



Diploma Update

Suzy Dünser

Here in the little bubble of the ASP satellite centre for the diploma programme, things are going very well - we've just finished a module with John Dawson, which got us up close and personal with porcelain. For me, and I suspect many of the others, it was a great experience to have this material demystified, and to find out that it's actually pretty great to work with. Most of the group will be moving on to a wood-firing module with Elena Renker this term. From what I hear, Elena's kiln is a dream to fire, so that should be offer a more rewarding (or at least, less black) experience than some of the wood firings the dipsters have been through on our own at ASP. A few of us will be doing self-directed study this term; for two of us it's our last year and we're looking down the barrel of the most meaningful assessment of the four years this November, so we're starting to focus on producing our "body of work" for that. (But no pressure.)

While the studio modules at the ASP are always great, issues with the distance classes sometimes come up, and at the moment we're dealing with one of those - trying to convince Otago not to cut the funding for a live drawing tutor for the drawing class. It's not clear whether we'll be successful, but Joanne has told us that if Otago doesn't come through, the ASP will organise a class for us, and make it viable by offering it to other ASP members as well.

While I absolutely appreciate this effort, it also makes me clench my teeth a little that the ASP should have to step up to cover for things they're not meant to. One of the things that makes struggles like this so frustrating is that the Otago Polytechnic diploma course is currently the best option in New Zealand for getting a comprehensive education in ceramics, and it's a good programme (and the way we stretch it in Auckland at least, an excellent programme). But if the School of Art down there chops away at it (and there are other ways this has happened over the last few years as well), it may become less prestigious. It's disheartening that they don't see the value in it that we do. Although if nothing else, at least it's putting the question of the future of ceramics education back into people's minds.

From the President:

The Diploma Course has provided a big boost to the level of activity at the Centre over the last few years. It has meant that a more intensive level of study and studio practice has been offered to many students and we have been able to offer valuable teaching spots to some of our senior potters. Some of the students have gone on to higher levels which the ASP is not equipped to provide because of our lack of individual studio space. The relationship with Otago has generally been very positive. Over recent years there has been a reduction in the share of the financial cake with the ASP's share being cut back from the original percentage. So the goalposts are moving slowly, getting closer together each year, and there are very plausible reasons given to us for that, but it appears that we have no leverage and so the

margins are getting tough. We are absolutely committed to offering a qualification at this level and we will continue to look for ways to allow this to happen. We are very proud of the results that our students produce, and their interest in, and enjoyment of, the many ways of handling clay that they have been exposed to. They have all embraced the process from the wet clay through to the excitement of building and firing kilns, and it feels like a revival of the enthusiasm of the 70s except with a lot more options to try out.

John Dawson teaching thrown porcelain for the first Diploma module of the year.



Renowned English potter Edmund De Waal has just published a book "The Hare With Amber Eyes" which is on the best-seller lists: Go to: <http://www.edmunddewaal.com/theharewithambereyes.html>

Jean-Paul Sartre is sitting at a French cafe, revising his draft of "Being and Nothingness". He says to the waitress, 'I'd like a cup of coffee, please, with no cream.' The waitress replies, 'I'm sorry, monsieur, but we're out of cream. How about with no milk?'

This email from Gustavo Perez arrived the other day:

Already some twenty days back here and fully reincorporated to my rhythm and my work. Also to my three cushions sessions ...

Jetlag was quite difficult on my return here. Almost ten days of bad night sleep. But now everything is OK, at least with my sleep rhythm. Because the country continues being a big mess, of course. If the bad news get even to the NZ Herald, it is because it is really bad. Alas, it does not improve.

And it is quite hard to imagine that it ever will. We need to continue our lives with this strange burden of knowing that something very rotten is going to make this place an even bigger mess than it already is. I would love to be wrong!

Now it is here 4 in the afternoon, I am drinking my coffee before going to the atelier again. And I have to think of you because your mug has become my afternoon coffee cup. It is a nice one, and it always makes me go back in my thoughts to your place, to the very nice time I had with you in your beautiful country. Today I have unloaded a kiln. Good results in general. Working on a new series. Life goes on ... Please give my best regards to everyone.

The ASP book "Playing With Fire" is selling well and received a generous review in last Saturday's Herald. Only \$55 to members.

The Committee is still intent on rationalising the ASP collection at the Museum, culling out the less important works, bringing some back to the Centre for members to see, and leaving a really top-class selection for the Museum to display, and for us to feel proud of, in that prestigious venue. We will be working on that project over the winter - it needs to be done with a lot of consideration and consultation.

Here's an enjoyable "beat" poem by Tim Minchin that may offend - open with an open mind.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhGuXCuDb1U>



Mike O'Donnell singing into his pot at Coromandel

Coromandel Easter Exhibition 2011

Suzy Dünser

Two things struck me at the opening of the Coromandel Potters' Easter show. The first was Mike O'Donnell's joy at the discovery that there was yet another way he could use his pots to make sound. The first thing he did was the "opening of the crypt," slowly drawing back the lid of a box so that the sound it made was stretched out. Then he played a song on a little wind instrument, but the show stopper was that he then bent over, stuck his head into one of his tall Vessels, and sang. His lack of self-consciousness in doing this was totally charming, and the resulting echoing sound was arresting. It gave the impression that the song was coming from very far away. Mike said he'd gotten the inspiration to do that from an old photo of Barry Brickell with his head in a pot – "Now I know what you were doing in there!" – but it also reminded me of Brendan Adams' "Ceramic Phone Apps" on show at the National Exhibition in Mount Eden, which amplified the sound from a mobile phone when you placed it inside one of them. Vessels are of course fundamentally functional, and it's not uncommon for them to be used to manipulate light, but this idea of vessels as soundmakers totally captivated me.

The second thing was that Barry, in his opening speech, said about the show: "this thing we do every year.... why do we do it, anyway?" I am a pretty literal person, and don't let many rhetorical questions go unanswered, so this question stuck in my head as I walked around the show, which this year featured the work of Barry Brickell, Wailin Elliott, Mike O'Donnell, Jenny Shearer, George Sempagala, and Janet Smith. The Coromandel Potters show is special to me, partly because it is a small show, and intimate with that, but also because the majority of the work is actually functional vessels, and a lot of it is wood fired. It's very easy to glance over a show like that and, if you're so inclined, dismiss it as outdated or lost in time, but the work is actually excellent,

many of the forms are beautiful, and some of the glaze effects (if you can call the result of three days in the firebox of an anagama kiln a glaze effect) are to die for. These pieces show a lot of care and effort in the firing as well as the making, and that is really inspiring.

Pikes Point Gallery

Nadine Spalter

We have decided to revive the Pikes Point Gallery at ASP. We had a small burst of adrenaline around the time of the conference when all the master classes were taking place, and managed to get some of our tutors to put their work in the gallery. Currently we have some generous Graham Ambroses, some rare Renton Murrays and some pearly Peter Langes, even some John Dawsons have stayed behind. On the shelves there is work by Margaret Sumich, Lex Dawson and Helen Perrett. All the work is for sale and this is a fantastic opportunity to purchase work from our tutors and mentors. In addition to showcasing our tutors, we will have an area where Diploma students can display and sell their work, so you can see what the Dippys are up to. So watch this space, and watch the gallery space, we will be updating you regularly.

Lucky Thirteen

Suzy Dünser

In 1988, thirteen ceramic artists were chosen to attend the First New Zealand Ceramics Symposium: three all-needs-provided-for weeks in Dunedin at Otago Polytechnic, devoted to creating. The only stipulation was that if possible they should try something new in their work. By all accounts, the experience was intense, resulting not only in bonding among the participants, but also in most cases (either right then, or later on) the hoped-for development in their work. About a year later, the group put on a show at the Dowse, called "Lucky 13," in acknowledgement of their good fortune in being chosen for the symposium.

Fast-forward 23 years to Objectspace,

where Moyra Elliott, Christine Thacker, Peter Lange, Marilyn Wiseman and Bronwynne Cornish gathered on April 30th to share their recollections of that time. Richard Fahey led the discussion, which inevitably turned to considerations of the implications of the symposium (which, despite the name, was never repeated) for ceramics in New Zealand, and for ceramic artists working today.

That participating in a symposium like that would be a great experience for a ceramic artist to have was a given. There was some discussion around whether the expectation of having a show at the end would be inspiring or daunting, and whether being challenged by outside critics at the start and finish would be productive. Not surprisingly, opinions on this varied, depending on individual personalities. The more universally agreed advantages to being in a situation like this were being removed from all one's other responsibilities and distractions, and the exchange of ideas and knowledge with the other participants.

The next question was, how could we make something like this happen today? And before that one could be answered (if it could be, because the answer is of course to a good extent dependent on finding funding), the next one had arisen: Is this really the best way to foster ceramics in New Zealand? So then the conversation veered off to how to raise the profile of ceramic art, whether we could have a reality TV show based on potters' lives, etcetera, and very shortly after that Philip Clarke told us it was time to go home, leaving this endless discussion to be continued next time. We were allowed to hang around and talk to the "panel members," though, and Moyra Elliott opined quite strongly that it wasn't about the marketing, the point was that people just needed to produce some good work.

Thinking about this later, I realised that there were two different issues: what will help individual artists improve their work, and what will make the public more aware (and appreciative) of ceramics in general. So then the question is, what are we trying to achieve? It's probably not possible to recreate the level of enthusiasm for pottery that existed in New Zealand a few decades ago, such that competent people can just choose to be potters and earn a living from it, but it will always be true that extraordinary work will get recognition. Maybe there could also be a flow-on awareness effect from that, especially if we also create more opportunities for people to show their work. So it is important to foster and support individual artists. Formal ceramics education in New Zealand is not that strong at the moment (although there is interest in expanding the options available), so events like the Lucky 13 symposium, or even smaller workshops or weekends, would be a valuable addition to the spectrum. We may have to be more creative and self-motivated to make these things happen - we won't get it handed to us on a plate these days - but it would be worthwhile to try.

Resurrecting ceramics

Linda Tyler, Director of NZ Centre for Art Research and Discovery

Nowhere is the connection between art and science stronger than in the world of ceramics. Glaze chemistry and kiln technology are always being manipulated to achieve ever more miraculous artistic outcomes from the meeting of fire and clay. Tellingly, renowned potters Len Castle and Chester Nealie both trained as science teachers, and their work is a highlight of the learning environment at The University of Auckland's Epsom campus. Castle and Nealie pots form the core of a small but significant ceramic collection which endures as testament to the literally ground-breaking work that took place at Epsom 60 years ago. Histories of studio pottery in New Zealand claim that it was experimentation with clays and glazes at Epsom that led to the foundation of the modern pottery movement. Renowned potter Len Castle traces the beginning of his career to 1946 when he was a 22-year-old student at Auckland Teachers' College. Working in clay was a minor element of the curriculum. Art lecturer Hilary Clark showed him how to kick a cranky wheel, centre the clay, and throw a pot. Enthused and encouraged, he enrolled in night classes with the Englishman Robert Nettleton Field at Avondale College to learn more. After becoming a lecturer in science at Epsom, he passed on his clay skills to a generation of would-be teachers, including science student Barry Brickell, who later reciprocated with kiln-building and firing instructions.

Believing that ceramic forms should not be overwhelmed by decoration or textured surfaces, Len Castle followed the oriental example initially. He also scaled his pots for domestic use. Marks of making by finger, thumb and knuckle were allowed to become expressive in vases, dishes, bowls and plates, celebrating the sense of touch. There are over a dozen examples of his ceramics in the art collection at Epsom, including wine ewers, slab and oval form vases and stoneware dishes.

Teaching alongside Castle was Patricia Perrin (1921-1988), a bold and radically modern potter who had studied sculpture at Elam. One of her keenest students in the mid-fifties was Graeme Storm, who was then only 19 years old, but who would become Perrin's successor in pottery teaching at the College. After becoming an art specialist for the Education Department, Storm travelled to England in 1959 returning to New Zealand and becoming a professional potter in 1964 when only 28 years old. His stoneware pots with their copper barium-based glazes in intense purples, blues and greens created a sensation at his first solo exhibition at new vision, where Perrin also showed.

Len Castle had left teaching to become a fulltime potter in 1963, shortly before Arts Laureate John Parker arrived at Epsom to train as a teacher. Parker is the epitome of the tidy potter Castle identifies as belonging to a tradition opposed to his own. Receiving

his teaching diploma in 1970, Parker first undertook postgraduate study at the Royal College of Art in London, before returning to New Zealand in 1977. He soon unleashed his Vortex Ware, thrown and turned to emulate industrial ware, as if each piece was a rediscovered relic from a forgotten Auckland commercial pottery factory. This tendency would reach its apotheosis in Parker's White Ware, where ancestral bloodlines back to Keith Murray's designs for Wedgwood via Crown Lynn legend, Ernie Shufflebotham, were evident.

By 1971, the groundswell of interest in ceramics had to be acknowledged, and Graeme Storm was able to establish the Pottery department at Auckland Teachers' College in that year. All three training colleges in the Auckland region offered classes in clay, with Ardmore Teachers' College a particular hotbed of handpotting. Opened adjacent to the airfield in 1948 Ardmore was a fully residential facility, well-suited to all-night firings of a kiln with the attendant refreshments. Appointed assistant lecturer in arts and crafts there in 1951, Peter Stichbury found four abandoned pottery wheels under one of the buildings. With his students, he began to experiment with local clays and glaze materials building wood-fired kilns, then oil kilns.

Appointed fulltime lecturer at Ardmore in 1959, Peter Stichbury found his embryonic pottery transformed and enlarged, and he taught pottery there until his retirement in 1969. Brian Gartside followed as art and ceramics lecturer, decamping to the new North Shore Teachers' College when Ardmore closed in 1974. At North Shore, ceramics briefly reigned with Stichbury teaching alongside fellow potters Peter Collis and Chester Nealie, who had both begun there in 1972. After Collis and Nealie left in 1975, Stichbury continued to offer classes until 1980.

All these potters have gone on to international successes, but the teaching of ceramics itself has gone into decline, with only one tertiary institution offering degree courses in the subject. The last potter on the academic staff at Auckland College of Education was Penny Ericsson who taught part-time until 1991, but the facilities are all still there.

Now that ceramics have found their way into contemporary art practice, notably in the work of Grayson Perry and Francis Upritchard, the Epsom wheels and kilns await rediscovery and reuse in the teaching of art and craft to a new generation.

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Centre Report

Renton Murray

This month has been quiet. The AGM was reported on in last month's newsletter. Apart from thanking again the outgoing long-serving committee members, the main point was the rewarding of Trien's hard work and dedication with a Life Membership. She was speechless (for a change) but very pleased I think. Well done, and many, many thanks Trien.

We seem to need to thank many people at the ASP which is great. Work just gets done and the Centre has that generous feel about it. Juliet Roburg also deserves a special mention for her wood stacking. The Phoenix kiln had another work out in very difficult windy conditions two weeks ago, what a sight the stokers were towards the finish ... dedication indeed.

We have been talking about rebuilding some, or all, of the outside kilns. Our thoughts so far are to rebuild the Phoenix fast fire with another wood kiln and to modify the other salt kiln that struggles to fire with gas to fire with waste oil like those at Driving Creek. So brace yourselves for a knocking down day and sorting of the bricks. We'll supply the gloves, we just need you.

The new term is underway with most classes full but we can still squeeze one or two in here or there - give the office a ring.

We somehow have ended up with more Primo porcelain than we need, so we may cut a deal with bulk orders. Give the office another ring.

Firings are up to date, but that means of course that the biscuit shed is overflowing ... the trailer awaits ... don't ring the office, just come and take away your pots ... and glaze them of course.

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EXHIBITIONS

Masterworks Gallery:

"All Creatures Great and Small" 5- 25 May
The animal kingdom whether real or imaginary has been a great source of inspiration and a significant subject matter in the history or art for centuries. Whether, through the human tendency to anthropomorphise their habits making them allegories of the human condition or from our keen observation of their daily routines and mannerisms, animals/creatures have been a source of wonderment and intrigue, and for some a lifetime's preoccupation.

This show features a range of artists working in the mediums of glass, ceramic, jewellery and mixed media.

Exhibiting artists include; Mike Crawford, Bronwynne Cornish, Cath Dearsley, Jane Dodd, Tegan Empson, Vicki Fanning, John Lawrence, Vaune Mason, Tania Patterson, John Roy, Liz Sharek, Frances Stachl and Ann Verdcourt

Upstairs Gallery Level One Lopdell House.
The Titirangi Potters' 16th Annual Exhibition, "Sweet Sixteen" until 5th June.

Zealand artists - Philip Trusttum, Sara Hughes and Peter Gibson-Smith.

The Awards will be presented on Monday 5th September. The Exhibition of Winners and Selected Finalists will be on display at the Pah Homestead from 6 September to 16 October 2011, before travelling to The Dowse where the exhibition will

run from 29 October to 4 December 2011. A Salon des Refuses of the finalists not selected for the travelling show will be on display at the Pah Homestead from 6 September - 14 October 2011.

To enter the 20th Wallace Art Awards 2011, applicants must guarantee that the work is a one-off original, not of an edition, that was executed by the applicant in the 12-month period prior to 11 August 2011, when entries close. Entries must not have been exhibited in a public exhibition.

Go to: www.wallaceartstrust.org.nz



Excellent floating "sinking boat" sculpture by French artist Julien Berthier - it has a small outboard at the rear to move it along.



CLASSIFIED

The 20th Wallace Art Awards 2011, with prizes amounting to \$165,000, are now calling for entries. The Wallace Arts Trust would appreciate your assistance in informing artists about this fantastic opportunity to be awarded a residency in prestigious international institutions in Switzerland and the USA.

The Awards encompass contemporary New Zealand painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, unique photography, and for the first time, video. The Awards are designed to encourage and develop the visual arts in New Zealand and to reward those producing outstanding work. They differ from other important New Zealand art prizes in that they aim to provide challenging opportunities and broadening experiences to the four major winners by way of residencies at top-class international institutions. This year the Awards are being judged by three distinguished New

For Sale: ASP has some Fastway South Island courier tickets to sell to members. Suitable for the Ballantyne's Tableware Competition.

\$19 for a large box to up 20kgs. Please call office for details. Courier pickup would have to be from ASP.

For Sale: We have a small collection from early 1980s including one outstanding large raku vase by Margaret Milne. We are making these items available to ASP members before anyone else, as some of today's students may benefit from the styles and work of that era.

Half the proceeds from any sales will be donated to the New Zealand Foundation (DriveSafe Project and Small Business Network Project).

Contact James Taylor at technica@xtra.co.nz for images of the work. Beverly Luxton (top) and Margaret Milne pieces pictured right.



ASP CENTRE

Opening Hours

Monday - Thursday: 12.30pm - 5.30pm

Friday: 12.30pm - 4pm

Saturday: 10am - 4pm

\$3 per hour (includes after class time)

(up to a maximum of \$9 per session)

Centre Director: Renton Murray

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NEWSLETTER

Editor: Peter Lange. Phone 6306942

Please send any copy or photographs to lange52@clear.net.nz

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