that, as a ceramic practitioner, I needed to research further and have, therefore, included a chapter on each in this dissertation. I have chosen to focus my research on specific aspects that I felt would expand my knowledge in the key areas that relate to glaze chemistry and ceramic history that are pertinent to this particular research project.

On one occasion, I was part of a group that Armstrong took to visit a Zulu potter in the Muden area between Weenen and Greytown, who mined her clay and worked from her home. Like the Nala and Magwaza family, she emphasised the importance of sharing her knowledge with her children so that the tradition was passed down to the next generation. This trip was of particular interest to me as, although I grew up in a rural area, there is no history of pottery making in my family. My experience of local traditional pottery was limited to the pieces that my grandmother, Zandile Mvusi, would have out during special celebrations to serve traditional beer to the men in our family. This trip further exposed me to burnishing and pit firing, which was similar to the methods demonstrated in the Ceramic Studios and seen in the work of contemporary ceramists Garrett and Sithole. Interestingly, they have both been inspired by the very same techniques and the same families such as the Nala's.

Of interest is the connection van der Merwe made with the ELC Art and Craft Centre in Rorke's Drift (est. 1962) which was continued by Calder. He exposed students to the centre by organising field trips where we visited their gallery, met with potters who were still working there, as well other artists in their studios. This trip and the knowledge I gained allowed me to have a better understanding of how the artists, specifically the studio potters I spoke to, were inspired by their surroundings and cultural backgrounds. It was also invigorating to see rural potters using the techniques I was most familiar with whilst maintaining the integrity of their pottery.

I was also fortunate to be part of a group of students that participated in a reduction firing, facilitated by Armstrong, in the large gas kiln. Unfortunately, due to the cost this is no longer done. Firing in electric kilns to a wide range of temperatures including earthenware and stoneware, along with pit firing and raku were the processes I learnt in my undergraduate training. Under Rall's tuition, these traditions were instilled. We were encouraged to learn from the diverse collection, a wide variety of ceramics, which includes, but is not limited to, the examples mentioned earlier. I was always drawn to the sculptural non-utilitarian vessels, and matte surfaces of Claassen's work found in the collection, and this continued into my Honours.

These field trips, different firing processes and the work that was added to the collection started to make the students more aware of and sensitive to the pottery traditions in Southern

Africa and expanded the scope of the syllabus. I was certainly made aware that there are fascinating traditions of vessel making on all continents that span many centuries from pre-historic time to the present.

I realised during my Honours year that I needed to explore surface treatments other than conventional utilitarian glazes. I became more interested in glaze technology and ceramic materials. This was also heightened by the fact that I realised that the materials I was using in ceramics all came from the earth and the natural environment that was the source of my inspiration. As a ceramist I realised the importance of the materials that I use, both as the medium that my work is made of and also as the medium that carries the message. I needed a greater understanding and knowledge of these materials in order to use them both for the making of the work as well as to be able to push and exploit their expressive qualities. I had started to see the possibilities of manipulating glazes and using a range of firing temperatures in order to do this.

At the same time, I became more aware of how the role of the vessel had shifted in studio ceramics during the 20th C. I was interested in examining how the form, surface treatment, and content were explored differently by potters making utilitarian wares from those making non-utilitarian ceramics. I wanted to explore the potential of using the vessel as a carrier of meaning and metaphor. The approach to vessel making, which is grounded in the studio pottery tradition, my personal preferences, and philosophies, are some of the reasons why I have selected the specific British and American ceramists surveyed in chapter three. This is explained further in this chapter, where I begin with the group that Clark (1995) identifies as the ‘studio potter.’ His categorisation is both logical and useful and will be employed in my discussion of selected 20th C ceramics. I continue the survey by examining how studio potters in the second part of the 20th C embraced new technologies whilst honouring the Traditionalists. This serves to highlight the revolutionary and innovative impact it made on ceramics and the shift from work that was made primarily for utilitarian purposes to non-utilitarian work chiefly intended for galleries. My focus throughout will be the vessel and I will be paying particular attention to the artists whose work has inspired the vessels I made for this research project.

In the following chapter I will outline the scope of this research, the aims and objectives and research questions.

Chapter One

Introduction

This written dissertation comprises five chapters and a conclusion. In this chapter, I will outline the scope of this research and discuss Practice-Based Research (PBR), my aims and objectives, and research questions. This will be followed by an outline of the remaining four chapters.

In my studio practice, I experiment with how my manipulation of the form and surface treatments of ceramic vessels can reflect my response to the natural landscapes' textures, colours, horizon lines, and contours. I explore how I can use ceramic materials to represent the natural landscape both literally and metaphorically. The making process together with the metaphorical meaning I ascribe to them has a therapeutic effect and the vessels become places of contemplation for me. Consequently, they will become vehicles for exploring form, surface, concept and individual philosophy (Haynes 2013).

In order to situate my practice, an art historical perspective will be used to examine the ceramic vessel. I am interested in how and why some studio ceramists in SA were influenced by American ceramists such as Peter Voulkos and Paul Soldner. In contrast, others followed the more traditional studio style of potters such as Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew. This is reflected in the ceramics produced in SA in the second half of the 20th C; some potters continued to make traditional studio ceramics and others began to accept non-utilitarian ceramic ware and regarded it as 'fine art' rather than 'craft' (Cruise 1991). To gain further insights, I explore the work of other contemporary artists such as Ewen Henderson and Wayne Higby.

Practice-Based Research

The focus of this MAFA-R is ceramic vessels. The creative artefact is the basis of this research and this dissertation cannot be examined without my creative studio practice. According to Candy (2006), this is the distinction between Practice-Based Research (PBR) and Practice-Led Research (PLR). In PLR 'research leads primarily to new understandings about creative practice,' while in PBR the knowledge is gained in practice and through the outcomes of the practice (Candy 2006: 3). PBR is a qualitative flexible methodology that allows for multiple methods of inquiry (Bolton 2010). Used as the overarching methodology, it allowed me to incorporate a heuristic approach which positioned me at the centre of my

research (Ings 2011). Heuristics is a form of inquiry that foregrounds the personal experience and insights of the researcher (Magana 2002). Under the umbrella of PBR, heuristics and art historical research allowed me to tailor-make this research as my own.

Therefore, PBR underpins both my creative studio practice and this written dissertation to form an integrated research project (Candy 2006: 4, Gray & Malins 2004). The works that I have made play a crucial role in new understandings about my creative practice. These are strengthened by my research which includes historical information about the development of ceramic vessels, the use of the metaphor in art, ceramic materials, and materiality.

The significance of the materials and the making process I use will be explained briefly with a discussion of materiality and metaphor. This will help me explain the complex relationship between the action of making and the materials used. In discussing metaphor and materiality concurrently, I will draw on Du Preez (2008), who maintains that the unique embodiment of a message is captured in the physical material thus, the matter from which an art object is made holds great significance. It is this meeting of materiality and concept through which the message is realised (Du Preez, in Hawley 2018: 17).

Clay has associations with the land and landscape because it comes from the earth. It is the chief medium in my artmaking and my choice of materials is significant and deliberate in this research as these materials ‘have the ability to influence the way we perceive and understand reality’ (Sofaer 2007 in Hawley 2018: 17). I will underpin this with a brief discussion of the materiality theory in my theoretical framework after a discussion of metaphor. In chapter four, apart from discussing some technical aspects and experimentation I do with clay, ceramic materials and other natural materials, I also include my reasons for the specific choices that I make with regard to my media, particularly terracotta clay.

The natural landscape inspires the non-utilitarian ceramic vessels that comprise the body of my studio work for this research. I use the term landscape in this dissertation to refer to the visual qualities of the natural environment as well as the meditative places and spaces that are part of my personal memories. Mitchell (2000) differentiates between place and space. He says a place is an exact location, and “space is a practiced place,” a site activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs. A landscape, then, turns site into sight, place, and space into a visual image (Mitchell 2000: 265). I recall spaces and places from childhood

memories but do not try to depict replicas of them. Instead, I carry the landscapes with me as memory and revisit them in my artmaking. I recall these landscapes because I have a personal connection to them, I have either lived in them or have an emotive response to them because they trigger childhood memories. As a result, ‘mapping’ those memories has become a significant aspect of my personal growth and this research.

I am aware of the current ongoing debate about land and landscape. Socio-political or environmental issues might be embedded in my work because of the subject matter, and thus assumed by the audience, but it is not my intention to incorporate them as themes in this body of work. As this debate falls outside the scope of this dissertation, I will not deal with it at length; instead, I will briefly outline some of the issues raised in this discourse that are relevant to this research.

Elkins & DeLue (2008) state that ‘landscape is part and parcel of human activity, experience, and discourse’ and agree with Mitchell’s statement that “landscape is not a genre of art but a medium,” which suggests the use of all types of landscapes (natural, pictorial, symbolic, mythic and imagined) to address artistic, economic, social and political discussion (Elkins & DeLue 2008: 11). Godby (2010) on the other hand acknowledges landscape as a genre and says its representation has been informed by the physical geography, diverse individual artists who, at different times, wanted to communicate something about their natural environment (2010: n.p). As a result, these representations become the catalysts for further discussion (Tilley & Cameron-Daum 2017: 4).

Mitchell (2000) identifies the two major shifts that the landscape discourse has experienced. The first is associated with modernism and “attempted to read the history of landscape primarily on the basis of a history of landscape painting, and to narrativize that history as a progressive movement toward purification of the visual field” Mitchell (2000: 1). The second is associated with postmodernism. The role of painting favoured “a semiotic and hermeneutic approach that treated landscape as an allegory of psychological or ideological themes,” where natural features such as water, stones, and trees are understood as political, religious, or psychological allegories (Mitchell 2000: 1). In my own art making these natural features are the visual stimuli which I look to for inspiration and use as metaphors for my emotive response to my traumatic memories.

In the 20th C the scope of the term landscape grew and was used by a wide range of people, including, but not limited to, artists, earth scientists, architects, planners, historians, and geographers (Rall 2000: 13). Åbele (2002: 210) maintains that 20th C artists longed for a particular vision in their work of “unspoiled nature as a metaphoric mirror of the human soul and produced stylised depictions of landscapes representing overpowering emotional experiences” (Åbele 2002: 210). In the 21st C, landscapes became more contested and valued because they are a significant part of reflecting the complexities of people’s lives. How individuals understand and engage with them “becomes untidy, messy, tensioned and always in the making” (Tilley & Cameron-Daum 2017:10). The expressive nature and multifaceted engagement which stems from the landscape is what makes it a visual and cultural phenomenon. It can be understood and ‘treated as a mediator between man and his environment and is a way of seeing nature (Sarapik 2002: 184).

Rall (2000:16) cites Pierce Lewis (in Meinig 1979: 11-32). He argues that an understanding of our landscapes will enable a better understanding of ourselves. Meinig also maintains that all landscapes are symbolic expressions of cultural values and collective social behaviours of individuals, which I will demonstrate with the use of metaphor as a way of storytelling. I hope that the landscapes I use as visual stimuli will help me develop a better understanding of my childhood memories, my roots, cultural values, relationships with my family and myself. My use of the natural landscape in my work is also for aesthetic reasons because I am inspired by the atmosphere, forms, colours, and textures. Mitchell (1994) in Rall (2000: 14) says even before it is represented, landscape is a physical and multisensory medium consisting of elements such as earth, stone, vegetation, sky, sound and silence and light and darkness.

Symbolic depictions of landscapes in the arts are not new. The many iterations reveal something different, and this can be seen in examples of works of SA artists such as Kim Berman (1960-), Penny Siopis (1953-), Mduduzi Xakaza (1965-), William Kentridge (1955), Blessing Ngobeni (1985-) and Mohau Modisakeng (1986-). Kentridge, for example, deals with the landscape as a theme in his animation *Felix in Exile* (1994), where he treats the landscape as the main character, shown as continually evolving from one form to another and devouring fragments left for its consumption. ‘For Kentridge, the landscape acquires meaning over time, through the history of human events and the traces these activities leave

imprinted on the ground' (Boris 2001: 31). By doing this, elements of the animation underscore the role of the landscape as a reservoir of memory and political history.

It is important to mention that the examples I have mentioned above are of two-dimensional works. In SA there are many painters and printmakers that depict the landscape and use it symbolically. However, there are far fewer ceramists who depict the landscape and none have directly inspired my art making. There are ceramists whose work I am aware of who use similar methods and processes, but the works of these artists are not well documented. While there is a rich heritage and variety of two-dimensional representation of landscape in SA this is not the case with ceramics. The ceramists who inspire my art making, such as Wayne Higby and Ewen Henderson, have been very influential in the terms of the development of ceramics worldwide. It is these particular qualities, the use of the vessel, forms and surface treatment in their work that I am attracted to. The deep connection they have with their materials and how they use them intrigues me. Furthermore, the landscapes that inspire them are sites of contemplation and meditation.

In my studio practice, I have experimented with how my manipulation of the ceramic vessel form and surface treatments reflect my emotive response to landscapes and personal memories. Textures, colours, and forms in the landscape assist me in triggering memories of significant events and traumatic experiences, which are then translated into the visual and tactile representations and embedded in the vessels themselves. The making process, together with the metaphorical meanings I ascribe to them, has a therapeutic effect, and the vessels become places of contemplation for me.

Aims and Objectives

The main objective in my studio practice is to create a body of work comprising ceramic vessels inspired by the natural landscape. I aim to:

- gain a deeper understanding of the role the form and the surface of the ceramic vessel have in my work
- highlight aspects of the importance of the vessel in ceramic history, specifically the studio pottery tradition and to give insights into the work and philosophy of artists who inspire me
- gain knowledge about ceramic materials that would broaden my understanding of how they can be used expressively and the role of materiality in my work

- identify and discuss the use of metaphor in art and develop my own personal metaphors
- understand the significance of giving my ceramic vessels titles

These following key questions will guide both my creative studio practice and my written research to achieve my aims and objectives

Research Questions

My creative studio practice and research are driven by interrogating how my relationship with the landscape can be reflected in the ceramic vessels I make.

I posed the following questions to guide my practice and research for this project:

- How does my emotive response to the landscape influence content, form and surface treatment of my ceramic vessels?
- How do the insights I gained about ceramic history and ceramic artists influence my approach to vessel making?
- How does additional knowledge about ceramic materials and materiality expand my visual vocabulary and allow me to use new approaches to express myself through form and surface treatment?
- How does my reflective journaling and the process of cyclical work lead me to new insights about my practice?
- How could I set up an exhibition in order to reflect my emotive response to the natural landscape, and communicate this with the viewer?

To conduct this research and answer these questions, I structured the rest of this dissertation as follows.

In chapter two reflective practice, the use of metaphor in art and materiality will be interrogated as theoretical frameworks. A literature review will highlight the key texts that are significant to this research. PBR, a heuristic approach and art-historical methodology will be outlined.

Vessels have the power to symbolise a relationship with past, present, and future (Van Gennepe (1960) in Raby 2015: 9). They offer sustenance and memory and the ability to shape identity by way of daily contact and through function (Raby 2015: 17). A survey of selected

ceramic vessels from the 20th C will be discussed in chapter three. I will highlight influential British studio potters, their philosophies and their impact on the syllabus and the work produced in the Ceramic Studios. It will include the Traditionalists, European Modernists and Post-Modernist studio potters. Ewen Henderson and the American studio potters, Peter Voulkos, Paul Soldner and Wayne Higby will be discussed in order to demonstrate their influence on my studio practice. Relevant art historical literature about ceramic vessels will allow me a better understanding of the developments in ceramic history (Pickering 2008: 193).

The focus of chapter four will comprise my research on technical aspects of ceramics and ceramic materials. My tests and experiments with these materials will be illustrated with images. Aspects of their application will be discussed both in chapter four and five. This will assist me to demonstrate the significance of the materials that I use.

Vessel, landscape, memory, metaphor and materiality, are the themes that will underpin the content of the discussion of my vessels in chapter five. I will reflect on my decisions about vessel form and surface treatment as well as my final exhibition. This chapter will also illuminate how practical and theoretical components unfold together to inform each other by including insights gained through this journey.

Finally, a conclusion will bring together the findings and discoveries of my research.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Frameworks

As a practitioner-researcher, the theoretical framework of PBR guided both my practice and dissertation. My creative studio practice was central to the study and ‘the research and the practice operate as interdependent and complementary processes’ (Candy & Edmonds 2018: 63). Creative practice and related theories develop together to bring light to research questions (Candy & Edmonds 2018: 68). PBR acknowledges the use of multiple theoretical frameworks to organise and make sense of information (Gray & Malins 2004: 135). The theoretical framework of PBR and heuristic inquiry were used together with interrelated theories that I researched. The use of an art historical approach and metaphor situated the relevance of research in the field of art and expanded my practical, theoretical and art historical knowledge. Using an art historical, metaphor and materiality lens, I was better equipped to explore the ceramic vessel as a carrier of meaning. These frameworks together with interrelated theory led both my theory and practice and assisted me in answering my research questions.

Because of the personal nature of this research, I incorporated heuristics as a research tool to guide this study. Heuristics is a form of inquiry which foregrounds personal insights and experiences of the researcher (Magana 2002). This approach is flexible and acknowledges creative practice as a valid investigative tool (Ings 2011). My personal experiences, memories and worldview are important and involve ‘subjectivity and self-reflection which are crucial to creative problem solving’ (Ings 2011: 227). This is important to my creative process because the work I make is rooted in my response to the landscape and the areas of the Eastern Cape (EC) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN), where I spent my formative years.

Heuristic inquiry is significant because it is concerned with discovery rather than proof and suggests that the approach to research might not be linear or documentable (Ings 2011: 229). Personal experience, including tacit knowledge, imagination, intuition and emotion, are of importance (Ings 2011:240). Defining tacit knowledge, Ings (2011:228-229) claims it is an intuitive sense of what is right. It acknowledges a practitioner’s gut feeling and insight and is vital for heuristic judgement and evaluation. My insights and tacit knowledge I have gained as a practitioner are significant to this process because it not only required me to think about what I was doing but allowed me to meditate on my studio practice and methods

of working and to organise my findings (Moustakas 1990: 11, Gray & Malins 2004: 134). New knowledge gained about ceramic materials and experimentation helped me discover an original approach to express myself. Through form and surface treatment I developed and deepened my understanding of the role of the ceramic vessel in my creative practice.

Within this research, I refer to myself as a ‘reflective practitioner’ (Gray & Malins 2004: 22). Being a reflective practitioner relies on tacit and experiential knowledge and together with intuitive working it allowed me to unite my research, studio practice and awareness of self and my actions in my research (Schön 1991). Ings mentions some difficulties with adopting a heuristic approach, one being ‘discomfort with a high degree of self-searching and exposure’ (Ings 2011: 229). This was a potential obstacle for me as my memories and emotions are involved in my creative practice. However, Ings (2011) suggests that to overcome any difficulties the researcher should ‘commit to ongoing, attentive and open dialogue’ (2011: 232). Gray & Malins (2004) situate reflective practice as an inquiry which unites research and creative practice through ‘reflection-in-action’ by the act of journaling (2004: 22). This dynamic approach leads to cyclical artmaking, reflexivity and critical awareness of self and improvement of practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 23).

An art-historical lens allowed me to trace the developments of ceramic history in the 20th C. In chapter three I survey significant British and American studio potters to:

- gain insights about their contribution to studio pottery
- observe the shifts that occurred in the forms and surface treatments of studio pottery
- gain insights about the role of the vessel
- pay closer attention to the personal philosophies of studio potters that have directly influenced my studio practice
- gain insights into how and why their use of ceramic materials has made an impact on me and my perception of clay as an expressive ‘fine art’ medium

In my creative practice I read about and looked at the works of the artists who inspire me. By doing this, I hope to improve my visual language and become a better-informed artist. I used this lens to examine the meanings associated with and the significance of the titles of their vessels.

Metaphor as a theoretical framework is discussed in the following section to contextualise its role in my creative studio practice and research.

Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech which allows us to create and understand abstract images, language, and personal expressions (Lakoff & Johnson 2003). Metaphor plays an important role in this discussion of embodied experience and helps in understanding one thing in relation to another (Phillips 2010: 43-44). Metaphor is significant in key areas of my creative practice and research.

Using metaphor, I explain how ceramic materials are used expressively in my creative practice. This framework allowed me to acknowledge how clay and other ceramic materials became important metaphors in my creative practice to create personal expressions. Firstly, in the way I handle the clay and the way I merge other materials to create a 'skin-like' surface on the vessels. Secondly, the metaphors are not randomly assigned but are rooted in physical and cultural experiences. They can "serve as a vehicle for understanding a concept only by virtue of its experiential basis" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003:18). I used metaphor as a significant creative problem-solving tool to explain my creative studio processes and methods of artmaking. Thirdly, I used metaphor in my reflective journaling to uncover other embedded meanings in my practice that I might not already have been aware of. This led to a better understanding of my actions and is discussed in chapter five. The metaphor 'journey of exploration' demonstrates the nature of my engagement with this research (Gray & Malins 2004: 2).

Examining my vessels as metaphorical objects is significant to understanding them as expressive artefacts. Raby (2015) says the ceramic vessel can act as a repository for memories (2015: 33). I will use metaphor and materiality theory to merge the container and surface treatment to create new symbolic meanings that are unique to my memories and experiences. The spectator will be free to, and is encouraged, to interpret the vessels with their frame of reference. My hope is for the symbolism to develop from what I have embedded in them. Metaphor can be used to describe the physical attributes of vessels (Katzin 2016: 2). Fourth, I describe the forms and surfaces of my vessels to further explain how themes such as landscape have been contemplated and used to make my vessels. I am better equipped to reflect on and write about my vessels as carriers of meaning and this is

discussed further in chapter five where I discuss my vessels. Lakoff & Johnson (2003: 14-15) suggest that metaphor is about the imaginative and creative language but more importantly that it assists the way we consolidate ideas.

Metaphors enabled me to address personal issues relating to memory and my relationship to the landscape as well as to find metaphors that represent my emotive response. This framework assisted me in finding universal metaphors and discovering personal metaphors that were integral in developing titles for my work using Xhosa poems. I preserved the poetic; descriptive and symbolic language found in the poems which represent my thought processes in order to provide context and meaning to my works (Phillips 2010: 43).

While reading about the artists who inspire me, I looked for significant metaphors that were similar to mine. I examined the interpretation of their vessels to see whether there are deeper meanings that have been suggested in their titles.

Materiality

Metaphor theory, along with an understanding of materiality, helps me reflect on the holistic connection between the act of my artmaking and embedded meanings. Du Preez (2008: 30) says art matters due to its materiality, the ‘stuff’ it is made of, and “through its materiality, the art object exists physically in the world.” I apply this lens to assist in my use of metaphors and detailing the process of artmaking to the aesthetics of the final product that comes from my creative practice. Furthermore, as a ceramic practitioner, this lens helps me to better describe the experiences of working with materials that might not be familiar to my audience. Hawley (2018) cites Sofaer (2007), who describes materiality as having the ability to provoke an aesthetic response through material engagement between the viewer and artwork. In a social context, materials can potentially convey embedded identities, messages, and meanings (Hawley 2018: 30)

“Clay is a time-based medium: performative, relational and responsive” (Andreoletti 2019: 1). This is because the material is experienced over time as it changes from wet to bone-dry and during firing to ceramic. As a result, the material responds to new layers of meaning to be embedded at each stage of making and firing; this can influence how we understand reality. The unique embodiment of a message is captured in the physical; thus, the matter from which an art object is made holds great significance. It is this meeting of materiality

and concept through which the message is realised (Du Preez (2008: 40) in Hawley 2018: 17).

A central theme in my artwork is the landscape, and the materials that I use come from the earth. This, on its own, is significant because it suggests breathing new life into an everyday resource. It is strengthened by the use of found materials which come from the natural environment and are wedged into my clay, and further emphasizes the aesthetic qualities of the surfaces and embedded meanings. The merging of materials further amplifies the landscape theme.

Of significance, both literally and figuratively, in my creative studio practice, is the material terracotta clay and its aesthetic qualities. This clay evokes memories of where I spent the majority of my childhood. The characteristics of the material when fired between low temperatures and mid-range suggest important themes such as the decay of childhood memories. As a result, the natural material embodies the message and allows for an engagement with the audience.

The different firing methods used are just as significant to the materiality of the works. Firing transforms clay to ceramic and preserves the qualities of the material and the marks made by the artist which become permanent and provides the object with longevity. Firing methods can elicit excitement and emotional response, from packing the kiln to firing, and the reveal of completed firing. Just as significant is withholding firing, which denies permanence. This would suggest that a work transgresses a traditional core ceramic value (Andreoletti 2019: 3).

The work discussed in this dissertation is primarily presented as completed objects. However, the process of making is inseparable from what is produced, and metaphors come to the surface. “The knowledge is not before or after the making, but with the making” (Siukonen (2011) in Falin 2009:1). Falin (2009: 2) continues to say artworks are part of the creative artistic process, and the articulation of the work follows, and this subjectivity is acknowledged in practice-led research (interchangeable with practice-based).

Author and Ceramist, Edmund de Waal asks “if theory is of value, why is this not more apparent to potters – and why are not more makers of ceramic art writing about their work?”

(de Waal 2000: 2). Falin (2009) suggests that this silence might be due to how hard it is to verbalise the “entangled issues of ceramics and making” and continues to emphasize that the “makers position is valuable and should be exploited” (Falin 2009: 3).

The works discussed in this dissertation are my explorative creative practice using materials and themes pertaining to landscape, memory, metaphor, and the vessel. The vessels are discussed together with the materials and tacit knowledge that is used in making them. Metaphors and personal memories are provided with descriptions that are subjective and informed by my worldview, therefore legitimise the heuristic inquiry.

Methodology and Methods

PBR is the overarching flexible methodology for this research and allows for integrated research methods that relate to both theory and practice. Using several complementary methods is more likely to provide the researcher a significant critical and holistic view than any single method alone (Gray & Malins 2004 31). For this reason, I use heuristics and art historical methods together with PBR. While systematic methods are helpful with my studio experiments with ceramic materials, creative methods allow for more spontaneous working (Gray & Malins 2004: 26). PBR will allow me to reflect in and on my actions and inform my cyclical artmaking (Gray and Malins 2004: 12). The action phase generates both primary and secondary data through making, observation and a qualitative survey of experimentation and reflection (Gray and Malins 2004: 98). I have documented this information in visual journals, glaze notebooks and photographs (Gray and Malins 2004: 102-109). Secondary data is sourced from books, journals, and online sources and provides the opinions of key writers, researchers and ceramic vessel makers.

The reflection phase entails a reflective analysis of the outcomes which should result in reflexive research and further action thus creating a cyclical process (Etherington 2004: 30). Critical analysis of both the artworks and the research will, both during the process and on completion, form a significant part of this research (Gray & Malins 55). Journaling, peer and supervisor input and exhibition of selected works, reflection and reflexivity all contribute to giving this research validity (Moustakas 1990: 39). While PBR emphasizes the importance of the results, attention must be given to the process and the methods used to explain how the research was conducted (Gray & Malins 2004: 60).

Heuristic inquiry is flexible, involves self-discovery and a non-linear research journey. The discoveries add value and reveal newer methods of conducting research (Ings 2011: 229). An important aspect of heuristic inquiry for me as a practitioner-researcher is the use of personal experiences which need reflection through self-examination for personal growth (Etherington 2004: 110). Furthermore, I must acknowledge the importance of using my tacit knowledge and intuition in making qualitative decisions about this research (Moustakas 1990: 28-29). The phases of heuristic inquiry and reflection assisted in my creative studio practice. They helped me in organizing my technical research about materials and art historical research to inform my ceramic vessel survey for chapter two.

Ings (2011: 229) points out potential challenges for the researcher using a heuristic approach, namely self-examination and the use of personal experiences which proved to be difficult for me as my creative processes included the use of personal memories. I was aware of this and incorporated the methodology and methods of PBR, heuristic inquiry and art historical research and used the following to guide this research.

Journaling

Ortlipp (2008:697) identifies a reflective journal as a tool that assists in keeping the research transparent. Two journals were used to assist my research, a reflective sketchbook and glaze notebook. The reflexive decisions from my creative studio practice which I gained through reflective journaling are discussed in chapter five. These journals were available for examination and were my primary research sources.

Visual Journals

- include sketches of ideas and reflections about my creative processes and keep track of how my processes and methods develop
- are used as an ‘off-loading’ tool (Gray & Malins 2004: 58) for reflective writing to help me interrogate my studio practice (Ings 2011: 229)
- allowed me to journal about personal memories and relationships to identify personal metaphors and enabled me to ‘search introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively’ to make meaning about significant experiences (Moustakas 1990: 11)
- are used to translate Xhosa poems

Glaze Notebook includes

- chronological documentation of materials, glaze recipes and firing temperatures before testing
- chronological documentation of materials and glaze results after firing with notes on alterations

This documentation helped me to identify developments in my studio practice to assist me in making decisions about my vessels, surface treatments and examine my cyclical artmaking to make sense of my findings.

Photography includes images of

- colours, textures, and forms of the natural landscape to aid as visual stimuli in studio
- studio experiments of materials to keep track of the changes that take place in the first and subsequent firings
- vessels during the making stages to plan how to continue building and treat the surfaces of my vessels

These photographs assisted my reflective writing, helped me to explain my creative studio practice, provided me with a catalogue of images that were used to assist me in making decisions about the setting up of my final exhibition

Experimentation

Qualitative experimental research includes testing in controlled spaces such as laboratory environments (Candy 2006: 18). I made use of the Ceramic Studio of the CVA to conduct my experiments because it provided the necessary equipment and safety precautions are observed. Using tacit knowledge together with research from secondary sources I expanded on what I already knew. I:

- tested ceramic materials individually and combined with found organic materials to replicate textures and colours I find in the landscape as well as to find suitable materials for my ceramic vessels.
- methodically recorded, evaluated and annotated experiments in order to be able to repeat them
- kept these at hand in my studio and used them as reference material

Art Historical Methods

The discussion of relevant ceramic vessels is conducted using formal and contextual analyses. In art, a formalist approach assists in discussing compositional elements such as shape, colour line and texture (D'Alleva 2010: 27). A contextual analysis helps to understand the historic and cultural settings during the time of that movement (D'Alleva 2010: 79). For my research, the formal aspects of the discussion focus on vessel form, surface, and content, while the contextual discussion focuses on the key developments in particular times in history.

This methodology helped me interrogate the creative studio practise of other artists as well as my own. Also, I used this methodology to discuss the historical relevance of metaphor in ceramic vessels. I gained a deeper understanding of the artists who inspire my creative practice and can critically evaluate the relevance of my research

Literature Review

To assist my understanding of both the theoretical and methodological aspects of PBR and heuristic inquiry, I have sourced appropriate texts. These, together with literature about both historical and technical aspects of ceramics as well as the use of metaphor in art are used to guide this research. The key texts used are discussed below.

Secondary sources of literature used in this research include published books and journals, as well as unpublished theses, catalogues, the studio handbook/manual and online journals. My journals and notebooks are primary sources and are used throughout this research. These are referred to in chapters three and four. They were included in my final exhibition but not submitted with this dissertation.

Practice Based Research: A Guide by Linda Candy (2006) has been an essential text which has given me a deeper understanding of PBR for the researcher-practitioner and the role of the vessels I produce as an integral part of my research. Carole Gray & Julian Malins' (2004) *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and design* offers a practice-based structure which assists me to map my research and creative studio practice, establish methodologies and methods, and present my findings. Both Candy (2006) and Gray & Malins (2004) point out the importance of the reflective practitioner in PBR which is an essential part my studio practice and emphasizes the integration of my theory and practice.

In *Managing Heuristics as a Method of Inquiry in Autobiographic Design Theses*, Welby Ings (2011) discusses heuristics as a qualitative method of problem-solving, whereby using a non-linear approach, the researcher obtains knowledge by intelligent and informal questioning and utilises informed subjectivity and tacit or embedded knowledge to solve complex and creative questions. Due to the subjective nature of my research as a ceramist with experience and knowledge gained through practice, this text is very pertinent. Furthermore, the case studies he includes give examples of this type of research with potential guidelines for me to tailor-make my research.

In *Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process* Michelle Ortlipp (2008) emphasizes the need for critical reflection and acknowledges the need of artists to have a space to off-load 'baggage'. She says constant critical self-reflection can help to identify and prompt changes in research methods when pre-planned ways of working are not successful (Ortlipp 2008: 699). The use of reflective journals allowed me to make my experiences, feelings, and thoughts visible and part of my research and creative studio practice. This also facilitated reflexivity (Ortlipp 2008: 695). This text, therefore, demonstrates the importance of my reflective journals and how journals are used to advance this research.

Literature relating to the historical survey of ceramic vessels and the use of metaphor in ceramic art helped me to locate studio traditions and developments in studio pottery.

South African born leading critical writer Garth Clark is a key author for my survey of ceramic vessels. Clark founded the Ceramic Arts Foundation in 1979 and was the Director until 2005. Apart from being an author, Clark and partner Mark Del Vecchio owned the Garth Clark Gallery in New York with branches in Los Angeles, London and Kansas City. Their gallery helped to shape the field of ceramics internationally, became a hub for artists and collectors and included a variety of works ranging from functional pottery to ceramic sculpture (Clark, G., Adamson, G., Strauss, C. & Burrows, K., 2012). Clark now owns a digital publication called C-File (cfileonline.org) where he and other critics continue to write about the radical changes in contemporary ceramic art and design. For these reasons, Clark's writing has been used extensively in this research.

In *The Potter's Art: a complete history of pottery in Britain* (1995) Clark provides a comprehensive history of British pottery dating from as far back as the Middle Ages. I selected chapters from the book that deal with the period from the early 20th C to the early 1990s. *Studio Pottery After 1955: from pots to vessels* in Jeffrey Jones' *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005* (2007) focuses on studio pottery after 1955 and what he calls the transition from 'pots to vessels' (2007: 170). These texts together with *Modern Pots: Hans Coper, Lucie Rie and their contemporaries* (2000) by Cyril Frankel informed my understanding of immigrant potters who introduced a modernist style to British pottery.

A Century of American Ceramics in the United States 1878-1978: a study of its developments (1979) by Garth Clark & Margie Hughto is a broad history of American ceramic art. Of specific interest to me is the rise of abstract expressionists such as Peter Voulkos and Paul Soldner who pushed the boundaries of vessel making far beyond the utilitarian. *Craft Horizons* (1941-1979) an America publication, now known as *American Craft* (1979–present), generated many discussions around this issue. Rose Slivka's *Peter Voulkos: a dialogue with clay* (1978) and *The New Ceramics Presence* (1961) helped to analyse the impact of Peter Voulkos and his students in America.

Annie Carlano's *Contemporary British Studio Ceramics* (2010), Garth Clark, Glen Adamson, Cindi Strauss and Keelin Burrows' *Shifting Paradigms in Contemporary Ceramics: The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection* (2012) and Kevin Petrie & Andrew Livingstone's *The Ceramics Reader* (2017) all offer selections of essays by a diverse range of writers such as practitioners, critics, historians, and gallerists. These offer a contemporary opinion on both historical and contemporary discourse.

Metaphors we live by (1980) by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson assisted in understanding how language and experience can be used as tools to understand universal concepts. June Raby's *Material, Memory, Metaphor-Convergence of Significance in the Ceramic Vessel* (2015) thesis was useful for my discussion of metaphor and the vessel as a holder of metaphorical meaning. Sophie Phillips' *Metaphors with Clay: Embodying the Maker in the Made* (2010) gave me a better understanding of how material and the vessel can carry metaphorical meaning.

To deepen the understanding of my practical engagement with my art making and materials I have been assisted by literature pertaining to materiality. In *(Im)Materiality: On the Matter of Art* (2008), Amanda Du Preez discusses the importance of the ‘stuff’ that art is made of. In addition to a focus on the materials, Agustina Andreoletti’s *Performative Raw Clay Practices and Ceramic Firing Techniques* (2019), discusses clay related artistic methods as well as the use of varied firing techniques. In *Connection to materiality: engaging with ceramic practice* (2009) Priska Falin explores materiality and practice. This text has assisted me in understanding how engagement with ceramic materials can become aesthetic experience therefore adding value to the artists’ life.

Christina Mills’ *Materiality as the Basis for the Aesthetic Experience in Contemporary Art* (2009) becomes important to understand the relationship between the audience and the viewer and further asserts that the art objects come from material experience.

Technical information was sourced from Frank Hamer and Janet Hamer’s 2nd edition *The Potters Dictionary of Materials and Techniques* (1986), an invaluable reference book for studio potters. The alphabetical layout with cross-referencing makes it easier to access information about all aspects of ceramics, including ceramic materials and specialized technical process which are particularly important in this research. To supplement the information about ceramic faults, I consulted Harry Fraser’s (1986) *Ceramic faults and their remedies*.

Useful in this research are more contemporary ways of working with clay, such as additives in the clay body are demonstrated in Josie Warshaw’s *The Complete Practical Potter* (1999), Anne Lightwood’s *Working with paperclay and other additives* (2000) and Marilyn Scott’s *The Potter’s Bible: an essential illustrated reference for the beginner* (2006). Additionally, the ceramic art journals, *Ceramics Southern Africa* (RSA), *Ceramics Monthly* (USA), *Ceramic Review* (GB), supply the most current technical information and feature articles on ceramic artists by practitioners, historians and critics.

In this chapter, I have situated the theoretical frameworks, set out the parameters of methodology and methods, outlined the key texts that were used to conduct this research and expand my knowledge of techniques, art historical content relating to ceramic vessels, artists and their philosophies.

Chapter Three

Introduction

The purpose of this historical survey of 20th C studio potters is twofold. Firstly, in order to gain insights about the roots of studio ceramics, I select some of the most well-known 20thC British studio potters and by looking at examples of their work and philosophies, I identify commonalities and differences in their work and note how the emphasis on vessel making shifted from utilitarian ‘pottery’ to ‘ceramics’. In examining this work, I also note the roots of the basis of the curriculum and ethos of the Ceramic Studios at the University of Natal (now Centre for Visual Art). Secondly, I identify American studio potters whose philosophies and alternative approaches to vessel making and non-utilitarian vessels have directly influenced my work.

The reasons of focusing on high fired and glazed ceramics have been explained in the background and chapter one. My attention will be on form, surface treatment and function of the vessels. This will include observations of changes in the work of vessel makers who initially emphasized the traditional descriptors of form, namely foot, body, shoulder, neck and lip and their use of utilitarian glazes as a surface covering.

The terms pottery, ceramics, function (functional) and utilitarian (utility) have been used over the decades to indicate how ceramists and historians were interpreting the developments that occurred. In this research I am guided by Austin’s (2016) observation that utilitarian objects are vessels which are ‘quickly made, inexpensive to buy, and serve a common everyday household purpose’ (2016: 6). Whereas functional can serve both a practical and aesthetic beauty. As Howard Risatti states function is “that which an object actually does by virtue of its maker, in order to fulfil a purpose” (Risatti 2007: 24). In this research Risatti’s definition largely applies to ‘gallery’ objects and the terms pottery and ceramics are used interchangeably. However, generally speaking utilitarian vessels are referred to as pottery and functional as ceramics. For the studio potter these objects are not necessarily made quickly or inexpensive, but they are made for everyday household use.

In his study of vessel making as an art form, Clark (1995: 6-7) identified four kinds of makers from the first ‘rudimentary bowls’ of the Stone Age to those of the intellectually ambitious art ceramics of the late 20th C. His rationale for this was that each group had its

own identity, resources, status, methods of operation, and aesthetic goals. Whilst I am aware that as a vessel maker and a ceramist, the roots of my tradition go back to the earliest vessel makers and are from many continents, the focus of this research is on the group that he identifies as the ‘studio potters’. I am also aware, as Clark (1995:7) points out, that styles and movements overlap, often evolve simultaneously and though they might die out, are sometimes revived again. Nevertheless, I feel that his categorisation is both logical and useful and will employ this in my discussion of British studio ceramics of the 20th C.

The studio potters emerged in the early 20th C and can roughly be divided into three distinct phases. The first group, ‘The Traditionalists’, who were influenced largely by early Chinese stoneware and British slipwares, lasted from about 1910 to the mid-1960s. Three potters, Bernard Howell Leach (1887-1979), William Staite Murray (1881-1962), Michael Cardew (1901-1983), were the dominant figures who, with their roots in traditionalism, together with their followers established the grounding for the studio potters (Clark 1995: 134).

From about 1950 to 1970, the impetus for change came mainly as a result of the influence of Lucie Rie (1902-1995), Hans Coper (1920-1981) and Ruth Duckworth (1919-2009), three refugees from Europe, and resulted in the second phase, that of ‘The Modernists’ (Clark 1995: 134).

Clark (1995:134) refers to the last group as ‘The Post Modernists’, although he says this is not a stylistic reference but rather the point at which Modernism began to lose its weight. This group were the most diverse, eclectic, and experimental. The studio potters in this category include Jacqueline Poncelet (b. 1947), Alison Britton (b. 1948), Elizabeth Fritsch (b. 1940) and Carol McNicoll (b. 1943).

I will then discuss the work of organic vessel maker Ewen Henderson (1934-2000) to emphasize the influence his work has had on my studio practice and vessel making. I have identified three American studio potters whose philosophies, the processes of vessel making, surface treatment and association with the landscape have largely inspired my studio practice. They are Peter Voulkos (1924-2002), Paul Soldner (1921-2002) and Wayne Higby (b. 1943).

British Studio Potters

The Traditionalists

Most studio potters came from upper-middle-class families and most had tertiary education in fine arts (Clark 1995: 134). The Traditionalists, however, strived for the life of the self-sufficient rural potter. They believed in truth to materials and mined local deposits and mixed their clays and glazes (Clark 1995: 136). Of interest in this research is their philosophy and ethos of making utilitarian wares which were incorporated into the Natal University syllabus and used as a model for many potters in SA who set up their studios. At the forefront was Bernard Howell Leach who was known internationally as the father of British pottery.

Leach was born in Hong Kong and moved to Japan where he lived until he was ten. Leach and his family moved to the United Kingdom where he received his tertiary training under Henry Tonks at the Slade School of Art, London (1903), and etching under Frank Brangwyn at the London School of Art (1907). Interested in Japanese arts and culture, in 1909 he went to Japan to teach etching to explore arts, crafts and learn ancient Japanese methods of throwing, brushwork, and firing kilns. (Clark 1995: 147, Cooper 2002, Lark 2013). His holistic approach to art and life was influenced by his lived experiences and influences in the East and West (Cooper 2002: 6).

Leach was a member of the Shirakaba along with Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961) and Shōji Hamada (1894-1978). They were a group of young writers and artists dedicated to preserving traditional Japanese art, craft, and folk art through the Mingei movement (Leach 1967, Clark 1995: 147). Mingei developed a theory based on a set of ‘criterion of beauty’ for handmade folk crafts for everyday use. Crafters worked in groups to make objects that would support their daily living. Craft pottery was significant as a carrier for the highest spiritual and aesthetic philosophies (Kikuchi 1997, Manners 1990: 174). When Leach returned to the UK, he opened the St. Ives Pottery (1920) where he taught and practiced following the Mingei philosophy. Leach introduced raku and wood firing kilns which he had learnt about in Japan (Cooper 2002: 11).

St. Ives pottery was one of the first such studios. Before that, pottery studios were found in institutions such as the Royal College of Art (RCA) with hired throwers from the industry



Figure 1: Bernard Leach, *Leaping Salmon* (1931). Stoneware, oxidised, matte white bracken ash glaze with iron brushwork. 127/8 × 61/8 in. (32.7 × 15.5 cm). York Art Gallery; © The Estate of Bernard Leach. Donated to York Art Gallery, by Eric Milner White (1887-1963): Milner-White Collection (York Art Gallery and BBC: 2014)

in Stoke-on-Trent (Cooper 2010: 280-281). St. Ives became an important hub for studio potters and Leach employed students as apprentices, amongst whom were Michael Cardew who joined in 1923 and others such as Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie and Norah Braden who in turn set up their studios (Clark 1995).

The Potter's Book (1940), known as 'The Bible' by aspiring potters, reflects Leach's account of English slipware, stoneware, Oriental porcelain and Japanese raku (Clark 1995: 151, de Waal 2003: 9). In his essay *Towards a Standard*, he offers guidelines for standards for making pottery. *Leaping Salmon* (1931) (fig.1) would be an example of what Leach would have regarded as a well-designed pot. The 'vertical lines emphasizing growth' and 'horizontal lines showing rest' in the rippling water. 'The diagonal lines are for change' and can be seen in the body of the salmon. 'Curves for beauty' are seen in his painterly strokes and in the gently curving form of the body of the vessel. The vertical lines frame the image of the leaping salmon and water ripples which demonstrate a Chinese influence. The vessel has a wide base for stability. It narrows to the rim to give the pot elegance, and the rounded lip is

emphasised with a band of colour echoing the vertical lines on the pot (Leach 1940: 23-24).

Leach glazed the pot with his bracken-ash glaze (York Art Gallery and BBC: 2014). A key ingredient in the glaze is ash which is made from burnt natural materials such as trees or shrubs (Cooper 1980: 8-9). Wood ashes vary and are historically used to act as a flux in glazes for porcelain and Oriental stoneware's and present subtle colours in reduction (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 338).

Of particular historical significance for this research was his use of ash glazes. Ditchburn was an admirer of Leach's Anglo-Oriental aesthetic which included ash glazes, evidence of this is the number of glaze recipes from Ditchburn's teaching time which are available in the Ceramics studio handbook/manual for students to replicate. Ditchburn was also an avid reader of Leach's writings and in her lecturing referred to *The Potter's Book* (Watt 2016: 6).



Figure 2: William Staite Murray, *Motet for Strings*, 1937–39, iron glaze, incised and brushed decoration of three-stringed instruments in blue, brown and white. $19\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$ in. (50.3 × 28.2 cm). York Museums Trust.

William Staite Murray studied ceramics at Camberwell and by 1919 when he set up his studio in Rotherhide, he had already participated in several mixed media exhibitions and by the time he met Leach in 1921, he was producing quality work. When he visited St. Ives, Leach and Hamada gave him invaluable technical knowledge about kiln firing. Hamada also helped Staite Murray with making foot rings and holding a paintbrush in an Oriental manner (Clark 1995: 140). Leach and Staite Murray's friendship did not last long due to professional disputes about a pottery teaching post and their philosophies about the pot as a utilitarian vessel. Staite Murray surrounded himself with painters and sculptors and was a member of the *Seven and Five Society* (1927), an elite group which included Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell. Staite Murray exhibited in prestigious galleries known for primarily showing paintings

and as a result, his prices were much higher than any ordinary pottery (Clark 1995: 141).

Staite Murray was initially idolized by the critics, as his work rapidly transformed into a language of its own. He made making one-off ceramic objects for the gallery. He received favourable reviews for his exhibitions, held both with painters and sculptors and one-person shows. This gradually changed after the publication of *A Potter's Outlook* (1928), an essay by Leach in which he argued that the 'utilitarian' pot was a more ethical pot than the 'art' pot. This coupled with the Depression which led to people questioning the prices Murray was asking for his work and a growing conservatism resulted in less favourable and more critical reviews with Charles Marriott asking if Staite Murray's enthusiasm made him forget that 'a pot is just a pot' (Clark 1995: 142).

Interestingly, both Leach and Staite Murray used the classical vase form though with different intentions. For Leach, the utilitarian function dictated the design and purpose whereas Staite Murray did not see pottery as crafts-based manufacture of vessels for them to be used for food or liquid. For him, the pot symbolised the essence of life itself. *Motet of Strings* (1937-39) (fig. 2) sits on a foot-ring, has a belly with evident throwing rings, shoulders, a neck and round lip. The most striking aspect of this pot, beside the painterly

brushstrokes, is its careful placement of the design of the string instrument on the belly and neck. Staite Murray's work was described as not having the same easy line of grace as Leach's but has greater potential energy (Clark 1995: 141). Compared to Leach's Chinese influenced delicate brushstrokes, Staite Murray's are vibrant and echo the acoustic reverberation seen in paintings such as Georges Braque's *Mandora* (1909-1910) (Tate 2012). Titling his work as a painter would set him apart from other potters during the time. Unfortunately, just as he was starting to make his important work, he faced increasingly hostile criticism (Clark 1995: 142). In 1939 Staite Murray was visiting in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and was stranded due to the outbreak of World War II and only returned to his studio Britain in 1957. In 1958 he held a successful exhibition in the Leicester Galleries of his surviving work from the thirties. This revived interest in his vessels and his philosophy that pottery traditions should be re-interpreted instead of merely revived, and that pottery as a discipline should reflect contemporary issues and that 'practicality was unimportant: the forms are abstractions and as such readily contemplated as pure form' (Stair in Adamson, Droth & Olding 2017: 40).

Further cementing his importance and acknowledging his work was the 1984 exhibition dedicated to his life's work organised by the Crafts Council, the Cleveland County Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, with an essay written by Malcolm Haslam (Clark 1995: 144).

Michael Cardew's work, much like Staite Murray's was often poorly appreciated and misunderstood. Cardew was interested in and exposed to pottery from a young age as his father was an admirer and collector of the work of Edwin Beer Fishley (1832-1912), a prominent peasant potter making traditional slipware. He attended classes at Branton pottery in the summers of 1921-22 (Drexler-Lynn 1990: 49). However, unlike Leach and Staite Murray, Cardew did not study fine arts but read classical literature and philosophy at Oxford. His passion for pottery remained and he took up an apprenticeship at the St Ives pottery (1923-26). During this apprenticeship, he acquired technical skill and benefited from the many debates about pottery with Leach and other apprentices which shaped his aesthetic appreciation of the vessel.



Figure 3: Michael Cardew, *Teapot with Metal Handle*, ca. 1932. Earthenware. 10 x 15 x 10 in. (25.4 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm.). Image [online] available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/michaelcardew/winchcombe-teapot-with-metalhandleUBR4enriK0Tb93uuIrHpiQ2>



Figure 4: Three slip-decorated moulded dishes in Ceramics teaching collection dated 1997 by Juliet Armstrong.

Cardew wanted to set up a studio where he was able to source all his clay and other materials locally and opened Winchcombe pottery Gloucestershire (1926-1945). *Teapot with metal handle* (1932) (fig. 3) is an example of a simple, well-designed utilitarian vessel inspired by traditional English slipware (Jones 2017: 180, Clark 1995:154). The round pot has two handles and a well-positioned spout to facilitate pouring the hot liquid. It is decorated with slip-trailed flora and fauna and covered with a thick opaque earthenware lead-based glaze (Whiting 2009: 9). The use of slip with its spontaneous design and lively sgraffito on the lid enhances the form and results in decoration that critic Eric Gill called ‘exuberance of the workman’ (Clark 1995: 156). Charles Marriot wrote (*The Times*, 1931) that Cardew had managed to lift the status of slipware and present it as a conscious art without removing its character association with utility (Clark 1995: 156). Cardew’s slipware was unlike that of his predecessors. This is the type of well-designed teapot with an aesthetic and utilitarian design that I became aware of in

the teaching collection in the Ceramic Studios (fig. 4). The lead-based glaze, coupled with the wood-fuelled kiln it was fired in, created the orange speckled surface and gave the pot an impenetrable and durable surface (Watt 2010: 25-26). These lead-based glazes (although altered for safety reasons), a study of ceramic materials, utilitarian design principles and practicalities, as well as a variety of methods of decoration such as slip trailing and sgraffito, are still part of our Ceramic syllabus.

Cardew left Ray Finch in charge of Winchcombe to open Wenford Pottery. As with St. Ives, these and other potteries became important spaces that trained many apprentices and

welcomed potters from around the world, for example, South African potters Esias Bosch and Hyme Rabinowitz (Watt 2016: 29).

In 1940 Cardew moved to manage an unsuccessful pottery project at Achitoma College after which he moved to Vume, Ghana with his student Clement Kofi Attey where he set up a pottery working with local materials. This lasted until 1948 and when he returned to Britain, he exhibited pots made in Vume which were arguably the most beautiful pots he had made in his career (Clark 1995: 157). Cardew was profoundly indebted to the art and culture of African countries because it was there where he found himself restored and making good pots (Harrod 1989: 157).

As with Leach, his lectures abroad and writing played an especially important role in the dissemination of his ideas. His book *Pioneer Pottery* (1969), a manual for the potter which is a blend of philosophy, geology, craft, and art gave him a wide following of aspirant potters (Clark 1995: 158). The BBC film *Mud and Water Man* (1974) about his years in Abuja further enhanced his reputation both as a teacher and remarkable potter.

These three notable potters each offered something unique to the history of Ceramics. For Staite Murray ‘the pot symbolized life itself’ (Clark 1995: 141), and he described the studio potter as a modern artist who should engage in a cohesive art world. He emphasised that pottery should not be shown as a single entity but should be seen alongside sculpture and painting (Stair in Adamson, Droth & Olding 2017: 40). Although Leach’s work did not develop the same individuality as Staite Murray’s and Cardew’s, he was a role model and mentor of some of the finest studio potters of the 20th C. Clark (1995:154) maintains that Leach encouraged the studio potter to be self-confident about their work and insisted on a high standard of ceramic literacy for both maker and the viewer. Although they were inspired by similar ceramic traditions their personal philosophies developed differently. Staite Murray made objects for exhibition while Cardew mainly made for practical use and would have felt that aesthetic followed naturally. Leach however made two distinct types of ware which he described as ‘standard’ and ‘personal’ ware. Standard ware was production line and the personal were more special once-off pieces (Clark 1995: 158).

Leach’s Anglo-Oriental aesthetic was the foundation for many studio potters in SA. Watt (2016) reaffirms what Clark wrote in 1974, ‘that South African potters had become totally

preoccupied with Leach' (2016: 55). As a result, it took a long time to shift from this aesthetic and it made it hard for some potters to embrace the radically different work that was being produced in other parts of the world. At first this was also the case in the academic institutions such as ours but because there was more exposure to (and appreciation of) firstly the Modernists and then the Americans, producing more exciting experimental work. Examples of the British Modernists and American studio potters are discussed further in this chapter. An increasing appreciation of the local pottery traditions occurred in our Ceramic Studios as a result of the research work of lecturers, Calder, Armstrong and Juliette Leeb-duToit and is also reflected in the works produced by some of the students.

A seminal event in 1952 was the *International Conference of Craftsmen in Pottery and Textiles* held in Dartington Hall, Devon. Leach was one of the organizers and it attracted 110 delegates from around the world who exchanged information about their craft through demonstrations, lectures, and an exhibition (Watson 1997: 23, Jackson 2017). An exhibition held at the same time as the conference was organised by the British Crafts Council (Clark 1995, Watt 2016). Amongst the exhibitors were Lucie Rie and Hans Coper whose work stood out as being very different from the rest. Critics were beginning to question the contemporary relevance of Leach's aesthetic vision and Robert Melville wrote in a review of the exhibition *Architectural Review* in which he commented

'Only the stoneware of Hans Coper and porcelain of Lucie Rie remains outside the prevailing atmosphere of rural quietism... They alone make the point that the whole exhibition was intended to make. That the artist-craftsman is not necessarily an anachronism in our time, that it is not impossible for him or her to be, so to speak, with us' (Clark 1995: 167).

This ushered in the move from the Traditionalist era to a Modernist one.

The Modernists

Functional and traditional pottery thrived in the fifties and sixties, however, in Britain it was no longer Leach's aesthetic that dictated the standard and more individuality became evident in the functional ware of many of the young ceramists.

In the sixties the demand for handmade ware grew as a result of several factors, one being the Utility Scheme of 1942 where factories were only permitted to make white wares for the domestic market. Studio potters could apply for permits to make handmade ware and this was sold at the best department stores, thus expanding their market. Further exposure for the

studio potters was created by well-attended events, such as the Festival of Britain in 1951 and 'Ceramics for the Home' in 1952 (Clark 1995: 166, McLaren 2017: 469).

Art education also played a role in the growing demand for these wares. It was revised and expanded to allow ceramics to become part of the university academic programmes for degree purposes. This afforded access to arts education, validated the value of ceramics as a university qualification, removed the idea that artmaking was a private and a middle-class occupation and provided a new structure for studio pottery. In 1963 Harrow School of Art introduced a two-year vocational course to train production potters who would be able to set up their studios and produce functional ware. Apart from the rigorous practical training, the course was structured to develop creative and individual thinking.

Both hand-building and throwing were taught and many non-traditionalist ceramists such as Gillian Lowndes and Mo Jupp were brought in so that the students would be exposed to a wider range of the possibilities of their medium (Clark 1995: 194). This was mirrored in the Natal University when CSA trained Malcolm MacIntyre-Read joined the Ceramics department in 1972. He specialized in hand-building, onglaze decoration such as hand-applied and silkscreen transfer techniques. He also specialized in industrial methods of press moulds and slip casting (Rall 2014: 27, Calder 2012: 65). While Ditchburn was more rigid and systematic in her teaching, MacIntyre-Read encouraged a more expressive approach to ceramics. Together they expanded the ceramics coursework to include the history of western ceramics and sculpture (Calder 2012: 65).

While all these factors in the UK played an important role and created the conditions for change in Britain, the aesthetic impetus came from Lucie Rie, Hans Coper and Ruth Duckworth. The three were refugees who fled Europe because of the Nazi persecution of the Jews and who introduced a new modernism to Britain. Unlike the Traditionalists they lived in the cities, were inspired by sculptors and painters such as Jean Arp, Constantin Brancusi, and Alberto Giacometti (Clark 1995: 166). All three played key roles as teachers and assisted their students to develop their sensibility for form, the importance of a well-finished pot and gaining an understanding of their ceramic materials (Clark 1995: 177, Frankel 2000). Rie was at Camberwell (1961-71), so was Coper (1962-1972) as well as the RCA (1966-1975), and Duckworth at the Central School (1959-1964) until she accepted a

teaching position at the University of Chicago in 1966 where she remained for the rest of her life (Carlano 2010: 66).

Their educational backgrounds are varied and interesting. Rie trained under Michael Powolny at the Kunstgewerbeschule (University of the Applied Arts) Vienna (1922-1926). Powolny was revered for his technical accomplishments and co-founded the Wiener Werkstätte with Josef Hoffmann. Although she enjoyed being taught by Powolny, her work was not influenced by him or the wares made at the Wiener Werkstätte. Rie's vision was defined from the start of her career and was strongly influenced by progressive architecture and the founders of the Modern movement in Austria (Clark 1995: 168, Carlano 2010: 127). Coper studied Textile Engineering in Dresden (Drexler-Lynn 1990: 53). Interestingly, Coper was never interested in textile engineering but sculpture and when he arrived in Britain he took on odd jobs and began to paint. When he joined Rie she encouraged him to improve his throwing and she sponsored Coper to attend Woolwich School of Art where he was briefly taught by Heber Matthews. He returned after only three days able to assist Rie in making tableware (Frankel 2000, Clark 1995: 174). Duckworth studied Art at the Liverpool School of Art (1939-1940, now Liverpool School of Art and Design), where she studied sculpture, drawing and painting (Carlano 2010: 66). In 1956 when she approached Rie about her interest in ceramics, Rie advised her to study ceramics formally. She attended Hammersmith (1955) but transferred to the Central School of Arts and Crafts (now Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design) because she felt that Hammersmith syllabus was too rigid for her taste. At the Central School, she found that exploratory glaze chemistry practice and innovation were encouraged (Drexler-Lynn 1990: 62, (Clark 1995: 185).

This brief discussion of selected Modernists examines the extent to which changes occurred within a reductivist and organic approach to ceramics. All three came from European modernism and made 'city' pots for urban interiors in contrast to the traditionalist's 'country' pots, and their aesthetics were informed by a wider range of influences (de Waal 2003, Frankel 2000). Rie and Coper were both reductivists in their approach, although Rie became more decorative in her later years (Clark 1995: 134). Rie was influenced by Bauhaus, modernism and architecture and her strong response to decoration enhanced her form which integrated the two (Clark 1995: 168). Coper was influenced by Egyptian, Cycladic, Neolithic and primitive African art which informed his response to form and an interest in how a pot can 'contain and reflect its maker and the human world it inhabits, to

contribute its minute quantum of energy' (Clark 1995: 176). Duckworth was significant in the development of free-form sensuality and organic abstraction, a style that became in part due to her influence, a major and reasonably cohesive movement, which was still active during the mid-'90s (Clark 1995: 134). I will briefly discuss a work that demonstrates her unconventional sense of style and rejection for symmetry, but my focus will be on the porcelain work she made in the US.

Rie, Coper and Duckworth established studios and worked in London. Before moving to Britain, Rie was a successful potter with her studio in Vienna (Heath 2006). She opened a workshop in her Albion Mews flat in London, initially making custom buttons for the couture market, and once-off pieces in her spare time (Clark 1995: 171). Rie was very fond of her Vienna apartment which was designed and furnished by modernist architect Ernst Plischke and so she shipped her Vienna furniture to Albion Mews (Heath 2006). Coper had a studio in Hammersmith (1958) before moving to the arts collective in Digswell (1959) (Clark 1995: 176).



Figure 5: Lucie Rie, *Rare Conical Porcelain Bowl*, 1938. Porcelain. Sgraffito and manganese. 4.25 x 7.88 in. (10.8 x 20 cm.). Image [online] available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/lucie-rie/rare-lucie-rie-conical-porcelainbowlfyHLEPGzq9AiLONUSOfuA2>

Rare Conical Porcelain Bowl (1938) (fig. 5) demonstrates Rie's Bauhaus influenced, modern reductive aesthetic (Carlano 2010: 127). It is a conical thrown vessel with thin walls and narrow base. A vertical sgraffito design was incised before glazing, the most striking visual aspect are the bands of manganese on the bottom near the base and on the rim where it flows into the glaze below it (Clark in Clark & Strauss 2012: 10). Leach criticised her thin walls and said they would benefit from clear throwing rings and thicker feet because they were not 'robust enough and lacked humanity' like the pots made by country potters (Rice & Gowing 1989: 105). Rie admired Leach and was aware that his approval would expand her British market. Leach's criticism briefly bruised her aesthetic, however, her thirteen

years of experience in studio pottery and Continental design would set her apart from British potters (Cooper 2012: 107, Clark 1995: 171).



Figure 6: Tableware set; two teacups with saucers and a milk jug, Lucie Rie and Hans Coper, c. 1955. Porcelain with manganese slip and sgraffito decoration. Cup: 5.5 cm (H), Saucer: 4.8 cm (D). Crafts Study Centre, Farnham. (Jones 2007: 120, Heath 2006).



Figure 7: Hans Coper, *Vase*. 1958. Stoneware, with black and white matte glazes. Acquisition details: Primavera, London. Location: The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery. Image [online] available: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O19247/vase-coper-hans/>



Figure 8: Lucie Rie, *Rare Uranium Yellow Bowl with Bronze Lip*, 1950–1960. 7.75 x 4 in. (19.7 x 10.2 cm.). Private Collection. Image available [online]: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/lucie-rie/rare-uranium-yellow-bowl-with-bronze-lip-aOzF0BSd3YbyTkLs7RnrVgQ2>

Rie came to the UK with a developed aesthetic which she continued to work with even when she collaborated with Coper making tableware (fig. 6). The bases of the teacups sit comfortably into the well of the saucers, whilst the design details of the set are carefully considered. The placement of the band of the sgraffito and manganese design on the outside of the cups and jug is reflected on the saucers. The white interiors are a good contrast making the vessels more elegant and clearly for use. Although Rie and Coper influenced each other and exhibited together for many years, their distinct styles are seen in Coper's *Vase* (1958) (fig. 7) and Rie's *Rare Uranium Yellow Bowl with Bronze Lip* (1950-60) (fig. 8).



Figure 9: Hans Coper, *Candlesticks at Coventry Cathedral*, (1962). H: 7 ft. Thrown and joined with a steel rod to attach to the floor. Image [online] available on SlideShare online: https://www.slideshare.net/oliver_1/int-o-the-light-catalogue-16705546

Rie continued to refine her curved bowl forms and gave *Rare Uranium Yellow Bowl with Bronze Lip* (1950–1960) a high foot, demonstrating that she took note of Leach's criticism. She expanded her glaze colour palette by creating brighter and shinier surfaces whilst once again, using a band of manganese on the rim, which became a characteristic of many of her works. Coper assembled works such as his *Vase* (1958) with thrown and often distorted components. In contrast to the brightly glazed and shiny surfaces of Rie's pots, Coper integrated layers of slip and oxides into the clay body which resulted in abrasive and matte surfaces. In building up his layers he worked on ceramics in the same way sculptors patinated metal to create multifaceted surfaces (Clark 1995: 174, de Waal 2003: 124).



Figure 10: Ruth Duckworth, *Untitled Vessel*. 1965. Stoneware, 48.26 x 25.4 cm. (19 x 10 in.). Image [online] available: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/ruth-duckworth/untitled-vessel-EqrI-l4D-baiXO6-ULZILQ2>

Coper's *Candlesticks at Coventry* (1962) (fig. 9) was the most important post-war public commission which would catapult his career (Frankel 2000: 19, Graves 2012: 4). They are six 7 ft. candlesticks constructed from individually thrown sections that are threaded onto steel rods and set into the floor. In doing so he resolved the issue of installing large ceramics works. Building them in segments Coper overcame the issue of size by fixing separately made parts into each other and thus achieved a vertical silhouette with horizontal groove accents. Three are situated on either side of the altar with the middle of each treated with black manganese and the others in white slip which created rich layers on the surface. They have a monumental presence which draws the viewers' eyes upward and echo the vertical structure of the building and frame the altar (Graves 2012: 5).

Duckworth was also concerned with the surface of her vessels. *Untitled Vessel* (1965) (fig. 10) has surface marks that were created during the hand-building. It exhibits a stone-like, matte, crusty surface due to the grog Duckworth wedged into her clay and is accentuated by the layer of uneven glaze (Clark & Strauss 2012: 303, Drexler-Lynn 1990: 62). This vessel demonstrates Duckworth's early response to organic abstraction and asymmetry (Clark 1995: 183). Birks (1999: 22) commented on Duckworth's individuality by saying her vessels do not appear to be a reaction to Leach and his philosophy but rather as though she did not concern herself with his traditionalist aesthetic.



Figure 11: Ruth Duckworth, Views of the mural *Earth, Water, and Sky*, 1967-1968. Glazed stoneware. 400 square feet. For the Geophysical Sciences Building at the University of Chicago.



Figure 12: Lucie Rie, *Small volcanic glaze vase*, 1970. Stoneware. W: 10 cm, H 19 cm. Image available [online]: https://www.olsengallery.com/exenlarge.php?work_id=10788&exhibitionid=526.

This is evident in the type of work she began to make when she relocated to Chicago. One of her biggest and noteworthy breakthroughs was the commission of *Earth Water and Sky* (1967-68) (fig. 11) (Raphael 1994: 44). The mural covers four walls and a ceiling and is created from abstract forms that suggest topographical imagery and cloud patterns using pictures of Mount Fuji and satellite images (Grimes 2009). It has earthy blue, ochre, and bronze tones and translucent white porcelain clouds suspended from the ceiling with fitted lights which shine on certain areas of the mural. This was a monumental achievement for Duckworth. She began to shift her ceramics from the plinth to an architectural structure and dealt with containment from a sculptor's perspective.

In 1970 Rie made *Small volcanic glaze vase* (fig. 12), thrown and altered vessel with an elongated body, like the long necks of her bottle forms. The



Figure 13: Left: Vase with fluted body, (1978), Stoneware with white pitted glaze. 22.5 cm (8 7/8 in.) high. Cat. No 313 Right: Vase with flaring lip and integral spiral, (1985). Mixed clays creating an integral spiral of colour and texture beneath the glaze. 26.5 cm (10 3/8 in.) high. Cat. No 314. Both impressed with artist's seal. In Phillips Auction Catalogue Important Design + Lucie Rie and Hans Coper: Potter and Artist (2018).



Figure 14: Left: Bottle with hourglass base and disc lip, (1965). Stoneware, black glaze. 13.5 cm (5 3/8 in.) high. Cat. No. 315. Right: Cup on stand with central disc, (1965). Stoneware, black glaze. 14 cm (5 1/2 in.) high. Cat. No. 316. Both impressed with artist's seal. In Phillips Auction Catalogue Important Design + Lucie Rie and Hans Coper: Potter and Artist (2018).

vessels demonstrate the rhythmic rise of clay on the potter's wheel and are covered in Rie's richly coloured and textured volcanic glazes (Whiting 2018: 10). The surface finishes of these vessels are important to me for two reasons, firstly Rie was raw glazing and achieved extensive volcanic surfaces. Secondly, for vessels such as *Vase with flaring lip and integral spiral* (1985) (fig. 13 far right) she used mixed clays to achieve spirals on the clay body beneath the glaze. The combination of these surface treatments on her vessels is what gave her the richly textured surfaces which were innovative at the time.

The synergy between Rie and Coper is demonstrated in how, while keeping the characteristics of the vessel form; base, body and lip, they have approached vessel making differently but with attention to the well-constructed forms. Where Rie has handled her material and construction more organically, Coper has a more mechanical aesthetic in *Bottle with hourglass base and disc lip* (1965) (fig. 13). His articulation is much bolder and breaks up the form, especially in *Cup on stand with central disc* (1965) (fig. 14). The shape, particularly the silhouettes, of these vessels became very iconic along with the vessels he made during the 1970s such as *Pots with bases* (1972) (fig. 15) (Clark 1995: 177). Additionally, he drew inspiration from sculptors and started to incorporate plinth-like bases for better stability.

Visually as well as structurally these bases are an integral component of the vessels, which together with their elongated necks formed elegant yet stable vessels. Critics started to regard them as sculpture rather than pots (Watt 2016: 19).



Figure 15: Hans Coper, *Pots with bases*, (1972) predecessors to the later Cycladic forms, 6" to 9" W

Duckworth developed a remarkable sense of form and made vessels where she would bisect and split the forms without losing her volume, an influence that is clear in the work of Ewen Henderson.

Untitled (Five Porcelain Forms) (1985) (fig. 16) are a group of minimalist wheel-thrown white porcelain cylinders and spheres with delicate translucent white blades anchored into the interiors and have the ‘gravitas of ancient Cycladic sculpture’ (de Waal 1999: 45). The coupling of the vessels and the interlocking flat blades

were interpreted by Cooper (2009) as metaphors for relationships. Interestingly Duckworth never made identical vessels and even when she was at Hammersmith, she found the concept of a traditional vessel with a foot, middle and lip problematic. While challenging the spatial notions of a vessel she also opened the interior for the viewer to engage with (Clark 1995: 185-186, Carlano 2010: 66).



Figure 16: Ruth Duckworth, *Untitled* (Five Porcelain Forms) 1985. Porcelain; thrown, altered, with slab elements; ranging in size from 6 x 3.5 x 3 in. to 8 x 7.5 x 3.5 in. Image [online] available on Digital Crafts Council Online: <https://www.craftcouncil.org/post/modernist-forms-ruth-duckworth>



Figure 17: Ruth Duckworth, *Untitled*, 1999. 16" H x 18" wide x 16" deep, Porcelain

In her later works, Duckworth never lost the organic sensibility she developed while working in Britain. Instead of the translucent blades, she folded the rims inward into the vessel, thereby extending the rim down the body of the vessel as she did in *Untitled* (1999) (fig. 17). She treated the surface of the vessel in layers, by scratching through the surface when

leatherhard, applied and rubbed oxides into the grooves to build up the surface. She achieved a wide variety of earthy tones as a result of firing in a gas kiln with a reduction atmosphere (Collins 1969: 19).

The Modernists made an immeasurable impact on British studio pottery. Rie's advancement of raw glazing and textured glazes was achieved through her meticulous journals and discipline. She had a clear understanding of glaze technology and paid attention to how she used materials to develop cost-effective studio practice (Heath 2006, Cooper 2012: 48-49).

John Houston said,

‘the intuitive evolution of her work tests some of the Modern Movement’s primary convictions about new forms...and about volume expressed as consistent and coherent space. The persistence of her intuitions about the architectural basis of Modernism carried her work almost unscathed through the overflowing charm of Viennese eclecticism, and eventually survived the powerful influence of Bernard Leach’ (Clark 1995: 174).

Elizabeth Fritsch said, Coper’s ‘teaching had the same integrity and strength as his pots; graceful, direct, precisely and sensitively tuned...’ (Birks 1983: 61). He always understood the nature of pottery, in an essay Douglas Hill reflected that Coper ‘never sculpts, he makes pots. In the process, he is enlarging his concept and ours of the essential “potness” of a pot (Clark 1995: 178). Duckworth’s vessels were her interpretation of the ‘ebb and flow of the natural world’ and she is celebrated as a modernist sculptor (Cooper 2009). She escaped what Jones (2007: 144) defined as ‘potting in a vacuum’ that was happening in Britain and her studio practice flourished once she settled in America where other potters were making ceramics at on architectural scale (Clark 1995: 185).

During that time, Peter Voulkos and Paul Soldner were amongst the most innovative and influential studio potters in America (Fisher 1978, Slivka 1961). However, back in Britain Duckworth’s legacy was cemented in ‘The Later Organic School’ which included ceramist Ewen Henderson.

The Later Organic School and Ewen Henderson

As mentioned earlier, education played an important role in the shifts that occurred in ceramics in Britain with several art schools offering alternative views to those of Leach and his followers. At the Central School of Art Dora Billington had a broader historical approach and included European ceramics. There was no hierarchy of media and sculptors were invited to teach. This encouraged a non-traditional approach to crafts and most in the

ceramics department had studied painting. Gilbert Harding Reed took over 1956 and he felt that he was educating artists that worked in clay rather than training potters. For a while, a Central School 'style' developed, heavily influenced by Picasso's ceramics, where the pots were covered in drawings. However, these low fired wares were eventually replaced by work that was fired to stoneware, sometimes unglazed or only partially glazed. Nearly all the artists in this so-called 'Organic School' had some association with the Central, one of whom, as discussed in the previous section, was Duckworth.

An important shift in the work of Duckworth which influenced the work of Ewen Henderson (1934-2000) was her rejection of symmetry which had been the basis of studio pottery. The volumes of her vessels were split into halves and the rims were sometimes jagged and uneven.

During the 1960s and 1970s, artists such as Mary Rogers, Geoffrey Swindell and Colin Pearson started to embrace the organic aesthetic. The work that is known as the 'later organic school' became more decorative and was largely inspired by nature. This work generally lacked the 'boundary-pushing unease' (Clark 1995: 188) of the early organic work although Ewen Henderson was a notable exception. I include Henderson here because his work has directly influenced my studio practice and because he was one of the least orthodox potters in Britain between the late 1970s to 1990s, as recognised by Christopher Reed (Clark 1995: 190).



Figure 18: Ewen Henderson, *Bird Dish*, 1980. H: 27 cm. Catalogue no. 16. Image[online]: <http://www.galeriebesson.co.uk/constructedclay.html>

Henderson achieved the earthy tones in his work by using a limited colour palette and handled his materials spontaneously by pinching and laminating clays and non-ceramic materials which resulted in patchy and craggy surfaces, such as *Bird Dish* (1980) (fig. 18) (Clark 1995, Dormer 1994: 42). It is a flat dish with uneven square edges displays a grid-like patchwork with volcanic glazes that appear to be inspired by Rie's surfaces. The edges



Figure 19: Ewen Henderson, *Dark Torso* (1986). Hand-built stoneware, H: 60 cm.



Figure 20: Ewen Henderson, *Footed Tea bowl*, 1990. Mixed laminated clays, 9 x 12 cm. Image[online]: <https://www.veniceclayartists.com/in-the-form-of-a-bowl>

of the patches are not clearly defined because the materials have merged during the firing, like the gradual cooling down of lava (Jones 2007: 194). The laminating creates tension in the materials which replicated what happens in the earth's crust (Reid 1991). This is also demonstrated in *Dark Torso* (1986) (fig. 19), however, the difference here is he handled the materials in a more organic way thus merging them more enhancing the organic nature of the vessel.

During his studies at Camberwell (1965-68), he was also influenced by Coper who often spoke to his students about 'the nature of form', it was ironic that Coper said 'form has nothing to do with silhouette' even though silhouette became such a strong element of his work (Clark 1995: 189-190). *Footed Tea bowl* (fig. 20) *Zig-zag Folding Form* (1990) (fig. 21) were both made with laminated clays. *Footed Tea bowl* retains the characteristics of the form of a foot and a bowl. *Zig-zag Folding Form* (1990) was made in slabs and included blotting paper, silicon carbide, wire structures and ceramic colours (Harrod 2010: 22).

Footed Tea bowl and Zig-zag Folding Form

(1990) demonstrate a shift from hollow vessel to an opening up of the form which suggests fragmentation, memory and metaphor (Boydell 2007). Crichton-Miller (2016) suggests that Henderson shaped his materials into metaphorical fragments reminiscent of rock formations, bone, flesh, and seascapes.

Henderson's open vessels explore the 'relationships of space, interlocking volume and contour and drawing as much on imaginary landscapes of the mind as places seen and felt'

(Whiting 2016). Additionally, his titles include words like ‘torso,’ ‘zig-zag’ and ‘bird’ which suggest subject matter associated with objects outside of ceramics.



Figure 21: Ewen Henderson *Zig-zag Folding Form*, 1990's. Laminated stoneware clays and paper, 39 x 52 x 29 cm. Photo Michael Harvey, courtesy of Erskine, Hall & Coe. Exhibition: *Gordon Baldwin & Ewen Henderson* at Erskine, Hall & Coe (3–23 November 2016) & *Gordon Baldwin & Ewen Henderson*, Eton College (11 May–10 October 2016).

Henderson's work demonstrates a versatile and innovative approach to materials. Like him, I am drawn to the transformative nature of ceramic materials, particularly the ability to transform into something else at every stage of wet to dry and firing. This change in material is a quality that I identified and hoped to emulate in my own cyclical art making.

The developments in his vessel making demonstrate his belief, that I share, that ‘form’ is not static, but something in flux, ‘from the energy of the initial making to the transmutation (a word he liked) in the kiln’ (Whiting 2018: 4). As with my vessels, Henderson's work is layered, in the making, visually, as well as conceptually. The forms are difficult to describe with descriptors usually used for utilitarian vessels. His surfaces, especially in *Zig-zag Folding Form* (1990) entice the viewer to journey through the textures and colours on and embedded in the surfaces. This was a significant consideration for some of my work especially the *Shard* installation which will be discussed in chapter four.

Post-Modernists

At the beginning of the 1970s, three generations of potters were active studio ceramists in Britain, The Traditionalists, The Modernists and The Post Modernists, and they all made a rich contribution to studio pottery. The Modernists were reaching the height of their careers, the Post Modernists, most of whom graduated from the RCA and worked simultaneously

with the Organic Movement, were emerging as a significant group. The Post Modernists fed off the culture high of the sixties, where artists were influenced by television programs, fashion, music, and journalism and as a result, their work was called irreverent and disrespectful to pottery tradition (Clark 1995: 192).

The Post Modernists were confident in their creative instinct and were convinced they could reinvent ceramic art. While freeing ceramics from both Leach's craft-based philosophy and the Modernist orthodoxy, they incorporated decoration, figurative imagery, literal and humorous subject matter. Many rejected the stoneware colours for the brighter, lower-fired, slip cast earthenware and were using industrial processes namely slip cast, printed transfers and flashy lustre overglazes. The traditional boundaries of high art and low art became blurred (Clark 1995: 193)

David Queensberry was appointed at the Royal College in 1959 and made changes to the syllabus. He expanded the design vision of the department, allied students to the progressive factories Rosenthal Porcelain Factory (Germany) and Bing and Grondahl (Denmark). He also noticed that students from art schools were pottery studio oriented, so he shifted the focus of the department from design towards a graduate course in ceramic art (Clark 1995: 193). Sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi was hired in the department. He was effective in encouraging the understanding of assemblage and collage by using images from contemporary glossy magazines and catalogues. The department produced students who critically contemplated their craft and it became an experimental hub. Queensberry disregarded the admission rules and accepted students into the programme with unconventional backgrounds, including Jacqueline Poncelet, Elizabeth Fritsch, Alison Britton, and Carol McNicoll, all of whom would shape British ceramic art for two decades.

The RCA classes between 1971-73 were eclectic. The graduate exhibitions were noted as the place to be for collectors, and they were supported by the new department head David Hamilton. With Hamilton's assistance, the faculty was a lively and experimental space for students. Victor Margie (secretary of Crafts Advisory Committee now British Crafts Council) was impressed by the RCA students and promoted their careers through exhibitions, catalogues and *Crafts* magazine. These students and other Post Modernists defined the new era of 'New Ceramics' (Clark 1995: 194).

Here I focus on selected RCA graduates, Jacqueline Poncelet, Alison Britton, Elizabeth Fritsch, and Carol McNicoll.

Poncelet graduated with a BA in Ceramics from Wolverhampton College of Art (1964-1969) and then M. A. Ceramics at RCA (1969-72). Britton studied at Leeds College of Art (1966-67), Central School (1967-1970) and RCA for an M.A. (1970-73). Fritsch studied the harp and piano at Birmingham School of Music & Royal Academy of Music (1958-1964), thereafter got an M.A. from RCA (1968-71). McNicoll who studied Fine Art at Leeds School of Art (1967-70), before attending at the RCA (1970-73), had previously worked as a machinist for fashion designer Zandra Rhodes and designed costumes for Roxy Music. This group of Post Modernists made vessels that were not utilitarian in the traditional manner. They referred to jugs, bowls, and teacups but they were meant for the gallery and not the kitchen. In doing so, they examined the relationship between ‘pottery’ and ‘ceramics’.



Figure 22: Jacqueline Poncelet, *Bowl*, 1976. Bone china. Depth: 14.50 cm, Height: 8.10 cm. The Curtain Foundation Gallery, V & A Museum. Image [online] available: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O19603/bowl-poncelet-jacqui/>



Figure 23: Jacqueline Poncelet, *Bowls*, 1976. Bone china. Unglazed. Depth: 10.90 cm, Height: 6.60 cm. The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery, V & A Museum. Image [online] available: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O19604/bowl-poncelet-jacqui/>



Figure 24: Alison Britton, *Stork Jug*. 1977. H 30 cm. Earthenware (Dormer, et al. 1985: 41)

the base and extends up to one side of the bowl and thus creating a sculptural piece. The taller vessel sits at a tilted angle and demonstrates a shift from the symmetry of utilitarian wares.



Figure 25: Elizabeth Fritsch, *Saxophone and Piano Duo*, 1978. Both vessels have been painted with similar pale green, brown, mauve, pink and white matte stoneware glazes. Depth: 10.30 cm, Height: 26 cm. Acquisition: Leeds City Art Galleries. Location: Ceramics Rm. 142, The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery. Museum number: C. 160&A-1979, Victoria and Albert Museum

Poncelet made paper-thin bone-china slip-cast vessels *Bowl* (1976) (fig. 22) and *Bowls* (1976) (fig. 23). Clark (1995: 195) raises an interesting point by mentioning that Poncelet was dissatisfied with the preciousness and fragility of her vessels. The surface design on *Bowl* (1976) consists of triangular and circular piercings with embossed lines which join the circles and the corners of the triangles. The outwardly flattened rim is thin with a sharp edge. The piercings and fragile nature of this vessel make it unsuitable for utilitarian use. In *Bowls* (1976) the smaller bowl does not have a traditional foot-ring but has an unconventional base that follows the curved form of

the base and extends up to one side of the bowl and thus creating a sculptural piece. The taller vessel sits at a tilted angle and demonstrates a shift from the symmetry of utilitarian wares.

Britton's earlier work consisted of vessels with faceted walls, with more linear, illustrative rather than painterly decoration that included bird motifs (Clark 1995: 196, Cooper 2010: 326). The surface of *Stork Jug* (1977) (fig. 24) has a carefully designed and placed linear image of a stork and a tree placed along the body and wide spout of the vessel (Hardy 2000: 60). The handle has become flat making it uncomfortable to hold, instead of the rounder handles made by The Traditionalists, in order to visually marrying the handle with the faceted form (Dormer et al. 1985: 41). Fritsch developed illusionary surface designs which often denied the volumetric quality of the vessel and this together with the foreshortening of her forms created what writer Philip Rawson described as 'spatial enigmas' (Clark 1995: 199-200).

Saxophone and Piano Duo (1978) (fig. 25) were inspired by her classical music training, coupled with her interest in geometry, composers and artists such as Johann Christian Bach and Kazimir Malevich (Houston 1991: 62, Galerie Besson 2008). The top of the vessel on the left is formed into a spout and is suggestive of the playing keys on a saxophone. The vessel on the right has a rhythmic pattern signifying the tonal structures found in music and her interest in synaesthesia (Clark 1995: 200). The geometric pattern on the vessel creates a sense of illusionary depth and makes the foreshortened vessel look bigger than it is.



Figure 26: Carol McNicoll, *Fan Bowl*, 1980. Painted with underglazes and fired to Earthenware. H 21.5 cm x D 37 cm. Purchased by the Crafts Council (P257) from the Francis Kyle Gallery. Photo: Stokes Photo Ltd.



Figure 27: Carol McNicoll, *Twig Fruit Bowl* (1983). Coloured slips and underglaze colours. H: 23 cm. Photo by Robyn Beeche. Image in Jones (2007: 161).

McNicoll was inspired by the faceted, glossy, and patterned Oribe wares (Harrod 2003: 16), to make *Fan Bowl* (1980) (fig. 26) with individually slip-cast fans which were reassembled into the shape of a bowl (Cooper 2010: 328). She used a similar bricolage process to construct *Twig Fruit Bowl* (1983) (fig. 27). McNicoll used found objects such as twigs and cloth and dipped them in slip to construct her vessel. The surfaces are painted with underglazes and slips. These non-ceramics related objects and cloths she used were unified by the repeated patterns and repeated objects (Adamson 2017: 336).

She uses the word ‘bowl’ in her titles to refer to pottery tradition and Clark (1995: 205) suggests that her approach to making and transfer decoration are sloppy, and he assumes she was confronting the ceramic tradition of good craftsmanship. This is because when working in the pottery tradition different criteria and aesthetics apply as opposed to work that is non-utilitarian or sculptural.

During the 1980s Britton made more angular forms with painterly strokes such as *Tall Blue and White* (1983) (fig. 28) which were reminiscent of American Action painting (Clark

1995: 198). The black and blue strokes are layered on an off-white surface, giving the vessel a lively energy as a result of the contrast of the fluid brushstrokes on the sharp edges (Clark 2001: 20, De Waal 1999: 78). Britton made the vessel in the likeness of a utilitarian jug, although it does not have a conventional handle or pouring spout; she does not pay attention to these design aspects which were important to the traditionalists. Additionally, this approach demonstrates a shift in her vessels where the forms become less conventionally utilitarian and the surfaces more abstract than illustrative.



Figure 28: Alison Britton, *Tall Blue and White* (1983). Earthenware. H 36cm (14 in.). (Dormer et al. 1985: 84-85).



Figure 29: Carol McNicoll, *Coffee Set*, 1991. Slip-cast Earthenware painted with coloured slips. 10 x 29 x 140 cm. Accession number: P6033/A-H. © The Maker Updated 2014.

During the 1990s, the provocative nature of McNicoll's work was thought to be in bad taste as it further rejected Leach-inspired pottery (Dormer 1994: 221). *Coffee set* (1991) (fig. 29) borrows the familiar coffee set from utilitarian pottery tradition while embodying a typical form of English 'eccentricity resembling British domestic knick-knacks' (Prest 2003: 8). Harrod (2003: 67) describes the set as overzealous with overwhelming surface decoration. She also points out that the set was made during a time when coffee sets were considered obsolete and

non-profitable and McNicoll could have been commenting on this. In an exhibition, McNicoll displayed the set as if it were for the kitchen table. She removed plinths from the gallery space, added wallpaper and furniture to reinstate 'the home, a context the cutting edge of the art world abandoned around 1945' (Harrod 2010: 21).

These Post Modernists now in their seventies, still make ceramics and contribute to ceramic art literature. Poncelet solidified her career by expanding and working with artists working in different media and on an architectural scale. Britton contributes largely with her critical writing and exhibition curation of ceramics and still exhibits with leading gallerists such as Adrian Sassoon.

The Post Modernists partly succeeded in creating what Peter Schjeldahl called ‘the smart pot’ which is ‘an academic object positing an imaginary academy, the brains of an imagery all-embracing civilization...so removed from innocence, so thoroughly implicated in every received notion of nature and culture, so promiscuous in means and open in its ends, that it is almost innocent all over again ...’ (Clark 1995: 192). Their ethos and academic studio training gradually expanded the visual vocabulary and studio processes to include the use of slip-casting and colourful low firing surface finishes such as engobes. These shifts were gradual, however due to the increase in access to materials and publications such as exhibition catalogues and journals, during the late seventies and into the eighties some South African studio potters were using manufacturing techniques used in the ceramics industry such as slip casting and transfer printing. Ceramists like Juliet Armstrong who was exposed to the work of The Post Modernists, and read for a diploma in Industrial Design in Ceramics and Glass Blowing at the Leister Polytechnic in England, also made use of the industrial techniques and used bone china to make sculptural vessels. She introduced these techniques and process to the teaching syllabus at the Ceramics Studios at the CVA (Calder 2012: 66).

The influence of British ceramics was felt throughout the world throughout the 20th C. The influence of the Americans was slower to infiltrate the Ceramics department; their ceramics were bigger, bolder and louder in colour. Although not all the American studio potters remained in the vessel tradition, they too were largely influenced by vessels. This is of significance to me because the universal image of a vessel and its ability to contain is a constant symbol in my work.

American Studio Potters

The history of American ceramics before the 1950s, whilst very interesting and has certain parallels with that of Britain, falls outside the scope of this study. Coplan noted (in Clark and Hugtho 1979: 137) what had begun in the 1950s had the effect of revolutionising the

approach to ceramics and ‘what was done in those days is now mainstream ceramics’. It is not possible to deal with this vast area of ceramic history in this research project. I have therefore restricted the focus of this chapter to the three American studio potters Peter Voulkos, Paul Soldner, and Wayne Higby, whose philosophies and alternative approach to vessel making and the ‘non-utilitarian’ vessel have had a profound influence on the work that I have produced during the course of this research project.

When Bernard Leach toured America in 1950 he commented that there was ‘no ceramic taproot’. Most American born potters and the Europeans who settled in America emulated the styles and processes from Europe and aesthetic remained largely European.

In the 1940s after a period in which a decorative ceramic sculpture aesthetic was dominant, a strong group of potters emerged. Some of them preferred the traditionalist’s aesthetic, whilst others such as Sam Haile pushed the boundaries and extended the vocabulary of both the vessel and the medium. Interestingly, Haile was a graduate from the RCA where he had studied under William Staite Murray. In the mid-1950s significant changes occurred when Abstract Expressionism and the Zen pottery of Japan with their disparate styles and ethos combined to produce something unique that shifted American ceramics to the forefront of world ceramics. A contemporary vocabulary emerged, particularly amongst the artists who were associated with Peter Voulkos and the Otis Art Institute

Peter Voulkos obtained his MA in Fine Arts from the California College of Art and Crafts (1952) and ran the Archie Bray Foundation with Rudi Autio until 1954. During that time two important things happened. Firstly, Leach, Hamada and Yanagi visited The Bray workshop during their US tour, and Voulkos was captivated by Hamada’s spontaneity and approach to wheel throwing in allowing the material to guide his throwing process (Drexler-Lynn 1990: 155, De Waal 2003). Secondly, Voulkos visited the New York School where he attended exhibitions by Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning and was immediately drawn to the large scale of the work and the performative brush marks. These coupled with his prior training in painting and printmaking, a period of studying music, and the ceramic work of the artists Miró, Chagall, Léger, Fontana and Picasso resulted in a radical shift in his work from functional ware to a breakthrough in the vessel aesthetic that placed Otis at the forefront of producing what was at the time regarded as the

most radical ceramics in the country. These occasions had a great influence on his work (Smith 2002).

Three pertinent developments occurred in his work during his time at Otis, which are significant and have influenced me. Firstly, he copied ceramics by Picasso only to realise that the painting on the surface ruins three-dimensionality, at the same time it allows the artist to rebuild the form using line and colour and so to distribute the climactic aspects of the form. Secondly, Voulkos's pots became more fragmented because they were assembled from separate parts. Third, he approached form differently by dealing less with the volume of the pot and more with the pot as mass. Although he retained the traditional characteristics;



Figure 30: Peter Voulkos, *Jar*, 1956. Stoneware; iron and cobalt slips and glazes, H 26in. Collection: Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. Photographer: Main Street/Lorenz. Prize-winner in the nineteenth Ceramic National exhibition (Slivka 1978)



Figure 31: Peter Voulkos, *Rocking Pot*, 1956. Colemanite wash and fired to stoneware. 13 5/8 x 21 x 17 1/2. Courtesy, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the James Renwick Alliance, and various donors and museum purchase. © Peter Voulkos. Image in (Clark 1992)



Figure 32: Peter Voulkos, *Untitled*, 1956. Stoneware with glaze, gas-fired, 20 x 14 x 15 in (50,8 x 35,56 x 38,1 cm). Collection of Ross and Paula Turk. Photo: schoppleinstudio.com/Voulkos & Co. Catalogue Project

foot, body and lip, his vessels were made from solid pieces that were shaped into sculptural bodies (Clark & Hughto 1979: 135). Although these developments are not chronological in his artmaking, they are evident and overlap in many of his vessels.

Jar (1956) (fig. 30) demonstrates influence from the Abstract Expressionists, painted with loose and uneven brushstrokes which Dormer (1994: 23) described as intuitive, defiant, anti-European and gutsy. It displays the beginnings of an approach to surface treatment that was approached differently but with the same vigour in the way he violently cut into the body of *Rocking Pot* (1956) (fig. 31). This is also loosely inspired by Fontana's sliced, punctured, and punched canvases (Drexler-Lynn 1990: 156).

Rocking Pot (1956) became an important vessel to me because he took a bowl form which he inverted to create a dome which inspired my approach to *Izinto ezincinane* (*small things*) (fig. 80). As mentioned before, Voulkos's work became more fragmented because he made his vessels out of many components. Instead of fluid units, *Untitled* (1956) (fig. 32) is rugged and built up in segments. The vessel is made up of a thrown central core, hand-built box-like slabs which make up the middle, then the thrown cylindrical neck reappearing at the top.

Jar, *Rocking Pot* and *Untitled* were all made in the same year and although very different vessels they demonstrate how he trusted his intuition, a critical aspect of my studio practice and art making. Voulkos said,

'When you are experimenting on the wheel there are a lot of things you cannot explain. You just say to yourself "the form will find its way" – it always does. That's what makes it exciting. The minute you begin to feel you understand what you are doing it loses that searching quality. You reach a point where you are no longer concerned with keeping this blob of clay centred on the wheel and up in the air. Your emotions take over and what happens just happens. Pottery has to be more than an exercise in facility – the human element, expression, it is usually badly neglected' (Clark & Hughto 1979: 135).



Figure 33: Peter Voulkos, *Little Big Horn*, 1959. Stoneware with slip and glaze, gas-fired, 62 x 40 x 40 in. (157,48 x 101,6 x 101,6 cm). Oakland Museum of California, Gift of the Art Guild in memory of Helen Schilling Stelzner. Photo, schoppleinstudio.com /Voulkos & Co. Catalogue Project

Intuitive working was not only an important aspect of his wheel throwing but also of his vessel construction, as is mine. This is a doctrine he shared with his students, one of whom was Paul Soldner who will be discussed below. As a result of this spontaneous approach, his vessels demonstrate an organic transformation from the wheel to fragmented pieces to a whole growing form (Perchuk 2007: 11). This is demonstrated in vessels such as *Little Big Horn* (1959) (fig. 33) and *Rondena* (1958) (fig. 34). They are constructed in a similar manner with wheel-thrown and slab components with a central structural device to support the components he added.

Little Big Horn (1959) appears more architectural and due to the sharp edges, which are emphasised by the

sectioned surface colouring. The punctured holes give the vessel a mechanical presence, while *Rondena* (1958) appears to be more organic due to the curved forms that have been paddled into place. Although Voulkos built his smaller vessels in the same way as the big ones he said,

‘the larger the starting mound of clay, the softer it has to be, so the more water it contains. That meant the drying time was longer until it got to the leathery state and I could handle it, push it, pull it, find my cracks and holes. Knowing when the formed clay has dried enough—cured to just the right leathery consistency, hard enough so it does not collapse but still soft enough to be malleable, able to withstand more handling, plus the weight of more clay forms—is crucial’ (Voulkos in Slivka 1995: 50).



Figure 34: Peter Voulkos, *Rondena* (alternate views), 1958. Stoneware. Paddled and constructed wheel-thrown elements, brushed cobalt, iron, and white slips, epoxy, 62 x 37 3/4 x 32 1/2 inches. (Clark 2017)



Figure 35: Peter Voulkos, *Big Jupiter*, 1994. Clay wedged with grog for strength. Wood-fired stoneware, 40 x 30 1/2 x 27 in. (101.6 x 77.5 x 68.6 cm). Linda Leonard Schlenger Collection. © Voulkos Family Trust

As a vessel maker of varied sizes, this was important to me because my tacit knowledge helped me determine the amount of time I could work on a vessel before I had to leave it covered for some time and when I could return to it again. The larger, thicker, wet clay enabled me time to mentally process what I was doing and creatively think through my decisions.

Rondena (1958) demonstrates a return to being inspired by Picasso's painted surfaces. In this vessel, however, he uses the painted lines to follow the curves of the form. Unlike the evenly glazed ceramics of The Traditionalists, Voulkos was constantly approaching his surface treatment like a painter. The slips and glazes were painted, poured, dripped and splattered across the large areas, scraped down in some areas and built up with texture (Adamson in Adamson & Gifford 2017).

At the time his intuitive approach to form and surface treatment in his studio practice was unique to him. The large scale which became a part of his repertoire gave him a larger surface to work on. Similar to the manner in which most Abstract Expressionists made large paintings. The bigger his vessels, the richer his brushstrokes and he was often labelled as a clay sculptor rather than a potter (Gifford in Adamson & Gifford 2017). However, Clark and Hughto (1979) caution against the claim that he 'turned ceramics into a sculpture', because no matter how sculptural his work was it was still embedded in pottery tradition. This is demonstrated in his later works such as *Big Jupiter* (1994) (fig. 35), although the vessel was constructed in fragments, the bottle form remains recognizable.

Paul Soldner was one of Voulkos' students at Otis and was the most receptive of them who took to his teaching and spontaneous studio practice. He obtained an MFA (1956) and later went on to be an influential teacher at Scripps College, California (1969-1991) as Professor of Ceramics, dedicated to exploring raku firing which he discovered reading Leach's *A Potter's Book* (1945) (Cooper 2010).

Soldner has been a significant influence for a couple of reasons: Firstly, although he made functional vessels, he never considered himself a traditional potter. Secondly, exploration and intuitive working were important to his studio practice, especially in making his monumental floor pots during his time at Otis. Lastly, in addition to raku, Soldner experimented widely with low-fire salt glazes (Clark & Hughto 1979: 330). Raku was an important part of my undergraduate studio practice and is taught in the Ceramic Studios.

Soldner started experimenting with raku in 1960 when he built himself a simple kiln and tested a couple of lead-based glazes which he was not pleased with (Clark 1987: 299). He continued to experiment because he was fascinated with the rapid cooling process. Over time he discovered that the raku he was practising was unlike the open-air rapid cooling

Japanese raku. Instead, his ceramics were removed from the kiln and buried in a heap of combustible materials (Cooper 2010: 296). He discovered that the combustibles were reducing the oxygen in the metal oxides in the glaze which sometimes produced coppery surfaces. Soldner admitted in an interview with Judith Dunham for *American Craft* (1982) that he only discovered at a later time that he was not following the Japanese method and had developed a technique of his own which is now identified as American raku (Clark, et al. 2012, Drexler-Lynn 1990).



Figure 36: Paul Soldner, *Pedestal Piece*, 1978. Stoneware, 12 ¼ x 10 ¾ inches diam. (31.1 x 27.3 cm) Gift of Clark and Del Vecchio. In (Clark, et al., 2012: 77).



Figure 37: Paul Soldner, *Untitled*, 85-1, 1985. 27 x 29.5 x 8 in. Low-fire salt, unglazed, wheel-thrown and altered.

Like Voulkos, Soldner's vessels had a foot/base, body and lip/rim but he did not concern himself too much about absolute symmetry, for example *Pedestal Piece* (1978) (fig. 36) and *Untitled* (1985) (fig. 37). *Pedestal Piece* (1978) piece was thrown and has an altered rim while *Untitled* (1985) was part of his exploratory 'floor pots' which were inspired by Voulkos's intuitive studio practice and later stacked pot series (Clark 1987: 299). The clay body was textured with impressions of tiles and shoe soles, a process he developed while working on his slabs on the floor where he grabbed the closest object in his studio to add a decorative feature (fig. 38) (Dunham 1982: 28).

Soldner's spontaneous approach to vessel making and mark making is significant to my studio practice. Although Soldner's methods differ from mine, I also utilize a spontaneous approach. Sometimes I throw a vessel, alter it off the wheel and return it to the wheel to emphasize the growth of clay and intentionally create very visible marks to the surface. These marks are created by stamping objects, pinching and stabbing into the clay to create surface depth. The development of his raku surfaces also demonstrate the spontaneity of his

technique and he describes the process as serendipitous because it was largely out of his control and produced unexpected flashes of colour. As I do in my studio practice, Soldner was learning by doing and as a result, was unable to provide probing researchers with a reference list he was acquiring his techniques from (Dunham 1982:27). Soldner said:

'In the spirit of raku, there is the necessity to embrace the element of surprise. There can be no fear of losing what was once planned and there must be an urge to grow along with the discovery of the unknown. In the spirit of raku: make no demands, expect nothing, follow no absolute plan, be secure in change, learn to accept another solution and, finally, prefer to gamble on your own intuition. Raku offers us a deep understanding of those qualities in pottery which are of more spiritual nature, of pots by men willing to create pots that have meaning as well as function' (De Waal 2003: 163, Clark & Hugto 1979: 330)



Figure 38: Left to right; 1–4: Soldner flattens the clay by throwing it down on the ground. He textures the clay surface with found materials; scrap wood and curved templates. 5–8: Soldner repositions templates for impression, additional textures are provided by his straw and burlap. 9–12: Soldner has a layered relief. Edges are trimmed against a wooden template to fit the form he wants. 13–16: Soldner rests the plaque in the concave form to keep its shape.

Even though my work is not raku fired, I find that his words resonate with me still in my intuitive vessel making and surface treatments. In a similar manner to that used by Coper to resolve the issue of display when his vessels had pointed ends, Soldner's later vessels were mounted onto short square plinths. Unlike his earlier vessels, *Pedestal Piece* (1990) (fig. 39) is darker, the surface embellishments are more refined, and the form is taut and gives the feeling of soaring, unlike *Untitled* (1985).



Figure 39: Paul Soldner, *Pedestal Piece*, (1990). 36 x 28 x 9 in.

Soldner was a vessel maker and his experimentation with form and surface allowed him to develop his unique vocabulary whilst championing American Raku. He acknowledged that raku had drifted from the Oriental tradition and has been largely identified in the West as an American art form. He added that ‘if the technique is to become more than an amusing parlour trick, the same demands for depth and sensitivity that are required for the Oriental raku artists are essential for their Western counterparts’ (Clark 1987: 300). Soldner’s approach to learning by doing, raku explorations and unfamiliar vessel forms helped to

inspire a new generation of potters coming from The Archie Bray Foundation and Scripps College during the ’60s.

Like Soldner, Wayne Higby taught at Scripps College and was seduced by raku. When he saw Minoan pots at Heraklion Museum in Crete, he decided to enrol for an MFA in Ceramics at University of Michigan and worked at the Archie Bray Foundation until 1968. He makes nature-inspired vessels and murals (Clark 1987: 273). Working from the invaluable foundations laid by Soldner, Higby’s inventive use of raku combined with landscape imagery was an appreciated and necessary shift from the ‘traditional’ American raku (Clark & Hughto 1979: 298). Like his predecessors, at times, Higby makes functional vessels with the characteristics of everyday vessels, such as foot, body and rim. Although some appear to look like utilitarian bowls they cannot be used for food or liquid because they are ‘American raku’ which is low fired and therefore unvitified.

Of particular importance to me is his inventive illusionary adaptation of the landscape which inspired my vessel *Njengoko ndikhangele (Searching)* (2017) (fig. 86), including his celebratory aesthetic of the natural landscape.

For Higby, the American landscape represented a new world, celebrated as a symbol of opportunity and diversity. It continues to inspire hope and longing with its ‘sublime vistas’ and ‘intimacy of calm pastures’. He adds that his work extends out of the practice of

American Landscape Art ‘by process it is an analogue to nature herself – earth, water and fire team to bring forth mysteries of place’ (Higby 2008: 2). Meditative spaces he finds in nature are the basis of his work and this resonates with me. He says, ‘the pot is me’ and as ‘the bowl radiates out, it becomes a metaphor for human consciousness and our strong existence in space’ (Clark 1987: 273). His philosophy is demonstrated in *Winter Inlet* (1975) (fig 40) which is a series of four separately made lidded vessels. When placed together there is a continuation of the horizon line from one vessel to the next, which inspired *Inqanawa I, II, III and IV (Vessels I, II, III, IV)* (fig. 78) and *Ukudibana kwendlela (Pathways collide)* (2016) (fig. 82).



Figure 40: Wayne Higby, *Winter Inlet*, 1975. Press-moulded, Raku-fired Earthenware. H. 8-1/2, W. 31, D. 6 inches (21.6 x 78.7 x 15.2 cm.). Gift of Helen Williams Drutt, (until 1980; her gift to MMA, Accession Number:1980.572.2ab). Image in (Adlin (1998) *Contemporary Ceramics: Selections from The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York, 1998, p. 5, fig. 6.



Figure 41: Wayne Higby, *Mirage Lake* (1984). White, blue, brown, purple, and grey glazes with crackle from landscape decoration. Raku-fired earthenware. 27.94 x 46.99 x 42.54 cm (11 x 18 1/2 x 16 3/4 in.). Impressed seal at foot: WH. Collection: American Contemporary Art at Alfred New York, US. Accession number: 1984.770. Purchased by MFA, 1984, from Helen Drutt Gallery, Philadelphia. Gift of Mary-Louise Meyer in memory of Norman Meyer.

Adlin (1998: 6) says *Winter Inlet* (1975) carries the spirit of the canyon and lake-like imagery, while Cooper (2010: 331) says the chance reliant results from the raku firing have added a variety of textures and depth to the pictorial imagery. He approached his imagery quite differently in *Mirage Lake* (1984) (fig. 41), in an illusionary manner, viewing the interior and exterior as one whole image. The thrown bowl demonstrates the characteristics

of a utilitarian vessel; with its symmetrical form and rounded rim it appears to be suitable for holding food or liquid, however, the raku glazing renders it unsafe as a receptacle for food. Reflecting on the balance between form and surface Higby said: ‘I like to think that there is an equal tension or balance between the three-dimensional form and the drawn illusion of projecting and receding space. It is a balancing act... the bowl form has that potential resonance; it can deal with finite space and infinite, illusory space – things that also exist in our psyches’ (Clark 1987: 273).



Figure 42: Wayne Higby, *Temple's Gate Pass*, (1988). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of KPMG Peat Marwick © 1988, Wayne Higby

Higby's approach to surface treatment is also demonstrated in *Temple's Gate Pass* (1988) (fig. 42). It plays on perspective and the illusion of space and distance and echoes a familiar feeling of moving through a landscape (Clark 1987: 222, Dormer 1994: 120-121). Adlin (1998: 7) added that the whiter areas on his vessels suggest a sense of calm and maybe isolation. The arrangement forms an illusionary panorama, which challenges the concern between real and implied meditative spaces. The alchemy of materials combines the imagery of nostalgia and emotive connection to his past. The reference to nostalgia, the delicacy of the edge qualities and chance results from raku are what give this vessel significance (Held 2014). These are the qualities I aspire to achieve in my own vessel making.

I selected three American studio potters that I felt have been significant in establishing a major shift in the approach to vessel making. They have inspired vessel makers like me to literally push through the walls, engage with clay more expressively and expand my view of the potential of the vessel as an artform.

Voukos is easily one of the most influential 20th studio potters and his philosophy and approach to his work have been disseminated worldwide. He is often credited with

dismantling the hierarchies between traditional arts and crafts and the advancement of ceramics outside of the decorative arts. Soldner introduced a new aesthetic of raku which became known as ‘American-style Raku’. Together with his technical and expressive brilliance, he maintained that concepts and how they are executed are vitally important.

For Higby the landscape gives him a theme, but the result is not illustrative but metaphorical. He said, ‘I like to think that there is an equal tension or balance between the three-dimensional form and the drawn illusion of projecting and receding space. It is a balance...as the bowl radiates outward, it becomes a metaphor of human consciousness and our strange existence in space. The bowl form has that potential of resonance; it can deal with finite space and infinite, illusionary space-things that also exist in our psyches’ (Dormer 1994: 121).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have surveyed some of the most well-known 20th C British studio potters with examples of their works along with their philosophies. This has helped me gain a better understanding of the roots of studio ceramics in the Ceramics Studios and my practice as a studio ceramist. I identified commonalities and difference in their works with the emphasis on their vessel making processes and how utilitarian ‘pottery’ shifted to ‘ceramics’. American ceramists Peter Voulkos, Paul Soldner and Wayne Higby, their philosophies and alternative approaches to non-utilitarian vessel making were also discussed because of their direct influence on my work.

Chapter Four

In chapter three I discussed how traditional studio potters mined their ceramic materials. Nowadays in ceramic studios it is common to purchase clays and glazes that are ready prepared and formulated for specific firing ranges. However, as a researcher-practitioner, I need to understand the nature of these materials because my work is of clay and about clay. In the studios at the CVA, we have a comprehensive selection of the many materials available to ceramists who wish to mix their clays and glazes. I have found the more I know about these materials, the more possibilities I find that I have to manipulate my materials. I felt that being able to add to my tacit knowledge would broaden my range of surface treatments, thus making my work more visually interesting.

In this chapter, using illustrations of my own studio experiments and some examples of my work, I discuss the relevant findings of my experiments and art making that are particularly pertinent to me as a studio practitioner. I will demonstrate how this newly acquired knowledge, together with my embedded knowledge, helped me make creative decisions about the vessels I made in my studio.

The discussion of materials focuses on the characteristics of the ceramic materials I use, and their effects. A broader discussion deals with my predominant use of terracotta clay, additives such as sand, flower petals and tree bark that I wedged into the clays and the significance of these in relation to my work and materiality theory.

Throwing and hand-building are discussed as my chief methods of building. I outline examples of surface treatments, textures, patterns and colouring techniques used in my art making. These include piercing, agateware, stamping, impressing, sgraffito, incising, and inlay. Glaze formulation and post firing techniques are also included. A discussion about how this research and experimentation with the ceramic materials assisted me to make decisions about how to achieve both the visual and expressive qualities I was seeking for my vessels is included.

Potters making utilitarian ware often have to discard work that has what is known as ceramic 'faults', however this does not apply to non-utilitarian work. I have therefore looked at some of these from the perspective of a maker of non-utilitarian ware in order to ascertain where they can be utilised for visual effect and to add embedded meaning to my work.

In chapter five I will discuss in greater detail how the discoveries made during my studio experiments and in this chapter assisted my creative choices.

Clay & Ceramic Bodies

Clay ($\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$)

Clay is an abundant material, scientifically known as hydrated silicate of aluminium which decomposes from igneous rock like granite. Further decomposition results in the mineral feldspar and over time alkalis are washed away resulting in kaolinite or clay (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 59, Rhodes 1975: 4). Primary (residual) clays are found and mined at their parent rock. Whilst others known as secondary (sedimentary) clays are removed from their parent rock through the action of water, wind or ice. Secondary clays are not as pure as primary clays because of the impurities they collect during the weathering process (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 60).

Primary and Secondary Clays

Primary (Residual) Clays

- China clay and bentonite are examples of primary clays
- Valued for their purity and whiteness
- Typically found in irregular pockets with large clay particles, therefore low in plasticity

China Clay/Kaolin ($\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$)

- Pure primary clay which remains white after firing.
- Contains large particles and requires the addition of a plasticiser for better workability
- China clay can be used to introduce mullite. Clay becomes stronger due to the formation of mullite crystals. Mullite is a product of vitrification and can be introduced into clay bodies in the form of molochite.
- A common ingredient in clays and important component of porcelain and bone china
- Apart from clay bodies, china clay is also added to glazes and functions as a stabiliser. It is high in alumina and can act as an opacifier which sustains viscosity in glazes (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 54).

Bentonite $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 5\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ or $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 4\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$

- Highly plastic clay which derives from the decomposition of volcanic ash.
- Used in small amounts of about 2% to increase plasticity. 6% can be used to in very low in plasticity clay bodies.

- Too much bentonite in clay can make it sticky
- Used in small amounts in glazes as a suspension agent
- The addition of water to bentonite on its own makes it swell. It is important to combine dry materials with the bentonite before adding water (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 23-24).

Secondary Clay (Sedimentary)

- More commonly found than primary clays
- Broken down through abrasion and weathering where the particles are broken down into finer particles which increases the clay's plasticity.
- When clay moves downhill, the heavier particles settle to the bottom of the stream while the finer particles are left suspended.
- Secondary clays contain carbonaceous matter which burns away during firing and other impurities which affect its colouring.

Ball Clay

- Fine, plastic, black in its raw state because of the carbonaceous materials which burn away and fires cream or white
- Not as pure as kaolin and has some iron content.
- Combined with kaolin in clay bodies to improve workability
- Named after the process of forming the damp clay into balls in the mines before the transportation
- Difficult to use on its own because it shrinks up to 20 % at maturity (Rhodes 1975:18)
- The presence of free silica, soda, calcia, magnesia, feldspar and potash lower the vitrification range of the kaolinite from 1200 °C to 1100 °C. Therefore because of its lower fusing temperature, it is found in smaller amounts in stoneware clays.
- Used in glazes as a suspension agent and can discolour when impure (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 17).

When I was experimenting with finding textures that were new to me, Professor Ian Calder advised that I experiment with sprinkling ball clay (powder form) on top of a wet slab of studio-mix clay and stretch it (fig. 43). The dry powder was absorbed by the wet clay underneath it. The result of this experiment was the surface that resembled parched earth, which I continued to use on some of my vessel surfaces.

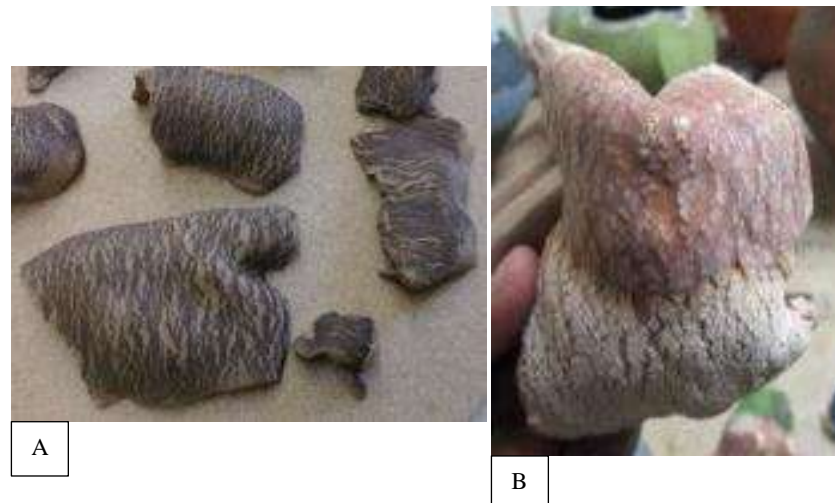


Figure 43: **A:** ball clay sprinkled onto wet clay and stretched, **B:** fired test piece with the white firing ball clay and clear glaze on its top half.

Other Clays

Ceramists tend to classify their clays according to the firing ranges; raku, earthenware, stoneware and porcelain. I have discussed earthenware and stoneware clays as these are the clays I have used in this body of work and this research.

Stoneware clays

Stoneware clays mature at a high temperature between 1200°C and 1300°C. Because of this, they tend to be non-porous and much stronger than earthenware bodies. Stoneware clays are often lighter in colour and fire cream or white because they contain fewer impurities. It is chiefly for this reason that I have used some white stoneware clay together with the red terracotta in my vessel making.

Stoneware clays do occur naturally but are often mixed up to specific recipes for studio use using a base of ball clay. Ball clay-based clays tend to be highly plastic and are adjusted with other materials for better workability and are therefore often used for throwing (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 60-61). These characteristics make stoneware bodies the better choice for making utilitarian wares. Additionally, it is essential to find the accurate glaze fit that is less likely to chip and is dishwasher and microwave safe.

The stoneware clays in our studio can be fired to much higher temperatures such as 1250-1260°C. However, we try to keep the firings at no more than 1220°C because it saves

electricity costs and wear and tear of the kiln and its furniture. Furthermore, there is less warping and shrinkage of the wares. I have made limited use of stoneware clays

Earthenware Clays: Terracotta Body

Earthenware clays are less refractory and more fusible. They contain up to 8% red iron oxide which gives it the rust-red or terracotta colour. The addition of red iron to the clay deepens its colour (fig. 44). Earthenware clays contain the oxides and fluxes which causes them to vitrify at lower temperatures of 1080 - 1120 °C. Because of the low firing range, earthenware clays are porous but can be covered with a layer of glaze to make them waterproof (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 61).

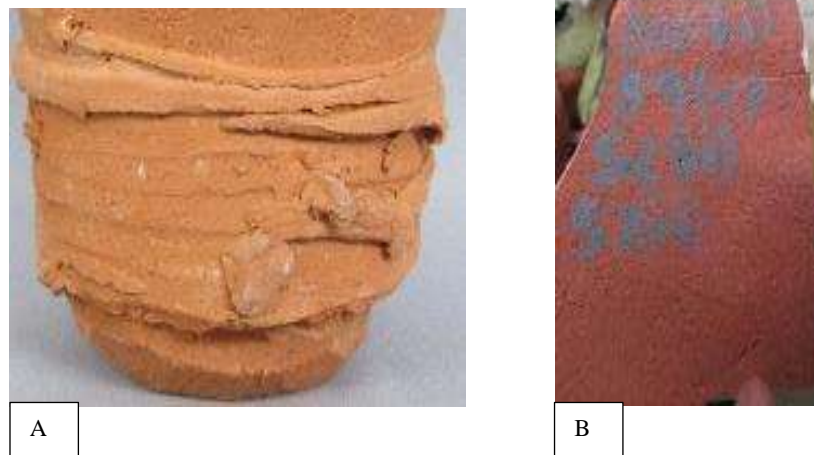


Figure 44: **A:** Red terracotta clay fired to 1080° C (earthenware), **B:** Red terracotta clay fired to 1200° C (stoneware). I was curious to see the change that would to the terracotta clay.

Terracotta clays are often associated with sculpture and are used all over the world to produce objects like ornaments and burial offerings (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 313). I intentionally selected terracotta clays as my main clay for a couple of reasons:

- Terracotta clays and white stoneware clays contrast beautifully when used together
- The intense range of earthy colour they fire to reminds me of where I grew up. The earthy tones trigger childhood memories of rainy days, playing in the rich red mud and proceeding indoors with dirty feet. This was never pleasant for my grandmother who liked to keep a clean house. The intense terracotta colour is also reminiscent of my childhood because this was the place, I recall seeing the earth that colour. When I started to work with these richly coloured clays, I was often overwhelmed by the childhood memories that came flooding back.

- I believe secondary clays have a different energy from primary clays, due to the travel and weathering they experience. For me, this is symbolic of personal journeys and how I believe that struggles and misfortunes will beat us around only to make us stronger.

Studio-mix Clays



Figure 45: White stoneware clay and buff/pinkish studio-mix clay

Studio-mix is a mixture of the clay scraps generated in the studio by students. These scraps, comprising different clay types used in the studio, can be reconstituted into usable plastic clay and are often combined with clay powder and other materials to improve workability and offer a wide firing range. The colour ranges from buff to terracotta (fig. 45). The result is a versatile clay that can be used for hand-building or throwing and can be fired up to stoneware temperature of about 1260°.

As a practitioner, I find clay a desirable material because of its plasticity. As it dries it retains its form and becomes permanent when put through the fire. I have used white stoneware, terracotta and studio-mix clay bodies individually and combined because of their contrast in colour and texture. Specifically, important to me are the characteristics of the clay when fired at between 1080°C and 1200°C, especially the terracotta when fired to the higher 1200°C.

Plasticity, strength and thixotropy are important characteristics as they all promote workability of clay. Workable clays can endure stretching, pulling, pressing and throwing. Plasticity means that the clay can withstand reasonable pressure and enable it to hold new shapes. For a clay to be workable, a balance between thixotropy and plasticity is necessary (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 339-340)

Water in Clay

Plastic clays all contain water which evaporates as it dries. There are three types of water in clay. They are water of plasticity, pore water and bound water. Plastic clay consists of forty percent water in the following ratios. Twenty percent of it is a lubricant, ten percent fills the

pores between the particles of the clay, and ten percent is chemically bound in the clay particles. The performance of clay is affected by these three types of water, as well as the addition or removal of water (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 332-333).

The water of plasticity:

- Makes up 20-30 % of the clay's weight and acts as a lubricant
- Lubrication of the clay particles enables them to slide over each other
- Dries out of the clay due to the atmosphere
- As the water of plasticity dries off the clay particles have less room to move around and the clay holds its form
- Once water of plasticity has left the clay only bound water and pore are left behind and will be driven off through firing

The more plastic clays (secondary clays) have smaller sized particles (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 333).

Pore water:

- Atmospheric water or water of formation
 - Found in the pores of dry clay
- Driven off the clay by the heat up to 120 °C

Bound water:

- Chemically combined water also known as water for crystallisation
- 14 % of the clay's weight accounts for the bound water
- Remains as part of the clay structure until red heat at 600 °C

When the bound water has been removed through heat, it is no longer clay but ceramic. This process is also known as dehydration (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 332-333).

During these phases (drying and firing) there is a decrease in clay size, known as shrinkage. During the firing stages, physical and chemical changes occur between 573°C and 600°C which cannot be reversed, and the clay has become ceramic (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 284).

Additives and their effects on clay

Many additives can be added to clay to change its physical structure. Ball clay improves the plasticity of a clay body and grogs are used to open the clay body, reduce shrinkage and give texture. These examples are familiar to me from my undergraduate training. During my

exploration of surface textures, I found that I struggled with achieving fragility and roughness, so I began to experiment with including found materials to my raw clay. When I started to include found materials, I wanted to incorporate materials that would enhance the themes in my work and expand my visual vocabulary. The soft and brittle nature of the petals and tree bark and hard structure of the rocks used in my practice became a significant part of my vessels. By inserting them into the clay they embedded more meaning to the clay material and the vessels. I explain this below and in the discussion of the vessels in the following chapter.

Sand/ Rocks:

Sand is mostly naturally ground quartz and differs in compositions and grain size. Like clay, sand consists of silica but depending on where it is found it may contain other matter like soluble salts, calcium from shells and oxides which give it colour and can produce speckled surfaces in the fired clay. Much the same as clay, iron, manganese, zirconium silicate and titanium dioxide can also be found in sand. Furthermore, pure quartz sand can be used as a source of silica for glazes, glass and frits (Lightwood 2000: 32, Hamer & Hamer 1986: 278).



Figure 46: Rocks found on a trip to eNkandla. Used in my studio practice as inspiration for colour and surface texture

I collected the sands from the beach and other places significant to me. Although I relished in the gritty texture created by the sand, I found it difficult to throw with because of the roughness on my hands. The physical properties of the clay triggered an emotional response because the scarring on my hands reminded me of my emotional scars. It was important to me that I included the sand because of the personal memories I have of those places. The physical addition of the sands took on a textural quality which embedded metaphorical meaning in the vessels and made them even more significant as carriers of my memories.

Figure 46 shows examples of rocks that I collected eNkandla and in the Scottsville area of Pietermaritzburg. I hoped to break them down into smaller pieces and wedge them into my wet clay to enhance the surface texture. However, some proved to be difficult to break down

and I was keen on saving them as visual references for colour and texture. Although I found them as solid forms, some of them proved to break down easily when put into water for a few days. I fired the grains on flat pieces of ceramic, and they did not melt, so I decided to wedge them into my clay to embed them into the body of the vessel. There was an interesting contrast when I combined the grains that did not melt with sea sand which fused more with the clay and melted with the glaze (fig. 47, 48, & 49).



Figure 47: Detail; The interior of the vessel neck, hand-built with clay that was wedged with sand. Gritty texture can be seen on the surface of the interior.



Figure 48: Grains from a rock collected in Nkandla and sea sand were wedged into clay body before throwing



Figure 49: Detail: Coiled pot wedged with sand.

Petals and Tree Bark:

In using red earthenware clay, I found that my knowledge and practice was limited in the types of surfaces that would express fragility and vulnerability. I wanted to experiment with ways to express fragility so that I would be able to explore mental, physical and emotional fragility and vulnerability. I was already aware that materials like newspaper, when added to the clay, would burn away and make the clay lighter and more fragile. I wedged flower petals and flower buds into clay in order to see if these gave me similar results (fig. 50).

These materials proved to work best when I was hand-building rather than throwing. That way I could better control where I added them especially where I wanted to have brittle edges (fig. 50 (c)). As a result of these additives the fired became physically weaker, but the piece became stronger because the symbolism and the fragility I often felt was visibly evident in the vessels. This way of working introduced different edge qualities to my work,

in addition to pinching and tearing the rims of my vessels. The organic materials left imprints in the clay which became an integral component of the surface.

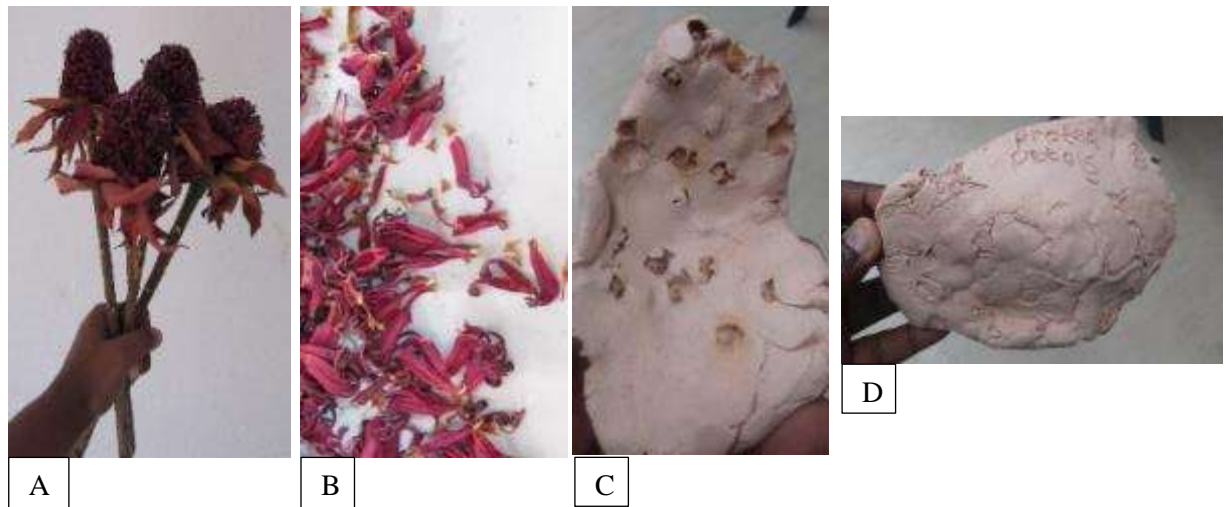


Figure 50: A: Dry protea flowers, B: preparing the petals to wedge into clay, C: bisque test pieces of protea flower buds wedged into the clay body, D bisque test piece of protea flower petals and leaves wedged into clay

The process of adding flower buds and petals into my clay became a precious and therapeutic act for me because the flowers were gifts from friends. I had had to overcome my association of flowers with death and decay. After the flowers had died, I removed them from the water and allowed them to dry. This time allowed me to process my thoughts about my current emotional state. I would often sketch the petals as they were drying to observe how they would shrink and change. I paid special attention to the edge qualities so I could emulate them on the rims of my vessels. These symbolised my fragility and vulnerability and at the same time allowed me to slowly think of them less as images of death.

Forming Methods

In chapter three I discussed how during the early 20th C wheel throwing was largely used by studio potters to make utilitarian wares.

My undergraduate training also consisted of wheel throwing and other techniques such as pinching, coiling and slab building. In this body of work, I no longer needed to adhere to the design principles that apply to utilitarian ware and this allowed me greater freedom to experiment with combinations of different building techniques. I have often gravitated towards wheel throwing because the technique ensures a quicker way of making symmetrical vessels by centring the clay on the wheel-head, opening and pulling up the walls whilst keeping the clay centred. I wanted to continue wheel throwing because of its meditative quality, where I would achieve a place of calmness by centring the clay whilst at

the same time centring myself. Then I would disrupt it to make the asymmetrical vessel (fig. 51). Using multiple wheels and making a series at the same time allowed me the space to move from one vessel to another, to pull up the walls, alter it further and see each vessel from a different viewpoint.



Figure 51: Process images. **A:** Wheel-throwing vessel in progress. **B:** results from the wheel throwing. Here the vessels have been bisque fired and painted with terra sigillata. Vessels became *Inqanawa* series

Being able to view them in this way I was able to re-imagine the folds on the vessels as the folds in the mountains and pay particular attention to the rims. On some of the rims, I have combined soft and sharp edges referencing a rocky edge, from the natural landscape and also alluding to rocky personal relationships.

I have also largely used throwing for vessels that I wanted to stack on top of each other which can be seen in Appendix 1 Illustration 3. This was inspired by Peter Voulkos and also because I wanted to incorporate playfulness in my making methods. I intentionally decided to build this way so I could learn to trust my intuition and develop alternative ways of building vessels.

By using the malleable qualities of the clay, together with the pinching, I have been able to tear and stretch the clay to make physically weaker edge qualities and strengthen the content (fig. 52). My pinched finger marks created a softer surface while the impressed natural objects created a harder exterior. I have also been able to combine techniques, such as throwing and pinching, off the wheel, to create thinner and delicate edges (fig. 53). These techniques to create varied surfaces enabled me to produce visually apt descriptions for how I tend to feel sometimes.



Figure 52: rim detail of the vessel post-bisque firing. Visible finger marks on the interior and tree bark texture on the exterior



Figure 53: Process images: details of vessels in progress. Vessels with torn and stretched rims to represent delicacy and fragility



Figure 54: Coiled surfaces of pots. Exteriors left as is to suggest craggy hillsides and imperfection.



Figure 55: soft slab applied to the base of the vessel to suggest dressing up a wound.

For the majority of my hand-built vessels, I have used coiling which is slower process of building and allows me to meditate on the developing form. During the process of coiling, I became more aware of how the coils could represent layers of the earth when I left them as they were without refining. Figure 54 illustrates my deliberate choice in some of the vessels to keep the layers visible and consciously embed my thoughts and feelings through processing them as I worked, they became an intrinsic part of the making.

Figure 55 illustrates an example where coiling and a soft slab are combined. Slab work tends to be associated with hard edged and architectural building, whereas here it is free flowing with the curve of the base. The unrefined addition of the slab is intended to suggest patchwork.

Piercing

I deliberately eliminated the possibility of the ware being utilitarian by piercing small shards into the body of the vessels and by used my finger to stretch the clay until it tore (fig. 56). I did this while the clay was still wet and easier to manipulate. The shards pierced into the clay (fig. 56 a) suggest how natural matter grows through concrete. It was important for me

to leave the makers marks instead of the harsh marks from the cold blade (fig. 56 b). I could alter the meaning embedded in the work and personalise it.

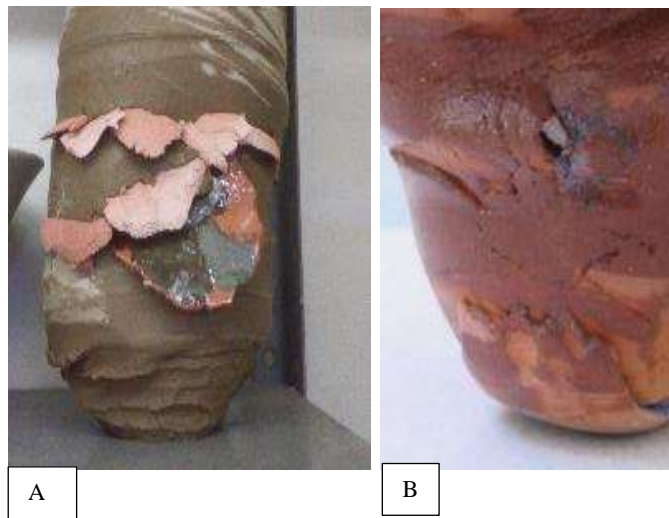


Figure 56: **A:** vessel pierced with bisque-ware after throwing, **B:** vessel pierced during the making with finger instead of a cold blade

Texture, Pattern and Colour

As discussed earlier, texture can be achieved by adding materials to the clay body. It is possible to add texture, marks and colour during the making, both in the wet and leatherhard clay as well as when the clay is dry. There are a variety of ways of transforming the surface during the firing of the ware as well as cold treatments that can be applied on the fired work. In the following section, I will provide captioned illustrations to demonstrate how I have used some of these techniques. They have been chosen for the visual quality I can achieve as well as to embed meaning into the vessels.

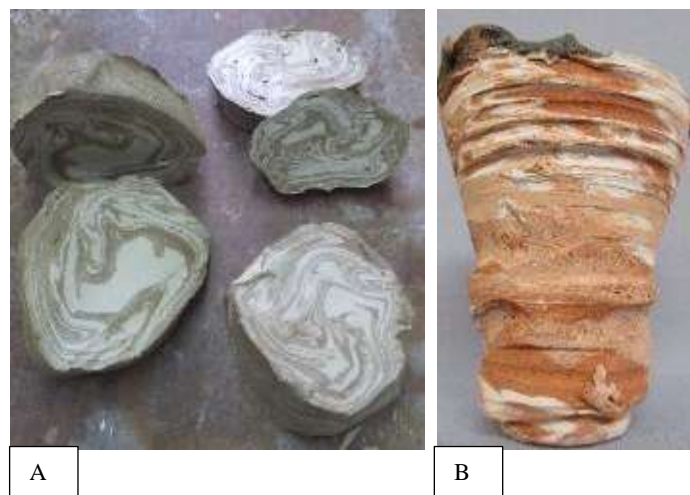


Figure 57: **A:** shows the preparation of mixing two clays by wedging and creates the agateware surface; **B:** The surface texture of the vessel. The vessel was made by combining a dark and light clay body. The striation of combined clays can be seen.

Agateware

Agateware (fig. 57) describes the decorative method of combining and wedging a light and darker coloured clay to create striations. This effect can also be created by using slips (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 2). By combining and wedging two clays together I could achieve unpredictable striations which acts as a decorative detail. I used this method spontaneously because I enjoyed the unpredictability of how the marbling would occur. These striations allude to the contour and horizon lines in the natural landscape. When throwing the striations were blurred (fig. 56 a), by cutting away clay I achieved sharper definitions (fig. 56 b).

Stamping and Impressing



Figure 58: A variety of objects I collected to assist as visual stimuli and as tools for my surface textures.

By stamping and impressing organic materials such as tree barks and seeds into the surfaces of my leatherhard vessels I was able to replicate the textures I observed in the natural environment (fig. 58, 59 & 60). Similar to coiling, the repetitive nature of building up the textures in this way became meditative. I

realised that the found objects would create different impressions in the clay when pressed lightly or harder into the clay.



Figure 59: Upper body and rim of vessel impressed using treat bark with hard pressure and later sponged with a slip.



Figure 60: Greenware lightly impressed with a found object.

Sgraffito, Incising and Inlay

Sgraffito and incising are similar decorative techniques. Sgraffito originates from the Italian word ‘graffiare’ which means to scratch. It describes the type of decoration which involves scratching through one surface to reveal a different colour underneath (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 281) (fig. 61).

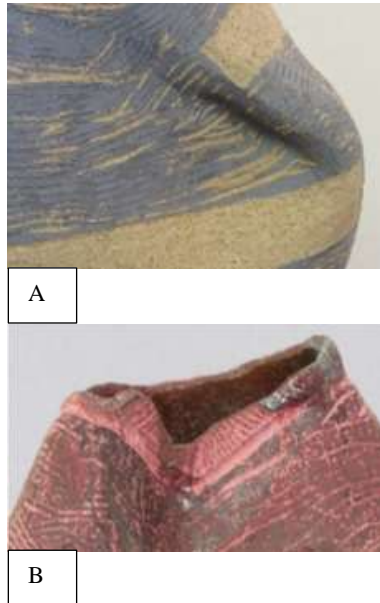


Figure 61: The surface texture of the vessel. **A:** before bisque firing at leatherhard stage, **B:** after glaze firing.



Figure 62: Underneath surface incised and inlaid with black slip

Incising is done by drawing or carving into a leather hard clay body creating precise drawn linear qualities in the clay (Scott 2006: 76). Inlaying is the filling in of incised or carved areas with a different colour clay or slip. The technique is also known as Japanese Mishima or marquetry and was used in decorating English medieval tiles (Scott 2006: 80). I used a black slip inlay to suggest contour lines (fig. 62).

Glaze and Post-Firing Techniques



Figure 63: **A** appearance of the glaze after firing, **B** glaze recipe is documented on the underside with black iron oxide before firing and fuses to the ceramic body. Example of balanced glaze fired to 1200. Copper blue stoneware glaze: Whiting: 21.98g, Potash feldspar: 63.74g, Flint: 14.28g, + ZiO : 10.99, + CuCO_3 : 1.10

As pointed out in my historical chapter the glaze used on utilitarian ware needs to be accurately formulated and mixed in order for it to be suitable and safe to use on vessels made to eat off of or store food and liquid. I noted how my formal training focused on the development of these glazes and how the work of innovative studio potters such as Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, Peter Voulkos and others who made non-utilitarian vessels showed me alternative ways of creating surfaces on my vessels. In order to formulate these alternative surface treatments, I needed to understand the materials used in these utilitarian glazes.

Glaze is a layer of glass that is fused onto ceramics through firing (fig. 63). Before a glaze is fused to the ceramic body, materials which are in their powder form are mixed with water to make a creamy consistency. This liquid glaze is applied to the porous ceramic body, which absorbs the water from the glaze and leaves a layer of powder on the surface. The ceramic ware is then fired to the maturing temperature. Glazes are used on utilitarian wares for hygienic purposes, and they are also used for decoration and durability (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 152). You can alter the properties by changing the ingredients or their proportions as well as the firing temp. If you want to make it more matte, one of the ways you can do this is by adding alumina or materials that contain alumina.

Raku	900-1050°C
Earthenware	1050-1120°C
Mid-Range	1120-1180°C
Stoneware	1200-1300°C
Porcelain	1240-1350°C

Figure 64: temperature bands

Fig 64 shows the four commonly used temperature bands. In my experiments, I primarily focused on firing to earthenware temperatures and stoneware of no more than 1200°C.

A balanced glaze is made up of three groups of raw materials: acidic oxides (glass former), alkaline oxides (flux) and amphoteric oxides (stabilizer). Other groups of materials called opacifiers and colourants help to adjust the appearance of the glaze.

Glass Former (Acidic oxides) (RO_2)

- Occurs naturally as sand, flint or quartz
- Appears white because of the light that is reflected off little crystals but is transparent
- Exists in a crystalline state in nature and turns to transparent liquid when put through heat and returns to solid when cooled over some time
- Can be introduced in a glaze by adding the minerals quartz (100% silica), flint (95% silica), feldspar (65%) or china clay (47% silica) (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 152)

Most common is silica (SiO_2), also known as silicon dioxide and forms the glassy layer and gives strength

Silica (silica sand, silicon dioxide, flint, quartz, MP: 1710°C)

- In glazes a flux is added to lower the melting point and glaze fit
- Its presence in a clay body assists with even drying and creating a glassy binding with the clay particles

- Silica in clay will affect the amount of contraction by the body when it cools down after firing (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 285)

Flux (Alkaline Oxides) (RO and R₂O)

- Alkaline oxide promotes ceramic fusion
- Fluxes share the same properties but all act differently, which means a flux must be matched with its firing temperature
- Fluxes range from low firing, high firing and wide range firing.
- Earthenware fluxes such as soda and lead oxide tend to be unstable at higher temperatures
- Other examples of fluxes are potash (K₂O), lithia (Li₂O), zinc oxide (ZnO) and magnesia (MgO). Lithia, soda and potash dissolve in water. (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 4-5, 139).

Lithium carbonate has been an important flux on the surface treatment of my vessels and will be discussed below

Stabilizer (Intermediate or Amphoteric Oxides) (R₂O₃)

- Amphoteric oxides act as a stiffener and prevent glaze from running off the ceramic body
- Alumina is the most important stabilizer and it increases viscosity (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 8, 512)

Alumina (Al₂O₃, also known as corundum)

- When too much alumina is added to a glaze it can cause it to crater or pinhole the surface of the glaze
- Pure alumina is rarely ever used in a body or glaze. It is introduced to a glaze through other materials containing it such as ball clay and feldspars (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 5-6).

Opacifiers

Opacifiers make a glaze opaque because of one of the following reasons:

- When the opacifying ingredient does not melt at the glaze temperature. Small opaque particles occur in the glaze and make it cloudy. Tin oxide (SnO₂) behaves this way
- During the cooling process, crystals form in the glaze and reflect light. Zinc, titanium oxide (TiO₂), calcia and alumina are prone to behave this way
- When particles do not fully melt, or colloidal bubbles are trapped in the glazes. Alumina and zirconium silicate (ZrSiO₄) can create this type of opacity (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 223)

Colourants (oxides)

- Colourants such as metal oxides are used in glazes to add or improve colour.
- Some colouring oxides act as a flux
- Are affected by the clay body, other ingredients in the glaze and the atmosphere in the kiln
- Too much colouring oxide can result in a metallic surface
- Carbonates are also used for colouring glazes but are much weaker than oxide

By understanding these components and the function of the materials used in the glaze, I could start to manipulate the glazes. I began by testing the materials (fig 65) in the studio to determine their melting points, as well as how the separate glaze ingredients behaved, firstly at 1080 °C and then at 1200 °C.

Lithium carbonate and whiting which are both fluxes fused to the clay body and remained matte, not shiny. These qualities made them very useful and important materials in my art making as I could use them on their own on my vessels, and not only combined with other ingredients in a glaze as I had been doing. When fired they resembled the earthy tones and moss like appearance I was wanting.

Lithium carbonate (Li_2CO_3)

- Used in glazes as all-temperature flux. Begins to flux at earthenware and will volatilize above 1200°C
- Does not occur naturally, formulated from minerals known as petalite, spodumenes, lepidolite and amblygonite
- It has similar fluxing properties to potash and soda (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 199).

Whiting (calcium carbonate, Paris white) (CaCO_3)

- Used in glazes as a source of calcia
- All-temperature alkaline flux
- Helps to create a durable glaze
- Can be found in crushed chalk, seashells and limestone (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 44, 337).

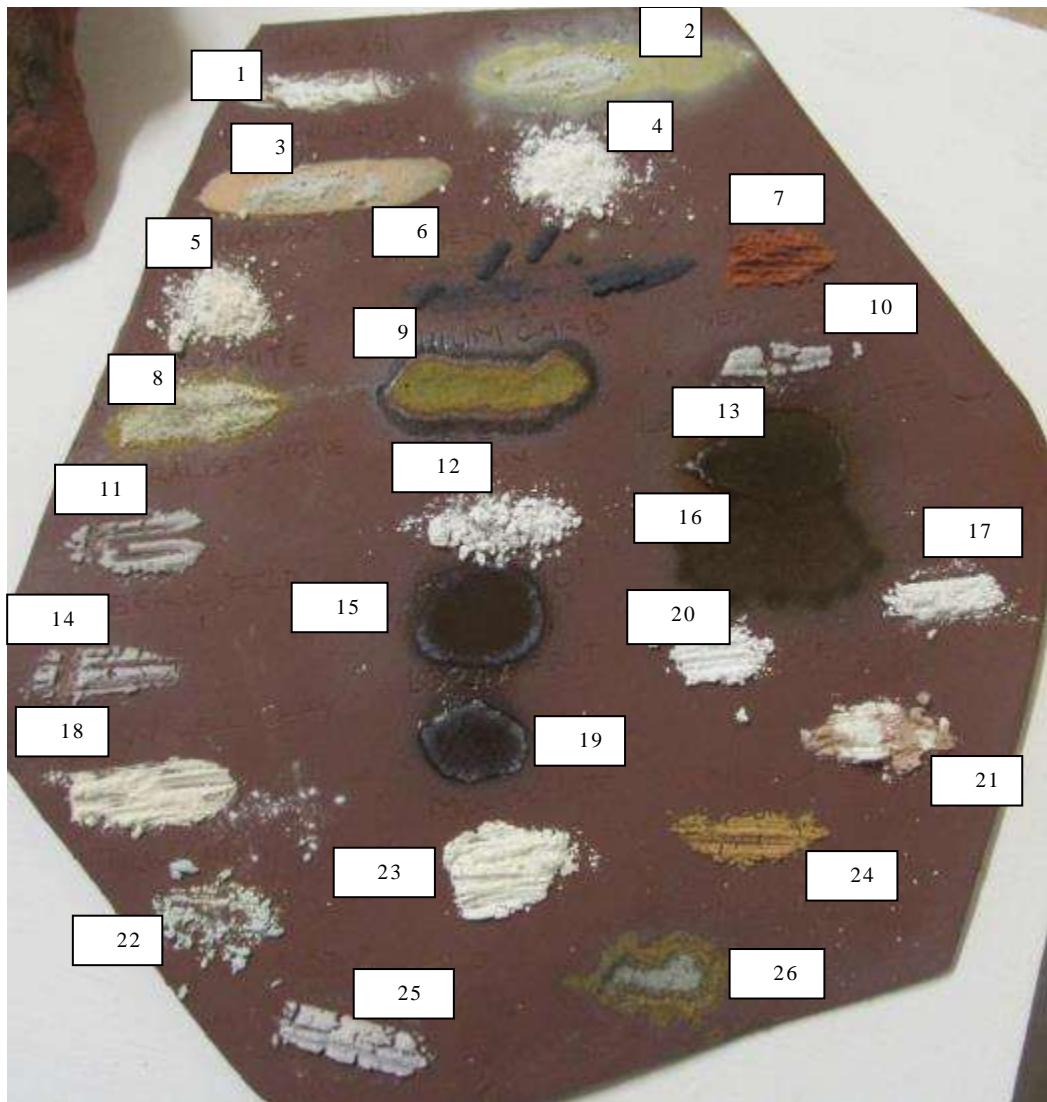


Figure 65: A selection materials available to me in the studio that I tested to determine whether they could be used separately instead of being mixed in a glaze. This test piece was first fired to earthenware temperature. Many of the ingredients remained refractory at this temperature so were unsuitable for lower temperatures as they would not have adhered to the surface of my vessels. I fired the tile to 1200 °C to determine whether there would be any changes

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-Bone Ash (Tricalcium phosphate): $\text{Ca}_3(\text{PO}_4)_2$ | 15-Frit 510 |
| 2-Zinc oxide (zincite): ZnO | 16-Gerstley Borate Colemanite/Borocalcite ($2\text{CaO } 3\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$ $5\text{H}_2\text{O}$) |
| 3-Titanium Oxide (Titania, Titanium dioxide): TiO_2 | 17-Talc (magnesium silicate, French chalk, steatite, soapstone) $3\text{MgO} \cdot 4\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ |
| 4-Tin Oxide (stannic oxide): SnO_2 | 18-G & W Ball Clay |
| 5-Zircopax | 19-Borax Frit Borax $\text{Na}_2\text{B}_4\text{O}_7 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ or $\text{Na}_2\text{OB}_2 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ |
| 6-Imenite Sand: FeTiO_3 | 20-Silica: SiO |
| 7-Rutile: TiO_2 | 21-Edgeware talc: $3\text{MgO} \cdot 4\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ |
| 8-Dolomite: $\text{CaMg} (\text{CO}_3)_2$ | 22-Tricalcium phosphate: $\text{Ca}_3(\text{PO}_4)_2$ |
| 9-Lithium Carbonate: Li_2CO_3 | 23-Molochite (chamotte, grog): $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$ |
| 10-Nepheline Syenite $\text{K}_2\text{O} \cdot 3\text{Na}_2\text{O} \cdot 4\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 8\text{SiO}_2$ | 24-Bentonite $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 4\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ |
| 11-Mineralised Stone (sub for Cornish stone) | 25-Soda Feldspar: $\text{Na}_2\text{O} \cdot \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 6\text{SiO}_2$ |
| 12-Serena kaolin (kaolinite): $\text{Al}_2\text{Si}_2\text{O}_5(\text{OH})_4$ | 26-Whiting (calcium carbonate, limestone): CaCO_3 |
| 13-Lead Bisilicate: $\text{PbO} \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$ | |
| 14-Blesberg feldspar | |



Figure 66: I painted lithium carbonate inside and outside the vessel and used brushed some whiting on the exterior which looks like islands.

I used whiting for the same reasons as I did for lithium carbonate. The melting point for whiting appeared to be higher as it did not flux as well. Consequently, I had to apply it thinly so that it would fuse to the ceramic body (fig 66).

I also explored the possibilities of surface treatments such as terra sigillata, Wenger's underglazes, watercolours and stone sealer.

Terra Sigillata

Terra Sigillata is a deflocculated slip consisting of fine clay particles suspended in water. Rhodes describes terra sigillata as an engobe often seen on classical Roman and Greek pottery, it has a waxy, dense, deep red-orange, brown or ochre colour (Rhodes 1957: 192). An engobe is similar to slip but can be applied to bisque ware and greenware.

I prepared terra sigillata using the following steps:

- Red powder clay and water are mixed to form a slip.
- Sodium silicate, a deflocculant, is added to increase fluidity and keep the finer particles in suspension whilst the heavier particles sink to the bottom.
- After thorough mixing, the slip is left overnight
- Water at the top is removed and the middle layer of finer particles in suspension is the terra sigillata.
- Coarser and heavier particles at the bottom of the bucket are discarded.

Figure 67 a, b and c illustrates my different applications of terra sigillata. This exploration allowed me to discover the potential use of terra sigillata in a non-conventional way. I continued to use the terra sigillata in my work in varying applications to create fragile surfaces.

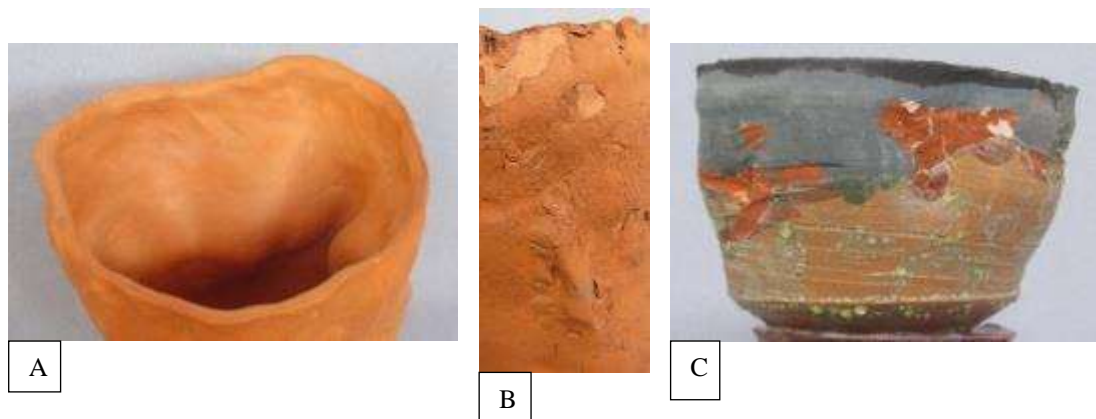


Figure 67: Three methods of applying terra sigillata, fired to 1080° C

A: Traditionally, terra sigillata is applied to a surface thinly and then burnished to get a semi-glossy surface

B The terra sigillata is applied thickly and not burnished which results in a matte surface that peels in certain places

C The terra sigillata is sponged thinly and thickly onto the surface in with glazes on the same vessel, resulting in peeling.

Wengers Glazes and Underglazes



Figure 68: Package label for Wengers prepared glaze.

Wengers Ltd was founded in 1870 originally by Mr Albert Francis Wenger in Stoke-on-Trent, England. Wenger came from a noble family, the Wengers of Wenge in Switzerland and moved to England in 1869. Wenger Limited was the supplier of raw materials, clays and glazes and the finest colours such as their purples and Rose-Du-Barris. After his death, the business was left under the management of his sons.

Wengers Ltd used to supply the Ceramics Studios with prepared glazes, majolica colours, glaze stains,

underglaze colours, enamel colours that were packaged into brown bags (fig. 68). The use of prepared glazes was phased out by Ditchburn as she introduced her own range of glazes which were mixed up in the studio and students started to learn to formulate their own unique glazes. When ceramic materials became more readily available from local suppliers, the Wengers materials were gradually phased out.

The remaining supplies were stored in a cupboard where I discovered them. Some of the bags had lost their labels and so I set about testing them at earthenware temperatures (fig. 69). Some of these proved to be suitable for my vessels.



Figure 69: Selection of Wengers colours, prepared glazes and underglazes tested to 1080 °C

Traditionally vessels with slip are covered with a transparent glaze. I have intentionally covered my vessels with colourful Wengers underglazes to reveal and conceal some areas (fig. 62). My use of sgraffito and inlay also suggests scars and the colourful Wengers is my way of attempting to hide them.

Post-firing treatments

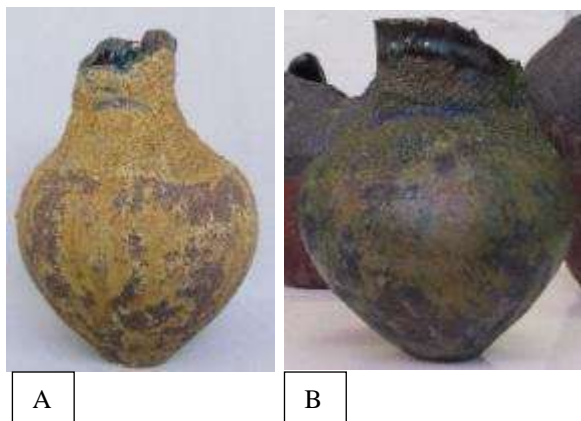


Figure 70: **A:** before watercolours and stone sealer. **B** after the surface was painted.

I was not always satisfied with the appearance of my vessels after firing. Because these vessels are not utilitarian, I could consider non-ceramic materials such as watercolours and stone sealer for my surface treatments. I was able to manipulate the watercolours in order to achieve the intensity of the colours I wanted. I found this added another layer of depth to my surfaces. The matte stone

sealer, which I used to fix the colours and seal the surfaces, lifted the intensity of the colours. I approached the application of these as a painter would. This helped make the glazes look as if they were blended similarly to watercolour painting. I worked the surface with green ink and blue hues of watercolours (fig. 70).

Common Ceramic Defects

Whilst ceramic faults are the bane of a utilitarian potter's life, I came to realise that I could embrace them because they often resembled the textures and surfaces of the landscape. As discussed in the historical chapter artists such as Rie, Coper, Henderson, Voulkos and Soldner also utilized unconventional methods to enhance the visual interest of their work.

In my studio practice, I researched these faults, some of which are described below and illustrated with examples of my work.

Clay Body Cracks

Clay body cracks are undesirable to the utilitarian studio potter because their vessels can no longer be used for their intended purpose.

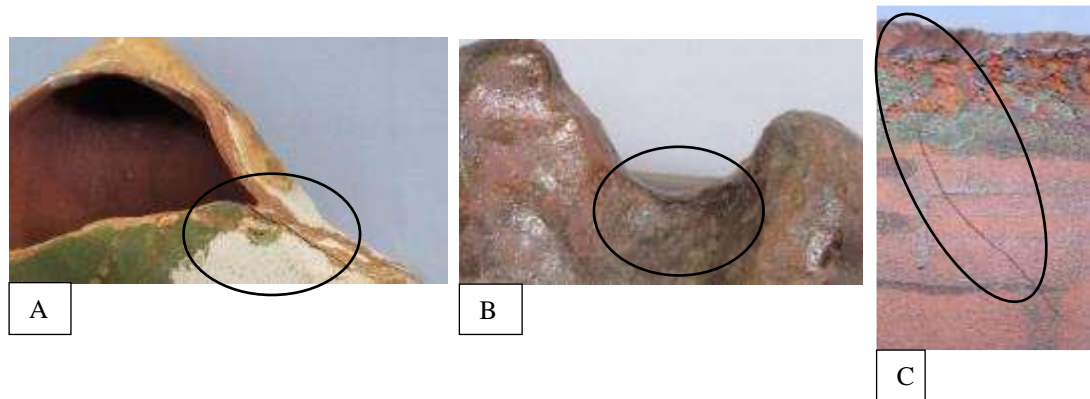


Figure 71: Examples of cracks that have appeared in my work are circled in black in the above images.

A: Was the result of uneven drying

B Was the result of a join that split open during the first firing

C Dunting happened to this vessel which I suspect was caused by the thick layer of lithium carbonate I applied inside the vessel. This possibly caused the stress crack, but it might also have been from multiple re-firing as it occurred during the fourth firing.

Cracks are caused by the physical stress the clay body undergoes either when it is being shaped, when it is drying or when it is firing (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 79). Figure 71 shows examples of some of the cracks that occurred in my vessels. Because my vessels are not utilitarian, I chose not to discard them but to first assess whether the cracks added, rather than detracted from the visual quality of the work. It was pointed out to me that I should embrace the cracks and seek to make them more deliberate in my work to emphasize themes relevant to my research such as fragility and vulnerability.

Crawling (Beading, Creeping, Rolling or Rucking)



Figure 72: Glaze formulated to crawl on the ceramic surface resulting in an attractive decorative surface

A utilitarian glaze should form an even coating which covers the surface of the vessel. For a variety of reasons parts of the glaze roll up onto itself and does not adhere to the ceramic body. This results in a patchy surface of glazed and unglazed areas (fig 72).

The causes are:

- Excessive glaze shrinkage during drying
- Glaze applied too thickly
- Underglazes or slip hinder adhesion
- Sharp edges and cracks on the rim of the vessel
- Glazes with a high surface tension are likely to crawl and at their molten state are very viscous.
- Opacifiers such as tin oxide in large quantities are known to encourage beading in glazes. A glaze can then be adjusted to lower the surface tension when it is molten (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 89).
- In my experience crawling has occurred when I have applied a glaze inside of a vessel and not let it dry before glazing the outside.
- Grease or dust on the ceramic surface before glazing. I have used this to my advantage in my work.

Blistering



Figure 73: Dark grass green glaze applied to the exterior of the vessel.

Blisters can be caused by:

- Gas particles in the clay body and the glaze.
- If the glaze starts to set before the gases have been released this causes bubbles which grow within the glaze. These sometimes burst, resembling craters (fig. 73) (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 27).

Bloating

- Bloating is the occurrence of bubbles in the clay body and generally occurs at stoneware temperature more than bisque
- Pockets of air are trapped in the walls and cannot escape once the walls have started to vitrify or if the glaze seals the body before the gases have escaped (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 28)
- Although similar in appearance, this bloating must not be confused with the bloating that occurs as a result of overfiring the clay (fig. 74)



Figure 74: Glazed surface of vessel that should have been fired to stoneware 1200° C, However, the kiln overfired which caused bloating in the ware

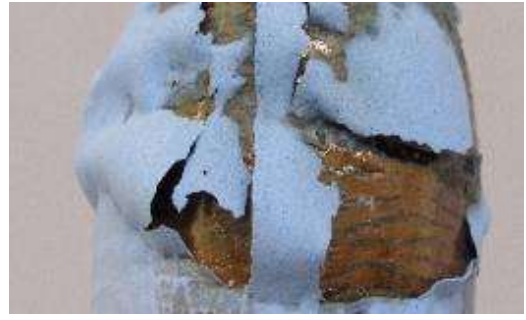


Figure 75: Dry glaze over shiny, glossy glaze

Shelling

It is the peeling off of the glaze from the body in flakes (fig 75). It is caused by:

- An insufficient bond between a glaze and the ceramic body resulting in the clay body shrinking more than the glaze during the cooling period.
- It occurs in the kiln or the days or weeks following the firing due to the build-up of pressure between the ceramic body and the glaze (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 282, Fraser: 1986:30).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the technical aspects and techniques relevant to this research and for me as a studio practitioner working with ceramics materials. I explained my experiments, their results and application in selected examples of my work. I have demonstrated how doing tests and recording the information on the pieces enabled me to make decisions about vessel making and surface treatment.

I gained a deeper understanding of clays and could make informed decisions about my choices of materials as well as to be more adventurous and to experiment with adding unconventional organic materials. I started to use pottery tools less when creating textures because they did not have the organic sensibility I wanted to achieve. I discussed some of the work that I made using these clays and will elaborate further in the following chapter.

I discussed the importance of understanding the individual components used in glazes formulated for utilitarian wares. This knowledge allowed me to understand how I could manipulate glazes to create interesting textures and colours that echoed those of the natural environment. As a studio practitioner, it is important to note many of the discoveries made during this research could not have been possible without this technical knowledge and experimentation.

Chapter Five

This reflective-reflexive chapter is a discussion of works made during my studio-based practical research. It demonstrates how my practical work and theory unfolded. The reflection phase entails a reflective analysis of the outcomes which should result in a reflexive study and further action, thus creating a cyclical process (Etherington 2004: 30). Critical analysis of both the artworks and the research will, both during the process and on completion, form a significant part of this research (Gray & Malins 55). Journaling, peer and supervisor input, and exhibition of selected works, reflection, and reflexivity all contribute to giving this research validity (Moustakas 1990: 39).

In the previous chapter I described some of the processes I used and discussed the importance of them in my studio practice. I will begin this chapter by elaborating on these. I then explain the origin of my titles and why I have chosen to source Xhosa poetry before discussing the themes of landscape, metaphor, vessel, memory illustrated with pertinent examples of these in my work. I will then describe the setting up of my work, decisions I took about how to arrange it in the gallery space and the final exhibition.

Personal traumas are embedded in the artworks in a variety of ways, and this reflective discussion is about how they affected decisions I made about my choices of material, my processes of working and how these manifested in my work.

I will expand the discussion in the previous chapter on how gaining a deeper understanding of ceramic materials enriched my knowledge and understanding of the union between form and surface. Where applicable I will acknowledge the influence of Voulkos, Henderson and Higby in my own work.

Processes

Jones (2007: 130) says ceramic processes are similar to the way the earth is created. 'Processes of time, pressure and heat, accumulation and degradation all echoing geological concerns of deep time, slow shift, constant renewal, and the fundamental relationship between structure and landscape.'

Wedging, coiling, throwing, glazing, and firing are all methodical processes used in the making of my vessels. Many of them are repetitive in my art making and require repetition

to achieve the same or similar results. In ceramics one needs to acquire a set of skills which, in time, will become second nature. However, this does not mean that the process does not involve one's attention and even when I am working in a series each vessel is considered separately and is treated individually. The fluid and repetitive nature of wheel-throwing requires one to be centred and focused and this has helped me channel anger, and frustration especially when throwing large vessels. The slow and methodical rhythm of coiling has become a space of meditation and mindfulness. These processes have allowed me time for introspection and time to focus on my work while the rest of the world 'disappeared,' and it became a place for me to have a non-verbal offloading.

The processes of glazing and firing are equally important components of both the technical and the creative aspects of making. I have come to realise that the processes would occur after the biscuit firing are as important and sometimes even more important than the construction of the vessels. Furthermore, the surface treatment and considerations relating to it need to be considered from the initial conception of the work and throughout all the stages of making and firing and even, at times, after the firing.

It has been significant to discuss the 'stuff' that my work is made of because, as Du Preez (2008) says, "through its materiality, the art object exists physically in the world." Because clay is a time-based material, it has enabled me to embed the surfaces with personal meanings during the making and thus the building process is inseparable from the final object.

My use of clay to make ceramic vessels has allowed me to consciously use the material as a conduit for memory. This mirrors the way in which, throughout our lives, our memories are altered and we never remember as the first event. Furthermore, they are subjective and unique to us depending on our perspective and worldview. My materials take on a new form at each stage, beginning with the malleable clay through and even sometimes after the last kiln firing. Clay responds to the makers' touch. Once it is committed to the fire, those marks remain permanent. I have become more mindful of the results from firing processes. The physical change allowed me to embrace significant changes within myself and thus became symbolic for me.

The processes of glazing and firing are equally important components of both the technical and the creative aspects of making. I have come to realise that the processes would occur after the bisc firing are as important and sometimes even more important than the construction of the vessels. Furthermore, the surface treatment and considerations relating to it need to be considered from the initial conception of the work and throughout all the stages of making and firing and even, at times, after the firing. The layers of colour with matte and shiny glazes are to conjure images of the landscape (fig. 79 & fig. 87).

Vincentelli (2012: 30) echoes the idea of the transformative nature of clay from the earth. It is moulded by hands and put through the fire, a metaphor for the process of land formation itself, and through firing, a new structure is made permanent (fig. 83). No matter how much I tried to control what happened during the firing process based on multiple tests and recordings, I had to learn it is not always possible and I should embrace the vagaries of the kiln. Fire transforms the malleable clay into permanent ceramics, which represents a metaphor for emotional and spiritual transformation (Jones 2007: 9). As a ceramist, I was aware that ceramic change through firing is central to my artmaking. It is akin to the geological, gradual altering of the earth's crust. This process is symbolic and suggests the passing of time and captures the tension between form and surface.

Titles

I noted in my historical chapter that Staite-Murray was one of the few early studio potters to title his work as a painter would. Though it has become more common practice, particularly for non-utilitarian vessel makers and many ceramists still choose not to title their work in this way. I however give my work titles as pointers to my ancestral roots and home language, Xhosa and the poems that inspire me.

After a conversation with my father, where we were discussing our clan names, my enthusiasm to learn Xhosa, his love for the language and its representation in music, I searched for Xhosa poems which he helped me translate. I wanted to find the visual descriptors used by poets who were inspired by the landscape. Of importance is the way that the poets used the poetic nature of the language to connect the reader with a landscape that was not familiar to them. The lyricism in the poems is something I wished to achieve in my titles. I usually begin a work with a title in mind but sometimes only decide on one once I feel that work is completed. In retrospect, what was most exciting for me was when the titles

transformed while the work was in progress and as certain aspects became more pertinent. The poems and the verbal metaphors were an integral part of preserving the landscape descriptions, symbolism, and my emotive response which supply context and meaning.

Schama (1995: 56) would agree "the poet makes the landscape itself the carrier of memory: things that are buried but will not stay interred; a nature that proceeds, season to season, birth to death to birth, indifferent to the revolutions of state and the bickering of dynasts." *Ndikhuselwe* series (*I am protected* series) (2016) (fig. 76) was initially titled *Ndokhuselwa ziintaba* (*The mountains will protect me*). The series is both a poetic homage to the mountains and to my ancestors, who I believe still guide me. Poetry from *Izinto Ezincinane* (1994) by poet M.T.A. Makuliwe inspired *Izinto ezincinane* (*small things*) (2016) (fig. 82). The title *Inqanawa enzulu* (*Deep vessel*) (2016-2017) (fig. 85) is a metaphor that suggests a deep unattainable connection to the past, which is often triggered by the retelling of childhood stories and speaks to my desire to be content. *Nazo intlungu ziyodlula* (*This too shall pass*) (2016) (illustration 10 appendix 1) was inspired by *Ubuhle Bendalo Ehlotyeni* (1987) by Ncumisa Vapi which means 'the beauty of nature in summer'. This made me contemplate on how events in our lives pass and we are left with memories, and even when they fade, they have a lasting impact.

Themes

The themes of landscape, vessel, metaphor, and memory have been the basis of my vessel making in this research project. I have selected examples of vessels most pertinent to each theme to discuss. Much of the content discussed is from my personal experiences and some of it is from shared memories with those close to me.

Landscape

The landscape is filled with textures, surfaces, dry and wet places, scents, sounds, seasonal rhythms, places, paths, and forms that, through subjective experience, constitute different identities and are entangled with who we are (Tilley and Cameron - Daum 2017: 5-6, check this). *Ndikhuselwe* series (*I am protected* series) (2016) has the contrast of smooth and rough surfaces (fig. 76). The harshly gouged exteriors are influenced by Voulkos who also punched and sliced his forms. The gouging revealed exciting patterns of the agateware which was significant to emphasise personal change and growth. *Ndikhuselwe* series (*I am protected* series) (2016) (fig. 76) was inspired by Tjerk van der Veen's idealisation of making vessels

that looked as if they were just dug out of the earth. His form and surfaces echo natural qualities that I wished to achieve in my work.

Though these vessels form a group, I intentionally gave each one unique characteristic which symbolise my ancestors; colourful interiors to suggest personality traits, unrefined, rough and tough looking exteriors, soft and rounded rim edges. In this way, I demonstrate that my ancestors, like the mountains in nature, are permanent support structures in my life. Although people like my grandmother were ‘tough as nails,’ she was the kindest person with a vibrant personality. She loved to share her life’s experiences and wisdom with her children and grandchildren.

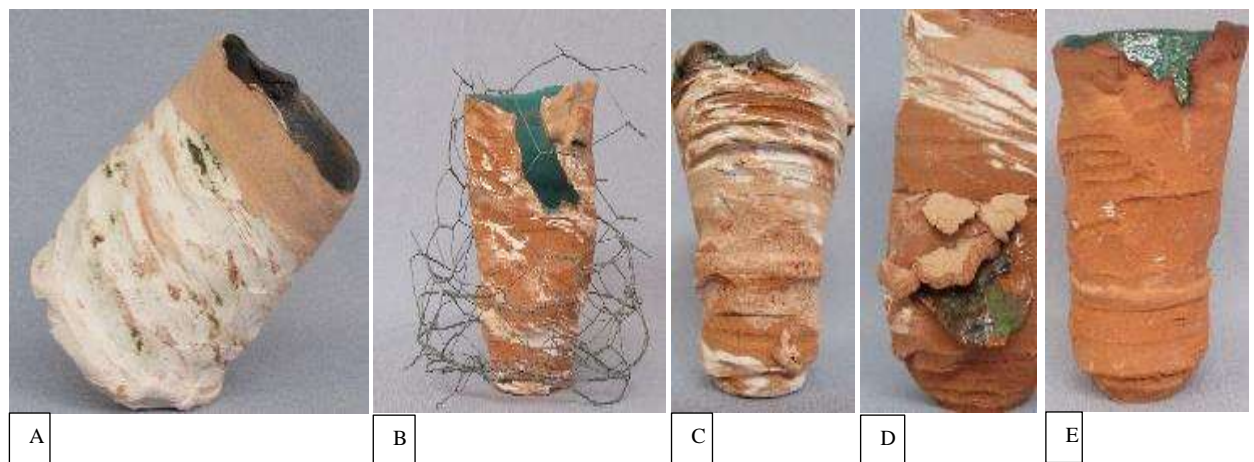


Figure 76: A-E; Ndikhuselwe (*I am protected*) (2016). Earthenware, watercolour and stone sealer finish. Series 5/9 wheel-thrown with combined white and terracotta clays. **B:** is encased in a wire structure which symbolises fragility and protection

In my family it is important to honour and give thanks to our ancestors because we believe that they are always guiding us; failure to do so could result in them ‘showing’ themselves to us in spiritual manner. The vessels (fig. 76) A and D rest on precarious bases to suggest a sense of unpredictability.

Through my artmaking, I can meditate peacefully and conceptualise landscape as an expression of my personal experiences. The landscape is an essential part of our lives because we live and walk in it (Tilley and Cameron - Daum 2017: 5). It is through walking the landscape that I can find places to sit quietly and contemplate my emotional state. I am often drawn to expansive and sweeping landscapes that are bare and appear to be uninhabited which in turn comfort me and have inspired vessels such as *Mhlaba sondle I (Mother earth feed us I)* (fig. 77) and *Inqanawa I, II, III, and IV (Vessels I, II, III, IV)* (fig. 78).

However, comfort is not always the case, some landscapes, specifically from my place of birth, I find to be majestically confrontational. This is because when I travel back home they are landmarks that always remind me of memories as a vulnerable child and convey a feeling of despair and hopelessness (*Intaba II* fig. 79). A similar sense of vulnerability and sadness is suggested in the stretched landscape form of *Mhlaba sondle I* (2017) (fig. 77), which upon reflection reminded me of the stretched arms of the central figure in Francisco de Goya's *The Third of May 1808* (1814). The man's Christ-like surrender is poignant, and the rugged and torn rim of the vessel add to this sense of weakness.



Figure 77: *Mhlaba sondle I (Mother earth feed us I)* (2017). Earthenware. Coiled with terracotta and white clay to suggest distant horizon lines and contour lines.

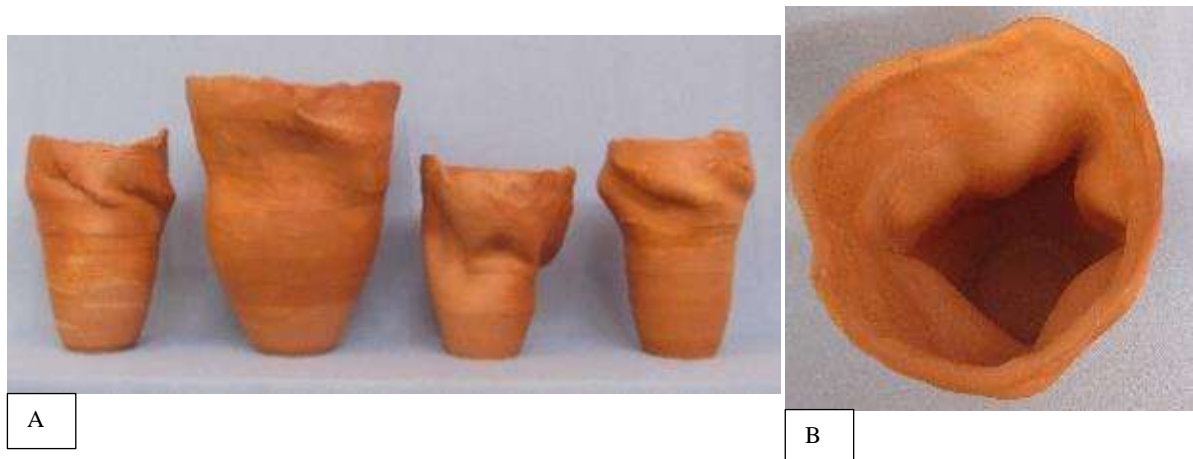


Figure 78: **A:** *Inqanawa I, II, III, & IV (Vessels I, II, III, and IV)*, (2017). Earthenware. **B:** Aerial view of vessel interior.

The rolling hills of the countryside inspired the curvaceous forms of *Inqanawa I, II, III, and IV (Vessels I, II, III, IV)* (fig. 78) and the vibrant use of orange terra sigillata captures the warm glow of the sunny days. I used several wheels in order to throw and work on more than one vessel simultaneously. This enabled me to manipulate the wet clay and build fluid and organic forms quickly. I found I could be playful in my approach to making, whilst at

the same time I had to maintain my focus and concentration as the more I worked on these pieces the more likely they were to collapse.

Furthermore, pausing and looking at the profiles brought back memories of road trips with friends on dusty scenic roads. Upon reflection, I realised that I unconsciously made the top halves to resemble, not only mountain forms but crowns. I thought this was a fitting tribute to the women in my life who are my pillars of support.



Figure 79: A: Detail: *Intaba* series (*Mountain series*)3/4 (2015-2017). Coiled with mixed clays. Earthenware and stoneware. **B:** *Intaba I*; painted terra sigillata and sponged glaze, *Intaba III*; matte body treated with oxides and mountain peaks lightly sponged with transparent glaze, *Intaba II*; painted, sponged, and poured glaze, oxides, and underglazes.

The grandeur of mountain forms has a hypnotizing power that pulls me towards them, which is symbolic because of their importance in my culture as sacred places. *Intaba* series (*The mountain series*) (2015-2017) (fig. 79) represents my sacred places at different times in my life. This series was emotionally challenging because I was working through and processing many memories at once. Making the forms became an emotional rollercoaster. As sometimes the wet clay would threaten to collapse. I devised a process where I worked on the vessels simultaneously. The pauses between every five coils of each vessel were cathartic. They allowed me times to process emotions that I had buried and in turn, it also gave the clay enough time to firm up before adding more wet clay. After making the forms

I allowed myself time to evaluate the personal spiritual and mental obstacles that I have had to overcome.

Hopkins (2007: 5) mentions *The Poetics of Space* (1994) by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in which he examines the relationship between our psyche and spaces that are an intimate part of our lives. Bachelard reveals that our consciousness, our memories, our imagination-ultimately, our humanness-is inseparable from these spaces (Hopkins 2007: 5). The landscapes and spaces that are inseparable from my psyche are my birthplace Tsolo (Jence) and Umzimkhulu where I was raised by my grandmother. The warm earthy surface tones and green mountain top of *Intaba I* are a nostalgic reminder of these two places. The roughened peak signifies the uneasy relationship I have with my birthplace. This is due to often feeling detached from the place and often questioning my attachment to 'home' and belonging.

The three peaks of *Intaba III* represent my relationship with my sisters. Between the peaks, there is a crack that has become symbolic of the nature of sibling rivalry. The matte surface is inspired by a process known as *ukusinda*, which is part of cleaning and sealing floors in rural communities using cow dung (Yuku 2016). As the children in the church, during my childhood, the duty of cleaning and preparing the church for Sunday sermon was ours. As children we never objected because it was instructed by the elders. As an adult, I have often wondered about the appropriateness of smearing foul cow dung to the floor of the church which is meant to be a house of worship.

Raby (2015:18) says, "our material bodies define our relationship with the earth. We experience emotions, calculate time and space through our perception of the lived world, our sense of safety within its landscape, and with each other. These experiences, combined with our memory of them, connect emotion to other phenomena leading to abstract thought, to projections onto people and things". The deliberately exaggerated scarring with a knife on the surfaces *Intaba II* suggests some of the trauma and pain I endured surrounded by these landscapes where I grew up. This process was meditative and began an emotional journey of revealing suppressed memories. A year later after making the form I was able to treat the surface was therapeutic and symbolic because I was finally able to overcome my mental block about the piece and to treat the surface. This was therapeutic and symbolic

Vessel

Higby (1986:26) states that a vessel can be for "pure contemplation" and Fariello (1999: 30-31) asks why ceramists have remained loyal to the vessel. Vessels are vehicles for exploring form, surface, concept, and individual philosophy (Haynes 2013), and for me clay is the perfect medium through which I use the vessel as a carrier of emotive meaning. When making these vessels it took me a while to unlearn the design considerations of making utilitarian wares. However, the knowledge I had was useful in understanding the design and conceptualisation of the aspects of 'the vessel.' Voulkos, Henderson, Gordon Baldwin, Claudi Casanovas and Tjerk van der Veen are the studio potters whose sensibility for clay and 'the vessel' I admire. Their work, like mine, functions outside of the utilitarian, inspired by landscapes and is an abstract expression.

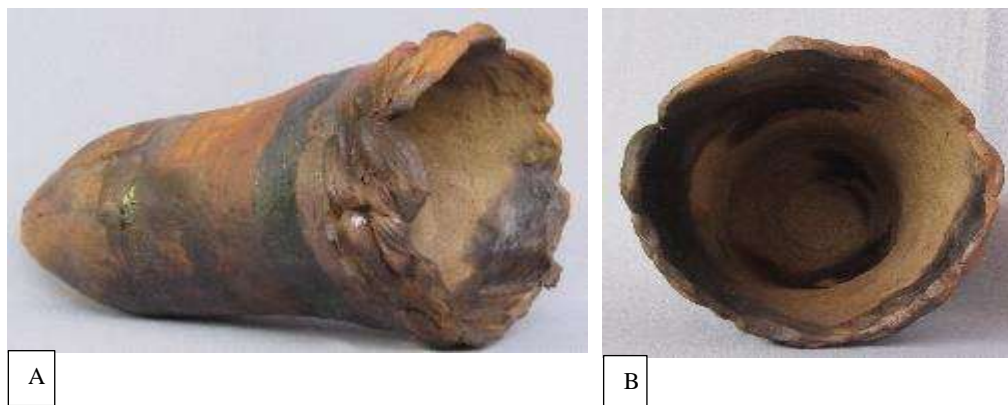


Figure 80: A: *Izinto ezincinane (Small things)* (2016). Painted bands fired to earthenware and smoke fired. **B:** Interior detail of smoke firing.

In his seminal text *The Vessel: Denying Function* (1986), Wayne Higby defines the contemporary vessel as "an object that presents the formal essence of the pot exaggerated to reveal a personal artistic vision uninhabited by pragmatic issues of function (1986: 25). For *Izinto ezincinane (small things)* (2016) (fig. 80) I consciously subverted the function of the vessel by placing it on its side. By doing this, the body becomes the 'base,' and also the profile of the body rather than the rim suggests a horizon line.

Raby (2015) says vessels can act as a lifeline to memory, and in doing so, they become metaphors (Raby 2015: 13). As a child I never felt that talking about how I was feeling was welcomed and as a result I bottled up everything I was feeling. As an adult I find that everything I suppressed is triggered by my auditory and visual senses which sometimes results in an overflow of emotions. This is suggested by *Izinto ezincinane* which appears as if it was knocked over. Upon reflection it also became reminiscent of childhood memories

when I would accidentally drop my mother's crockery and waited nervously to hear her voice travel from the other room.

Working intuitively, I used the leather-hard curled shavings pared off the body to form and frame the interior of the vessel. The painted bands of glaze suggest layers in the earth and layers of memories. I smoke-fired the vessel using old journals to start the fire this served as a form of emotional release of the contents of the journals. Removing the vessel from the ashes felt as if I was rising out of the ashes like a phoenix or being reborn.

Metaphor

Metaphors are an ever-present part of our language and how we represent the world. They form particular understandings of the landscapes we inhabit and how they are empowered or naturalized (Tilley & Cameron-Daum 2017:8). I have sought personal and found metaphors and documented them in my reflective journaling to help me make sense and represent my worldview.

The metaphor 'life is a journey' has been very appropriate for this research as a way to cope with life and make sense of things. It has mostly influenced my approach to my work and the materials that I have used. It has been the basis of the content of some works that speak about being on a therapeutic journey, one which allows me to find stillness in personal experiences that have been traumatic and weighed heavily on me.

In some of the above vessels (fig. 79) mountain peaks are symbolic and represent 'life is a journey' because I am suggesting the difficult uphill climb and endurance required to reach the top. This metaphor has been significant for my personal growth and to sustain rich relationships in my life and think of them as mountains that I trying to summit.

I have used river and stream imagery to reflect on my grandmother's words 'life's problems come and go like the river below,' which she used when pointing to a tributary of the Umzimkhulu, a river where we frequently collected water. I now recognise it as her way of storytelling and moments of imparting knowledge acquired through the wisdom of age. I am very fond of the memories I still have of her because, like a river that can dry up, time passes by, and you can only relive those experiences through memories that become faded or

blurred. In addition, I have often reflected on this personal moment and I find the peaceful flow of water to be soothing, meditative, a symbol of life, purification, and hope.



Figure 81: **A:** *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)* (2017). Earthenware and stoneware. **B:** detail of vessel

Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep) (fig. 81) is inspired by examples of bottle jars and bottle forms such as Rie's *Small Volcanic Glaze Vase* (fig. 12) and Voulkos' *Big Jupiter* (fig. 35). On this vessel I use bright blue water imagery to suggest renewal, change and cleansing. The sgraffito underneath suggests ripples, which represents 'ripples' in my personal life that even times of adversity, with the support of my pillars, my spirit is never broken. From doing experiments in the studio, I was aware that the blue underglaze applied on top of a shiny surface glaze would peel and become fragile. I was happily surprised by

the results of *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)* as it strengthens the fragility I often find in myself. The brittle surface proved difficult to hold every time I moved it, I found this symbolic and revealing of what is hidden underneath.

Ukudibana kwendlela series (*Pathways collide* series) (2016) (fig. 82) is also inspired by 'life is a journey', I have suggested this with the bands that curve around the vessels. They suggest both literal paths and contemplation about taking a different direction at significant times of my life. I intentionally created the series so that when the vessels sit together, the bands never have a meeting point. In order to suggest lost connections with the past I combed delicate broken lines onto the slip.

I only realised after completing the vessels that only one was in a warm colour. In contrast, the others have a dark and foreboding presence to them. I realised that this was symbolic of many of my personal struggles which were the very reason I had gone on these walks, namely, to clear my head. Moorhouse (2012), who says the "effects derived from the ceramic firing process emulate the weight and natural movements deep beneath the landscape

surface, far from a landscape view, but certainly about the landscape" (2012: 52). As a chance experiment, I sprinkled some of the underglazes onto the slopes of the upper part of body of the vessel which created crusty lumps that look like dry earth.



Figure 82: Two views of *Ukudibana kwendlela* series (*Pathways collide IV and II* series) **A:** *IV* and, **B:** *II* (2016). Earthenware.

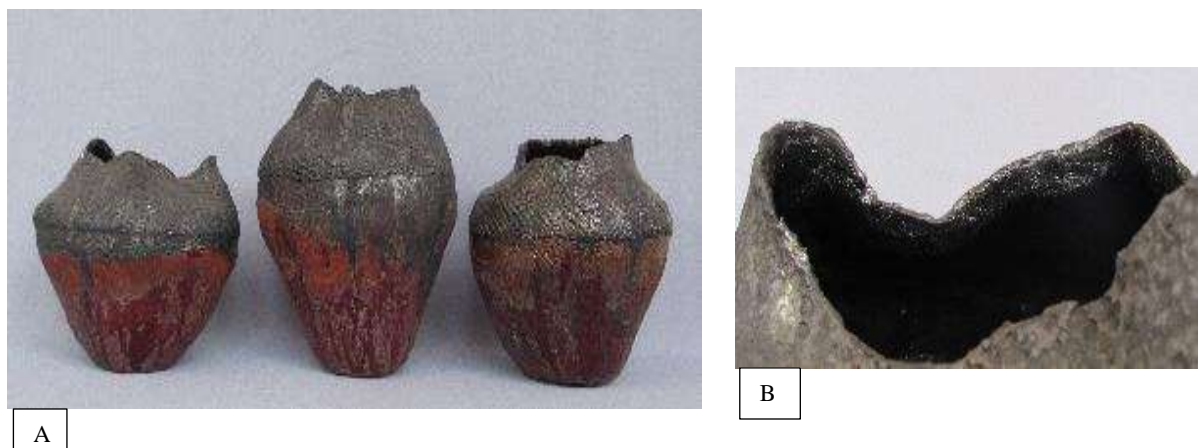


Figure 83: **A:** *Intlungu (Pain)* series, (2016) Stoneware. **B:** Close up of the rim

Metaphors can communicate experiences, tangible thoughts, and ideas (Phillips 2010: 43). *Intlungu (Pain)* (2016) (fig. 83) suggests an emotional and physical pain that I achieved by violently scarring the leather-hard clay. I also impressed found objects and stretched the clay along the rim to suggest fragility and vulnerability. Jones (2007) says one of the most alluring surfaces visually, namely dry barium glazes, is also the most unpleasant to touch (2007: 61). I left the unrefined surfaces to present the viewer with a tactile experience of this aggression. The several glaze firings developed the dark surface colours which suggest a menacing mood.

This surface treatments alludes to Freud's theory of '*unheimlich*.' The theory is about everyday experiences with an emphasis on aspects that might be repulsive or frightening,

where we are unable to distinguish between pleasure and displeasure or bad and good (Ruers 2019). By creating an unnerving tactile surface I also suggest discomfort and a sense of chaos.

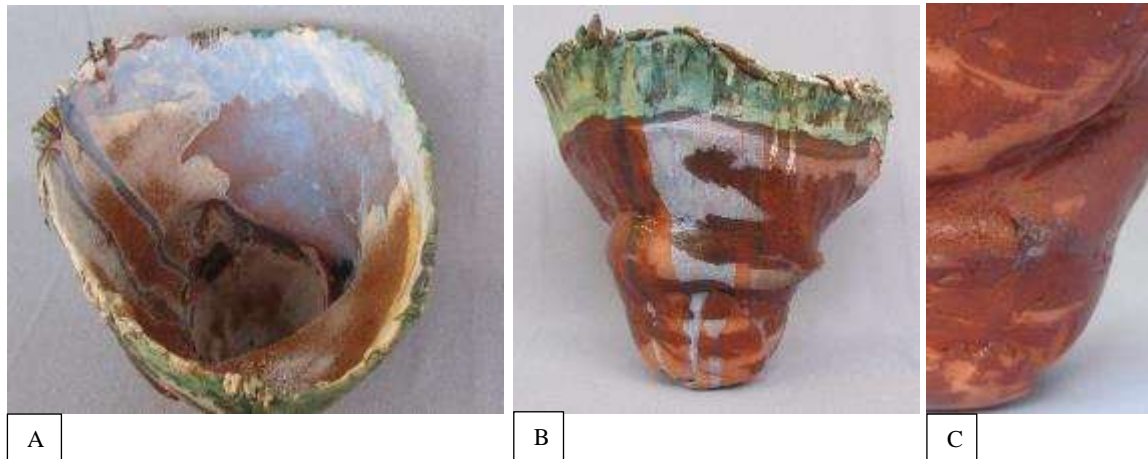


Figure 84: **A:** interior detail of vessel, **B** *Mhlaba sondle II (Mother earth feed us II)* (2017). Earthenware. **C** detail of stretched and torn ceramic body

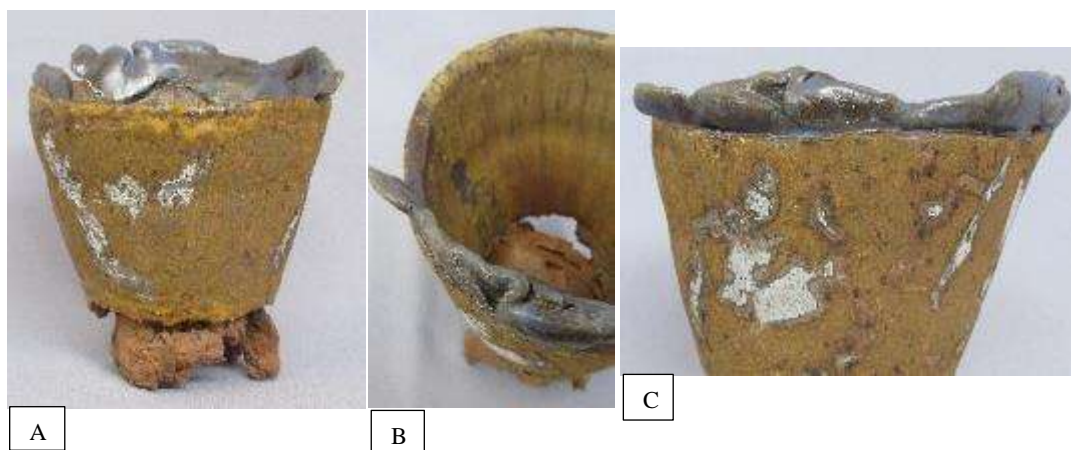


Figure 85: **A:** *Inqanawa enzulu (Deep vessel)* (2016-2017). Stoneware. **B** interior detail. **C:** close up of surface treatment

The expression ‘weight off my shoulders’ and Erykah Badu’s *Bag Lady* (2000) inspired *Mhlaba sondle II (Mother earth feed us II)* (2017) (fig. 84). The opening lyrics of this song which are:

“Bag lady you gon’ hurt your back
 Dragging all them bags like that
 I guess nobody ever told you
 All you must hold onto, is you, is you, is you.”

The saggy form suggests a weighty bag, filled with emotional baggage, that is tearing at the seams. The slab at the base acts as a patch to keep its contents intact. The older I get and the more responsibilities I have in my life, the more difficult I find it to process my emotions

when I do not have the right tools. The vessel becomes a repository of vulnerable and intimate aspects of a person's life that could explode at the frail seams.

In contrast to *Mhlaba sondle II*, the open base of *Inqanawa enzulu (Deep vessel)* (2016-2017) (fig. 85) suggests how I am sometimes able to be vulnerable and let things go. The surface is inspired by images I took of clouds drifting away.

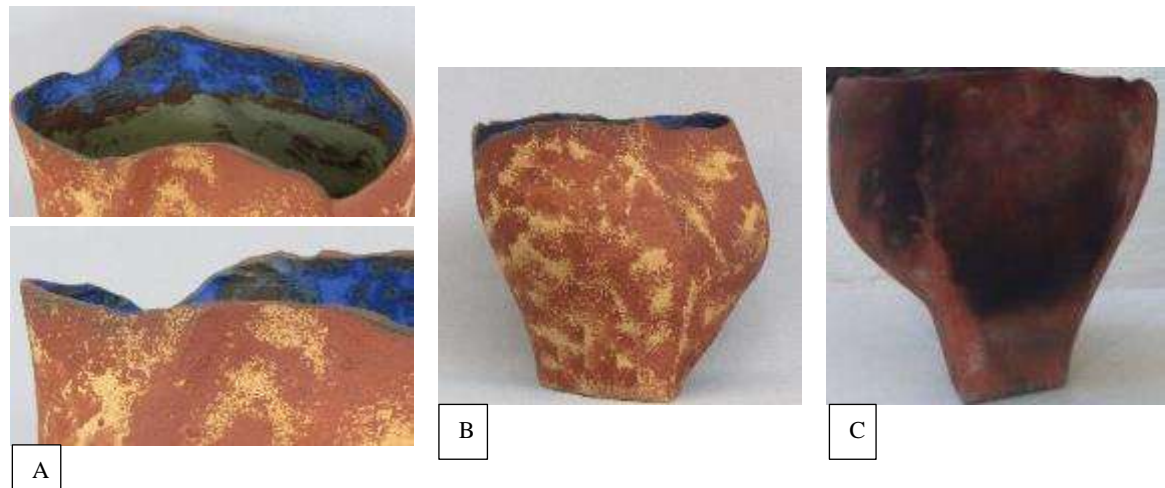


Figure 86: A: rim detail, B: *Njengoko ndikhangele (Searching)*, 2017. Earthenware & Stoneware. C: smoke fired and unresolved.

Memory

My hazy and delicate childhood memories form the bulk of the content that I have been trying to process through my artmaking. Often, I recall them very differently from how other recount them, and this might be due to the trauma they have caused me. In her essay, Klopper (2010) says that landscapes often become repositories for individual and collective memories, sacred and charged with symbolic meaning (2010: 28). The vessels discussed in this chapter have become safe repositories to hold my fragile and emotional memories.

Njengoko ndikhangele (Searching) (2017) (fig.86) is inspired by the illusory profiles of Higby's vessels and is my response to my constant searching for meaning in my elusive memories. Each side of the vessel presents a different profile as well as the overlapping mountain horizon lines of the rim to suggest the change which has occurred every time my siblings and I discuss childhood memories.

Upon reflection, I was struck by how much time I spent attempting to resolve painful memories and for a long time everything felt like a fog and I attempted to emulate that by

smoke firing the vessel (fig. 86: C). However, I re-fired it after a few weeks later to remove the soot. Interestingly, this process was therapeutic, and when the vessel came out of the kiln, it felt as if a weight was lifted off my shoulders.

Shard Installation (2015-2018)



Figure 87: *Shard* (2015-2018), mixed media. 406 (L) x 113 (W) x 20 (H) cm max.



Figure 88: Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Wall Pocket*, 2003-04. Cedar. Photograph: Michael Bodycomb © Ursula von Rydingsvard, Courtesy Galeri Lelong. In (Landi, 2007)

Shard (2015-2018) (fig. 87) is an arduous culmination of my themes and was partly inspired by Ursula von Rydingsvard's *Wall Pocket* (2003-04) (fig. 88). I was drawn to the chiselled form which resembles a mountain as well as the undulating and rhythmic profile. The sculpture resonated with me because it resembles a pocket or safe and comforting space to sit in.

These shards that form this piece were as a result of an unsuccessful attempt at building a large mountain form over wire construction. I became frustrated by the limitation of what my materials could do as the structure kept falling apart and breaking. This entire process of building and rebuilding was incredibly strenuous, both emotionally and physically. Due to feeling beaten down by the material I packed the fired shards into boxes. I would periodically take them out to try to find ways to reassemble them. This trial and error phase developed into a symbolic process for me. Instead of hiding a body of work that I felt had defeated I was determined to make a significant piece with the broken shards. Upon reflection, I also

realised that it represented how I had been feeling at the time, an emotional mess scattered into a million pieces. I therefore reflected on Jones (2016) who says the metaphor of forming a clay vessel is an analogy for life, how the material can be broken, and yet the shards survive forever (2016: 26).



Figure 89: Support structure for *Shard* piece

Unlike my intact vessels, the title *Shard* is a direct reference to the state of the work. Shards (a term used in archaeology) are often found in the earth and are broken pieces of discarded pottery that no longer fulfils a utilitarian function (Hamer & Hamer 1986: 282). *Shard* represents my process of unearthing and piecing together childhood memories. I use the singular, *Shard*, in order to signify it as a single object or *vessel*.

The most significant aspect for me in this installation is the blue 'stream' which meanders down the middle of the piece. It is inspired by the Umzimkhulu River, an important point of reference to my childhood. I drew the course to create the path of the river as well as to create an outline for the support structure underneath (fig. 89). My inspiration was Geologist Liz Hajek (2017) who says, 'the landscape evolves more frequently because rivers curve their way through and change course shifting rocks and clay deposits all around'. Her insights made me more mindful of the changing direction of the stream and what it meant to me personally. Like rivers changing course over many years, the direction our lives can be unpredictable, yet we are not helpless observers and can take control. With the river as a central focus I intend to take the viewer on a journey with me and 'walk through the landscape.'

The surface treatment of the 'stream of water' was carefully planned: some areas are shiny, translucent, and clear while other areas have sand to suggest the idiom 'murky waters' (fig. 90). I was fascinated by the textures on the shards which were a result of my pressing the clay onto the newspaper and chicken wire (fig. 91) support which reminded me of textures on rocks.



Figure 90: Close up of the central stream



Figure 91: Close-up of fire clay wrapped around the chicken wire and fired to bisque temperature before glaze firing.

Bill Viola (1995: 220) says that the landscape is a personified imprint about times passed and that walking through it becomes a re-telling of forgotten stories. This installation has come to represent a similar idea for me, the walking, sitting, meditating in nature and in assembling the installation.

The layering and stacking of pieces alludes to the layers found in the earth and my layers of memory. I played around with stacking them onto each other in order to try to balance them without having to fix them permanently, in the same way that our memories are constantly changing.



Figure 92: Close up of shards to observe layers

I was taken aback by the fragility of the pieces that broke so easily as I worked with them. At first this was frustrating but over time I realised that trauma is something real and not just in my past. The brittle, frail and fragile appearance of the edges of *Shard* add to the brutal and traumatic memories I was trying to keep buried (fig. 92), thus making *Shard* a metaphor for destabilisation. Whilst I could alter the piece every time I set it up, an aspect that never changes is that the pieces are able to support each other every time they

are assembled. I noticed that rebuilding *Shard* brought me back to mapping personal

childhood memories instead of avoiding them. The support is precarious in some areas, but it does not waiver, which is symbolic for me and the relationship I find I have with my siblings.

***Unearthed* the exhibition**

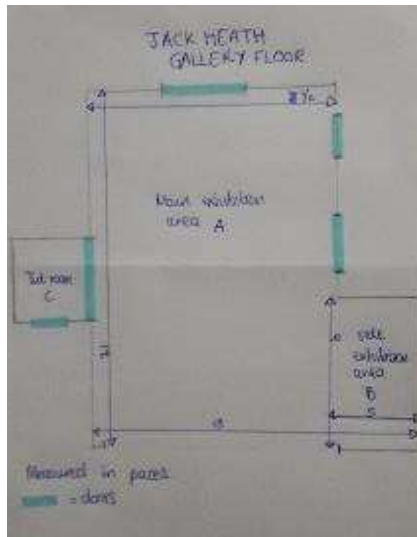


Figure 93: Jack Heath Gallery floorplan. **A** main exhibition area, **B** side exhibition area where I displayed *Shard* and, **C** the tutorial room.

The exhibition of the work produced in my creative studio practice which forms an integral part of this Practice Based Research is discussed in this section. I selected *Unearthed* as the title of the exhibition which references the title of this dissertation. This refers to both my exploration with the materials of the earth, and the metaphorical unearthing of my memories. Evidence of this can be seen in the surface of my ceramic vessels.

Photographs of all the work from the exhibition can be seen in appendix 1 and the artist's statement submitted to the examiners is in appendix 2.

I was conscious of how the curation of my work and use of the gallery space would influence the interpretation of it and did several trial runs. I eventually settled on a layout and used the main area for the vessels and *Shard* (fig. 93 A and B). I fashioned the tutorial room (fig. 93 C) to resemble my studio workspace and included test pieces, my journals and found organic objects that were pertinent in my studio practice in order to give the viewer insights into my practice and sources of inspiration.



Figure 94: View of *Unearthed* from entrances.

I decided to use a conventional mode of display in the gallery space the vessels were placed on white plinths at different heights in order to allude to horizon lines and undulating forms of the landscape. I deliberately left enough space between the plinths so that the viewer could move comfortably around the three-dimensional forms and experience the changing landscape from the different viewing points. Where I wanted the works to be viewed as a group rather than individually I placed them on the same plinth. Physical attributes and thematic considerations determined these decisions. (fig. 94).



Figure 95: *Intlungu (Pain)* (2016) in *Unearthed* at JHG

The exhibition was the culmination of a physically and emotionally exhausting journey in my studio practice. The exhibition reflected my feeling of isolation and loneliness while at the same time created a space where I could be ‘safely’ vulnerable and display repositories of my feelings and often fragile memories. I was

fascinated by the process of change in relation to curating a space where I was able to speak about loss and traumatic pasts. I alluded to these feelings by deliberately placing *Intlungu* (2016) (fig. 95) at the entrance of the exhibition because of the menacing colours and textures. However, I placed them on a lower plinth because I did not want them to be dominant. There were lighter moments in the centre of the exhibition on the low plinths with the *Ndikhuselwe* series and *Usikelelekile umhlaba* series (*The blessed land* series), (2016) (appendix 1, Illustration 3). I placed these lower plinths between the taller ones to suggest a sense of standing in the middle of a landscape and be able to view the horizon lines around you.

I used the postgraduate critique sessions to gauge the response of my colleagues to a number of modes of display for *Shard*. I contemplated hanging it on the wall or stacking it on the floor or a wide plinth. I also set it up outdoors which was intriguing as the different times of day and weather conditions altered the appearance considerably. I eventually decided that I wanted it to be seen as if looking down from a mountain onto a stream, in a valley below yet at the same time be able to move around it and to examine it from close-up to see the textures and colours of the stacked pieces. To emphasize the stream on the installation, I

displayed *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)* (2017) on a plinth at one end of *Shard* (fig. 96).



Figure 96: *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)* (2017) and *Shard* (2015-2018) in *Unearthed*



Figure 97: Exhibition practice in JHG.



A



B



Figure 98: Close up images of *Shard* during installation practice outdoors. **A:** outside on a cloudy day **B:** above and below outside on two separate sunny days

Conclusion

In this reflexive chapter I discussed the works made during my studio-based practical research. I demonstrated how my practical work and theory unfolded through cyclical art making and the use of reflective journaling.

I discussed the significance of the processes I used in my art making and how they developed and enabled me to create work that was influenced by childhood memories and is unique to my personal experiences. A discussion of the significance of my Xhosa titles allowed me to appreciate my home language even more and understand how poetry and art can exist together.

What became even more apparent to me are the varied and exciting possibilities for expression using clay and other materials. I have acknowledged the importance of the vessel as a significant repository for the themes; landscape, 'the vessel,' metaphor and memory, to me. Using these themes I was able to unearth memories that I had not been able to properly deal with. My subjectivity was vital in my studio practice, not only to shed light on my worldview but also, to excavate the meanings embedded on my vessels using metaphor and materiality theories.

Finally, I discussed the *Shard* installation and the culmination of my research and work done in my studio practice which was presented in my final exhibition.

Conclusion

The focus of this integrated PBR study was ceramic vessels. I established a practice-based methodology along with a heuristic approach which recognizes the legitimacy of subjective research that is flexible, non-linear and involves self-discovery (Ings 2011: 229). I produced a body of work of nature-inspired non-utilitarian ceramic vessels in my studio practice. The research documented in this dissertation, along with the exhibition, was conducted to expand my knowledge of ceramic history and materials, as well to deepen my understanding of my ceramic studio practice.

I began this dissertation with a background to motivate and briefly discuss the history of the Ceramics Studio which enabled me to explain the richness of my undergraduate studies.

In chapter one I introduced Practice-Based Research (PBR) as the scope of my study. I addressed my use of the natural landscape as a source of inspiration in my creative studio practice. I briefly discussed some of the discourse on 'land' and 'landscape' which helped highlighting issues that are pertinent to my use of landscape as source material. The importance of my materials and making processes together with a discussion of materiality theory. I set out my aims and research questions before briefly dealing with the significance of the vessel in both the theoretical and creative aspects of this research.

Chapter two outlined my theoretical frameworks; reflective practice, heuristics, art historical research, metaphor in art and materiality. PBR Methodologies in creative practice were explained. A literature review highlighted relevant key texts.

Chapter three was a historical survey of selected 20th C British and American studio potters. It assisted my understanding of; aspects of working in a studio setting, the philosophies and developments of studio potters who influenced the legacy of my undergraduate training. I realised how important this history is in understanding the roots of the curriculum and ethos of the Ceramic Studios at the CVA that I discussed in the background section. I elaborated on information provided in the background giving reasons for my focus on British and American studio potters and the developments and changes that took place in 20th C studio pottery. I realised the extent to which these have freed me from the constraints and conventions of earlier studio potters and my predecessors in the Ceramic Studios who were primarily focused on making utilitarian ware.

The shifts I identified occurred in studio ceramics in Britain from where vessels were made primarily, though not exclusively, for their usefulness as containers for food and liquid, to those which were chiefly made to fulfil the human need for creative expression rather than a utilitarian function. These developments laid the foundation which, together with concepts such as materiality theory, enabled me to embed meaning in the vessels that I make. I identified commonalities in influences, education, social circumstances and the artistic environments of the different groups outlined by Clark (1995). I discussed, where appropriate, the availability of materials and technology to make vessels which was either driven by artistic expression, personal philosophies or market preference.

I identified significant shifts in the works of three American studio potters whose alternative approach to vessel making and non-utilitarian vessels have directly influenced my work. This confirmed my belief that as a practitioner it is important to understand the historical roots of ceramics and the work and philosophies of the artists working in this medium. This survey deepened my appreciation for ceramic vessels as well as my materials. I observed the subtleties which occur in the glazes and other surface treatments and cannot always be replicated even when potters use the same glaze, application techniques, firing process, or kiln. This encouraged my research and experimentation in the chapter on ceramic materials. I became aware of seminal exhibitions as well as critical writing which expanded my knowledge of important aspects of the ceramics. However, this also made me aware of the lack of documented representation of studio potters who were just as, if not more, talented and skilled than Bernard Leach.

This observation of lack of peer reviewed documentation is even more true of South African ceramics. Much of the interest in the written history of South African ceramics was done as reviews of exhibitions and not so much the documentation of studio potters, except for commercial potteries as this has been recently addressed by the publication of a book by Wendy Gers. I believe that this is one of the reasons that many ceramists in South Africa refer to themselves as hobbyists or have not received critical acclaim. As a result, I feel that this has slowed down the potential for technical exploration and abstract expression in the field and continues to create a divide and the criticism whether ceramics is craft or art.

I focused on some of the more technical aspects of ceramic materials and techniques that are particularly relevant to me as a studio practitioner in chapter four. I gained a deeper understanding of the individual components of clay and glazes which helped me to anticipate the effect they would have when fired. I have demonstrated how doing tests and recording the information on the pieces enabled me to make decisions about vessel forms and surface treatments. I discovered that incorporating non-ceramic materials into clay bodies and ceramic ‘faults’ could be used for creative expression. I also experimented with cold treatments which offered alternative ways of intensifying the depth of ceramic surfaces.

I described some of my processes and in chapter five I elaborated on the importance of these in my work. In this reflective-reflexive chapter I provided some insights into how and why I title my work as well as the role of themes, natural landscape, vessel, metaphor and memories in my creative studio practice. Through this journey, I grew to understand the value and use of the vessel as a carrier of meaning of these themes. The ceramic vessel became a metaphor for containment of my remembering and forgetting. Tilley & Cameron-Daum’s (2017) observations resonate with me, “objects are a secondary result of thought. This does not mean that these objects are immaterial or purely a product of the mind. Instead objects are part of the same social and material world that we inhabit. We ‘produce’ or ‘recognize’ them through reflecting on that world” (2017:7). This research has strengthened my belief that this is so as I have produced my vessels by reflecting on the natural landscape and the world around me.

Materiality theory enabled me a better understanding of my materials, processes and the aesthetic decisions I made. I was able to discuss the mediums I use as key to the messages layered on my vessels. Including the significance of the tangible objects as proof of my studio practice. In addition, I was able to deliberate on the personal significance of my vessels. Through using ceramic materials and the vessel as a non-utilitarian object I was able to find personal metaphors that allude to my interest in processes and change, as well as the ephemeral nature of memory. Clay has offered me the ability to see and experience many emotions while working with it. It is was my hope that the viewer sees something new each time they view this work and is able to build on their initial interpretation of how the vessels speak to them. That is why I have decided to create a contemplative space in my exhibition where the viewer can retreat for reflection.

A crucial development in my studio practice was to continuously assess and re-assess the work during the process and to allow room for spontaneity as well as to recognise tacit knowledge as encouraged by the heuristic approach. The cyclical nature advocated by the research methodologies I adopted which encouraged reflection and reflexivity made me aware of meditative practices and the value of these not only whilst working in the studio but also in the setting up of my final exhibition. It became evident to me how my expanded knowledge of ceramic history, materials, techniques, and the technical knowledge I had gained through experimentation, together with the work and philosophies of ceramists that resonated with me had contributed to the insights I gained and how I applied this in my studio practice.

This has resulted in my being able to present a body of work comprising non-utilitarian vessels for display in a gallery. This is in stark contrast to the criticism levelled by critics at potters such as Staite-Murray and Rie. I have realised how much of my tacit knowledge from the experience in the university environment, the variety of work and artists I have been exposed to, landscapes, other potters have subliminally influenced my work. This has resulted in my producing something unique which personal embedded meaning and metaphors and not just an emulation of work discussed in the historical survey.

The flexibility of heuristic inquiry validates that the journey will not always go as planned (Ings 2011: 229). The experiences leave a lasting impression on me and my work similarly, clay which can go through a journey in the makers' hands of being shaped in various ways. This practice-based research has confirmed that chance is an inevitable part of ceramics which often offers one creative possibilities if the reflection-reflexive mode of practice is used. At the same time documenting processes and discoveries is a vital component of research as newly acquired knowledge becomes embedded knowledge through practice.

Upon reflection, I have become more aware of the curation of the exhibition in order to create a particular atmosphere. Moving forward from this research, I hope to develop more creative expressions that are not associated with utilitarian wares. To do this I hope to be braver in my studio practice, as well as for *Shard* to grow into a bigger piece and see it in a different space.

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Appendix 1: Illustrations of MA exhibition portfolio



Illustration 1: Top image Left to right: Anda Dodo, *Intlungu (Pain series)*, (2016) Stoneware. 24 cm (H) x 25 cm (W) max. Anda Dodo, *Xa ujonga phezulu (When you look up)*, (2016-2018). Mixed Medium. 29 cm (H) x 25 cm (W) max. Anda Dodo, *Intlungu (Pain series)*, (2016) Stoneware. 31cm (H) x 24 cm (W) max. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 2: Above-Anda Dodo, *Inqanawa I, II, III, & IV (Vessels I, II, III, and IV)*, (2017). Earthenware. Sizes vary: (I) 23 cm (H) x 21 cm(W), (II) 25.5 cm (H) x 19 cm (W), (III) 30.5 cm (H) x 30 cm (W), (IV) 25 cm (H) x 21 cm (W) max. Below; exhibition still. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 3: Anda Dodo, *Usikelelekile umhlaba* series (*The blessed land* series), (2016). Earthenware. Sizes vary, Shortest to tallest: 25.5 cm (H) x 13 cm (W), 26.5 cm (H) x 21 cm (W), 34 cm (H) x 13 cm (W) max. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 4: Anda Dodo, *Mhlaba sondle I (Mother earth feed us I)* (2017). Earthenware. 22cm (H) x 39 cm (W) max. Photograph: Anda Dodo

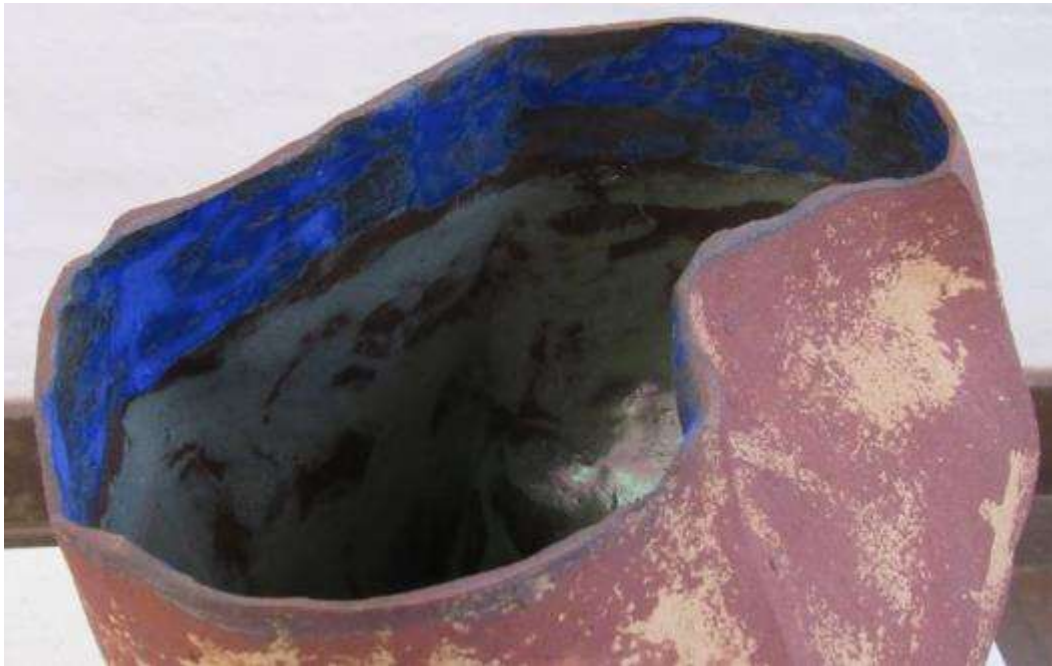


Illustration 5: Anda Dodo, *Njengoko ndikhangele (Searching)*, (2017). Earthenware & stoneware. 26.5 cm (H) x 23 cm (W) max. Photograph: Anda Dodo.



Illustration 6: Anda Dodo, *Mhlaba sondle II (Mother earth feed us II)* (2017). Earthenware. 25 cm (H) x 27 cm (W) max. Photograph: Anda Dodo



Illustration 7: **Left**, Anda Dodo, *Ukudibana kwendlela II (Pathways collide II)* (2016). Earthenware. 30.5 cm (H) x 21 cm (W) max. **Right**, Anda Dodo, *Ukudibana kwendlela IV (Pathways collide IV)* (2016). Earthenware. 31 cm (H) x 23 cm (W) max. Photographs Anda Dodo



Illustration 8: **Left**, Anda Dodo, *Inqanawa yolonwabo (Happiness in a vessel)* (2017). Stoneware. 23 cm (H) x 28 cm (W) max. **Right**, *Inqanawa enzulu (Deep vessel)* (2016-2017). Earthenware. 15 cm (H) x 14 cm (W) max

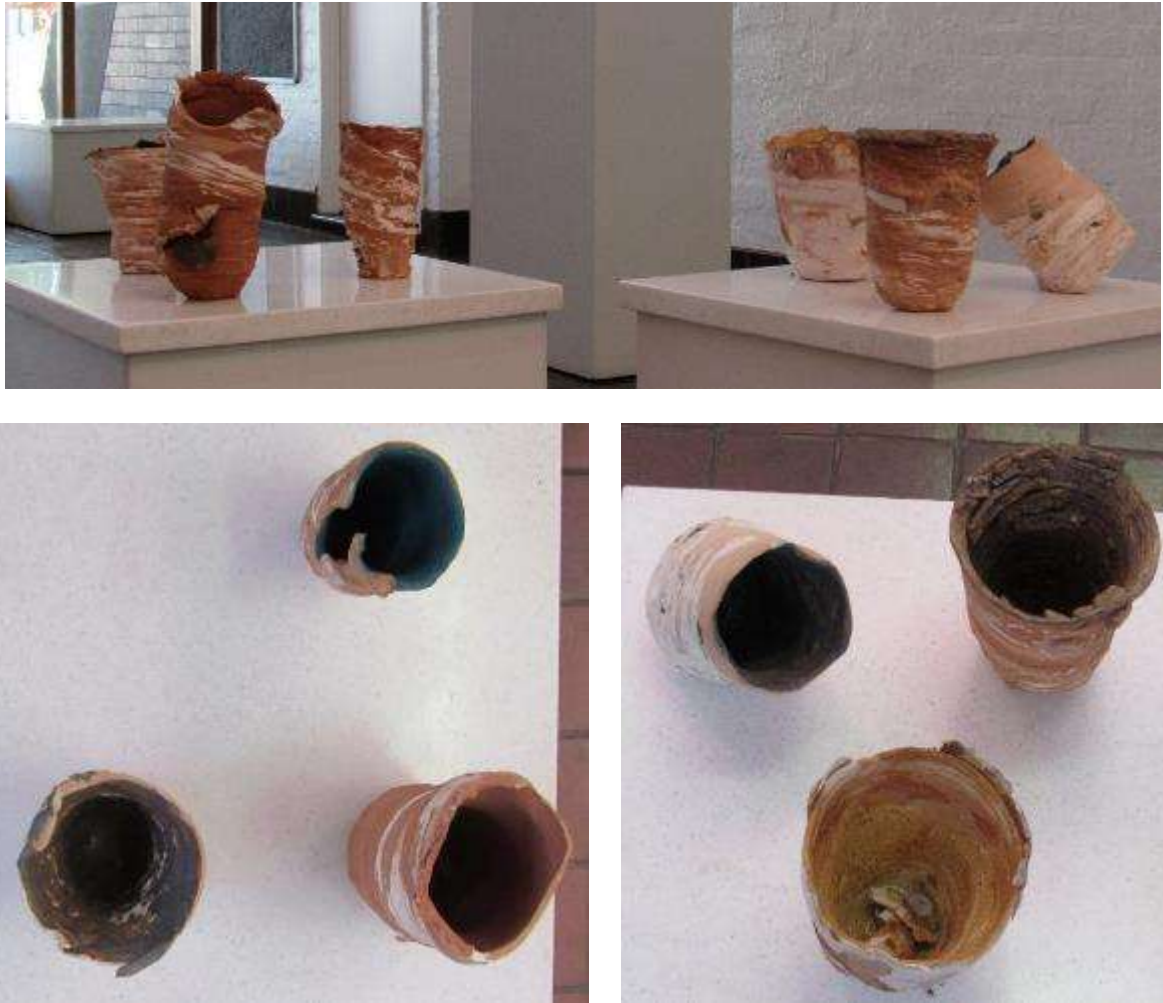


Illustration 9: Anda Dodo, Selection of (6/9) vessels from *Ndikhuselwe series (I am protected series)* (2016). Earthenware. Sizes vary. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 10: **Left** Anda Dodo, *Nazo intlungu ziyodlula*, (*This too shall pass*), (2016). Earthenware. 37 cm (H) x 21 cm (W) max. **Right**, *Izinto ezincinane* (*Small things*) (2016). Earthenware, stoneware and smoke fired 24.5 cm (H) x 35.5 cm (W) max. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 11: **Top-Left**, Anda Dodo, *Intaba III (Mountain III)* 2015-2017. Earthenware. 33.5 cm (H) x 36 cm (W) max. **Top-Right**, Anda Dodo, *Intaba I (Mountain I)* 2015-2017. Earthenware. 45 cm (H) x 31 cm (W). **Bottom-foreground**, Anda Dodo, *Intaba II (Mountain II)* 2015-2017. Earthenware. 38 cm (H) x 28 cm (W) max. Photographs: Anda Dodo



Illustration 12: Anda Dodo, *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)*. (2017). Earthenware and stoneware. 25 cm (H) x 12 cm (W) max. Photograph: Anda Dodo



Illustration 13: Anda Dodo, *Shard* installation (2015-2018). Mixed medium. 406 cm (L) x 113 cm (W) x 20 cm (H) max

Appendix 2: Anda Dodo MAFA-R Exhibition Artist Statement

This exhibition is the culmination of my studio practice which, together with my written dissertation, form my integrated masters research project. The written dissertation comprises research that has played an important role in my approach to the work I made in my studio practice. To understand the role of the vessel in contemporary ceramics, I focused part of my research on important aspects of Ceramic history in Britain and America since the beginning of the twentieth century. It also includes selected contemporary artists for example, Ewen Henderson, Wayne Higby and Peter Voulkos, whose work has inspired my own practice. This research enabled me to gain a better understanding of the shifts in thinking about the use of the vessel as a form of expression and a carrier of meaning rather than merely as container where the utilitarian function was the chief consideration for the maker.

Technical ceramics knowledge has also influenced the making and surface treatments of my vessels. In order to expand this knowledge, I consulted books, journals and websites and conducted tests with ceramic materials and processes in the studio. The test pieces on display, as well as the works themselves, are evidence of these and important discoveries are documented in my dissertation.

During my Honours year, I started to pay more attention to how vessels could function as containers of meaning rather than liquid or food. I found myself drawn to using the landscape and memories of my place of birth as my source material, see illustration 1 (*Yinkungu nelanga II*, 2014). I started to explore various forms and surface treatments that would enable me to convey my personal meaning and memories. The work on this exhibition explores these themes further.

My ceramic vessels are chiefly influenced by two aspects of the natural environment, namely, the physical appearance of the natural landscape and my reflection on these places where I find meditative spaces.

The physical appearance of the landscape with its mountainous forms, valleys and horizon lines (illustration 2) are reflected in the way that I build my forms and texture the surfaces. While building the forms, I add the textures using found organic materials. Rough and soft textures from nature informed the decisions I made to emphasize a few aspects of my work.

The varied surfaces invite the viewer to engage with the tactile nature of clay. The stretched, torn, and pulled edges express the plasticity of the clay while suggesting the fragility I find in myself. Vulnerability has been expressed in the way that I have left the rough surfaces bare and unchanged. In this way, I express the feeling of vulnerability to produce personal artworks, indirectly allowing myself to reveal and conceal and be vulnerable in my practice and in exhibiting my work.

The natural landscape (illustration 3) allows me to escape the busy city to meditate on what I am personally experiencing. My experience in the natural landscape extends to my studio practice and allows me to create vessels that reflect that emotive experience. I have been able to reflect on the natural outdoor spaces to create vessels which became containers for contemplation. I use metaphor to communicate my experiences and to communicate tangible thoughts and ideas (Phillips 2011). My own personal metaphors and symbolism, together with more universal ones are contained in the meaning of the vessels. Most important are the metaphors shared with me by my grandmother who raised me.

Warm colours have been used to express physical and emotional warmth. Terra sigillata (a very fine slip used to coat some of the pieces instead of glaze) has been largely used to refer to the warm terra cotta hues of eMzimkhulu, the landscape I grew up in. This place is referenced in my work because it is where I experienced my childhood. I have also found the same terra cotta hues in regions of Kwa-Zulu Natal and it has created a feeling of longing. This reference can be found in *Inqanawa I, II, III, & IV* (illustration 4)

The metaphor 'life is a journey' influenced works such as the series *Ukudibana kwendlela* series (*Pathways collide* series) (illustration 5). This series speaks to being on a therapeutic journey to find stillness in personal experiences. River/stream imagery has been used to reflect on my grandmother's words 'life's problems come and go like the river below', seen in *Njengoko ndikhangele* (illustration 7). She used to point to a river, a tributary of the uMzimkhulu, that we frequently went to. Her action of pointing in the direction of the river was always an important because it was a moment for her to impart knowledge.

Furthermore, the use of dark colours has become symbolic of difficult personal experiences I have had to deal with. Some of these vessels are in the *Ukudibana kwendlela* series (*Pathways collide*) series. These vessels were made to reflect a particular time when every

path I was taking seemed uncertain. The process of making them allowed me the time to reflect on the ups and downs and I used that to inform the types of vessel forms I was making.

The making process is an integral part of the metaphorical meaning of these vessels. I have used both throwing and hand-building to make my vessels and sometimes both processes are used to make one piece. I also alter my forms by cutting and squashing the clay. Hand-building allows me to be in a meditative space to reflect on the landscape that inspired the vessel as well as to reflect on the action of making the vessel. I surrounded myself with images of the mountainous landscapes. The calm of these landscapes enabled me, through my practice, to mentally revisit the feeling of peace and tranquillity and to fully meditate and engage in my process.

Ndikhuselwe (I am protected) series (illustration 8) is part of series of vessels thrown on the wheel with different colour clays with sand and other organic matter added to it. This, together with manipulating the clay when the vessel was wet, removed some of the evidence of it being made with the assistance of a machine rather than purely by hand. The rims of the pots often represent horizon lines. How they alter when one traverses the landscape is emphasized by the tilted position of the pot. It also allows the viewer to see the inside of the vessel. The inside of the form looks like a rusting surface in comparison to the organic exterior.

In April 2016 I took part in a workshop called *Triggering Creative Impulse* by Dr. Ralph Johnson at Phansi Museum (Durban). The workshop was about the use of poetry as inspiration and at a later stage, what I learnt from it, was helpful in guiding me through understanding the Xhosa poems that have been used to title my vessels. My titles have been inspired by Xhosa poems that reference the landscape. The use of Xhosa connects me to my birthplace. However, I spent the majority of my childhood in Umzimkhulu (my mother's birthplace) and there the dialect is isiBhaca which is a combination of Xhosa, Zulu and some Swati. As a result, my titles are often a hybrid of this dialect influence. I have always had great difficulty expressing myself when in my birthplace because I spoke a generic language that did not originate from one place. This is another reason why these titles are an important aspect of my work as I try to map out my personal experiences and influences.



Illustration 1: Anda Dodo, *Yinkungu nelanga II* (2014). Earthenware. Photograph: Anda Dodo (2014).



Illustration 2: *Intaba I (The Mountain I)* 2015-2017. Hand built with mixed clays. Earthenware. 47.5 cm (H) x 34.5 cm (W). Photo: Anda Dodo.



Illustration 3: Image taken on a mountain hike in Kamberg (KZN). Photograph: Anda Dodo, 2016.



Illustration 4: *Inqanawa I, II, III, & IV (Vessels I, II, III, and IV)*. (2017) Studio clay, thrown and altered. Earthenware. Sizes vary: (I) 23 cm (H) x 21 cm (W), (II) 25.5 cm (H) x 19 cm (W), (III) 30.5 cm (H) x 30 cm (W), (IV) 25 cm (H) x 21 cm (W) max. Collection of the artist. Photo: Anda Dodo



Illustration 5: *Ukudibana kwendlela* series (*Pathways collide* series) (2016) Hand built. Earthenware. Bottom left: 31cm (H) x 25cm (W) max. Exhibited at Jack Heath Gallery, Centre for Visual Art and at Ceramics Southern Africa Regional, KZNSA (2017). Bottom right: 31 cm (H) x 26 cm (W) max. Exhibited at Ceramics Southern Africa Regional, KZNSA (2017). Collection of the artist. Photo: Anda Dodo



Illustration 6: *Mlambo ongapheliyo (Still waters run deep)*. (2017) Studio clay, thrown and altered. Earthenware & Stoneware surface treatment. 44.5 cm (H) x 11 cm (W) max. Collection of the artist. Photo: Anda Dodo.



Illustration 7: *Njengoko ndikhangele (Searching)*, 2017. Hand built with studio clay. Earthenware & Stoneware fired. 24.5 (h) x 28.5 (w) max. Collection of the artist. Photo: Anda Dodo



Illustration 8: *Ndikhuselwe (I am protected)* series (2016). Mixed clays with sand, thrown and altered. Earthenware. Varying sizes. Collection of the artist. Photo: Anda Dodo