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AN EXPLORATION OF IMPERMANENCE IN
CONTEMPORARY CERAMIC ART PRACTICE

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AN EXPLORATION OF IMPERMANENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CERAMIC ART PRACTICE

ABSTRACT

This practice-led research investigates clay-based impermanent creativity, exploring this means of expression as a contribution to knowledge in the expanded field of contemporary ceramic art practice.

The research considers recent developments in innovative work by practitioners from the ceramic tradition, characterised by unconventional uses of material, natural decay and weathering, deliberate destruction, performance and physicality.

A key aspect of the research exploration is phenomenographic alignment of personal praxical development with that of contemporaries sharing backgrounds in the ceramic tradition. A case study approach based on a reflexive Schönian and Kolbian cycle is utilised and research material is viewed from trans-disciplinary perspectives to explore and elucidate its nature, impacts and implications.

Impermanence in clay is found to de-familiarise art work, altering and enhancing the creative role of percipients. Relationships between work, maker and percipient are explored. Mediatization of impermanent clay-based art is considered for its impact on work's reception and interpretation.

A perceptible shift is detected in such art practice from the arena of visual art towards that of performance, moving artist and audience relationships towards shared ownership in ceramic creativity, in which co-presence of work and percipient are essential. Aspects of relational aesthetics offer a cogent framework. Consideration is given to clay's shared significance with other basic materials such as textile in holding meaning beyond its physicality.

The thesis contributes to the discourse on methodological frameworks for practice-led research and to academic writing on contemporary ceramic art in its exploration of clay-based impermanence, encompassing maker intentionality, material alteration and destruction, site/location and significance, performativity and unrepeatability, and record. It provides a transferable research model for considering creative impermanence.

Areas identified for further research include artist/audience relationships and the nature of creativity, the role of location, performativity as an aspect of contemporary practice, and curation of performance and impermanence.

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ABBREVIATIONS: GENERAL

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
BCB	British Ceramic Biennial, Stoke-on-Trent
CARCUoS	Ceramic Arts Research Centre University of Sunderland
CIEF	Ceramics in the Expanded Field (major research project: Ceramics Research Group at the University of Westminster funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council - AHRC)
DOM	Durham Oriental Museum
ICF	International Ceramics Festival, Aberystwyth
MAD	Museum of Arts and Design, New York
MIMA	Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art
UoS	University of Sunderland
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum
'YBAs'	'Young British Artists' e.g. Emin, Hirst, Lucas
YMT	York Museums Trust

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF OWN REFERENCED WORK

(with abbreviations as used in text)

Tidal Transience, 2009

Losing It Rose Field, 2010 *Losing It*

ReCollection, 2011

Sanbao Respect, 2011 *Respect*

Nag Puja, 2011

Return to Koshi, 2011 *Koshi*

No.11 Tea Ceremony, 2012

RePlace Orkney, 2012 *RePlace*

Fallacy of Mass Production, 2014 *Fallacy*

Traces of China installation, 2014 *Traces*

Converse:Mao, 2014

ABBREVIATIONS: CONTEMPORARY REFERENCED WORK

Bustleholme *Bustleholme: Napalm Death* (Keith Harrison, 2013)

IIMIB *Is It Madness Is It Beauty* (Clare Twomey, 2010-2015)

Plate Spinner *Plate Spinner (Spode)* (David Cushway, 2011)

Swept Away *Swept Away: Dust, Ashes, and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design* (Phoebe Cummings, 2012)

DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

A number of terms used in the research narrative hold different meanings in different circumstances; their particular baseline use in the thesis is indicated below. Further discussion of meaning is provided as appropriate in the text.

Artist, Maker, Practitioner: interchangeable terms for an individual involved in creative endeavour with the intent of generating an aesthetic – as opposed to a solely utilitarian – outcome whether this is an object, an event, an installation or any such invitation for creative engagement.

Art practice: a broad term embracing design, concept, craft and delivery of an aesthetic entity. The emphasis is on the making process and on exercise of aesthetic judgement, as well as practical skills.

Art World: as in:

the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that art world is noted for.
Becker (1982, p.34)

Audience: those experiencing work provided for their attention by an artist.

Ceramic: all or some of the material, processes and skills associated with the use of clay as an expressive medium, including raw clay. Contemporary ceramic artists use clay in a wide variety of forms as they, alongside colleagues in other fields of contemporary artistic expression, test boundaries of material, process and message and seek to colonise expanded fields of creative endeavour.

Ceramic art practice: artistic expression utilising ceramic as a core, but not necessarily exclusive, element.

Ceramist and Ceramicist: used when an individual has described themselves thus (neither being terms used in preference to *Artist, Maker, or Practitioner*).

Contemporary: as indicated in 1.8 (p.29) and 2.2 (p.35), refers to art work which is current, and challenges pre-conceptions regarding art and artistic

expression. A more focused term than 'current', implying that it tests or even infringes conventional boundaries.

Craftivism: term devised by Greer to describe the global movement established at the turn of the millennium, in which modest/domestic craft activity, appropriately targeted, stimulates political and social change in others. 'The very essence of craftivism lies in creating something that gets people to ask questions' (Greer, 2014, p.8).

Ephemeral, transient: shortlived, or not intended to endure.

Exploration: (as used in the research title) refers to understanding, clarification and contextualisation. The thesis seeks to identify as many features of impermanence as possible within the inevitable restrictions that any research must consider, without claiming to cover every contemporary form of impermanent ceramic artistic expression, or to foresee all those which may occur in future. Bruner's term 'trust likeness', cited by Sullivan (2005, p.49), describes the research intent.

Impermanent: in the context of this research, as open a term as possible, the specifics being discussed in detail in Chapter 4. A key feature of its use in relation to art works investigated here is that makers' intentions are for work not to endure, that it is not 'permanent' as normally defined (*Chambers*, 2003, p.1119).

Installation Art: used in Nollert's (2003, p.11) terms, viz. 'installations are always three-dimensional, they relate to the space surrounding them and evoke a spatial experience... they differ from sculpture... in that they form a relationship with something, ; "i.e. in contrast to traditional sculpture they dissolve the borders between the work and the field of observation surrounding it"' (quoting Dumont, undated, p.124).

Instigator: used to distinguish the maker, whose act is the stimulus for creativity, from the maker who presents work complete and whole to the public.

Open: used to imply an egalitarian approach to creative practice through which percipients may become part of the creative act, as construed in Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics', and Umberto Eco's 'open work'.

Percipient: preferred term applied to 'audience', 'visitor' or 'observer', pointing up the necessity for work to be accepted as an opportunity for creative engagement by the individual who comes across it (usually in the environment). The percipient is a key element of the art-making triangle, together with the instigator and the stimulus (generally recognised as the audience, the artist and the work). The art is generated only when these three elements connect, physically or psychologically. (An *interactor* takes the step of moving beyond recognising the opportunity to interact.)

Performance: indicates a unique and unrepeatable event. It does not imply the necessity for human presence as the performer, but does indicate physical change in the object of audience attention, including, where appropriate, raw clay and fired ceramic.

Performative: relates to the changing nature of an (impermanent) object or material (used mainly in relation to clay and textile in the thesis), stimulating a physical or emotional response from the percipient. In particular it references performance theory as 'an adjective that can be applied to the dramatic... aspects of a situation or object of study' (Loxley, 2007, p.169) while also alluding to its linguistic roots in Austin's articulation of it as 'an utterance that performs a certain action rather than a description' (Loxley, 2007, p.169).

Persistence/Permanence: used differently in the thesis. *Permanence* implies an intention for work to last, to endure. *Persistence* is applied to work with an indeterminate lifespan, where the maker's intention is for it not to be permanent. Thus, *persistence* differs importantly from *permanence* in permitting an end to be contemplated, even if its timing may be unpredictable.

Record: evidence, permanent sign or trace (of the existence of an impermanent work).

Reflective/Reflection: used as outlined in Chapter 3, regarding the consideration of one's own experience and activity as a practitioner.

Reflexive/Reflexion: indicates the capacity for change in one's self as a result of reflection.

Significant: important, worthy of consideration (rather than as in 'statistical significance').

Stimulus: a key element of the creative triangle, along with the instigator and the percipient, this being the creative event, work or piece initiated by the instigator/artist and engaged with by the percipient to generate the artistic, creative outcome.

Trans-disciplinary: as in Ison (2008) p.1: ' I take "trans " to mean across... and thus trans-disciplinarity to be either a "metadiscipline " or a form of praxis that crosses disciplines.'

PROLOGUE: *FLOWERINGS OF REALITY*¹:

*In the time when Dendid created all things,
He created the sun,
And the sun is born, and dies, and comes again.*

*He created the moon,
And the moon is born, and dies, and comes again.*

*And he created the stars,
And the stars are born, and die, and come again.*

*He created man,
And man is born, and dies, and does not come again.*

Old Dinka song (in Trask, 1966²)

The start point for this research was a review of my work following graduation in Glass and Ceramics, and a dawning recognition of the pattern of my own practice, which had a number of persistent strands, these being:

- Involvement of unfired and/or fired clay
- Fragility or risk
- Capacity for alteration by outside forces

The work generally took impermanent form as environmental installations, often short-lived or of uncertain duration. In placing work outdoors, it was expected that weather, tidal and even human action might impact on it. Work was typically abandoned to its fate. An essential quality was unpredictability of its experience, once the work released into the world; and while being generally clay-based it also drew on other materials and processes (mainly textile-based).

This informal review raised questions regarding the nature of my artistic output and the mode of working which I had adopted intuitively. Was it, for instance, utilised by many other makers in the world of ceramics? If so, were

¹ See 5.3.2, p.120

² cited in Matthiesson 2000, p.5

there similarities in the way they and I approached our creative expression? Perhaps even more fundamentally, what was the stimulus for working this way for someone embedded in a craft tradition? What was it that spurred myself and others (it became clear that there were others) to create clay objects, installations and experiences with short, perhaps unpredictable, lifespans?

I was curious about this as a somewhat paradoxical thing to be doing. Why would one choose a material which is usually long-lasting, or even considered to be permanent, as the basis for a mode of artistic expression characterised by changeability, perishability, even disappearance?

I was already aware³ that consideration of value in art is territory which Thompson (1979) and Becker (1982) explore in their texts, the former in terms of value and how it is determined, particularly regarding the loss of value – even of existence – when an object is discarded, and the latter in terms of the concept of the ‘art world’ and the way it functions. While this was not an area I felt driven to explore further at this point – and which is only touched on briefly in the thesis, given the complex and far-reaching issues it raises - it drew my attention to issues of material culture, hierarchy, exclusivity and ownership.

I was particularly intrigued by two initial questions which my reflection stimulated:

- What is it about ‘ephemeral’ art that enables it to sit alongside ‘permanent’ work? Is there something about its nature that enables it to push the boundaries of the art world, in other words to ‘fit the bill’ despite its departure from the usual model?

But more important still:

³ as indicated in Gee (2012). Available at <https://www.academia.edu/5246477/>. Last accessed 16.03.16

- What is happening in the realm of ceramics in relation to short-lived or transient work? Is the development actually taking ceramics and/or artists working with impermanent ceramic as a medium for their aesthetic expression into territory where the rules are different?

Further reflection triggered an additional question of concern to this research journey:

- Is there particular significance in working in a transient, short-lived way with clay as a fundamental material, an *Ur-materiel*?

Such contexts and questions were the starting point for this research programme, with issues of art market and worth at an early stage being put to one side in order to concentrate on impermanent practice itself.

As a reflective practitioner, I am accustomed to reviewing my work and identifying how I am functioning as a maker. So where does my reflection find me now?

I consider the characteristics of my artistic production in the light of the drive which gets me working in the first place. I perceive that it is quite dissimilar from the work of many of my B.A. cohort, and I ponder on that.

There is little in the way formal art education prior to degree level studies in ceramics and glass underpinning the way I work. The only relevant experience prior to undertaking a B.A. in Glass and Ceramics was attendance for roughly nine years at a vocational pottery class. Perhaps this history offers an advantage in terms of freedom from the rules and conventions that students absorb when they start along the formal path of art education at school or at foundation degree level?

Are personal circumstances a factor in encouraging a way of working with raw and fired clay which is relatively independent of traditional fine art perspectives? It is possible that I am unconsciously seeking to make up for lost time in my recent adoption of art as a way of living following retirement from more conventional activity. Associated with such questions, is it simply that I have a significant amount of life experience to draw on in my work, and certain areas of concern which I need or want to express through my creative work?

There may be a personality trait which impacts on this complex and – probably – unresolvable tangle of questions. Reflecting on my practice, I recognise that I enjoy the freedom (even the edginess) of what I am doing in creative terms, following a very satisfying career working within boundaries set by others. It seems natural that now is the time for me to spread my wings, work outside the box, and to shake off conventionality and compliance with social and political norms.

Lifting my eyes to the broader horizon, however, it is clear that other artists, having experienced the usual art education system, also find ‘unconventional’ means of expression. So it seems more likely that I have an association with others, however loosely that might be defined, as makers working with transience.

This is not, as it is intended the thesis will address, to beg the question that in our post-modern world anything goes in the way of artistic expression; that no holds are barred in the aesthetic boxing ring; even that art cannot hold its head up unless it shocks and surprises. Clearly there are many illustrations of contemporary work which do those things and that are intended to make those impacts, the work of the Chapman brothers being a simple example. What is to be argued here is that the use of fired and unfired clay in making impermanent objects and artistic experiences engages materials, processes and assumptions in a way which is different in nature from the generality of contemporary artistic irreverence, ‘the shock of the [post-] new’ and the work of ‘the bad boys’ of the art scene.

It is relatively simple to identify artists with significant reputations and backgrounds in craft working in this different, impermanent, way with unfired and fired clay. Clare Twomey (University of Westminster research fellow) works with clay to generate short-lived installation work (*Blossom*, Eden Project 2007), unfired ceramic objects subjected to weathering (*Lost Rituals*, Gateshead, 2003), performativity (*Trophy*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2006) and 'ready-mades' (*Monument*, Middlesbrough, 2009). Anna Maria Maiolino generates short-lived installations, involving others in the process of making (*Continuous*, Camden Arts Centre, 2010). She exposes unfired clay to drying out (*Territories of Immanence*, Miami, 2006) and utilises enjambment (i.e. she 'crosses boundaries' between modes of working, thinking and doing to express herself. See Pollock, 2013, chapter 3), for instance in performance such as *in ATTO*, with Sandra Lessa⁴. This notion of boundary-crossing plays a strong – and growing - part in my own practice and that of other contemporaries.

Having recognised the commonality of interest through initial interrogation of contemporary art work with its foundation in ceramics, it is clear that my practice, as someone for whom clay is a material I instinctively go to when I wish to express myself regarding impermanence and change, is by no means exceptional. It is appropriate to explore whether there is a substantive difference between myself and other makers with similar characteristics, sharing a background and competence in ceramics.

From this position, my curiosity stretches to wondering whether there are significant differences between members of this group of likeminded practitioners with their feet securely planted in clay, and whether it is possible to find similarities with approaches to work, philosophies and beliefs underpinning artistic expression, purposes and aims in generating our work.

These reflections and questions have illuminated my research journey and underpin the exploration of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art

⁴ Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milano. 30.04.15. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/127832444>

practice presented in this thesis. They provoked me into 'noticing... things for the first time... *directly*⁵ as flowerings of reality' as Pessoa describes, and whose wise words encapsulate for me the whole concept of practice-led research.

The creative work listed below was undertaken during the period of the research journey as a personal development of praxis as well as in order to test, review and understand the nature of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice. As a result I have, as important outcomes of the research process, a body of work, an accumulation of knowledge, and more aware and confident self-understanding as a practitioner, all being fundamental for my further creative development.

2009	<i>Tidal Transience</i>
2010	<i>Losing It Rose Field</i>
2011	<i>ReCollection</i> <i>Sanbao Respect</i>
2011	<i>Nag Puja</i> <i>Return to Koshi</i>
2012	<i>No.11 Tea Ceremony</i> <i>RePlace Orkney</i>
2014	<i>Fallacy of Mass Production</i> <i>Traces of China</i> installation, <i>Converse:Mao</i>

⁵ My emphasis

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I write as a ceramist who is interested in working with the ‘thingness’ of the ceramic object... Ultimately, the pieces exist in a transitory state – as half-remembered things that seem to be, but yet aren’t.. They are purposefully open-ended objects that sit in the realm of ‘things’, but resist the easy fit of the everyday.

Ruhwald (in Dahn and Jones, 2013, p.179)

Chapters 1-3 of the thesis establish the purpose and aims of the research programme in the context of contemporary ceramic artists working with impermanence as a significant element of their practice.

Chapter 1 provides the basis for the research, outlines the nature of my practice and the motivation underpinning exploration of impermanence as a mode of artistic ceramic expression, and articulates the focus of the research, stating its specific aims and objectives.

Chapter 2 considers recent history for the emergence of impermanence as a particular mode of expression in ceramic art, and the underpinning of the personal practice which the thesis describes, reviews and analyses within the context of contemporary ceramic discourses.

Chapter 3 describes the approach and methodology for the programme, based on a phenomenographic and social constructivist approach. The basis is Kolb’s learning cycle and Schön’s model for the reflective practitioner. An iterative spiral is developed to enable the active practitioner also to undertake the role of the reflective researcher in support of praxical development.

Chapters 4-9 provide research material and initial findings and Chapter 10 the conclusions, contributions to knowledge and areas for further research.

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1 Start point

Working creatively with clay is a relatively recent development, following a professional career in an unrelated field. Personal meanings in my work connect with temporality, endurance, challenges to (and of) external forces and history, loss, memory, revisiting and re-ordering the past. My work in clay and textile often takes the form of anonymous environmental installation and is likely to decay, fall apart or deteriorate as it responds to weather and other natural forces. It is sited without announcement in places accessible to the public, where it may be left, altered, damaged, removed or destroyed as its finders decide. Elements making up an installation are generally domestic in scale and allusion, drawing attention to themselves mainly by the oddness of their location, as with *RePlace Orkney*, 2012 onwards (see Section 9.3.2, pp.214-215 and **Figure 1.1**). The stimulus and presentation is similar to that of Sarah Corbett of the Craftivist Collective (Greer, 2014, pp.204-5):

Craft helped me to stop and think. If you are crafting on your own, you are exercising your inner monologue. You are not going to stitch a text that you don't believe in, and by stitching it you take ownership of the words you are creating... Craft is non-threatening, and people value handmade items because it takes time to make them... Craftivism engages the craft community where they are and reaches out to others.

While the nature of our craft differs, the motivation is comparable, and my work holds text in the same way as embroidery may. In my practice, I hope that the finder may engage creatively with the work and make it her/his own, whether by physical interaction or by holding it in the memory and giving it personal meaning. This was certainly the case with the part of *RePlace Orkney* in **Figure 1.1** (a multi-site installation project discussed in detail in 1.6.2, pp.23-24, also Appendix 1.i), which disappeared entirely within five weeks, including the nylon ties.

My development as a practitioner emerged after a lifetime of enjoyment of craft, and appreciation of the skill and imagination of human creativity. However,

apart from some sketching, I had not ventured outside of my craft practice in textiles and clay until retirement.

Reflecting on practice and life experience, the importance of personal circumstances in this development is clear. My fascination with clay has been



Figure 1.1 Sarah Gee. *RePlace Orkney: Brodgar I*. Elements 6x4x4" max. Ness of Brodgar, Mainland, Orkney. Raw and fired Neolithic midden soil, North Ronaldsay and other wool, nylon ties. 2012

maturing from early childhood, particularly since a family holiday in Cornwall in the early 1950s at the age of six or so. When visiting a potter's workshop I was captivated as he threw a vessel on his momentum wheel. Turning to me, he invited me to try, and it has been a lasting regret that I was too shy to take up his offer. However, that experience imbued me with an interest in ceramics as both a skill and a means of expression. As my parents were also both craft practitioners, among other things making textiles together for home and family, I was encouraged as a child to practise and extend my skills in domestic crafts. I have continued this as an adult, particularly through knitting and photography.

I attended a vocational pottery class for nearly a decade, and built my own studio equipped with wheel and kiln, before commencing a B.A.⁶ on retirement in 2005. This was stimulating and energising as I developed confidence both in my technical handling of material and process and in exploring my own approach to creativity.

On completing the B.A. I recognised impermanence as a strong element of my artistic practice, characterised by the use of unstable ceramic and other short-lived materials, and also bringing about transience through destructive processes, laying work open to natural forces such as weather, and exposure to public engagement by means of performance and installation.

My doctoral research submission in ceramics was accepted soon after graduation, enabling me to develop my praxis as an integral aspect of the research process, with making and thinking about work with clay becoming more integrated.

The research programme has provided an invaluable opportunity to exercise the artistic licence which comes with a practice-led research brief, enabling engagement in creative work which might not otherwise have been contemplated, and also to develop a personal approach to creativity, to facilitate the testing of theory against experience and reflection on the nature and impacts of generating impermanent ceramic art.

1.1.2 Identifying similarities with contemporaries

At the commencement of the B.A., my understanding of theoretical frameworks for creativity was limited and amorphous. For example, my work appeared to be aligned with European *arte povera* and Japanese *gutai* and *Sodeisha* movements, with common interest in engagement with straightforward materials; but I was unaware of the aims and intentions of such artists. The research programme has been developmental both artistically and academically, resulting in greater understanding of creative contexts, having provided a significant opportunity to mesh practical experimentation (as a means to understand the essential nature of personal

⁶ Sunderland (UoS) B.A. programme in Glass and Ceramics (2005-09)

relationships with making work) with articulation of its place in the broader scheme of contemporary ceramic art practice.

Artists including Karin Lehmann, Clare Twomey and Anna Maria Maiolino also currently work with ceramic impermanence in various ways, from encouraging natural decay and weathering through deliberate destruction of work to non-traditional uses of ceramic materials, physicality and audience interaction, as part of their creative practice. This form of artistic expression enjoys fresh critical attention to explore why and how it manifests itself.

De Waal (2003, p.173) noted an historical 'paucity of critical writing about ceramics. The kinds of writing published fell into two kinds – either technical or commentaries on particular potters'. His own coverage of impermanent ceramic installation is brief – mention of work by Twomey, Richard Long and Antony Gormley in less than a page (*ibid*, pp.187-188), and two paragraphs in his concluding summary (p.212).

At the end of the same decade Cooper (2009, p.6) noted 'a few years ago... [t]here would... have been little evidence of installation work' in contemporary ceramics. The situation has since changed significantly, both in terms of such work in the public domain and in academic attention to it. His reflection on transient work, such as Twomey's *Conscience/Consciousness* (available at: http://www.claretwomey.com/consciousness_conscience.html) and Phoebe Cumming's *Between* (available at: http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag13/dec_13/fullfeature.shtml) is telling for being a relatively rare full-text reference at its time:

Twomey, working in the early years of the twenty-first century, exploits both the ability of clay to be formed into a seemingly enduring, hard material and also its vulnerability, turning it from a permanent to a transient material... While well aware of the long and complex history of clay, artists see it as offering opportunities for the exploration of ideas, whether about vulnerability, fragility or the desire to 'make a mark' even if this involves destroying the object itself. Cooper (2009, p.225)

As with other contemporary manifestations of artistic creativity in post-modern mode, over-turning convention and intending to make the public and critics puzzle about the work, its place and its connection with traditional ideas of art as objects for admiration in a gallery setting, those working with ceramic impermanence seem deliberately to take a course away from the predictable and comfortable. Cooper (2009) hints at this somewhat anarchic situation (as does Veiteberg, as indicated in 2.2.1, p.36 and elsewhere), and more recently Dahn (2011, p.153) indicates that 'the dominant popular discourse on ceramics still centres on traditional craft practices.'

It is only as recently as 2015 that a text has been published addressing the phenomenon of contemporary ceramic impermanence expansively (Dahn, 2015), the majority of which is pertinent to the research focus in its consideration of installation, performance and the utilisation of raw clay (see 2.2, pp.35 onwards).

Currah has asked of Twomey's *Consciousness/Conscience*:

Why does someone laboriously construct a sculpture with the full expectation that it will be walked all over and destroyed? Not only that, but have it destroyed in a gallery which usually shows objects which are highly crafted and treasured for their physical beauty. Currah (2003)

There is certainly a provocative and shocking aspect to work of this nature, and such a question stimulates a more general enquiry regarding impermanent ceramic expression, including the artist's purpose, the role of public interaction and the place of such work in a cultural context. This thesis shares Currah's curiosity and explores the issues in developing my personal praxis, which I have found to be a useful arena for research experimentation and analysis, as well as in the practice of other contemporary artists.

1.2 RESEARCH ISSUES

1.2.1 Clay as research material

The research was designed to address the gap in studies of the field of impermanent contemporary ceramics which I perceived at the start of the programme (I could find little that considered it explicitly or comprehensively as 1.1.2 pp.10-12, indicates.) Its practice-led nature enabled personal/artistic reflection as well as academic consideration, resulting in insights into some of the imperatives for artists of working with impermanence, an enhanced understanding of contexts within which they may operate, and articulation of a theoretical construct which seeks to contribute to understanding of the phenomenon in my own and others' work, and to be of value to other practitioners and academics in the field.

The interest in clay as a research material relates directly to involvement with the material as a creative medium with significant capacity for variety, particularly in its simple raw formlessness. It is exhilarating to work with a material, seemingly docile in its malleability, while demanding respect from the maker in order to achieve her desired results.

Clay is clearly acceptable as a contemporary creative medium. The significance of the shift from ceramic as object, as in Studio Ceramics, to a vehicle for both playful and serious inventiveness is instructive. While this is apparent in creative work by artists trained in many disciplines, it is of particular interest as a practitioner trained in ceramics to consider its shift as a craft medium.

As Chapter 3 indicates, attention has focused on contemporary practitioners who are also from the ceramic tradition. While their work is varied, it is similar in challenging assumptions about ceramic process and material, while testing aesthetic boundaries. The academic focus for a significant number of these makers is marked, either undertaking postgraduate research or working in academic departments focusing on ceramics (including, Cummings, de Waal and Twomey).

1.2.2 Personal practice development

The research rationale, with its emphasis on ceramic impermanence, is based at its core on reflection on personal practice development. Review and analysis of personal artistic expression was an essential discipline developed during the Sunderland B.A. programme. Consequently I recognised a pattern in my ceramic work where process developed as a cornerstone of creativity, and where the resulting work tended to be fragile, short-lived or subject to destructive forces.

Another aspect of making and presenting work as an undergraduate emerged as being increasingly environmental rather than gallery-based. *Hearths* (2007, **Figure 1.2**) exemplified these features. I hand-formed small discs in various clay bodies and laid them in overlapping spirals on bare earth before open-firing them utilising naturally occurring sources of fuel (sea coal and dried vegetation), supplemented with discarded paper and cardboard.

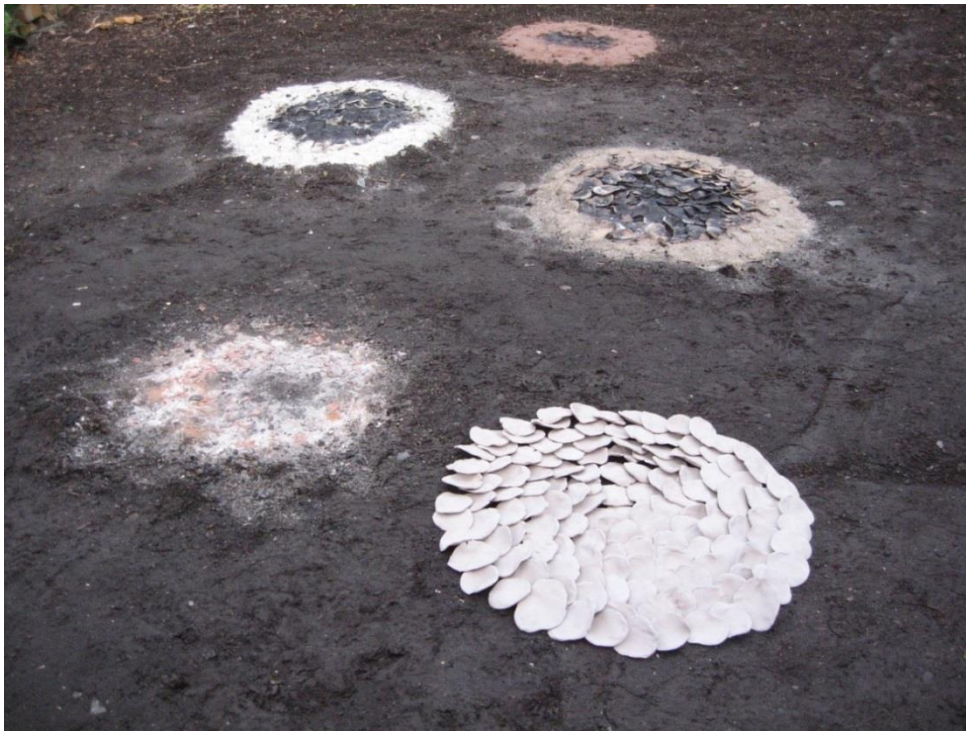


Figure 1.2 Sarah Gee. *Hearths*. Elements approx. 36" diameter. Olive Street Allotment No.1, Hartlepool (bottom right: stoneware hearth prior to firing). 2007

Each hearth consisted of a different clay body, in which some peripheral discs were almost untouched by fire, while those at the fire's heart, reaching

800-900°C, were fired to above quartz inversion, when sintering⁷ commenced. All were left to weather (see also 1.6.2, p.21).

The nature of my B.A. work shifted gradually from representation of destruction or instability to realisations of transience, risk, and perceptible change (**Figures 1.3–1.5**).

This development was personally intriguing both artistically and intellectually, particularly as little evidence of a similar interest in transience and material alteration was detected in the work of my fellow students or in specialist journals of the time.



Figure 1.3 Sarah Gee. *Tsunami*. Approx. 52x52x8". Undergraduate assessment piece, University of Sunderland. Reduction-fired non-clay material, steel, wood. 2008

⁷ When clay particles compact and porosity is reduced, resulting in a stronger material



Figure 1.4 Sarah Gee. *Cylinders*. 16x90x24" (max). Undergraduate assessment piece, UoS. Reduction-fired non-clay material, glass, perforated bricks. 2008



Figure 1.5 Sarah Gee. *Wrapped Attention* (detail). Element size approx. 10x4" dia. Degree show exhibition, National Glass Centre (NGC), Sunderland. Reduction-fired non-clay material, bone china slip. 2009

The mode of expression of colleagues who had been central to the early establishment of personal technical skills (mainly amateur potters) also differed. Here the focus was on domestic ware and gallery pieces, and on attention to craft skill and technical competence in creating and decorating vessel and sculptural pieces. I found it difficult to make connections between our very different ways of working.

1.3 RESEARCH TITLE

The thesis title, An exploration of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, supports consideration of a range of different practices within its key terms, while focusing on art derived from the ceramic tradition. It is also sufficiently open to allow for further research. It is evident from the thesis that this, while identifying and discussing some central aspects, cannot be the final word on the complex nature of impermanence in contemporary ceramic artistic expression.

The title also provides potential for further development of terms such as 'ceramic' and 'impermanence', and even 'art practice' (see Definitions and Clarifications, pp.xii-xv, for discussion of key terms).

The implication that a single form of ceramic art practice might suffice to describe impermanence as a means of artistic expression is hopefully avoided: and would be misleading. The art historical record provides clear evidence that modes of ceramic impermanence are multifarious and wide-ranging.

The focus on the search for characteristics of impermanence also avoids inferences regarding a need to justify impermanence in ceramic art practice *per se*: the very context of the research programme demonstrates that necessity for such justification is superfluous (Chapter 2 outlines contemporary ceramic discourse, indicating its increased prominence).

Both points are addressed by the inclusion of this form of practice in prestigious exhibitions and installations such as:

A Secret History of Clay from Gauguin to Gormley, 2004, Tate Liverpool
Clay Rocks, 29.09.06, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) event (Twomey and Harrison)
Richard Long: Heaven and Earth, 2009, Tate Britain
Possibilities and Losses: Transitions in clay, 2009, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (curated by Twomey)
Anna Maria Maiolino: Continuous, April-May 2010, Camden Arts Centre
Argentinian Pavilion, 2011 Venice Biennale (Villar Rojas)
Dropping the Urn: Ceramic works by Ai Weiwei, 2011- 2012, V&A
Swept Away: Dust, Ashes, and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design, 2012, Museum of Art and Design, New York (Phoebe Cummings)
Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, 2014, Tower of London World War I memorial installation (Cummins and Piper)

The title is therefore intended to provide clear focus and to avoid misconstrual of the fundamental position from which the research exploration commences. This centres on meanings in impermanent contemporary ceramic art practice, as it develops and matures as a means of artistic expression.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

ONE: To explore practical applications of impermanence as an important feature of contemporary artistic expression stemming from the ceramic tradition, and to identify theoretical frameworks relevant to, and offering convincing contexts for, such practice.

TWO: To evidence praxis, reflectively combining theoretical and creative aspects as a means of articulating the bond between theory and practice in this area of contemporary ceramic art practice.

The specific areas which the research investigates connect with the issues outlined in 1.2 (pp.13-17), i.e.:

- Identification, description and analysis of those particular features characterising the intentions, nature and impact of ceramic impermanence as creative expression;

- Exploration of characteristics of impermanent work of contemporary practitioners, including my own, with a history in the ceramic tradition who use clay as a core material, and relevant theoretical frameworks through which to illuminate them;
- Articulation of the nature of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice and its artistic environment.

These areas for exploration are contextualised by discussion in Chapter 2 of contemporary ceramic discourse to explain its emergence in, and relevance to, ceramic art practice.

1.5 PROPOSITIONS

The thesis seeks to explain why the material and its processes contain something particular that makes working in a temporally-sensitive mode with ceramic (a term here embracing both raw clay and fired clay), a significant mode of expression in contemporary practice, and Chapter 4 discusses this creative, rather than functional, use of impermanence.

The specific propositions explored as aspects of the argument are that:

- a. The use of clay has significance beyond being merely a vehicle for impermanent artistic expression, the material itself carrying social/cultural meaning (Chapter 5);
- b. Artists are working with impermanence in a medium generally perceived to be durable and permanent. This impacts significantly on an art work's reception (Chapter 4), due at least partly to meaning being embedded in the material itself (Chapter 5) and to its relationship with site (Chapter 6);
- c. By working with impermanence, practitioners from the ceramic tradition are moving contemporary ceramic art practice significantly into a time-based arena more familiar in the performance, installation and live art arenas (Chapter 7);
- d. Record and evidence of what is essentially a transient form of art is in itself challenging to the character of impermanent work, and may also inhibit the artist's intentions in deliberately making it (Chapter 8).

1.6 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

As indicated in 1.1 (pp.8-12), my interest in clay stems from early childhood experience. When I was invited as a small child to try my hand at throwing on a potter's wheel, I was overwhelmed by his mastery of the clay and refused his invitation. This rejection of an early opportunity to engage directly with the material and process has always been at the back of my mind, and as an adult I have enjoyed collecting, and connecting with, both functional and decorative ceramic. I have occasionally wondered about the identity of that Cornish potter, who sowed a seed which took fifty years to germinate.

While always enjoying the exercise of domestic craft skills (e.g. knitting, embroidery, tapestry, felting), I complemented this by taking up pottery on a vocational basis nearly two decades ago, thus realising a latent desire to fill the clay vacuum I had created as a child.

I enjoyed the engagement with clay, the transformation of raw clay to fired ceramic and the mysteries of glazes, oxides and firings. However, the nature of my vocational class (which resembled a club for potters lacking their own equipment, rather than a learning environment) left significant gaps in my skill base, experience and understanding, and I therefore sought out the more structured learning regime and environment of a degree course.

The part-time B.A. in Glass and Ceramics was both a resolution of the lacunae I had perceived, and a means of opening me up to a creative and conceptual consideration of ceramics. I found my capacity to engage fully with the programme both liberating and energising: I presented both ceramic and glass work at the degree show, having taken the opportunity to test my limits in relation to both glass and clay and their differing processes. However, my primary material was clay.

1.6.1 Early practice

On graduation, there was uncertainty regarding my creative focus and its place in an art context. Making gallery work was relatively antipathetic, making being characterised by deliberate avoidance of collectability and

commercial appeal, and latterly, in addition to working with clay, by the use of a non-clay material which I had devised specifically to produce fragile installation work.

Degree work (see **Figures 1.2-1.5**), offered representations of impermanence through the use of fragile materials, utilising personal experience as the basis of its content.

A rationale for an individual approach to making work had not, at this stage, been articulated. I simply responded to the urge to make work as ideas and emotions presented themselves, including the devastating 2004 tsunami, the aftermath of which I had witnessed on a visit to Pondicherry in 2008.

1.6.2 Developing practice in the research context

The shift from intuitive to 'aware' practice enabled the identification of recurring features (see 3.6.1, p.73) to underpin the research exploration described in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Alongside my developing focus on ceramics, my interest in textile creativity has also been of importance in my praxical development.

As **Figures 1.1** and **1.8** demonstrate (and as reflected in 5.2, pp.113-118), work is not exclusively in clay, but it is a core material, raw, fully or biscuit fired (a table of research-related practical work is provided in Appendix 2).

The shift towards environmental work noted in 1.1.1 (pp.8-10) has precedent, through the undergraduate hearth project (**Figure 1.2**), exploring the influence of environmental artists including Goldsworthy and Nash. As stated in 1.2.2 (p.14) hand-pressed elements of raw clay (e.g. earthenware, stoneware, raku) were dried before being fired on open ground. The impact of variation in firing temperature was evident as the pieces overwintered, the centres of the hearths, where heat was greatest, being most durable. Inevitably, given the process and location in a working allotment, the work was transient, although the idea of making impermanent work was not unreservedly central to practice at this stage.

Alongside the increased focus on ceramic impermanence since graduation, interactivity and accessibility by others also developed as aesthetic

characteristics, and are therefore subject to particular consideration as aspects of the research programme.

One of the first research-related projects, *Losing It Rose Field* (2010, see **Figure 4.6a/b**) tested, *inter alia*, the impact of 'private' installation, not publicly accessible (actually seen only by two others); thus raising issues regarding its status as an art work and the nature of 'private' art (see Appendix 1.vi for discussion).

Losing It (see also **Figures 8.4, 1.6** - after two months' exposure) was an environmental installation work of commissioned ceramic elements, of limited duration. Raw ceramic elements were exposed to the weather, on open ground, over a period of five months, where they deteriorated, dissolved into the soil, eventually being covered by spring vegetation. The progress of the work, of finite but un-predetermined duration, was recorded periodically with still photography.



Figure 1.6 Sarah Gee. *Losing It Rose Field*. Approx. 150x150". Olive Street Allotment No.1, Headland, Hartlepool. Unfired bone china (after two months) 2010.

In common with other practitioners, I commissioned the roses for the work from a flower maker in The Potteries, thus making commentary on the failing British pottery industry.

Environmental installations have developed from the private nature of *Losing It* to invite attention through location, position and form, and offer opportunities, as indicated in 1.1.1, p.8 and 9.3.3, pp.216-217, for their finders to engage with and take ownership of the art-making process. Reflecting on the development process, change, transience and an open, egalitarian aesthetic have developed as characteristic features.

RePlace Orkney (**Figure 1.7**) was an environmental installation project to return materials of various kinds to Orkney in the form of art work. The project was conceived as direct result of identifying the possibility of acquiring soil from a major archaeological excavation on Orkney, together with accumulated yarn from Orkney (see Appendix 1.i for the project practice report).



Figure 1.7 Sarah Gee, *RePlace Orkney: Ness of Brodgar*. Approx. 48x12" max. Ness of Brodgar Archaeological excavation. Raw Neolithic midden soil. 2012 onwards. Collaborative interment by Rik Hammond. Image © R. Hammond

The challenge for this project was to realise my long-held wish to combine clay impermanently with textile in a major installation. It was devised as a cooperative project with six others who produced knitted contributions to their own design, utilising yarn previously sourced from Orkney (indigenous knitting wool from North Ronaldsay and knitting yarn imported to Orkney for

commercial purposes). The relative anonymity in presenting work in the public domain enabled me to consider issues of record, witness and interaction.

From experience and reflection on *RePlace* and other early projects, I gained clarity regarding the nature of my creativity and was therefore in a position to develop my praxis.

1.7 ARTICULATING PRAXIS

1.7.1 Developing focus

My focus expanded from an initial creative interest in memory, loss and the human condition in general during the research programme. As indicated in the following chapters, it now also explores record, witness, and value (*ReCollection*), makes socio-political commentary (e.g. *Converse:Mao*), frequently relating to distant places and cultures (as with *Nag Puja*). Work is often environmental and site-sensitive (see Chapter 7), involving clay and other materials to draw attention to local culture and history (e.g. *RePlace*). Much of it is subject to alteration and/or destruction (*Tidal Transience*), and involves unauthorised installation (for instance, *RePlace* and *Converse: Mao*). It is less commercial and collectable, but arguably, in its public and open siting, more accessible to the public than its predecessors (e.g. *Fallacy*).

An important intention in using impermanence in my practice is to de-familiarise clay, a fundamental material crucially linked with the development of *homo sapiens* (see Chapter 5). Given that clay enjoys an almost mythical status as a material apart from all others, the research sought to test this by comparing the impermanent use in contemporary art practice of both clay and textile (in the form of guerrilla knitting or yarn-bombing) to identify variances in artistic expression which de-familiarises commonplace materials.

1.7.2 Articulating praxis

As a result of the formal research process, personal work and understanding of creative aims have matured. Thinking and making are integrated more coherently than before; reflection-in-action on creative decision-making is more effective; and underlying values and motivations which energise an intuitive approach to working are more readily recognised. The practical work resulting from the exploration of impermanence within the research has taken the form of an investigation of process and practice, while also seeking to understand its theoretical framework. Most work has been triggered by a creative imperative, binding the making and the thinking into an inseparable whole, albeit with little enduring physical 'product'.

Investigation has involved material, process, form, duration, location, presentation, audience, record and conceptual models. The following five chapters provide detail of experimental art works of direct relevance to the research programme, and the learning and knowledge thus generated. Personal practice is also illuminated by that of contemporaries, comparisons and contrasts being invaluable in enabling the articulation of the character of personal praxis. Schrag's words, 'Praxis is the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding' (2003, p.21) neatly refine Nelson's (2013, pp.55-56) description (3.2.2, p.61) and articulate what praxis means personally. The research programme and written thesis are my attempt to illuminate and communicate my understanding of it.

At the end of the formal research journey personal praxis continues its developmental journey. It tests boundaries: of material integrity, the role of the artist, and the tolerance of the 'audience', with 'unofficial' (sometimes illicit) engagements encouraging those finding my environmental installations (such as *RePlace*, 2012 onwards, and *Converse:Mao*, 2014) to devise their own interpretations of meaning and make their own decisions about the work's future form, function and finitude. This mode of work is deliberately accessible, open to engagement, and egalitarian. Gallery-based work has provided an opportunity to test the validity of such praxis in an institutional setting through engagement of museum visitors: with perishable and

disintegrating objects in an unexpected context in *ReCollection* (2011 onwards) and in *Traces* (2014) with valued and precious ceramics more directly than is usually feasible.

Defamiliarisation of material, object and audience are at the core of my artistic purpose, to stimulate fresh consideration and appreciation of the role of all three and in so doing to make the art more open and accessible.

(a) Defamiliarising material: expectations of how clay performs are deeply embedded. A familiar unremarkable material, its durability and reliability are often taken for granted. While acknowledging its fragility, it is accepted that potsherds will persist for millennia, waiting to articulate lost societies and communities through their inert remains. Many manifestations of clay in society are merely unconsidered 'things' rather than named 'objects'. The brick walls which protect us from weather or danger, the ceramic wash hand basin, used repeatedly, perhaps even the stoneware mug, preferred for a hot drink, tend to be unacknowledged and unnoticed. Brown's coinage of 'thing theory' (cited by Knappett, 2014, p.175) points up the neutrality of the material when it is behaving as expected. Using and presenting clay in an unexpected way – in this instance in impermanent form – draws attention to it precisely because it is not 'behaving' as expected and trusted to. It has been de-familiarised in the Shklovskian sense:

If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic. So eventually all of our skills and experiences function unconsciously... The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'estranging' objects and complicating forms, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious'. *Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant.* Shklovsky (1925, pp.4-6. His italics)

While recognising the development of critical thinking since the early twentieth century – and his notion of expansion can be extended from sight to include other senses – personal praxis is not far removed from this description of art. Shklovsky would surely approve of 'thing theory' (Brown in Knappett, 2014). His view, that the experiencing of the process of creativity is

the crux, is persuasive especially when extended by a qualification – the experience concerned being direct involvement in creativity.

(b) Defamiliarising the object. Knappett (2014, p.175) states a general assumption about objects (contrasted with Brown's 'things') as 'named, understood, and transparent.' In ceramic terms, these are artefacts, which draw attention to themselves, as a well-designed dinner service would by its beauty, utility or style. They are, in other words, recognisable, and they also perform as expected. Not lurking in the background of social or personal life, they have a presence. In the world dominated by instant hot drinks, for instance, a teapot of any kind is an object noted for unusual functionality as well as aesthetic value, but no longer taken for granted. Installing objects which do not conform to function or place – such as raw clay eggs in felted wool pockets on a farm gate, or piles of clay dust and newly fired bowls alongside valued Chinese porcelain in a display case – begs for them to be reconsidered. The familiar is decontextualised and estranged.

Research experience suggests that this effect may be stronger in the case of small-scale forms, particularly with connotations of domesticity or nurture. Perhaps reframing our understanding of familiar items in unexpected surroundings requires attention and active reconsideration, particularly where they patently have short temporal spans, or are vulnerable to natural forces of some kind.

(c) Defamiliarising the audience (reframed as the percipient): heightened awareness arising from the disruption of the relatively unthreatening domestic and personal context has its inevitable impact. In addition, the fact that the creative 'act' is not presented in the historic institutional art-setting as objects for viewing and admiration, but as opportunities for adoption and manipulation, raises questions. What is this disintegrating thing? Why is it here? Who is responsible for making it safe? Is that down to me?⁸ The relationship of percipient to work is, as indicated elsewhere (particularly Chapter 7), very personal. While the response may be playful, it may equally

⁸ Such responses were reported in relation to the knitted elements of *RePlace (North Ronaldsay)* in particular

be acquisitive, neglectful or destructive. The installation is in effect abandoned and vulnerable. The role of the percipient (see Fisher-Lichte, 2008, p.14, noting 'the transformation of the spectators into actors') is more closely aligned with the participant in Ono's *Cut Piece* (1965 and later), Abramovic's *Lips of Thomas* (1975), and The Brick Factory's *Tear Piece* (2011) than with a planned visit to a gallery, where an art-related experience is promised. Within such an event aesthetic the role of the percipient is different from that of passive audience member; rather it is as collaborator with the work. Decisions are made about its arrangement, its location, and its future existence, which are (deliberately) completely out of the control of the artist-as-instigator. This is less the 'death of the artist' to coin a phrase (Barthes, 1968, pp.41-45) than the enfranchisement of the audience. As Bishop (2006, p.41) indicates in her introduction to Barthes's seminal paper: 'his key statement on the idea [is] that a work's meaning is not dependent on authorial intention but on the individual point of active reception.' Considering Barthes' argument in the context of art rather than literature, his words remain potent:

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.
Barthes (1968, p.44)

Such 'closing' is absolutely antithetical in my personal praxis. **Figure 1.8** illustrates engagement in *RePlace* (commenced 2012 and discussed in detail in Chapter 5), by a local person (Njalsdottir) who not only added to the installation itself, but rescued it from winter storms, repairing and re-installing it in a safer place the following spring. As has been articulated in relation to design-based research, 'a triangular relationship between person/human – artifact/object – person/human' (Niedderer,2007, p.6) can be construed in the creative arena.

Engagement by others in such installatory work is not only acceptable, it is welcomed and valued. The capacity for the percipient to declare something to be art, to be creative, to alter it either physically or conceptually is also, in parallel with the defamiliarised object (discussed in 1.7.2.b, above), Bourraudian in its liberation from convention.



Figure 1.8 Sarah Gee and Njalsdottir. *RePlace (North Ronaldsay)*. Wool, bracken, dry grass, bone china. Dimensions variable (figure height approx. 6") Njalsdottir's companion (left) introduced April 2013 for original yarnwife (right). Image © Njalsdottir. Original installation 16.05.12

1.8 THE RESEARCH FOCUS

At the heart of the enquiry is the search for characteristics with which to locate, contextualise and examine impermanence as an expressive mode of contemporary ceramic art practice in order to illuminate this development, while considering its purpose and its impact on those engaging directly with it. The term 'contemporary' is used throughout to indicate art which is current, challenges pre-conceptions regarding art and artistic expression, and in which, citing Art21 (undated), 'contemporary audiences play an active role in the process of constructing meaning about works of art'.

The initial impetus for the research was a personal need to understand how and why impermanent ceramic art practice has developed its artistic prominence, particularly during the last two decades or so. Because this initial intent resulted from reviewing an emerging personal praxis, it favoured

a form of enquiry combining practice and theory, enabling reflection, speculation, experiment, analysis and narrative. Attention was given throughout the research programme to understanding and articulating this development as an active practitioner of contemporary ceramic art, to enhance understanding of the practice both for those undertaking it, and for those who engage with it.

As previously stated, a lack of published literature was also a major factor in identifying the research topic. At the time of the doctoral application in 2009, little was available in the way of texts or papers reviewing the subject with its ceramic focus, apart from artists' statements, reviews and commentaries associated with specific exhibitions and installations. A significant drive was therefore to fill a perceived gap. In the intervening years the profile of ceramic impermanence in contemporary art practice has grown both in volume and variety, and reference to associated literature is made, particularly in Chapter 2, and also in Chapters 4-9.

Whether due to greater public attention to such work, or to the generation of more work of this kind, ceramic art practice involving impermanence now has a more obvious presence, from Twomey's *Trophy*, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), via Ai's *Sunflower Seeds*, Tate Modern, to Maiolino's *Continuous*, Camden Arts Centre (01.04-30.05.10), Caroline Tattersall, 2009 and 2011 British Ceramic Biennials (BCB) and Phoebe Cummings, *Swept Away*, MAD, New York, 07.02-05.08.12.

The variety and ingenuity with which clay and ceramic are manipulated and presented stimulate questions regarding motivation, purpose and context, while the growing profile for ceramic impermanence as a mode of artistic expression prompts academic attention and scrutiny.

1.9 PRACTICE AND THESIS

1.9.1 Practice element and theoretical argument

The output of a practice-led research programme is two-fold: theoretical and practical. In this case, the research is presented in written form, being

accompanied for the oral examination by an exposition offering traces of practical work (process-related given that the focus of the programme is practice, rather than technical, development - see 3.3, p.65) and a record in written and non-written forms. The two strands functioned together throughout the research programme to stimulate analysis, generate arguments and draw conclusions. What was presented in the viva exposition was illustrative and partial evidence of a practice committed to transience, as much evidence of the research process as possible being contained within this written thesis, including images and appendices.

1.9.2 Writing style and use of personal pronouns

The thesis results from a practice-led research programme, therefore self-reference is inevitable. It is an essential aspect of the research process to reflect on personal art practice as the fundamental focus for the research exploration.

Although the classic style for writing a thesis eschews their use, not least in order to distance the writer's subjectivity from the matters under discussion, personal pronouns are appropriate to discussions of an autobiographical nature. As is described more fully in Chapter 3, the research process was approached in the mode of the practitioner, reflective-on as well as reflective-in practice (Schön, 1983), utilising personal artistic expression as a source of data and theory, and as a resource to stimulate thinking and exploring potential theoretical constructs for the research topic. I am thus both researcher and research subject in this exploratory journey.

Chapter 3 indicates that the research cycle also utilises Kolb's thesis of the learning process (Kolb, 1984), particularly pertinent being the experiential aspect of learning. Activity (making, doing) is the usual initiating impulse for reflection, experimentation and generation of my work. This is a process embedded in personal experience and thus results in articulation of the thesis from a subjective perspective.

Personal pronouns are accordingly employed where appropriate.

1.9.3 Thesis outline

The thesis has three main elements. Chapters 1-3 contain the introduction, contextual review and methodology. Chapters 4-9 cover the main content of the research, exploring themes identified as central to the investigation and identifying initial findings. Chapter 10 draws together the findings, offers conclusions, and indicates the originality of this research contribution as well as potential avenues for further research.

Each chapter has, in italics, a brief introductory statement indicating the nature of its contents and a final summary connecting it with the next chapter. Chapters 4-9 also have a final section (Reflexion) identifying major lines of argument and resultant findings.

This chapter has established the nature of the research programme, indicated its focus and the motivation for its undertaking.

It has briefly outlined examples of the developing current use of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice. Chapter 2 focuses on this context, both as the environment within which the researcher seeks to find an understanding of her own practice, and also to indicate the initial findings from secondary research into the work of contemporary ceramic artists working in associated idioms.

CHAPTER 2. CONTEXTUALISING IMPERMANENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CERAMIC ART PRACTICE

Ephemeral art is a reminder of the fragility of existence

O'Neill (2007, p.90)

Life doesn't last; art doesn't last. It doesn't matter.

Hesse (1970)

Chapter 1 outlined the genesis of this research, the route for personal praxical development, and the focus for the practice-led programme exploring issues of impermanence as a means of articulating an artistic voice for contemporary artists working within the ceramic tradition.

Chapter 2 contextualises ceramic as a medium for myself and my contemporaries and ways in which the impermanent aspect of clay is exploited as a means of artistic expression. The focus is contemporary models in Western art, mainly exploring the millennial decades (i.e. early 1990s onward). The chapter indicates themes in contemporary ceramic and craft-related discourses, and instances artists working in non-traditional ways, particularly identifying those whose experimentation with clay impermanence illustrates current trends for ceramic engagement.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, as skilled professionals with a degree of control over their output, a significant basic requirement for artists' economic viability has been to produce desirable work which is valued by those with the resources to buy and display it. The acceptability (and hence value) of art work in this model is predicated on possession and in most cases also on display. The artist's reputation and acceptance are necessary to ensure the work will find a market.

Using this model, whether art production has been commissioned for an individual's gratification or for public display, it is valued as an economic

good. As Becker (2008) indicates in his exposition of the social construct of 'the artworld', the policing of the frontiers of the artworld is undertaken with value and economics firmly in mind: 'Distribution has a crucial effect on reputations. What is not distributed is not known and therefore cannot be well thought of or have historical importance. The process is circular: what does not have a good reputation will not be distributed.' (Becker 2008 p.95).

Becker argues cogently that the mechanism of distribution is in the control of those perceived as having power within this artworld to decide on the worth of an artist and her/his creations and indicates (2008, pp.28-29) the difficulties of producing 'unconventional' work in this context (a social construct which Burr, 2003, and Searle, 1996, would surely recognise).

The economic imperative of the model requires durability of the art object as an investment. However, my practice does not comply with such a structure. I generate transient work referencing domestic familiarity in clay which, as Graves (2012, p.1) indicates, 'is a medium in which the material itself has little intrinsic monetary value'. Without wishing to dwell on issues of value and price, the historic model evidently does not encompass work like mine which is impermanent, not object-based, is without intrinsic economic value and is uncollectable.

While dependent on and emergent from a craft heritage, the impermanence of my work in conjunction with its quotidian media, domestic allusions, and accessible siting has a defamiliarising impact. Buszek (2011, p.1), in referring to the sensuous tactile 'information' of craft media implies that this inhabits some kind of basic human comfort zone, but in common with examples of craftivism, my installations do not comply with a submissive notion of craft and in their noncompliance hopefully provoke the observer into curiosity and reconsideration (as seen in witnesses to *Tidal Transience*, **Figure 6.4**).

Contemporary discussion (O'Neill 2007 p.ii) of the 'assumption in western culture that art objects are durable from economic, cultural and psychological perspectives' firmly identifies this assumption as 'a cultural phenomenon', a western social construct in Searlian terms: 'in most cases it is harder to see objects as just natural phenomena, stripped of their functional roles, than it is to see our surroundings in terms of their socially defined functions' (Searle

1996, p.4). Rather than a universal given (O'Neill 2007 p.92), in Burr's (2003, p.45) terms: 'a lot of the things we take for granted as given, fixed and immutable, whether in ourselves or in the phenomenon we experience, can upon inspection be found to be socially derived and socially maintained'. We make assumptions about what we will experience as 'art', based on social constructs; and the historic assumption is that ceramics are fired and fixed, and objects, not experiences.

While to a certain degree the model of the art world described above still applies today (as instanced in the late 1980s' phenomenon of the Young British Artists whose work attracted the attention of patrons such as Charles Saatchi), the contemporary art field has changed in a way aligning more sympathetically with the lack of economic imperative integral to my creative practice.

My particular concern in considering the nature of and context for my practical development has been to understand what social assumptions are being tested, and perhaps challenged, by work in clay whose meaning is bound up with its impermanence.

2.2 CONTEMPORARY MODELS

Currently, alternative models of the artist and of making art are burgeoning, as much for those from the ceramic tradition as from any other art form. As the curator and artist, Weintraub (2007, p.8), indicates:

... contemporary art embraces the maverick and the traditionalist. No topic, no medium, no process, no intention, no professional protocols, and no aesthetic principles are exempt from the field of art. Also missing are pre-existing standards, predetermined measures of success and ready-made definitions of art. Such artistic license [sic] grants to artists an exceptional opportunity. *They are free to originate new cultural possibilities.* (my emphasis)

Given the breadth and permissiveness that Weintraub indicates, the question of where to locate and articulate one's practice when 'anything goes' is potentially unanswerable, if not so broad as to be of little use.

I therefore considered that concentrating in the first instance on creativity within the ceramic tradition, my home-base, would be productive in contextualising my own practice; and I sought illumination from discussion of contemporary ceramics in particular.

As Dahn indicates, contemporary makers have:

... dispensed with the production of ceramics-as-objects-of-exchange, and their work challenges conventional notions of what constitutes and is appropriate to ceramics practice. Dahn (2011, p.157)

In the light of this, two questions effectively pose themselves: What are appropriate models to contextualise current practice? To what extent do they illuminate my own?

2.2.1 Ceramic research projects

The three-year Norwegian-based *Creating Art Value: A Research Project on Rubbish and Readymades, Art and Ceramics* (2008-12):

focused on ceramics for several reasons. Ceramics has a rich history and is international... as a commercial commodity and valuable art pieces it has served as an important bridge between east and west. Veiteberg (2011, p.7)

Introducing the project, Veiteberg references the wide variety of ways in which those who work with ceramics have addressed the 'post-industrial situation' which the west has experienced with the significant shift of industrial ceramics to the east. This perspective intrigued me because of the acceptance Veiteberg and other academics clearly evidence regarding 'alternative' trends in creativity, and particularly the strong connection with contemporary ceramics' craft heritage (her interest here being the ability of makers to combine industrial with craft processes to produce new work):

The post-industrial trend... has stood out as particularly relevant in the 2000s, and it is one of the few trends in craft that can be seen as something completely new. It is not new in a way that represents a break with the past, however. The past is present everywhere in post-industrial ceramics, in the choice of materials and motifs as well as in work methods and themes.... But the connections to contemporary material cultures are equally important. Veiteberg (2011, p.7)

Being a particular personal interest, the attention this research project patently paid to clay materiality was striking, not least in the ‘both/and’ aspect of containing both tradition and experiment. While the position statement was helpful in clarifying the perpetuation of the bond between contemporary ceramics and its craft roots, which is intuitively endorsed in my own practice, it lacked the particular focus on ceramic impermanence as a means of expression, this being my immediate concern.

It was therefore valuable to note Veiteberg’s interest in transient ceramic creativity in her monograph on Norwegian ceramicist Torbjørn Kvasbø (who was *inter alia* involved in Neil Brownsword’s inventive *Marl Hole* collaboration in 2009. See 2.2.1, p.40). Here Veiteberg (2013) reflects on recent developments in ceramics, including what she terms ‘action-based work with clay’:

The interest in creating impermanent projects in clay can be seen as a reaction to the unique, decorative art object, the beautiful and commercial...This attitude was an important part of the background to the emergence of concept art in the 1960s, and what critic and curator Lucy Lippard called ‘the dematerialization of the art object’. Veiteberg (2013, p.47)

Not only do such developments assist the recontextualisation of ceramic practice from the constraints of a purely craft (‘applied art’) arena, it aligns it with other modes of artistic expression and also challenges the tendency to frame discussion about clay-based creativity primarily by the material concerned, as Rosalind Krauss in her influential paper *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, defining the parameters of sculpture in the expanded field (1979, p.42) indicates: ‘within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium’; and as Dahn (2011, p.158) also points out in discussing the conceptual aspect of contemporary ceramics, ‘[t]he Royal College of Art...declares that “Ceramics... does not so much imply a fixed set of media, but a site for discursive practice where cultural, social, personal, historical and aesthetic concerns intersect.”’

There is a liberating effect in these perspectives, enabling ceramic-based work to be loosened from socially-imposed tethers of a strong history in the domains of functionality and decoration (domestic ware and applied art).

Without wishing to detach it from its context, which is crucial for audience engagement, I consider this enables a broader, less convention-dictated, view of clay-based creativity to be explored.

Ceramics in the Expanded Field (CIEF), as another major three-year ceramic-focused research project⁹ culminating in a research conference in 2014, provides current academic context in its acknowledgement that ‘ceramics is broadening out its dialogues with other fields through experimental practice and developments in critical theory’¹⁰. CIEF was particularly involved with interaction between contemporary makers and collections held in museum settings, and despite its particular focus on curatorial practice (which is outside the parameters of this thesis (see 3.5, p.72) is of importance in its constructions of new means of working for contemporary makers and fresh critical analysis. The series of short papers which CIEF generated is a rich resource for the wider community of researchers of contemporary ceramics, given the value of contributions from curators, academics and practitioners, Graves’ 2012 paper cited above being the first of the series.

Graves (2012, p.1), Curator of Ceramics and Glass Collections at the V&A, notes an aspect of practice development:

... when artists are seeking to work in new ways and with greater levels of ambition, such as can be witnessed in ceramicists working in the expanded field [*by which a less technical, mathematically-derived, definition is implied than that used by Krauss (1979, p. 33)*]. Here... objects appear less like portable and trading commodities, and more like happenings or projects. Their edges begin to blur. [My interpolation]

Graves’ comment outlines the shift from object-making, which features in the work of contemporaries discussed in the thesis, such as Twomey, 2.8, pp.53-55; Sormin, 4.3, pp.99-100; Harrison, 7.2.3, pp.178-182; and Lee, 7.2.4, pp.184-186. Indeed, his interpretation of the expanded field goes further, embracing installation as ‘a central concept’, noting the development of ‘the ensemble’ (from single object), and the importance of context: ‘of how and

⁹ Sponsored by the AHRC and the University of Westminster

¹⁰ <http://www.ceramics-in-the-expanded-field.com> home page [last accessed 08.02.16]

where something is displayed' (*ibid*), which again is evidenced in my own and contemporaries' work.

Graves also identifies temporality in this passage (a key aspect characterising my practice), his description *in toto* articulating the issues which were independently identified early in the research programme¹¹ as important (see 3.6.1 p.73), and which were endorsed by case study artists involved in my research (3.6.2, p.74):

Objects are no longer static. They might exist only for a temporary period, and within that period they might undergo change, or be subject to influences beyond the artist. The work then becomes a kind of performance, and one in which the audience may become active. Graves (2012, p.1)

In pointing up the performative aspect of contemporary ceramics, which is further discussed in 2.7 (pp.51-53), Graves' words endorse those of Dahn (2011, p.158): 'contemporary conceptual ceramics often incorporates performative elements and... ceramics has long been associated with performances of one sort or another.'

His identification of an active audience is also of importance, as Dahn (2015, p.24) also indicates in relation to the knowledgeable (i.e. specialist) and appreciative audiences for pyrotechnical performances, for instance at ICF and other festivals. But there is also a deeper penetration into non-specialist audiences, as in Keith Harrison's pyrotechnic stagings such as *Brother* (during *Possibilities and Losses*, MIMA, 2011), and *Last Supper (Clay Rocks*, V&A, 2006), where interested general audiences watched and responded to the live firings for which Harrison is increasingly known. Response becomes more active still with short-lived work such as Twomey's *Trophy* (also part of *Clay Rocks*, V&A 2006) and my installation, *Fallacy of Mass Production* (in *Traces of China*, at DOM, 2014), both being instances where audience members appropriated elements of the installations. This aspect of ceramic's 'expanded field' is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Graves' description of the expanded field is also captured in Dahn's more recent reflection that 'considered as an overarching discipline, ceramics is

¹¹ these pertinently included: site/location; audience/witness; performativity; evidence/record; materiality

elusive; it can be understood in a variety of ways that are often interlinked and can sometimes seem contradictory' (Dahn, 2015, p.10).

Acknowledgement of its somewhat slippery nature is helpful to the researcher/practitioner: ceramic discourses are at times informed by the craft tradition, at others by clay's capacity to hold its own in the arena of fine art, so Bruner's and Sullivan's notions of trust-likeness (see 3.3, p.65) assists in articulating its multi-faceted (and sometimes conflicting) character. When seen through a non-binary 'both/and' lens, the seeming contradictions have opportunities to co-exist in a fashion that Weintraub would recognise..

When Dahn (2015, p.10), in her exploration of new directions, describes contemporary ceramics as 'elusive', she cites the online journal *Interpreting Ceramics*' editorial statement¹² of 'ceramics...[as] any practice or mode of inquiry which brings a social and cultural awareness to bear on the manufacture and consumption of objects made from ceramic materials'.

This statement was made in 2000 and by omission demonstrates how rapidly ceramics has diversified since the turn of the century: installation, performance and event would now be essential features of a contemporary definition, some of which would not (indeed, could not) be evidenced in object form (for instance, Philip Lee's performance piece, discussed in 7.2.4, pp.184-186). In Dahn's more recent review of contemporary ceramics, features such as 'performance events, site-specific installation, and time-based (or 'durational') work are her focus in what she describes as 'strikingly exploratory works... whose uninhibited disrespect for the categorization of cultural forms challenges the status quo' (Dahn, 2015, p.13), phrases that echo Weintraub's (2007) analysis of the nature of contemporary art.

This perspective is enlivening for the practitioner/researcher whose practice is not 'traditional'; moreover it enables the expanded field described by Graves (2012) to be located other than solely in the museum or the gallery, for example *Marl Hole* (2009), a five-day collaborative project¹³ in conjunction

¹² Available at <http://www.interpretingceramics.com>

¹³ Instigated by maker and academic Neil Brownsword, and involving three other international ceramic practitioners (including Kvasbø) and a film maker

with the BCB, at the Ibstock Brick Ltd. quarry, Newcastle-Under-Lyme - far from a museum setting both physically and psychologically.

Dahn's perspective also makes room for the unconventional, even transgressive, quality in contemporary impermanent ceramic creativity, which is a particular personal concern as the thesis signals (6.2, pp.138-139; 9.2, p.211). While Claudia Clare (2016) indicates that subversion of domestic and functional ceramics for critical commentary has a long history in seeking 'to disrupt an established convention of form, use or process', or in using 'the context – the gallery or museum – in an unconventional way' (Clare, 2016, p.18), it is the extension and sometimes the dissolution of physical, social and cultural boundaries which is a concern in my practice. However, it is not necessarily the iconoclastic – destructive in Laura Gray's (2013) terms - which best contextualises it, though damage features in the work of contemporaries, including Harrison (whose *Bustleholme* event received destructive attention from an audience member, see 7.2.3, p.180, and in any event was likely to have been tested to destruction during its short performance life):

A significant number of sculptors and artists working with clay are using the act of destruction as artistic gesture, which includes destruction as a performative strategy'. Gray (2013, p.9)

A deliberate act of damage is implied in Gray's words, who also cites Rambelli and Reinders (Gray, 2013, p.11), in whose usage 'iconoclasm is a subset of the larger category *destruction*'. (Rambelli and Reinders, 2014, p.ix). However, the focus for my research is work where meaning is generally bound up in its impermanence, so that its change and dissolution is integral to it, rather than a damaging act upon it, seen in *Return to Koshi* (discussed in 4.1.1, p.80 and Appendix 1.vii) and Twomey's *Is it madness Is it beauty*, (4.1.1, p.83).

In seeking to illuminate my practice, it was important to identify alignments with aspects of the contemporary ceramic discourse.

(a) *Institutional contexts*: for instance, while the majority of my research projects were located in the environment, with concomitant open access, the institutional context described by Graves is pertinent to two (*ReCollection*

and *Traces/Fallacy* being sited in museum settings). He describes the challenges of commissioning work, as opposed to collecting existing pieces, indicating that in doing so the V&A (alongside other institutions - in my case, Durham Oriental Museum and Bede's World, Jarrow) 'avoided dictating too rigidly the outcomes, and has instead kept in mind the broader institutional objectives of supporting and promoting creativity and stimulating public interest in creative practice' (Graves, 2012, p.4).

(b) *Subverting the status quo*: Claudia Clare's discussion, as academic and practitioner, of subversive challenges to the status quo, whether political or social similarly has particular resonance for two research projects, *Losing It Rose Field* and *Converse:Mao*, with their political agendas.

Converse:Mao (see Appendix 1.v) utilised a subverted – even a mutilated - image to make political commentary: the press-moulded heads, of which this multi-site installation consisted, manipulated a popular icon of Chairman Mao to offer different interpretations of this once- (and still) revered leader. The resulting raw clay pieces were located across the south east of the People's Republic of China where I considered they would have impact and where their dissolution was witnessable: on a roadside where a huge engineering project forced a causeway through marshland; in a temple incense burner; by a workers' field latrine; in a stinking ditch where farmed fish had been discarded beside a soy bean field.

In contrast, *Losing It* (a project utilising a variety of media and processes, as the project report in Appendix 1.vi indicates) was a personal howl of grief at the loss of the British pottery industry which has framed my life since being a university student in the Potteries. In common with a number of contemporaries (e.g. Twomey with unfired flowers in *Blossom*, Eden Project, 2007 and Andrew Livingstone - fired flowers in *Made in England*, in *Parallax View*, Tullie House Museum, 2010) I used the undervalued skills of redundant modellers in making work where flower forms signal fragility and risk. There was no subversion of text here: in contrast to Clare's argument regarding ceramic subversion being satirical when not political (Clare, 2016, p.11), this work was elegiac and mournful. And my public installation work in

general seeks to stimulate reflection in the observer, to encourage a personal re-writing of the past, without imposing a 'message' or an interpretation.

As with the other models which have been identified as context, comparing the motivations and circumstances underpinning the various research projects, with the benefit of Clare's articulation of subversion in contemporary ceramics it has been possible to obtain greater clarity regarding their characteristics and impacts.

2.2.2 Other models, other messages

This review of contemporary ceramic discourses clearly identified relevant aspects and elucidated areas of my developing practice. My instinct, however, drove me also to seek insights which might cast light from other angles. I therefore also looked beyond the ceramic domain in seeking suitable contextualisations.

The core craft nature of guerrilla knitting (or yarn bombing, yarn graffiti, yarn storming etc. - as the phenomenon has bubbled up in a number of cities, countries and continents, the terminology is still relatively fluid) is elucidated by Keri Smith, conceptual artist and writer working in this mode:

Guerilla art is a fun and insidious way of sharing your vision with the world. It is a method of art making which entails leaving anonymous art pieces in public places. It can be done for a variety of reasons, to make a statement, to share your ideas, to send out good karma, or just for fun. My current fascination with it stems from a belief in the importance of making art without attachment to the outcome. To do something that has nothing to do with making money, or listening to the ego... I am not necessarily advocating that you do anything illegal or potentially life threatening. But there is something wonderfully sneaky about leaving some form of art in public places. Smith's blog, 08.06.10. Available at: www.kerismith.com/popular-posts/how-to-be-a-guerilla-artist-2/. [last accessed: 13.02.16]

Smith's earlier exposition of guerrilla art harmonises with my developing praxis, and she speaks for me in saying:

To relegate art to a gallery makes it available only to certain people... Guerilla Art is for everyone. It engages viewers who might never step foot into a gallery. It is free and accessible... I

do not personally try to make work with an overt political message (though sometimes that does occur). Instead I let the medium itself be the political act... I am also questioning what is acceptable behaviour and challenging what I am 'allowed' to do within a specific context... Work that is impermanent reminds us that nothing in life is permanent, that every state is temporary and transitory... Creating work that is impermanent helps us to release our own attachment to the final product and lets us focus more on the process. Smith (2007, pp.12-14)

As my praxis has matured, I have been able to reflect on its core characteristics, many of which are articulated in Smith's statement above: accessibility and openness, freedom from overt political messages, boundary-testing and transgression, meaning embedded in impermanence, focus on process (and material).

Smith's summary (2007, p.17) encapsulates this:

There are three possible approaches to guerilla art:

1. beautifying – altering your surroundings
2. questioning – using your voice, challenging the status quo
3. interacting – with the environment or people

Alteration (not necessarily beautifying), questioning and interacting are important characteristics in my work. As with guerrilla art, it is left anonymously in public for people to find and, importantly, to make of it what they wish (Smith cites Umberto Eco's term 'open work' as freeing up meaning-making in this form of art practice, paralleling Bourriaud's perspective in his arguments for the relational aesthetic).

However, Smith's (and later artists') context and stimulus are urban: this art form has its roots in graffiti and U.S. city-based subversiveness, thus holding a quite different resonance from that produced by the placement of my work in 'open' natural settings, and even its connection with my background in domestic craft.

This is equally true of the development of a subset of this art form, guerrilla knitting – a craft-based form with strong connections with my domestic skill-base - which has an urban focus, though its characteristics of anonymity, rule-breaking, accessibility, reassurance and humour are reflected also in my practice. As Magda Sayeg of Knitta Please (the group that initiated guerilla

knitting, in Houston, Texas) indicates: 'People... see this obviously hand-knitted piece that has been wrapped around something that is completely inanimate, and it turns alive. In fact, it not only turns alive but there is something comforting and loving about it.' (cited in Moor and Prain, 2009, p.15).

The scale and craft origin of much of my work has parallels with craftivist installation work, and also with Clare's subversion of the slipware tradition 'to use as a campaigning craft' (Clare, 2016, p.15, quoting journalist Mary Hockaday's description of her own work *Free Karanjit Ahluwalia. Resistance No Crime!* in 1996), but our purposes differ. I do not seek social change from engagement with the environment, and the rural context which I prefer for installations would defeat the craftivist objective of audience engagement on city streets, while being an alien environment in which to generate impact for messages about social justice issues such as domestic violence.

Evidently there is no direct and complete comparison between the practice I have developed as an integral aspect of the research, and the work of others. As indicated above, my practice is not generally aligned to the urban (if not metropolitan) nature of much impermanent art, nor to the managed experience of the gallery. Whilst there are a number of connections and comparisons between any one project and the work of contemporaries, each has its own character and individuality.

Hence I come full circle to Weintraub's liberating statement: as a practitioner/researcher that I am 'free to originate new cultural possibilities', while conscious of the *caveat* that this licence to innovate combines opportunity with the challenge of ensuring coherence of approach and aim.

Here, therefore, is the base from which I start my research exploration into my own practice, seeking as I do so to align it where appropriate with the work of contemporaries with similar concerns, processes or objectives.

2.3 RE:LOCATION

Weintraub's stimulus is further encouraged by Krauss, a founder of much postmodern thinking about art. When Krauss analysed the reframing of

sculpture (i.e. three-dimensional work), she enabled thinking to occur ‘outside the box’ with her decidedly box-shaped Klein group diagram (Diagram 2.1, Krauss, 1979, p.38), precisely because she described the parameters of our thinking about art in more expansive terms than the ‘white box’ of the gallery. Krauss’s contrast of ‘sculpture’ (object) with ‘site-construction’ (environment) throws light on the shift from the gallery that has been evident in contemporary ceramics as in other forms of artistic endeavour. As she indicates: ‘... once one is able to think one’s way into this expansion, there are – logically – three other categories that one can envision, all of them a condition of the field itself, and none of them assimilable to *sculpture*... [which] is rather only one term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities. And one has thereby gained the “permission” to think these other forms.’ (Krauss, 1979, p.38)

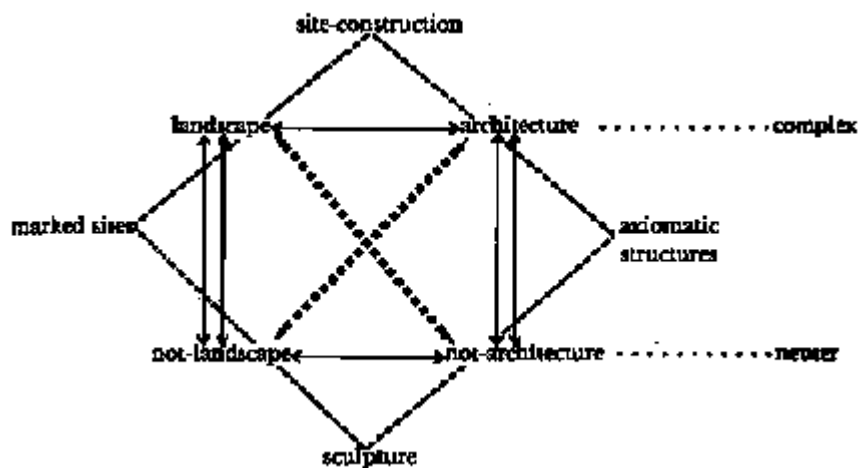


Diagram 2.1 Rosalind Krauss: Klein group diagram from *October*, Vol. 8, pp.30-44
© R. Krauss

2.3.1 Shifting from the gallery: events

While the gallery has historically been the contact point between artist and audience in western art, as the previous section indicates, art work has changed its nature to a significant degree, with ‘synthesis of art event and artwork, of presence and representation, of immateriality and materiality... the fleeting moment as both a generative and constitutive element of the installation’ (Nollert, 2003, p.4; endorsed by Graves, 2012, p.1): hence the

gallery plinth for three-dimensional, and the wall for two-dimensional, work no longer have the capacity to present such work comprehensively. Moreover, as Essay 3 of the Ceramics in the Expanded Field series indicates (Veiteberg, 2012, p.1), 'Meetings between artists and museums are... not devoid of tension and their interests do not always coincide'. A trend, particularly evident since the mid-twentieth century, has been for artists to move out of the gallery, whether private or public, as a sole location for showing work, exploring different means of public engagement via events and happenings.

Kaprow 'coined the word 'happening' to describe a presentation which had its roots in art but which had taken the artist in the direction of theatre' (Biggsby 1985 p.45), and the activity still flourishes in the form of performance art such as *Punk Prayer* (Pussy Riot, 2012) and walking art events, e.g. *We Stand Out The Most When We Stand Together* (performance parade conceived and directed by Nicola Singh, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 10 August 2013, see <http://wunderbar.org.uk/myportfolio/we-stand-out-the-most-when-we-stand-together-photos/>).

The nature of such art work fits with Kaprow's definition of 'happening' cited by academic and artist, Baron-Robbins (2013):

Words, sounds, human beings in motion, painted constructions, electric lights, movies and slides - and perhaps in the future, smells - all in continuous space *involving* the spectator or audience; those are the ingredients. Several or all of them may be used in combination at any one time, which permits me a great range of possibilities. Baron-Robbins (2013, p.7. His emphasis)

Performativity, ephemerality and audience engagement as characteristics of happenings are highly relevant to modes of working with clay in impermanent artistic expression, as Chapters 4, 5 and 7 discuss in particular.

2.3.2. Shifting from the gallery: environmental art

Krauss uses the term 'marked sites' to denote 'land art' – 'physical manipulation of sites' and also other forms of marking landscape, such as the 'application of impermanent marks' (Krauss, 1979, p.41) – supporting the

consideration of other modes of artistic expression outside the confines of the gallery which have also developed, again with pertinence to contemporary ceramic art practice, such as environmental installation (from Cecula's *Art Project 1974* which utilised local clay to create bricks to fill a crack in a roadside cliff face in Brazil and Richard Long's 'walking art' to Brownsword *et al's Marl Hole*, 2009) and injection of contemporary work into museum displays (such as Twomey's *Trophy*, V&A, 2006; de Waal's *a sounding line*, Chatsworth, 2007). The extent of change can be seen in the fact that, given technological and imaginative developments, some artists' creativity has no physical existence at all, extending their ceramic practice into new media such as computerisation, digitisation and video (for instance, Runa Islam with *Be The First To see What You see As You see It*, 2004; Cushway, e.g. with *Last Supper at The Glynn Vivian*, 2011, and *Teatime at the Museum*, 2012).

These shifts are predicated on cultural, societal and political changes, as well as more particular developments in the field of art, reflecting its increasingly fluid and permeable boundaries. They are also reliant on practitioners' ingenuity, and their take-up and adaptation of technological advances.

An increasing proportion of contemporary art in general is undertaken in the environment and is accessed primarily outside the art gallery. For environmental artists such as Nash, what does get exhibited in the gallery is a form of record of their work in the field, often as video and photography. While there are lively debates regarding the status of such gallery work it is absolutely clear that it would not exist without the creative work undertaken – and left – outside the gallery.

The importance of this development for the impermanent work of contemporary ceramic artists is considered further in Chapter 8.

2.4 CONVERGENCES AND CONSONANCES

2.4.1 Western and Eastern aesthetic divergence

O'Neill's statement about the assumption of durability for an 'art object' also raises an issue regarding assumed universality for the Western perspective

(O'Neill, 2007). For instance, in Japanese aesthetics '[P]ermanence through materials (granite, marble, the Pyramids, the Parthenon) is seldom attempted. Rather, the claims of immortality are honoured in another way.' (Richie, 2007, Location 347) Richie continues, '*Aware* is applied to the aspects of nature (or life, or art) that move a susceptible individual to an awareness of the ephemeral beauty of a world in which change is the only constant.' Illustrating a significant divide between historic Western and Eastern aesthetics, he points out: '[T]here have been various valiant attempts to translate the term *aware* into English, a language that has no way of doing so.' (Location 580). Despite this dissonance, there are telling parallels across the cultures: 'Things aesthetic, like everything else, are subject to commercialization.' (Richie 2007 Location 384).

2.4.2 Consonances: Cage and Ono

Two artists who in particular draw strongly on alternative cultural sources are John Cage and Yoko Ono. While emerging from diverse backgrounds, their practices have parallels and resonate directly with my own. Cage, best known as a composer, but also a visual artist, was born and raised in California. Ono was born in Japan and spent her early years there. Both span Eastern and Western approaches in their art and philosophies. Both demonstrate interest in Eastern philosophy, which is woven into their work and attitude to life which has echoes in my own interest in meditation and Zen Buddhism, while demonstrating a radical approach to Western art-making. And both were pioneers in shaping Fluxus as a post Abstract-Expressionist movement in the USA.

Cage and Ono are particularly pertinent, despite not being contemporary, because their approach to artistic expression encompasses issues which, as a reflective practitioner, I have identified as important in my creative practice (see Chapters 1 and 9 for further discussion of praxical development and its key characteristics):

- Centrality of the role of the percipient, extending to the effacement of the artist or instigator

- Art as expression of ideas and emotions, rather than statements for acceptance (or rejection)
- Ease with ephemerality in creating work (which leaves questions, impressions, feelings, thoughts, for the recipient/percipient).
- Involvement of chance as a key aspect of work,
- Ephemerality. Performance cannot be replicated exactly, enduring for a limited period of time: it can never be 'the same' work.

An exploration of these feature within my ceramic heritage, consonant with Ono's and Cage's approaches in different forms, has therefore been a strong underpinning for the praxical development outlined in the thesis.

2.5 IMPERMANENCE, THE PRACTITIONER AND VALUE

The central focus for the thesis is the development of contemporary concerns within the Western ceramic tradition to explore and to express transience, based on the work of practitioners trained in ceramics and embedded in craft traditions, while Eastern traditions of thought and philosophy undoubtedly illuminate the discussion, given their historical impact on Western art. The need for the practitioner/researcher to be simultaneously within the creative endeavour and reflecting on it, for instance, parallels Eastern meditation practice, and is exemplified in the approaches of *gutai* in seeking reconsideration of basic materials and processes through direct, physical engagement (as in Shiraga, *Wrestling Mud*, 1955).

Much art work in the Western/European tradition has subject matter and themes not centrally concerned with transience or impermanence and the use of impermanent means of artistic expression for any theme or subject, whether itself permanent or not, appears as a relatively recent development.

The historic environment for Western art has encouraged, if not dictated, a significant level of durability for art (as indicated in 2.1, p.33). Thompson (1979) persuasively argues in his exposition of rubbish theory that value is predicated on durability in social terms - a social constructionist argument conforming to Searle's model of institutional facts (Searle, 2010; Burr, 2003).

The concept of the acquisition, and loss, of value developed by Thompson is extrapolated in Gee (2012, p.108) particularly to test its validity and implications for contemporary ceramic art. It is sufficient to note here that, in the context of a policed 'artworld' (Becker 1982 and cited in Gee 2012, pp.108-9), the implications of value theory in relation to non-lasting art work have a significant potential impact on the motivation of artists to work in this way, in what might be seen as a perverse rejection of historically appropriate ways of establishing their presence and credentials in an economic, social and political environment (see 4.1.1, pp.82-83 regarding Lehmann's work). Since the mid twentieth century, environmental artists and the *arte povera* movement including Claudio Casanovas (e.g. *Split Bowl*, 1987, www.vam.ac.uk/blog/artists-residence-va/claudi-casanovas) and Janis Kounellis (*Untitled*, 1969, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kounellis-untitled-ar00069) have utilised natural materials and phenomena. This usage and attention to less-regarded materials and processes, significant also in the work of the *Sodeisha* movement in post-war Japan (e.g. Osamu Noguchi's clay walls), prefigures contemporary artists' interest in using short-lived modes to realise themes of transience, particularly in clay, an accessible and cheap material throughout the world.

2.6 PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY

To clarify the use of 'performative' and 'performance':

Performativity and *performance* have long since emancipated themselves from their linguistic origins and have been characteristically transferred to the realms of culture and theatre, philosophy and fine art, most clearly within the performance genre. Nollert (2003, p.10)

It is largely in this cultural domain that the terms are used in this thesis, while their derivation from linguistics and pertinence in social constructionism has relevance in clarifying how a material can be perceived as 'acting', 'performing' and generally being 'vibrant' (see Bennett, 2010 for interesting consideration of the active nature of the material world).

In the twentieth century development of conceptualism, Melchert included use of clay for performative expression with his piece *Changes – Performance with Drying Slip*. As Chapter 5 discusses, the material in this work is performative, indeed it is agentic, It demands a response from those involved, because of the unexpectedness of the experience it engenders. The Tate website, in the context of its exhibition ‘The Secret History of Clay’ (Tate, 2004), describes the work:

In Jim Melchert’s 1972 performance *Changes*, the artist and his companions enact a return to the earth, and the object dematerialises completely. The artist and others dunk their heads in clay slip and are filmed waiting for it to dry, in a room that is hot at one end and cold at the other. The body itself is described in terms of the vessel: ‘It encases your head so that the sounds that you hear are interior, your breathing, your heartbeat, and your nervous system. (It is surprising how vast we are inside.)

(Available at:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/historyofclay> [Last accessed 06.01.14])

The participants in this work were both performers and objects, and the artist was also an element of the work, reflecting a change in perspective of the role of the artist. In that respect, Melchert continues the performative turn initiated by Kazuo in *Challenging Mud* (see Kunimoto’s discussion, 2012), where the artist is filmed writhing in wet mud until he indicates that the mud has defeated him.

Melchert was in the vanguard in changing relationships to ceramic, and his approach impacts on contemporary practice. Adrián Villar Rojas, for instance, works in non-traditional ways with his chosen materials (clay, cement, brick, hessian etc., see <http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/adri%C3%A1n-villar-rojas-today-we-reboot-planet>) to create, for instance in the Argentinian pavilion of the 2011 Venice Biennale, an oversized environment within which the audience roams to make its own sense of its experience. Another contemporary artist, the Brazilian Anna Maria Maiolino (see 5.3.2, p.120) also expresses herself artistically by physically engaging with her material – again including raw clay – in the process of making. These two practitioners involve others in the making

process, utilising gallery spaces unconventionally, not explaining the 'meaning' of their work. The visitor must interrogate the work and sense its resonances, and develop personal ideas as to its meaning for her/himself.

The purposes and variety of means used for this category of artistic expression form an important area of investigation for the research, evidencing ways in which the traditional contract between artist and society, whereby art is produced as a durable good – an object – in exchange for financial benefit, is being rewritten; and the relationship of artist and audience regarding their roles in art making mutate.

As the Prologue (pp.1-6) indicates, the utilisation of shortlived means of expression for transient themes is increasingly significant in clay-based work including makers such as Cummings, Maiolino and Lehmann. And this basic material, clay, in non-durable mode is a particularly effective vehicle as Chapter 5 indicates.

2.7 IMPLICATIONS OF IMPERMANENT ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

The issue of making a living is inevitably of concern to artists in general and art making has taken a different turn in the Western cultural arena, over the last sixty years. Overseen by the Arts Council, the impact this has on art making in the UK is evidenced by the funding mechanisms offered, enabling artistic endeavour to be fully funded or subsidised, resulting in different income streams for artists and arts organisations supporting them.

Additionally, higher arts education has increasingly been taken under the wing of universities, where collaboration with other bodies increasingly provides opportunity for novel artistic ventures. The ability for individuals to undertake creative practice alongside a teaching role also provides some income stability.

As this indicates, art-making in general is integrated into society. However, those using impermanent means of expression present a particular challenge for society and the historic means of economic exchange in a visual art domain. Identifying changes in relationships between artist and society was pertinent for the research programme. An aspect of the investigation was the

extent to which impermanence of subject matter as well as of means of expression makes such art making a special circumstance. To illustrate: Arts Council England, the V&A and Wedgwood collaborated on the event *Clay Rocks* on 29.09.06, for which Twomey created the extraordinary installation *Trophy* as a transient, unrepeatable, interactive work (**Figure 2.1**).

Her website¹⁴ cites Weir of Arts Council England (undated): ‘We are delighted to be supporting this innovative project at the V&A. Clare is challenging the boundaries of ceramic practice through a temporary installation which will allow the audience to take away their own personal piece of the art work.’



Figure 2.1 Clare Twomey (2006) *Trophy*. Cast Courts V&A. Image courtesy of Clare Twomey. Photographer - Dan Prince. (*Clay Rocks* event 29.09.06)

This is by no means the traditional mode of making art work. As a short-lived art installation in a museum setting, with the elements of the installation scattered among items in the permanent collection (one which has a strong

¹⁴ <http://www.claretwomey.com>

history of interest in craft and design rather than art *per se*), it cannot be re-assembled because the elements which made it are not accessible to any curator.

The work had an 'open' character (an adjective described elsewhere, e.g. 1.6.2, p.23), and its 'audience' was able to acquire a piece of the installation merely by picking up what they wanted during the evening. Thus, in at least three different ways, this art work challenges suppositions about the nature of visual art. Yet it is difficult to see how it could be described in other terms. It was not craft – the elements were moulded and factory made. It was not a performance with performers following direction. It was not a purchasable art work: as installation, it now does not exist. Describing it by negatives is a clear way of identifying the character of this and other impermanent works, but one of my aims in exploring my practice and that of my contemporaries in this field has been to identify what it is, rather than what it is not.

2.8 ISSUES OF ARTISTIC IMPERMANENCE

2.7 raises issues regarding the nature of impermanent art practice, particularly, in the context of this research, when clay is the material of choice, stimulating questions including:

What IS impermanence in this art form? As outlined above, descriptions and explanations of varied forms of the ceramic art practice involved are crucially important.

How does such impermanence achieve expression? A survey of the range within which impermanence is explored indicates, records and discusses some of the variety and creativity with which contemporary artists work in this field.

Why do artists seek to make impermanent work with clay? Closely associated with the means of expression are the purposes for artists of impermanence to engage in such practice.

If such art has some level of importance, what issues does it generate? If, as argued in this chapter, ceramic impermanence is accepted as an important

aspect of contemporary art, the issues it generates require articulation, e.g. durability and persistence, 'audience' engagement, artistic licence, siting and presentation.

To what extent does the use of clay as an impermanent medium raise unique issues? Are there detectable similarities with other materials in the making and presentation of impermanent work, or does clay stand alone?

These questions are explored from a personal perspective in Chapter 4, before focusing in Chapters 5-8 from a variety of angles: ways in which clay is used impermanently, the material itself, siting of impermanent work, relationships of artist to audience, and challenges of recording transient work.

Chapter 2 has considered the development of the expanded field within which contemporary ceramics is situated; impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice including my own, illustrated by examples from artists using a variety of materials and processes; and discussion of contemporary ceramic concerns.

It indicates where the research journey started, on the basis of which the methodology articulated in Chapter 3 was devised to enable the issues raised in this chapter to be explored and addressed.

CHAPTER 3: APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHOD

Understanding is always partial, perspectival and inflected by the social formation and personal histories of the researcher.

Pollock, 2013, p.xxi

Noticing all things for the first time, not apocalyptically, as revelations of the Mystery, but directly, as flowerings of Reality.

Pessoa, 1992, p.93

Chapter 2 set the scene for the research programme outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 describes the selection of the particular qualitative approach and data-gathering methods for the research programme, informed by the environment within which contemporary ceramic art is practised. A constructivist, phenomenographic, reflective, reflexive approach is identified as appropriate, given the focus on personal practice and its examination within the context of the engagement with impermanence of other artists from the ceramic tradition.

The practitioner standpoint aligned with the objective perspective demanded by the practice-led framing of the research programme is discussed. The approach, designed to enable the alternation between personal and analytical, creative and critical, is described and its nature and purpose stated.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Personal experience and intuition were fundamental to my focus on impermanence in contemporary practice and I explored the subject from the inside out in order to enable me to then consider it from the outside in.

The research method discussed in this chapter was adopted as a resilient iterative process, utilising personal familiarity with the learning models adopted. The inside-out/outside-in process enabled the crucial interaction between intellect and practice, for mutual illumination through two prisms – practice (of my own and my peers), and supporting models and concepts. I

reflected on practice and my intellectual and emotional engagement with it, and how I responded creatively; I developed ideas about what was happening and why, before going out into the world – physical, emotional and intellectual – seeking the means to illuminate it.

It was thus possible to test my own processes and thinking against the work of contemporaries also working with impermanence, and to undertake an expansive as well as in-depth exploration of impermanence in my practice. Crucially (instinctively at first, but increasingly with conscious deliberation) I used the framework provided by this investigation, bound together with practice and personal theories, to construct a platform for experimentation: exploring, stretching and explicating my practice. I returned to themes and issues repeatedly to examine them through fresh insights, to explore different avenues with new navigational aids, enabling me to articulate a maturing praxis (offered in 9.4, pp.223-225), and to mature in the process.

3.2 TRANS-DISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK

3.2.1 Rationale and chosen approach

The qualitative character of research focusing on creative practice requires an appropriate approach and method. A trans-disciplinary approach (involving models used in archaeology, material studies and performance theory) was adopted and a complementary structure devised as the focus for the research programme, similar to what - based on Denzin and Lincoln, 1994 – could be described as ‘bricolage’:

By adopting a multi-method approach, the qualitative researcher uses a set of interpretative practices, and has been described as a ‘bricoleur’. Gray and Malins (2004, p.74)

In using the term, Gray and Malins acknowledge the longevity of the idea (Lévi-Strauss, 1974, Ch.1) that existing sources of knowledge and understanding, together with pragmatism, can generate new perspectives and solutions, paralleling the approach of the practice-led researcher.

Also, as Stewart suggests, 'it can be argued that the study of creative processes has shown that innovative thinking is often triggered by the joining of seemingly dissimilar phenomena' (Stewart, 2001, p.1). He then notes that the term bricolage 'refers to research processes that use multiple methodologies of qualitative research' (Stewart, 2001, p.5).

As the French term 'bricolage' translates as 'do-it-yourself' with associations of opportunism, or even expediency (and despite its academic respectability), my preferred term is 'tricotage', with craft connotations of using appropriate strands of methodological and conceptual approaches, knitted together to produce a strong, functional, trans-disciplinary fabric.

Adopting this approach, disciplinary and methodological silos are connected, offering the potential to scrutinise research subjects from differing angles, and seeking to obviate the tired quantitative/qualitative dichotomy of scientific rationality versus creative subjectivity – an unhelpful, even simplistic - binary which others also reject, including a respected cognitive archaeologist whose methodological concept of 'cable-like arguments' utilising varied disciplinary strands (Lewis-Williams, 2014, p.101-104) is comparable to 'tricotage'.

3.2.2 Conceptual sources

Exploration of appropriate frameworks within which to gain a better understanding of ceramic impermanence leads to a rich variety of conceptual models offering relevant and useful approaches. When these are compatible rather than contradictory¹⁵, the connection of one approach with another provides a novel perspective on the subject, with concepts and theories criss-crossing disciplinary boundaries. At an early stage in the research journey a number of frameworks were considered to have potential, which proved to be durable, relevant and illuminating.

Social constructionism describes the human world as a place in which perception is at least as important as fact. Its proponents (e.g. Burr 2003, Steier 1991, Searle 2010) argue that we experience the world through the filters of our history, culture, perceptions and expectations. This is a valuable

¹⁵ although reconsiderations spurred by contradictions are also valuable

start point in building an understanding of the nature and impact of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice. As Burr (2003, p.45) indicates:

[A] lot of the things we take for granted as given, fixed, or immutable, whether in ourselves or in the phenomena we experience, can upon inspection be found to be socially derived and socially maintained.

The relevance to impermanent ceramic work and its impact is clear to me as a maker. The responses which my transient work receives indicate this impact is partly due to the unexpectedness of clay and ceramic behaving 'differently' (5.1, pp.108-113, discusses 'clay' and 'ceramic'). When ceramic is perceived as durable and stable, this is a social and cultural puzzle. Constructionism thus provides a valuable perspective and explanation.

Viewed in isolation, social constructionism raises the issue of monism. How can the world be constructed purely through a social or cultural filter, when it is clear that objects exist and have independent existence, however we might be thinking and interpreting them? Searle (1996, p.12) helpfully distinguishes between intrinsic and observer relative facts about objects, the latter being 'created by the intrinsic mental phenomena of the users, observers, etc.'. He further asks (Searle, 2010, p. ix) 'How is it possible that we can have factual objective knowledge of a reality that is created by subjective opinions?' in describing his theory regarding the creation and maintenance of institutional facts, i.e. those things which are realities in a social rather than a concrete sense:

The distinctive feature of human social reality... is that humans have the capacity to impose functions on objects and people, where the objects and people cannot perform the functions solely in virtue of their physical structure. The performance of the function requires that there be a collectively recognized status that the person or object has, and it is only in virtue of that status that the person or object can perform the function in question. Searle (2010, p.7)

We impose an order on the world by declaring 'this is the case', for instance 'this is a country with frontiers', and build a social order to reflect the

statement, although physically there is no boundary; animals, and sometimes peoples, migrate across these social constructions without recognising them. Searle overcomes the dilemma between objective reality and subjective perception in his identification of a society's or culture's 'collective recognition' of social facts and his statement has direct bearing on the approach and method selected for this research.

As Reason and Rowan (1995, pp.xii-xiii) suggest, the classic scientific method (which they term 'the orthodox research method') is not appropriate for all research inquiry, particularly given the historic expansion of academic research into the creative arts. The apparent alternative of 'naïve inquiry', with its Hegelian connotations of subjectivity, although 'involved, committed, relevant, intuitive; above all... *alive*¹⁶, is an insufficiently robust alternative. They therefore present 'in new paradigm research... an approach to inquiry which *is* a systematic, rigorous search for truth, but which does not kill off all it touches... a synthesis of naïve inquiry and orthodox research' (Reason and Rowan, 1995, p.xiii). They identify not so much a middle ground as a model offering rigour and transparency in research practice in the arts. This firmer basis enables the creative arts practitioner to argue for the substantive nature of research in her/his field, while preserving the value of qualitative and subjective data in support of an argument.

This 'new paradigm' approach thus connects the philosophical context familiar to Burr and Searle with the dilemma of the practitioner, whose work is subject to research inquiry while simultaneously being a creative act, and enables both objectivity and subjectivity to play their part in the process without the loss of the advantages of either. For this to be an effective method, the fact that there are distinct roles to be played in the creative research process must be recognised, to ensure the researcher's ability to cross boundaries without loss of either creative capacity or analytical integrity. Nelson (2013, p.10) addresses this dichotomy, providing guidance from his perspective as supervisor for 'practice as research' (PaR) doctoral theses:

¹⁶ Original emphasis

Rendering porous the firm institutionalized binary between theory and practice... involves an iterative, dialogic engagement of doing-thinking.

Reflective practice, as articulated by Schön (1983) is an attractive 'doing-thinking' model for 'the artist involved in practice-based research. He describes a mechanism of reflection-on- and reflection-in-practice (Nelson's doing-thinking) very familiar to the practitioner involved in the challenges of work-in-progress and reviewing process and outcome. Schön's notion of reflection, identifying the practitioner's familiar inability to articulate (tacit) knowledge, is another useful framework within which to set this research, using also the Kolb family's work on learning styles specifically in relation to the different phases of the research process (Kolb, 1984, Kolb and Kolb, 2005).

Kolb's work has been subject to critique and development since its first publication (e.g. Honey and Mumford's 1992 Learning Styles Questionnaire, re-published 2006). The cyclical model, whatever the specific character of its stages, resonates with, and is adaptable to, a research process where action and experimentation are interspersed with analysis and conceptualisation. A significant issue with wholesale adoption of Schön's approach is the need to move beyond the reflective into reflexive mode. Steier (1991, p.1), with whom Burr and Searle would probably agree, insists that:

taking a constructionist stance means, as a starting point, challenging the traditional objectivist and rationalist views of inquiry, which keep the world, both physical and social at a distance, as an independently existing *universe*, and which hold knowledge as reflecting, or even corresponding, to *the* world. In contrast to this traditional view is the recognition that what I describe in my research is in no way existent apart from my involvement in it – it is not 'out there'.¹⁷

His distinction between the two modes is important. Schön's use of the term 'reflective' suggests a process of review, of developing an understanding of an experience both in and after action. While 'reflection-in practice' has been criticised as overshadowing the importance of practice itself (e.g. Richardson,

¹⁷ Steier's emphases

1999), his attention to the nature of practical professional problem-solving indicates the complexities of using experience, monitoring performance and gathering data for future application.

'Reflexive' takes this process to a different level, consistent with the dictionary definition (*Chambers*, 2003, p.1273) of 'bending back on itself' to indicate that "the same self" may be different as a result of its own self-pointing' (Steier (1991, p. 2). His description (also p.2) of this as 'a circular process, in which reflexivity is the guiding relationship allowing for the circularity,' is precisely the process which Kolb's learning cycle references, outlined (3.4.1, p.66, 3.4.2, p.67) as an important methodological structure for the research programme.

The argument (Steier, 1991, pp.1-2) that within the constructionist context 'the research process itself must be seen as socially constructing a world or worlds, with the researchers included in, rather than outside, the body of their own research' is liberating for the artist/researcher structuring the practice-focused research journey. It clarifies and helps to legitimise the Janus-like experience of turning one way towards intuition and creativity and the other towards intellect and analysis in undertaking research on one's own practice. The historic dichotomous debate between the 'scientific' and the 'qualitative' method marginalised the use of subjective data as the basis of legitimate research activity. It is thus liberating to track the consolidation of practice-based research methods, and the development of 'practice as research' as a third (indeed a triangulating) prism through which to view, describe and interpret the world. Haseman's 'bold claim' cited by Nelson is certainly attractive to the practitioner/scholar:

Practice-led researchers are formulating a third species of research, one that stands in alignment to, but separate to, the established quantitative and qualitative research traditions
Nelson (2013, pp.55-56)

A triangulating 'third way' is exemplified in this thesis, acknowledging its complexities, as indicated in the quotation from Pollock (2013) at the chapter head.

3.3 PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH

There is much discussion of the nature of creative research in the context of the academic system. Australian arts academics were among the pioneers exploring issues of practice-focused research and its relationship to a more traditional research tradition. Their early discourses regarding arts research in the institution have triggered a significant theoretical and methodologically-oriented literature, including Gray and Malins (2004), Sullivan (2005, 2009), Candy (2006), and Bartlett and Bolt (2010), which sit within the social constructionist and 'non-orthodox' research framework.

A relatively early guide to the postgraduate research process in art and design (Gray and Malins, 2004, p.3) considers that the approach to research in this field should accept art practice as the start point for research questions as well as being its context. Importantly, they also envisioned practice as 'playing a part in the research methodology and in developing innovative and creative, but nonetheless rigorous, research methods' (Gray and Malins, 2004, p.16) which Reason and Rowan (1995) would find acceptable.

Again, within a context which Reason and Rowan, and also Nelson, would recognise (see 3.2.2, p.61), Sullivan (2005, p.xiii) notes that 'a third kind of research genre is arts-based educational inquiry'. He describes a key issue concerning research in creative practice.

The problematic nature of how the researcher knowingly or unknowingly interprets images in the construction of meaning is an issue... A useful heuristic is the way that the 'interpretive space' used for analysis is located among several sources, including the text itself, the producer of the images, the surrounding context, and the position of the viewer.
Sullivan (2005, p. xiv)

Undertaking a detailed discussion of the status of empirical knowledge contrasted with theoretical knowledge, of intuition and inference as the source of understanding, as opposed to reason and deduction, Sullivan (2005) cites Bruner (1996) to state what, to me, is one of the crucial truths regarding creative research:

As Bruner notes, the purpose is to achieve understanding rather than explanation, and in the process we construct meanings...

The object of interpretation is understanding, not explanation: its instrument is the analysis of text¹⁸. Understanding is the outcome of organizing and contextualizing essentially contestable, completely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way... The requirement, rather, is verisimilitude or 'trust likeness,' and that is a compound of coherence and pragmatic utility. Sullivan (2005, p.49)

(Pessoa, see chapter head quotation, p.57, endorses this in somewhat more poetic language,) The distinction made by Sullivan and Bruner is important to practice-focused research in the arts in its identification of the legitimation of belief, perception and attitude as serious sources of knowledge and learning, and by extrapolation, the capacity and appropriateness of practitioner-led research.

In the light of this, the focus of the practitioner's academic attention also merits discussion. Candy (2006, p.1) makes a useful distinction between practice-based and practice-led research on the basis of differing intentions and outcomes:

1. If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-**based**.
2. If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**.

In the remainder of the thesis, these terms are utilised on the basis of Candy's distinction (see also 1.9.1, pp.30-31).

Liamputtong and Rumbold (2008, p.2) have noted that '*[P]resentational ("symbolized") knowing* which represents experiential knowing in expressive forms is relatively underdeveloped in academic research'¹⁹. In this rapidly developing field, there are inevitably boundaries to be tested and conventions to be challenged in the research's content as well as its approach.

¹⁸ Its meaning in this context broadening from written to other forms of artistic communication

¹⁹ Original emphasis

Adoption of a 'third way' is intended to enable the research to benefit from both practitioner and academic perspectives.

Consideration of these concepts and arguments enabled the identification of appropriate research methods:

- Practical work (including experimentation, reflection, analysis) utilising:
 - Schönian reflection-in- and reflection-on-practice
 - Kolb's learning cycle
- Case study using:
 - face-to-face interviews
 - correspondence
 - informal and opportunistic discussion
- Examination of contemporary work in publication, *in situ*, and experientially, including:
 - gallery and museum installation
 - environmental installation
 - performative work/live art events

3.4 METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 The reflective practitioner and Kolb's learning cycle

As Gray and Malins argue (2004, p.22. See also 3.2, p.62), the concept of reflective practice is wholly appropriate in the field of arts research. They reference Schön's concepts of 'reflection-in-practice' and 'reflection-on-practice', through which the practitioner engages with issues in her/his work, the former describing the intuitive, spontaneous – even unthinking – activity of practical problem-solving, the latter articulating intellectual considerations of aesthetic development.

To build on this approach, Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) was adopted as a helpful guide. Barrett and Bolt (2010, p.9) state that '[A] feature of studio-based enquiry is that the method unfolds through practice – practice is itself, [*sic*] productive of knowledge and engenders further practice demonstrating

the emergent nature of the process'. This suggests an oscillatory, indeed reflexive, process, while Kolb's analysis of learning styles teases out the elements into a more comprehensive and developmental loop with four stages, as indicated in 3.4.2, p.68.

Gray and Malins (2004, p.16) make an assumption that work (e.g. tangible objects) will form part of the research findings. Candy (2006, see 3.2) indicates two forms of practice-focused research, with different intentions and outcomes. In this context, it is clear that my research investigation relates to practice as process rather than practice as production. It primarily focuses on practice and its conceptual underpinnings, in conjunction with the purpose and advancement of knowledge regarding practice, where the production of practical work is fundamentally a means of exploring concepts and testing out ideas.

As Candy (2006, p.1) suggests, rather than aiming for a specifically 'creative outcome', 'such research includes practice as an integral part of its method and often falls within the general area of action research'.

In addition, the essential nature of impermanent work implies the loss or degradation of objects, where these are produced, and is related more to a concept of performance rather than visual art aesthetics, where:

the shifting relationships between subject/object and materiality/semioticity... make the traditional distinction between the aesthetics of production, work, and reception as three heuristic categories seem questionable, if not obsolete. There no longer exists a work of art, independent of its creator and recipient. Fisher-Lichte (2008, pp.18-19)

and

These short-lived, transient, theatrical communities of actors [in which I include agentic clay, see Chapter 5] and spectators [whom I describe as percipients, see *inter alia* 1.7.2(c), pp.27-28] are particularly relevant for an aesthetics of the performative. Fisher-Lichte (2008, p.55)

3.4.2 The cyclical approach, reflexivity and phenomenography

A version of the Kolb learning cycle was adopted to guide the practice-focused research cycle (**Diagram 3.1**), given its support of Schön's reflective

approach. Following reflection during and after making work (moving round the diagram clockwise from Concrete Experience), findings in the form of themes were examined and analysed across the spectrum of personal art work (Reflective Observation) to underpin the process of conceptualisation. The fourth element of the cycle (Active Experimentation) in turn enabled the concepts (propositions) to be tested in practice (see Diagram 9.1, p.204 for its application)²⁰.

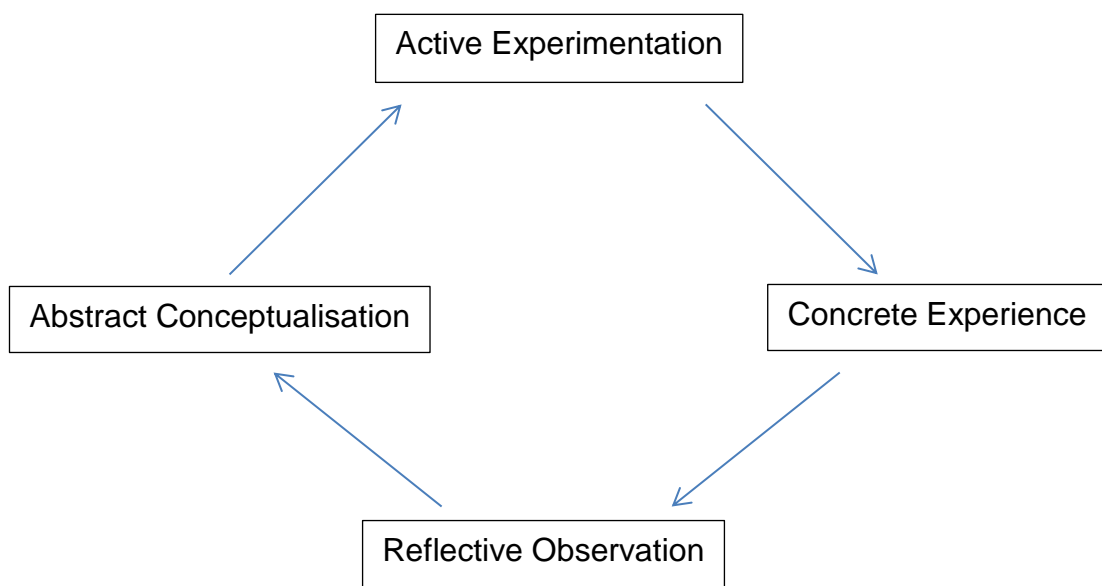


Diagram 3.1: Kolb learning cycle

This overall cyclical framework generated useful insights, particularly in connecting personal praxis to the broader art world and theoretical perspectives.

In addition, a broadly phenomenographic approach to some aspects of the subject was appropriate, in order to understand the impact of impermanent art on both recipient and artist. Being an interpretivist application used in diverse settings (e.g. education research), its aim to 'discover the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, realize and understand various aspects of phenomena' (Ornek, 2008, p.1) matched the need to understand how impermanent work in ceramics is developed, presented and received.

²⁰ While the sequence was generally as described, this was not rigidly adhered to, reflection on others' work and practice in particular occurring opportunistically.

An interpretivist model combining constructionist and phenomenographic perspectives is relevant to exploration of the perceptions, motives and purposes of artists working with impermanence; and Steier's social science model provides a helpful basis from which to consider issues of reflexivity and self-reference – of particular relevance in this practice-led research programme. His statement above (3.2.2, p.62) is particularly sympathetic to a practitioner working with impermanence:

In contrast to [the] traditional [objectivist and rationalist] view is the recognition that what I describe in my research is in no way existent apart from my involvement in it – it is not 'out there'.
Steier (1991, p.1)

A clear benefit offered by the generic Kolb learning cycle is that it is not a closed system; rather, as a spiral, it provides energy through its spring-like form of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and testing, to progress research



Diagram 3.2 Sarah Gee (2015) Kolb-based learning spiral demonstrating mutual support. Three intertwined coils. Fired clay bodies (paperclay, bone china, white earthenware). Dimensions variable (approx. 10"x10"x12")

dynamically. The process is also strengthened by the transfer of learning and information across an interlinked system as indicated in **Diagram 3.2** (here indicating connections between praxical, case-study and contextual elements). Thus, because the phases are not self-contained, they inform other areas of the cycle on a continuous basis, as well as bringing in learning from connected systems.

This echoes the earlier discussion (see 3.2.2, pp.62-63) of the role of reflexivity in research which suggests (Steier, p.2) that the circular process described may 'unfold as a spiralling, if we allow for multiple perspectives, and acknowledge that "the same self" may be different as a result of its own self-pointing'.

The transferability and adaptability of the approach is indicated by the fact that it has relevance and application in educational (e.g. New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2004, cited in Smith, 2012), commercial (Sheehan and Kearns, 1995), as well as academic environments (Healey and Jenkins, 2000). The utilisation of these two inherently flexible and transferable models thus provides a robust framework appropriate to the practice-focused character of the research programme.

The programme is consistent with Candy's (2006) definition; its focus relates to practice and the explication of practice in the field of impermanent ceramic art, rather than the creation of an artefact. Within this context, the focus for gathering material and its consideration reflects practice (my own and that of my contemporaries), where process, material and situation are of more importance to outcome than the aesthetics of finished objects; there is no clear boundary between the studio and the environment as settings for generating work (both have their place); and meaning-making is shared with those encountering and engaging with work.

3.5 CASE STUDY APPROACH

Specific strands of enquiry in the research programme initially included:

- Use of personal practice and experimentation with different modes of impermanence in art production, including installation, performative and live art (**Table 8.A**, p.190: personal research-related work)
- Identification of relevant artists of (ceramic) impermanence to identify their approach to practice, process and presentation of work (**Table 3.A**, p.71: artist case study subjects)
- Consideration of artistic approaches to impermanence (apart from those customary to visual and ‘applied’ art), utilising the literature and contextual review (Chapter 2) and primary data-gathering to identify those of particular relevance to the research question
- Exploration of curatorial approaches to impermanent art work

NAME	INDIVIDUALS’ DESCRIPTION OF OWN WORK	INDIVIDUALS’ DESCRIPTION OF OWN ROLE	DATE OF INTERVIEW (i) OR RESPONSE (r)
Gillian Clarke	Hard to describe	Hard to define	Nov/Dec 2013 r
David Cushway	Socially-engaged practice	Artist	10.11.11 i
Victoria Eden	Installation and sculptural work	Not asked	21.07.11 r 26.05.14 i
Phillip Lee	Live body performance	Performance artist	01.11.11 r
Andrew Livingstone	Ideas – making a commentary	Maker and purveyor of ideas	05.04.12 i
Linda Sormin	Installation	Artist	28.10.11 i
Caroline Tattersall	Ceramic sculpture	Artist	March 2012 r

Interviews formed a significant part of the case-study design on which direct data gathering was based, particularly with artists currently working with impermanence. The focus for data collection through case studies was initiated via analysis of personal data utilising a Kolbian cyclical approach, enabling theoretical and practice-related themes to be identified and considered in the wider context of contemporary art.

In addition to interviews, selective participant observation was also used in order to capture data from the perspectives of curation and conservation. This provided a practical means of gathering qualitative data, supported by

interviews with curator case study subjects, including those involved with personal research-based work.

It was clear on reflection at a relatively early stage of the programme that curatorial issues would expand the research focus to an unmanageable extent. Data was generated which would develop into a rich parallel strand to the core research aims. Cushway (2015, including pp.51-56, 128-129) discusses complex curatorial issues in relation to contemporary practice engaging with the museum throughout his doctoral thesis: aspects relating to transient or disintegrating installations would equally require significant discourse to do it justice. While consideration of this data has therefore not been included in the thesis, it is an important area for further research into the development of curatorial practice in relation to impermanent gallery-located installatory and performative work. Therefore, material which has been gathered, while not considered in the thesis, is available for further research consideration. **Table 3.B** provides the list of curator case study subjects for information.

TABLE 3.B CURATOR CASE STUDY SUBJECTS (interviews)			
NAME	INSTITUTION	RESEARCH LINK	INTERVIEW
Craig Barclay	Durham Oriental Museum	Traces of China/Fallacy of Mass Production	23.03.15
Rachel Barclay	DOM	Traces/Fallacy	23.03.15
James Beighton	Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art	Rift, Brother (Possibilities and Losses)	24.07.12
Laura Lamp	Bede's World, Jarrow	ReCollection	12.09.12
Helen Walsh	York Museums Trust	Indirect/Clare Twomey	19.09.12

3.6 DATA GATHERING

3.6.1 Practical experimentation and analysis

Practical research-related activity involved experimenting with impermanent creative work in multifarious ways, mostly utilising clay directly or referencing

the ceramic heritage. The reflective practitioner regime was utilised to analyse processes and impacts (personal and artistic), and to consider the outcomes of these experimental activities for further analysis and evaluation in the light of further iterations of the research cycle.

This practical work was fundamental to the research method in order to test approaches and enable the development of the personal praxis indicated above, in both the 'activist' and the 'practical' aspects of the Kolb cycle. Workshop diaries and travel journals (see Appendix 1) were used as an immediate means of capturing reflections-in-action (travel journals in particular being valuable means of converting record into 'artful' evidence as described in Chapter 8).

A number of projects were undertaken within the framework of the research programme (see Appendix 2). While all work was experimental in order to take the research forward, it also contributed to artistic endeavour as an aspect of praxical development (see Chapter 9). This enabled, as intended, a reflective practitioner approach to be adopted. As this was closely connected with the literature and contextual review processes, advantage was taken of the impetus generated in parallel by the theoretical exploration of relevant aspects of the research question and the practical applications (see **Diagram 3.2**, p.69 and 3.4.1, p.66), to address the aim of developing an individual artistic practice, philosophy and aesthetic, i.e. personal praxis.

The practical work included environmental installation²¹, gallery-based installation and performance work. Fired ceramic, raw clay, non-ceramic materials, and found objects were utilised. I also experimented with different levels of 'audience' involvement in individual projects, including:

- no observer (*Losing It Rose Field*)
- witness/recorder (*Tidal Transience*)
- gallery visitor (*ReCollection*)
- collaborator and co-producer (*Nag Puja*)
- interested agent given instructions for installation (*RePlace Orkney*)

²¹ Making/exposure of work (ceramic and non-ceramic) to tidal, weather and other intervention

uninvited participant in determining the nature and outcome of work
(*RePlace*)

intervening (active) gallery visitor (*Fallacy*)

Other experimental work included provision of written instructions for an open-air firing *in absentia*, broadcast performance and directing a non-clay based performance which have not contributed directly to the thesis and are excluded for the sake of brevity.

Appendix 2 gives detail regarding materials and processes. The reflective activity, related to making, generated themes which were then incorporated into data collection for the selected artists (see Appendix 3.ii).

The early themes generated as persistently – if variously – important both personally and for case study subjects were:

- natural forces
- location/site
- audience engagement
- performativity
- evidence/record
- private/public art
- material as medium
- impermanence as message

3.6.2 Data gathering: interviews

The breadth of the initial contextual review enabled currently active artists, using impermanence in some form in their work with clay, to be identified. The identification process involved reviews of journal articles, gallery publicity and informal networking; a deliberately loose description of ‘impermanence’ was used to identify the work of individual artists (see Chapter 4 for early discussion of its features), resulting in a range of approaches being identified, including performance, environmental and gallery-based work.

All those approached agreed to participate in interviews regarding their individual involvement with impermanence as a means of artistic expression (see Appendix 3.i for the methodological basis).

Interviews were undertaken with five artists, using a checklist, developed with the assistance of David Cushway who kindly undertook a pilot, and the

discussion was recorded with their permission. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each interviewee indicated willingness to provide additional information and was given a copy of the transcription of the interview, and offered the opportunity to edit, amend or veto any of the content. No changes were requested.

Review and analysis of transcripts of the interviews enabled refinement of themes, and areas requiring further data gathering (e.g. to explore the development of ceramic reference and other expressive media in their work, while their commitment to ceramic remained central).

As it was impractical to undertake interviews in person with the remaining artists due to lack of opportunity, data was gathered regarding their artistic practice and attitudes to impermanence by other means, including written responses to prompt questions and unstructured discussion. Each artist indicated willingness for further contact.

Data gathering from case study subjects enabled themes of specific interest to be refined, which relate also to themes emerging from reflective practice. The focus for the analysis, discussed in Chapters 4-8, relates to aspects whose significance emerged from both sets of data gathering:

- Characteristics of, and attitudes towards, impermanence
- Materiality
- Site and placement
- Audience and witness
- Performativity
- Recording art practice

Data was also gathered to illuminate curatorial perspectives on the exhibition and conservation of impermanent ceramic work, whether installatory, performative or static in nature.

The curators identified for case study purposes (see **Table 3.B**) were interviewed using a similar model to the interviews with artists (Appendix 3.iii), with parallel opportunities to edit, amend or veto content. As indicated in 3.5, pp.73-73, this material was not analysed for the thesis, because – while valid – it was too extensive for inclusion. Similarly, no changes were requested. The curatorial perspectives explored were varied: the Customer Services Manager who adopted and protected the research-based

installation at Bede's World: the curator of decorative arts with a particular interest in British Studio ceramics at YMT; the curator responsible for contemporary ceramic and jewellery collections, whose responsibilities also covered contemporary art at MIMA; and the chief and deputy curators at DOM responsible for the *Traces* exhibition.

3.6.3 Data gathering: secondary research

Initial consideration of the primary data (both personal and case study-based) enabled common features of interest to be identified which were then applied to work by selected contemporary ceramic artists, utilising direct experience of their work, and secondary data in the form of monographs, exhibition catalogues, reviews and critiques.

Relevant exhibitions, performances and installations likely to illuminate the research questions and assist the development of the hypotheses were visited during the research programme, including:

- exhibitions
- presentations
- writings
- broadcasts
- conferences
- colloquia
- festivals²²

The approach sought to identify phenomenographically the perceptions and social constructs of those involved intimately with the generation, presentation and reception of impermanent contemporary ceramic work.

The findings from this subjective and selective approach are discussed alongside the analysis of primary research data in Chapters 4-8.

As providing evidence of impermanent work in physical form has been a persistent research issue in relation to transient art practice involving clay, consideration of issues of evidence and record are made the particular subject of Chapter 8. This also impacted on the nature of non-written presentation at oral examination, leading to a decision to utilise the 'viva exhibition' to offer an exposition of the traces of work and experiment rather than an exhibition of completed projects, consistent with the spirit of the practice-led, rather than practice-based, research approach.

²² BCB 2011/2013; ICF 2013/2015

As indicated in 3.1, pp.57-58, the research method was adopted as an appropriate means of exploring and critiquing aspects of impermanence in my practice in the context of peers working in a similar mode with clay.

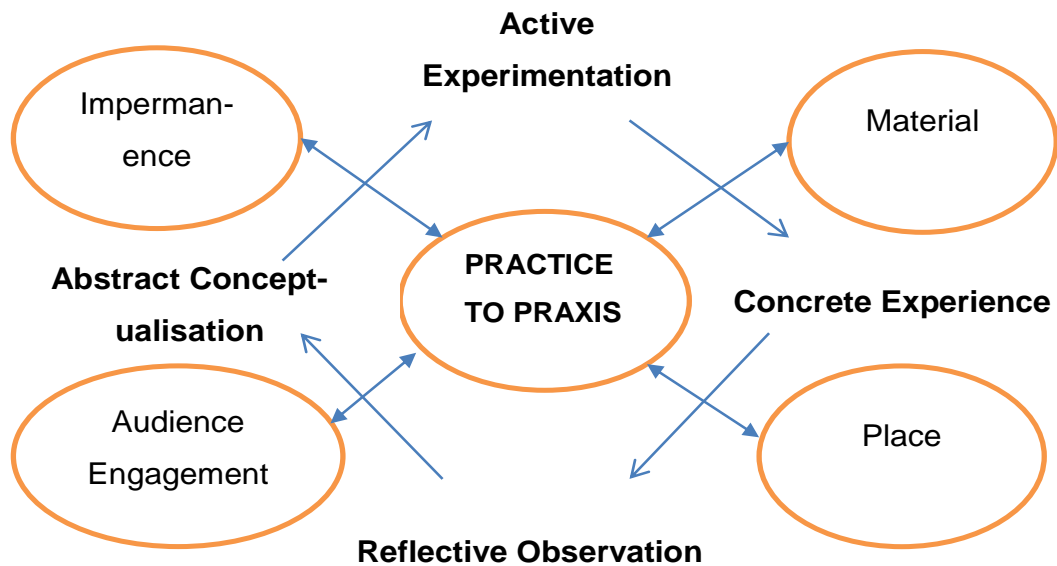


Diagram 3.3 Method of research learning (see Diagram 3.1 for Kolb original)

The research method was deliberately experimental and testing: of materials, processes, production, and both creative and analytical self. Iterations of the cycle (**Diagram 3.3**) enabled learning and understanding to be reviewed and adapted in the light of experience, analysis, contextualisation, modelling and testing in a reflexive format.

The programme was a cyclical journey with practice at its core, opportunities being taken (see subsequent chapters) to compare praxical development both with theoretical models and the practice of peers.

Chapter 3 has described the approach and methods adopted as appropriate for the practice-led research programme, developed to enable the boundaries between creative practice and theoretical analysis to be navigated, while enhancing both modes of working with the least possible disruption to either.

The findings from the application of the contextualised practice-focused approach are discussed in Chapters 4-9, and a variety of theoretical models are described as means to interpret this mode of artistic expressivity.

These chapters describe and discuss features of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, identified from examination of my own practice and that of selected ceramic artists working in a similar mode, in order to clarify the nature of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice.

Firstly, the nature of impermanence as identified in contemporary ceramic art practice is discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: IMPERMANENCE

To be reminded that physical matter is simultaneously indestructible and entirely transmutable: that it can swap states drastically, from vegetable to mineral or from liquid to solid. To attempt to hold these two contradictory ideas in the brain at the same time is usefully difficult, for it makes the individual feel at once valuable and superfluous.... Such knowledge grants us a kind of comfortless immortality: an understanding that our bodies belong to a limitless cycle of dispersal and reconstitution.

Macfarlane (2007, p.173)

Chapters 1-3 explored the focus, purpose and motivation for the research programme, gave an overview of relevant aspects of contemporary impermanent ceramic art practice, provided the research context, outlined the approach adopted as appropriate for a practice-led doctoral programme and argued for a specific new paradigm research method building on a combined Schönian/Kolbian model.

Chapter 4 considers impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice and offers a means of classifying it. In this context, it describes and reflects on work generated as part of the research, and that of case study artists, using a classification system devised for the purpose.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 What is ceramic impermanence?

Contrasts are useful in situating my work with clay. It is not vessel-based (although arguably the frequently used egg form can be seen as a vessel). Nor is it iconoclastic: it is not 'the destruction of the artwork to make way for the new (regime, political thought, religious order, movement in art)' in Gray's terms (2013, p.10). In exposing work to other forces, and not protecting it in a museum case, it may be destroyed, but that is not essential. The aim is not to overturn a world-view through a violent embrace of destruction – rather to stimulate other ways of understanding the world. Indeed, the intention is, much like Sullivan's, for 'verisimilitude or "trust likeness" ... a compound of coherence and pragmatic utility'. (Sullivan, 2005, p.49)

Chapter 1 introduced means by which my personal practice uses clay impermanently for the purposes of creative expressivity. This chapter reviews the various ways in which impermanence was explored during the research programme to identify its characteristics as the basis for comparison with work of other contemporary practitioners. In my work impermanence generally takes the form of alteration or disintegration, somewhat less than shocking in its destructive or iconoclastic capacity.

I frequently use raw clay in my practice, including liquid slip, one of the most elusive forms of clay, in which the material is amorphous and ambiguous, challenging the capacity of resulting work to be an object with formal qualities. *Return to Koshi* (**Figure 4.1**, see also 6.2.4, p.148) was the briefest work undertaken, an unannounced, site-related, seconds-long, live event (site-sensitivity is discussed in Chapter 6).



Figure 4.1 Sarah Gee slip-trailing. *Return to Koshi*, approx. 2l brick clay slip. Saptakoshi River, Nepal. 08.05.11. Image © Dr. H. S. Baral

Raw clay is also press-moulded, as in *Converse:Mao* (**Figure 4.2**), a multi-site environmental installation (see also 6.1.1, pp.133-134 and **Figure 6.1**) scattered through two provinces of the People's Republic of China.



Figure 4.2 Press-moulded heads for *Converse:Mao*. Various raw clay bodies. Elements approx. 1¼x2¼x¾" each. Use of various clay bodies (differences in behaviour of material evident in clarity of the features). 2014.

Fallacy of Mass Production, in the *Traces* installation (Chapter 6, and further discussed in 5.1, pp.110-113), also involved press-moulded clay bodies – some raw, some biscuit-fired, and some high- and glaze-fired (**Figure 4.3**) – piled in a heap and accessible to the public for physical interaction.

Work is also made in which impermanence or transience occurs as a result of external forces, whether human, as in *RePlace*, where fired and raw clay was involved (see 5.2, pp.117-118), natural (*Tidal Transience*, with high-fired non-clay ceramic material), or a combination of these (as in *ReCollection*, again using non-clay material with bone china slip, which was high-fired in a reducing atmosphere) both described further in 4.4, pp.104-105.



Figure 4.3 Sarah Gee *Fallacy of Mass Production*. Various fired and raw clay elements (see text for Installation for detail). Variable: 22½"x5" (max.) *Traces* exhibition, Durham Oriental Museum. July–November 2014.

Macfarlane (2007) encapsulates the enigma of impermanence in the chapter head quotation (p.79). In speaking of nature and our relationship with it, his reflection on impermanence sums up my attitude to it as a form of artistic expression. However often it is presented, transient creativity seems to have a capacity to intrigue, even puzzle and annoy, those coming in contact with it.

Rodgers (2014) reflects this response in a review of a recent gallery-based impermanent installation:

Here's an exhibition for the existentially troubled: Swiss artist Karin Lehmann created an *homage* to decay this year with *Sediment Sampling*... The pots were filled with water and allowed to crack and fall apart into a puddle of formless clay.

The reason I'm not hiding under my bed right now is because the decay portion of the piece calms me down a little. I like the idea of Lehmann investing so much time into shaping these vessels only to hand the keys of the exhibition to Chaos for the remaining half of it. Dematerialization, unmanaged by Lehmann, is shaping these works as well and the callous randomness of it still holds beauty and purpose.

The essentials of Lehmann's piece in this New York exhibition are raw clay, vessel forms and introduced water. The vessels degraded during the exhibition period and the work is no longer a physical entity. Clare Twomey's *Is it madness Is it beauty (IIMIIB)*, first created in 2010, has similarities – and like Lehmann's work, is not iconoclastic in Gray's terms (Gray, 2013). It involves human performers introducing water to raw clay vessels and dealing with the consequences over several days (see Chapter 8, also <http://www.siobhandavies.com/work/component/it-madness-it-beauty-clare-twomey>).

Why would artists wish to work in this way?

As described on her website, Lehmann:

does not aim for the spectacular or monumental or narrative. Inspired by minimal art... she is interested in the processual and in treating the source material 'at eye level'. In this way Karin Lehmann achieves immediate and yet subtle transformations that are open to interpretation. Munter (2013)

In contrast, *IIMIIB* (see **Figure 5.2**) is described as 'a performance that explores the relationship between repetitive actions and the desire to achieve within the human condition'²³, while Twomey said in briefing performers (06.03.15) 'within this work it examines what hope brings, what failure brings and the determination to continue exploring that'. (As a human performer, working to the artist's precise script of movements, tasks and timing, the experience of being part of what was essentially a tableau drew out interesting relationships in the interaction between bone china and human performers. Rather than hope, the persistent acts of filling and mopping emphasised the futility of the task in the face of the predictably unpredictable behaviour of the material.)

Raw material is not the sole way in which contemporary makers use ceramic impermanently. David Cushway's *Plate Spinner: Spode* (considered in Chapter 8) used fired plates, which shattered on a concrete floor (**Figure 4.4**).

²³ on the display-board for the piece, Shipley Art Gallery, March 2015. See video clip: <https://vimeo.com/123665322>

Cushway explains:

the focus of the work was about the ludicrous act of trying to balance plates, to spin plates, and the fact that you are immediately aware of the outcome the minute it starts. You know what's going to happen to those plates, eventually. And I think that's one of the more important aspects of the work really... You are aware of the outcome before it's happened. But it still manages to hold people's attention. Cushway (Interview. 10.11.10, Appendix 5).



Figure 4.4 David Cushway *Plate Spinner (Spode)*, BCB 2011, Spode Works

Jeppe Hein's 2003 gallery piece *Do Not Touch the Artwork* (see http://www.attesedizioni.org/eng/artisti_designer/hein/page_01.html) similarly involved the shattering of pre-fired plates, in this instance through the triggering of an infrared beam when visitors approached closely. Gray (2013, p.32) cites Kirsty Bell describing Hein's work as 'jolting the spectator out of complacent assumptions by enabling the art object to answer back, so to speak, or even to initiate the conversation' (issues of material agency are

discussed in Chapter 6), while the Saatchi Gallery website²⁴ considers that ‘Jeppe Hein’s interactive works playfully remind viewers of their vital part in activating art’s communicative potential’: audience involvement is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

Where statements of intent are available, purposes in making impermanent works involving clay demonstrably differ from maker to maker. Both primary and secondary research (e.g. Appendix 5, also Chapter 2) indicate that there are as many ways in which ceramic practitioners wish to invest meaning in such work with clay as for artists in other spheres of creative activity.

Early in the research programme the importance of identifying key characteristics of work being studied was recognised, to enable discussion of the particularity of individuals’ work, their aims and its impact. The resulting classification incorporates contemporary modes of working and presentation identified in personal and others’ practice, forming the basis of **Table 4.A**.

4.1.2 Classifying contemporary ceramic impermanence

The most common types of impermanent work considered through the research process are grouped under four headings: classic installation, dynamic installation, materially degrading installation, and performance/ event. These descriptors have been devised as part of the research programme to fill a perceived classificatory gap in the literature. The major forms of ceramic art practice involving impermanence with which this thesis is concerned are described and illustrated from the work of contemporary makers, Chapter 10 returning to the issue of classifications of impermanence as an aspect of characterising impermanence in contemporary art practice.

While ‘installation’ is often used to describe impermanent contemporary ceramic work in a gallery, it is too broad a term for the purposes of this thesis, given that impermanent work may also present itself in the environment or as live art (e.g. Cushway’s *Plate Spinner*). Refinement of this term was therefore the basis for generating the descriptors in the table, as indicated below.

²⁴ Available at http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/jeppe_hein.htm. [Last accessed 07.04.15]

TABLE 4.A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR IMPERMANENT CERAMIC ART




Main Type	Sub-set	Examples/Locations
<p>1. <u>Classic Installation</u> Of specific duration, e.g. for temporary exhibition.</p>	<p>1.i Finite site-sensitive work in a particular location before being removed. Integrity of the work is maintained - may be installed elsewhere for similar exhibition</p>	<p>de Waal, 2006 <i>Blackwell: A Response</i> Blackwell Arts and Crafts House</p>  <p>Image © E. de Waal</p>
	<p>1.ii Finite site-specific work in particular location, then removed. Work is dismantled/de-installed. Elements may not endure</p>	<p>Eden, 2007 <i>February 5th 2004</i> Initial environmental installation Morecambe, 2007. Also More Music - Morecambe exhibition, Morecambe North Beach, February 2014</p>  <p>Image © V. Eden</p>
<p>2. <u>Dynamic installation</u> As (1), with added immediate element of dynamism/ destruction as part of maker's intent</p>	<p>2.i Artist/curator-induced impermanent work, incorporating explicit, planned human engagement to alter/ destroy aspects of work as key element of installation. Permanent alteration to nature, condition or appearance of work while on display</p>	<p>Sormin, 2009 <i>Rift, Possibilities and Losses</i> transitions in clay exhibition. MIMA (22.05-16.08.09).</p>  <p>Image © MIMA</p>

TABLE 4.A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR IMPERMANENT CERAMIC ART




Main Type	Sub-set	Examples/Locations
	<p>2.ii Audience-induced impermanent work, e.g. where the visitor/viewer intervenes (sometimes literally 'stepping-in ') or engages in destructive fashion. Permanent alteration to nature, condition or appearance</p>	<p><u>Twomey</u>, 2003 <i>Consciousness/Conscience</i> Approaching Content exhibition, British Crafts Council, London (also Tate, Liverpool and Icheon, Korea 2001-2004) Intervention in this case may be unintentional by individual seeking to engage with work, consequent damage/destruction, while intended by artist.</p>  <p>Image courtesy of Clare Twomey Photographer Andy Paradise</p>
<p>3. <u>Materially degrading installation</u> Impermanence resulting from material in conjunction with environment</p>	<p>3.i Environmental work. Nonspecific duration. e.g. work located outdoors, subject to external forces, including weather, human action</p>	<p><u>Gee</u>, 2011–present <i>ReCollection</i> Material remains in situ, over time evidence of the piece may disappear, constituent material may remain in degraded form.</p> 
	<p>3.ii Gallery work. As 3.i, nonspecific duration, alteration/degradation induced by maker</p>	<p><u>Cushway</u>, 2000 <i>Sublimation</i> Immersion of raw clay in water tank results in dissolution over time.</p>

TABLE 4.A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR IMPERMANENT CERAMIC ART

Main Type	Sub-set	Examples/Locations
		 <p>Image © Dr. D. Cushway <u>Livingstone</u>, 2008 <i>The English Scene</i> Unfired porcelain slip-cast figures degrade over time in airtight vitrines. See Figure 7.10</p>
<p>4. <u>Performance/event</u></p>	<p>4.i Ceramic engagement. Installatory event, dynamic/performative change in material construction engaging audience for limited time</p>	<p><u>Tattersall</u> 20.10.11 <i>Spode Towers</i> BCB 2011, Live at Spode, Context and Content - Ceramics Practice as Research Symposium See Figure 8.7</p>
	<p>4.ii Ceramic artist as performer. Shortlived event, artist engaging/performing with clay material/objects</p>	<p><u>Trench and Lee</u> 20.10.11 <i>Spode Slip</i> BCB 2011 (as 4.i)</p> 

Initially, I anticipated that some work may defy neat categorisation, given artists' inventiveness in adopting different forms of impermanent expression; this was confirmed in practice. Victoria Eden's *February 5th 2004* is an example; the artist has reconsidered since it was first made in 2007 (see also 6.2.1, pp.142-143, regarding the importance of its location). While this commenced life as a classic installation (1.ii in Table 4.A), she has now decided to commit the elements to tide action:

I sank another two pieces on Feb 5th and M photographed the sinking for me. It was a beautiful still and sunny morning, so unlike the day of the tragedy and this heightened the feeling that life had moved on. All life is change.

So six pieces have now been sunk and the process will continue. The sinkings have become an important part of the installation in a rather unplanned way and I am now wondering about keeping the other ovoids and just sinking one or two every 5th February, finishing the sinkings in 2027 (if I'm still here!) 23 years after the drownings. Eden (Personal correspondence, Feb 2015)

It might therefore be re-classified as Class 3.i, a materially degrading environmental installation.

Likewise, Twomey's *Trophy* may have been planned as Class 1 (a temporary installation), but became a Class 2.ii installation due to visitor action. The facts are difficult to ascertain as the narrative around this work has shifted over time, although it appears that the installation opened with an explicit offer – possibly an incitement – to visitors to remove elements of it, while they are more recently described as stealing the jasperware birds of which it consisted (see http://www.claretwomey.com/trophy_info.html, last accessed 10.07.15).

Using the system, **Table 4.B** indicates the classifications allocated to works mentioned in this chapter (in order of reference). Most of the categories in this table share an installatory character, with particular specific characteristics being identified for each grouping.

Nollert (2003, p.11) suggests ‘the word installation has... become a universal term subsuming many artistic forms of expression that defy any more precise definition’ (see also p.xiii for a general definition of ‘installation art’).

To avoid the danger of such all-embracing terminology, it is important to be specific about installation’s subtler meaning in this thesis.

Table 4.B CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM APPLIED TO WORKS REFERENCED IN TEXT (CHAPTER 4)		
Title	Type/Subset	Location
<i>Return to Koshi</i>	4.ii Performative event	4.1.1, 4.3
<i>Converse:Mao</i>	3.i Materially degrading installation	4.1.1
<i>Fallacy</i>	1.i Classic installation 1.i (some elements of 2.ii Dynamic installation ²⁵)	4.1.1
<i>RePlace</i>	3.i Materially degrading installation	4.1.1
<i>Tidal Transience</i>	4.i Performative event	4.1.1, 4.4
<i>ReCollection</i>	3.i Materially degrading environmental installation	4.1.1, 4.4
<i>Sediment Sampling</i>	2.i Dynamic installation	4.1.1
<i>IIMIIB</i>	4.i Performative event	4.1.1, 4.3
<i>Plate Spinner (Spode)</i>	4.ii Performative event	4.1.1, 4.2.3
<i>Do Not Touch The Art Work</i>	2.ii Dynamic installation, audience-induced	4.1.1
<i>February 5th 2004</i>	1.ii Classic/3.i Materially degrading environmental installation	4.1.2/4.3
<i>Trophy</i>	1.i Classic/2.ii Dynamic audience induced installation	4.1.2
<i>The English Scene</i>	3.ii Materially degrading gallery installation	4.2.1, 4.2.2
<i>Auto-Materiality</i>	3.ii Materially degrading gallery installation	4.2.1
<i>Accidental impermanence</i>	Excluded – unintentional impermanence	4.2.1
<i>Sublimation</i>	3.ii Materially degrading gallery installation	4.2.1
<i>Eight Forests</i>	3.i Materially degrading environmental installation	4.2.2
<i>Losing It</i>	3.i Materially degrading environmental installation	4.2.3
<i>Rift</i>	2.i Dynamic installation, artist/curator induced	4.2.4, 4.3

²⁵ See Chapter 5

<i>This Progress</i>	4.i Performative event	4.2.4
<i>LeWitt wall drawings</i>	Excluded – repeatable	4.3.1
<i>Torres Untitled (candy)</i>	Excluded – repeatable	4.3.1
<i>Snowdon</i>	Excluded – repeatable	4.4
<i>Earth</i>	Excluded – repeatable	4.4
<i>Tsunami</i>	Excluded – unintentional impermanence	4.4
<i>Sanbao Respect</i>	4.i Performative event	4.4

Bishop (2005, p.6) indicated that, at the start of the millennium:

‘Installation art’ is a term that loosely refers to the type of art into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as ‘theatrical’, ‘immersive’ or ‘experiential’... installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. The insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic... (original emphasis)

A decade later, the term is used in the research classification as much about work placed outside the usual ‘art space’ as within it, which engages with its environment (site-specificity is discussed further in 6.1.2, pp.134-137) and, moreover, is not always clearly ‘art’ to its finder (an aspect discussed in detail in Chapter 7). It follows that the issue of an installation’s location affects meaning: while in a gallery space, a viewer expects to experience ‘art’, this is not necessarily the case in the public domain.

Most of the installation work described thus fits well with de Oliveira *et al*’s characterisation (1994, p.7):

The prominence of installations in specific non-art sites... continues to figure among the concerns of installation artists. The activation of the place, or context, of artistic intervention suggests a localized, highly specific reading of the work, and is concerned not only with art and its boundaries, but with the continual rapprochement, or even fusion, of art and life. Installation must therefore also represent the artist’s desire to extend the area of practice from the studio to the public space.

4.2 ISSUES OF CLASSIFICATION

The classification exercise raises a number of issues requiring clarification in relation to impermanent work.

4.2.1 Inclusion/exclusion

Consideration of clay's impermanence generated discussion with case study makers regarding its characteristics.

For example the academic and artist Andrew Livingstone queried the term 'impermanence' in relation to *The English Scene* (**Figure 7.10**) and *Automateriality* (**Figure 5.8**), both works being subject to physical alteration:

But one could say that they actually are still permanent because there's a physicality to them. And they are in public collections and they are being exhibited. So, whether they're impermanent, I'd probably say not. There is an impermanence to the material. But it's still a physical presence, so it's not impermanent, personally. Livingstone (Interview 05.04.12, Appendix 5)

Similarly, teacher and maker Gillian Clarke was prompted by the accidental disintegration of one of her pieces to reflect on the persistence of material, once its form had lost its integrity (see 7.2.1.b, pp.168-172).

Firstly, therefore, it is important to state clearly that artistic intention for work not to last in its initial form is the subject for study. Accidental creation of impermanent work is incidental to the thesis. However, the percipient role is also important in describing work, as in this case, when I, as percipient saw the work differently from the maker.

Efforts have been made to clarify the use of the term 'impermanence' in a way that encompasses work which is significantly altered, although all the constituent parts may remain²⁶, such that an observer²⁷ is aware of the transience of her/his experience. To echo Heraclitus's observation that we cannot step into the same river twice (Kirk *et al*, 1983), it is contended that in terms of impermanent ceramic artistic expression it is impossible to revisit work

²⁶ for instance in Livingstone's vitrine

²⁷ The nature of the observer/participant role, and different terminology, is discussed further in Chapter 7

as it first presents itself. It changes, or it disappears. What remains is memory and, perhaps, traces as reminders of what it once was.

In Cushway's *Sublimation*, for instance, although the glass tank contained the same molecules following the dissolution of the cast of his head, there is no 'resurrection', no feasible return to the original form. Likewise with Livingstone's *The English Scene*: it is not practicable to reconstitute cast elements from wet clay residue.²⁸

Secondly, an issue prompted by the classification exercise is that, for this research, impermanence is not about artistic representation of impermanence, as a narrative within either a permanent or transient piece. The work under consideration is impermanent itself, rather than being about impermanence. Artistic impermanence is used to explore a wide range of issues, concepts, meanings and emotions through the medium of alteration, dissolution, decay or extinction of the form itself – even, as the research process revealed, to the extent of interference with or removal of it. Thus, the focus is generally not impermanence for its own sake, which Gray (2013) might class as iconoclasm – a deliberate act of destruction. There is little of violence in my personal practice, and little also in the work of the artists included in the research.

A third point regarding classification is that artists may change their minds about the future of their work, as Eden has in relation to her cockle-picker memorial (see 4.1.2, p.89, also further discussed in 6.2.1, pp.142-143), and Twomey has potentially done regarding *Trophy*.

Reflecting on both my own practice and that of the makers I studied, it was important to ensure intentional impermanence is broadly enough considered to encompass work planned to alter physically (e.g. *The English Scene*), as well as work losing physical integrity (e.g. *Return to Koshi*) or its link to its initial location (e.g. much of *RePlace*), because connections between artistic intent, work and percipient, as well as concern for material and process, are crucial to this idea of impermanence in art.

²⁸ Physically, there is less material to work with to make a slip cast object following the process of dissolution, there being an element of waste in the casting process.

A number of areas of interest emerge from this explication of the core features of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice.

4.2.2 Intention and motive in creating impermanent work

Firstly, it is clear that intentions and motives in creating impermanent work with clay are varied, as indicated in 4.1.1, pp.79-85.

Livingstone (see <http://www.andrewlivingstone.com>) critiques socio-political issues through his gallery installations:

I like to make commentary... specifically you can think about *The English Scene* where the figurines are sweating and rotting as a direct reference to the container [lorry] coming across the Channel with the Chinese immigrants suffocated.... Also the piece with the IV bag²⁹ – political comment in terms of the decimation of the UK ceramics industry. Livingstone (Interview 05.04.12, Appendix 5)

The ecological concerns of Virginia Jones, the Australian environmental artist, on the other hand, contextualise her installations in the landscape upon which she comments:

'When I'm working, I'm focused on the materials and developing a process for laying out those materials... I freely let it go after the making... and let the materials be destroyed over time and by chance. That's part of the process.' *Eight Forests*... sought to engage the public in considering why forests are important. Jones (cited in Schwarzman, 2014, p.24)

Other makers articulate other concerns. As Chapter 2 indicates, the reasons for utilising impermanence artistically vary across cultural boundaries. While for Buddhists impermanence of current existence is part of the path to *nirvana* or non-being, in Western/Judaic cultures impermanence of life on earth precedes eternity for the soul. Thus Western-centric artists making political and social statements involving ceramic impermanence (with purposes as indicated in 4.1.1, pp.79-85, regarding Lehmann, Cushway and Hein, and above regarding Livingstone) contrast with ritual imperatives motivating, e.g., the making of sand mandalas, where intricate patterns in coloured earths is an extended meditational experience for Buddhist monks,

²⁹ *Auto-Materiality*

symbolising the transitory character of human existence, the mandala being destroyed once complete, its purpose fulfilled. A piece's ephemerality in all these cases is central to its meaning to an audience.

Other artists, of whom Jones is an example, are able to connect these systems with contrasting world-views:

Virginia Jones' work is gentle, engaging and strong. Her process transacts closely with nature's rhythms and calls upon Zen's embrace of the transient and ephemeral... Jones uses clay, minerals, rocks, found natural objects and text, most often placed directly... on grass, sand or ground cover...
Schwarzman (2014, p.23)

4.2.3 Recording impermanence

My research experience indicates that, where the focus is on process rather than product, ensuring some trace of impermanent work remains can be an issue. The imperative to present research evidence raises questions: is it essential that the artist makes a record (or has one made)? what is the place of witness in installation or performance work? As crucial issues in this thesis, these are discussed in Chapter 8.

In considering impermanence it is sufficient to note that evidence of impermanent creative practice can range from continuation of the piece itself, as indicated by Cushway (**Figure 4.5**), to uncommunicative remains of *Losing It* (**Figure 4.6**).

Cushway discusses the continuing role of shards following *Plate Spinner* (**Figure 4.5**):

It's quite important to me to leave the residue because I wanted people to come to something, a post-performance, really... I like this idea that you can come across this residue of a performance but still understand the performance – you can still draw the narrative and understand effectively what has occurred.
Cushway (Interview 10.11.11)



Figure 4.5 Remains of *Plate Spinner* on 14.11.11

In the evidence of *Losing It* (**Figure 4.6**), however, little of either the nature or meaning of the piece is apparent to me as its creator. Denise Lilley's fired rose is exquisite, but in its durability does not convey the demise of the



Figure 4.6 'Evidence' of *Losing It*, 24.03.15: what might have been in the form of a fired bone china rose by Denise Lilley, and what was artificially preserved of a portion of the installation. Respectively 1" diameter x ½", 8"x8"x2".

Potteries' ceramic industry with the same impact as the fragile raw clay flowers did. The excavated residue of one of the elements which was actually part of the work is artificially detached from its context, and hence from its meaning. It was removed from its location as evidence for research monitoring purposes and consequently is sterile.

4.2.4 Retaining artistic integrity

The lack of market value of impermanent ceramic work as objects (noted in the Prologue, p.2) creates collecting and curating challenges, a situation pre-figured in Rubbish Theory (Thompson, 1979) and in 'thing' theory (Brown, cited in Knappett, 2014), and discussed in the context of contemporary ceramics (Gee, 2012). The artist's directive intent may be in clear conflict with that of an institution exhibiting visual art in a traditional way, where a dominant aim is conservation and preservation of objects in a collection. This challenge has generated tensions in the past. Much of Getty Conservation Institute's conference, *Mortality Immortality? The legacy of 20th century art*, March 1998 (Corzo, 1999), concerned the phenomenon of transient, impermanent work, the institution's responsibility for preventing deterioration, and consequent dilemmas. Some institutions have no de-accession policy, precisely because it conflicts with their key values: to offer an insight into art history which is reliable and stable, and to act as custodian for future generations: work which decays or disintegrates presents serious challenges.

It is clear that art institutions are adapting to more performative means of expression, which artists in general are increasingly adopting: from performative destruction in Linda Sormin's *Rift*, in the Possibilities and Losses exhibition at MIMA in 2009, via performative perambulation, in Sehgal's *This Progress*, an undocumented performance work at the Guggenheim, New York, February 2010³⁰, to Twomey's performative persistence: *IIMIIB*, in Gateshead, March 2015³¹. A shift in this regard is increasingly evident, prompting a re-framing of the visitor relationship and engagement with art (as discussed in Chapter 7).

³⁰ Performers (from young to old) accosted visitors as they entered engaging them in discussion on social issues as they walked up the museum's spiral ramp

³¹ a piece originally part of ROTOR, Siobhan Davies Dance Studio, London, 2010

4.3 CHARACTERISING 'IMPERMANENCE'

Clarity regarding the extended, or restricted, nature of a finite period of time in relation to a piece of impermanent ceramic work is a question begging an answer. How short- or long-lived can a piece be when categorised as impermanent? For instance, can it apply to Eden's *February 5th 2004*, elements of which were abandoned to the sea in Morecambe Bay nine years after their making, one being taken by the tide when first installed at Morecambe, while other elements survive, with the intention that they will also be cast into the sea? At the other end of the spectrum, is extremely short-lived work pertinent to the debate? Does *Return to Koshi*, which lasted seconds, have relevance as an art work?

As a result of the research process I consider that works at both extremes are encompassed by the term 'impermanent' because the artistic intention is for them not to survive. These contrasting works exemplify artistic decisions to make work that would have an uncertain future or indeed no future at all (see 4.1.2, p.89. regarding Eden, 6.2.4, p.148, regarding *Return to Koshi*). The intention of the maker is crucial to the characterisation of ceramic impermanence, as with work using other materials and processes. As Jones indicates (see 4.2.2, p.94), chance plays its part in such work.

It may also be the case, when makers decide to create impermanent work, that the outcome is that they have no personal interest in preserving the material remains, even making efforts to ensure that work be recycled as Phoebe Cummings did with her collaborative residency installation work at the University of Hawaii³²:

If possible I like to re-cycle the clay, but sometimes it's not really practical. With the piece in Hawaii they broke that down and reclaimed it... for re-use. Cummings (2014³³)

In an important sense, therefore, the way artists of ceramic impermanence perceive their work differs significantly from makers whose artistic intent is

³² Also Twomey, *Is it madness Is it beauty*, Gateshead 2015.

³³ *Site – Material – Process* presentation at Ceramics Art Research Centre UoS (CARCUoS) colloquium, SITE: Situating Ceramics, 09.05.14

for work to last, i.e. to have continuation, to be stable, or to be an object for retrieval, re-exhibition, perhaps also as a piece for sale.

Sormin's pro-actively destructive work, *Rift*³⁴ (**Figure 4.7**, Appendix 5, vimeo.com/30559140) illustrates this, and illuminates Class 2.i, dynamic installation, artist/curator induced. Having gathered material locally on Teesside (see Chapter 6 for discussion of site regarding *Rift*), Sormin constructed a room-sized installation, including a floor-to-ceiling Plexiglas tube in which she placed precariously balanced ceramic elements. They lost even that fragile equilibrium when, at regular intervals during the exhibition, the curator crawled along an adjoining tube at ceiling level and hammered the ceramic at the top of the tube, which broke and ricocheted down the tube.

Sormin intended the destruction, which she required as integral to the work, describing it as 'showing the ability of curators not only to shape the work, and to open the work literally as he did in the show, but also the possibility of destroying the work'³⁵ and 'this breaking open of the work was something I wanted to feel as a material change, as an event, in the work' (Sormin. Interview. 28.10.11. Appendix 5). The inclusion of raw earthenware elements in the installation and the curator's hammering make the intentional, even iconoclastic, impermanence of such a work explicit.

³⁴ Possibilities and Losses exhibition, MIMA, 2009

³⁵ presentation at Thing, Tang Trash conference, Bergen, 29.10.11



Figure 4.7 Linda Sormin *Rift*. Possibilities and Losses exhibition, MIMA, 2009. Image © MIMA

4.3.1 Impermanent or not?

It is pertinent to reconsider the character of Twomey's *IIMIB* in the light of the discussion of impermanence. For this work, the classification proposed in 4.1.2, p.86, is not sufficient, although it may be necessary, to an understanding. This work was produced for ROTOR, a specific 'ensemble of performances, sound, installations and artworks' at Siobhan Davies' Dance Studio in 2010³⁶. In briefing performers in Gateshead in 2015 as part of the Acts of Making festival, Twomey said: '*Is it madness Is it beauty* has been shown... on innumerable occasions', raising the question of the nature of its impermanence. While the materials, processes and agencies involved in the piece do not persist in the gallery (as with a dynamic installation, 2.i, with

³⁶ See <http://www.siobhandavies.com/work/rotor/>

artist or curator induced impermanence), it is a work that can be repeated, and in different locations, as are LeWitt's wall drawings and Gonzales Torres' *Untitled (candy)* installations.

This raises an important issue regarding uniqueness of impermanent art work, not just in the materials and processes and agencies involved (these will, indeed, have differed on each occasion of Twomey's piece), but crucially in unrepeatability. It is true of practically all work studied as part of the research programme that it cannot be revived without alteration to the meaning of the work, to its instigator and its percipients, due often to its time- and place-sensitivity. 4.2.1, p.92, stated: 'in terms of impermanent artistic expression, it is impossible to revisit work as it is first presented. It changes, or it disappears. What we have is memory, and perhaps, traces as reminders of what it once was.' Applying this to *Is it madness Is it beauty* points up that this apparently impermanent work can actually be re-created (even without the artist's presence), and thus does not fulfil one important criterion for my articulation of impermanence.

It may seem paradoxical that *Is it madness Is it beauty* is not classifiable as an impermanent work. However, although using impermanent components, it is better described as a 'tableau ultra-vivant', where actors (clay and water) with props (tables, humans, mops and buckets) perform within a restricted framework of place, duration and action, presenting a comparable outcome each time.

4.4 IMPERMANENCE IN PRACTICE

An important aim for this research was to achieve better understanding of impermanence as a means of creative expression, particularly relating to clay, and the practice-led nature of the programme offered an opportunity to use personal practice as a resource and testing ground.

While my personal focus does not stem from a western religious sense of the impermanence of life, followed by the permanence of an after-life, there is a spiritual dimension to the motivation for working in this way (for instance, with *ReCollection*), which has its strongest parallels in Buddhist thought:

Impermanence expresses our experience of the finite world of birth and death, and is founded on the bedrock of one formulation of the three Buddhist statements concerning the nature of that world: (1) all is impermanent, (2) all is suffering, and (3) all is without ego or self. Everything is impermanent.

Stambaugh, 1990, pp.1-2

Reflecting on practice over the research period, meditational qualities are stimulated by psychological withdrawal (a feature of both my making and my installation processes) rather than location, being apparent in work I have made in both West and East.

The interest in valuing impermanence appears to have deep psychological meaning in Western and Eastern thought alike. Freud states:

I did dispute the pessimistic poet's view that the transience of what is beautiful involves any loss in its worth.

On the contrary, an increase! Transience value is scarcity value in time. Limitation in the possibility of an enjoyment raises the value of the enjoyment. Freud (1915)

He remarks on the importance of transience, the value of transient things and the dual responses of denial and fight in the face of impermanence. The tension he describes is personally very familiar, given concepts of self and other, of time passing and the irretrievability of what is gone.

Two works illustrate the temporal range which can be encompassed in an exploration of impermanence, both also illustrating another feature of impermanence which the research has identified as important, i.e. unrepeatability. There is a perceptible difference between unrepeatable work (e.g. *Return to Koshi*) and that which can be resuscitated in some way (for instance, two of Cushway's raw pieces: 'In terms of *Snowdon*, which is the unfired cast of the top of Snowdon, that still lives in the garage. The *Earth* piece, which is a similar thing made out of clay... I know that I can remake them if I need to ever... I don't see them as impermanent really.' Cushway. Interview 10.11.11. See Appendix 5)

Tidal Transience (**Figure 4.8**) was planned and executed as an environmental installation to last briefly, in this instance less than a tidal cycle.

The work involved keel forms from *Tsunami* (see 1.2.2, pp.14-17, and **Figure 1.3**) and the action of the sea. I intended it solely as an installation work of limited duration in which I experimented with the notion of an unrecorded event, an aspect of impermanent work which was to become a key research focus, as discussed in Chapter 8. Consequently, I experienced both practical and emotional consequences of a lack of physical documentation of impermanent work, while an invited audience enabled me to identify issues, both as artist and audience member, regarding witness, participation, performance and memory, which stimulated personal reflection. In the event, and on further reflection, this was a very liberating way of working, due to the unpredictable nature of the evidence of the work of which I, as the instigator, am aware.



Figure 4.8 Sarah Gee *Tidal Transience*. Dimensions variable. High tideline, Hartlepool Headland. 20.09.09 (one of several elements). Image © M. J. Gee

It performed a cathartic act for me, in releasing the whole issue of tsunami damage to the sea – back to its origin, albeit half a world away from where it

had occurred. I walked the tideline close to my home immediately prior to high tide placing keels to be overwhelmed by water, before invited witnesses. The entire focus for the work was the rapid loss of the physicality of the high-fired pieces (I had not at this stage in my research appreciated *Tidal Transience's* performance aspect). It was a deliberate decision to take no photographs, thus exploring the impact of lack of evidence, but witnesses (who included passers-by) were not prevented from doing so. While field-testing occurred over several days, the work took less than thirty minutes for the keels to wash away, become embedded in the sand, or break up (see Appendix 1.ii). The rapidity of the impermanence wrought by tidal action on pieces, which had personal meaning was crucial to this work. Being a site-sensitive and live event, it cannot be recreated.

ReCollection (first installed 2011, still *in situ* at the time of writing. See Appendix 1.iii) was an environmental installation exploring memory, care and respect. My aims in making this installation were to utilise self as case study material to experiment with subject matter (testing whether work with ceramics involving other than socio-political commentary is effective using an impermanent mode of expression, compared with *Losing It, Return to Koshi* and *Sanbao Respect*), material and process (identifying the importance of both) and siting: to compare issues both of public exhibition in an institutional setting with those of open-air installation work anticipated to be of very short duration (such as *Tidal Transience*) and of site-sensitivity as opposed to site-specific work (e.g. *Koshi* and *Nag Puja*).

The materials used were personally symbolic, the fired ceramic having been devised for a personally important degree show piece (see **Figure 1.5**) while the organic content of bone china connotes mortality. Laying out shrouded body forms in orderly fashion (see Figure **9.2a/b**) mitigated the random, disrespectful dumping that the new-born infants experienced at Yewden Roman villa (for information about the excavation and analysis see <http://www.chilternarchaeology.com/hambleden.htm>). The materials and forms, deliberately selected for their fragility, were laid out in rows on a bed of pebbles. Weather and human footfall allowed the pebble matrix to absorb these 'bodies' gently, over time. The impermanence here related more to

alteration and integration into an eco-system than to destruction. Modification by weathering was anticipated, but colonisation of elements by moss was not, adding an appropriate piquancy to the work.

This work's persistence (see *Definitions and Clarifications* p. xiv for this term) was not anticipated at the outset, being the result of adoption and curation by staff of what was planned as a temporary installation. (This adoptive type of intervention was an unanticipated aspect of impermanent work at the earliest stages of the research programme, but became more significant, for instance in *RePlace*; see 5.2, pp.117-118, and Appendix 1.i).

An important outcome of exploring the context for personal praxis was confirmation that impermanence is significant also in the way the work of other makers is received, and that impermanence has a long pre-history of importance in understanding our world. As Whiteread (2012) notes regarding transient installation art remaining in the memory: 'A lot of the work has been temporary. Probably the most powerful thing about *House* is that it doesn't exist any more'. Freud would no doubt have derived psychological meaning from commentary on both my works and Whiteread's remark.

The ways in which impermanent art is received in general indicate that it intrigues and challenges critic and public alike and, as indicated in Chapter 1, my research motivation initially was to understand the context for my intuitively creative work with impermanence and to explore the meanings and motives for others working in a similar way.

4.5 REFLEXION ON IMPERMANENCE

While it is not a novelty, creativity involving impermanence is capable of puzzling an audience. Ceramic artists, in parallel with those in different artistic arenas, wish to invest meaning in impermanent work.

There is creative variety both in using the material and the purposes to which it is put, and a simple system has been devised to help structure consideration: classic, dynamic and materially degrading installation, and performance/event (involving both material and human agents).

As Nollert (2003) describes:

The term *Performative Installation*... refers to the specific nature of the link between ephemeral performativity and static installation.

Artists work in this grey area in order to intertwine different levels of presence, temporality, space and experience... The presence and participation of the artist [or, as I argue in the following chapter, the material itself with its agentic character] and recipient brings forth the relevant contextuality of the work at hand. Nollert (2003, pp.8-9)

The classification enables discussion about what to include, e.g.

consideration of artists' perceptions of their own ways of working, deliberate and accidental impermanence.

Features of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice emerging at this stage comprise:

- Deliberate intention on the maker's behalf for work to be short-lived, or of uncertain duration
- Expression – rather than representation – of impermanence
- Unrepeatability of work (whether an object, an installation or an event)
- Inclusivity - from forms of impermanence to maker's purposes
- Distinction between persistence and permanence
- Capacity for the instigator (as well as the percipient) to change the intended future for work, thus altering its classification
- Meaning generally embedded in the conjunction of material, its essential transience and circumstances/location.

This chapter has focused on impermanence in the work of a number of contemporary ceramic artists, identifying similarities and differences between individual artists' practice, including my own, as the basis for theoretical consideration.

In identifying alteration as well as destruction, and unrepeatability without loss of meaning, key features of impermanence are identified as an important step towards a description of this mode of working in contemporary ceramic art practice.

The research process identified in Chapter 1 indicated the nature of clay, as a material, to be a key aspect of impermanence. This is considered in Chapter 5 for its contribution towards characterising impermanence in the context of the research programme.

CHAPTER 5: CLAY: MATERIALITY AND MEANING

My first encounter with clay... provoked a commotion inside me. Putting my hand in that wet mass of earth – dirt, matter – immediately a whole cosmos, a vision, presented itself. As material, clay is the perfect prototype. It carries within itself multi-form possibilities.

Maiolino (2002³⁷)

Chapter 4 characterised impermanence in current ceramic art practice, providing the basis for considering four emerging themes for investigation in the research programme: materiality, placement, artist-audience relations, and record.

This chapter considers the first of these themes: clay as substance, exploring the importance of both physical and symbolic materiality in order to elucidate this in relation to impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

An important aim of the research programme was to clarify whether clay has a material quality which affects, or perhaps even determines, its contemporary artistic usage in impermanent form.

To examine this, the research sought to test whether the use of clay has significance beyond being merely a vehicle for art, i.e. whether the material itself carries cultural meaning (see Research Proposition 1.5.a, p.19). The fundamental question in this context was: what, if anything, is special about clay which contributes to its impact, when used in impermanent artistic forms, to affect – and have significant meaning for – its audience?

It was not intended to seek, or claim, uniqueness for clay, as having a special status in relation to our social existence; however, it is notable for its evocation as a metaphor in creation myths³⁸ and literature in many cultures³⁹.

³⁷ Cited in Pollock, 2013, p.131. Also (partially) in Fer, 2008, p.155.

³⁸ Creator gods across the world fashion man out of clay and breathe life into him

In fact, it is feasible to make parallel arguments regarding other basic materials, which have been subjected to transformation by human intervention over millennia, to facilitate use and enhance the lives of those who use them.

I identified textile⁴⁰ as having similarities to clay, in order to explore the potential validity for a classification of basic, common, materials that require transformation in some way to be exploitable. Processing of the two materials has similarities: clay and fibres have to be worked from natural resources to be utilisable. In that 'working' it transmutes from its original form and after processing is identifiably different from its constituent 'ingredients'. Also, both are generally inexpensive resources.

The role of textile in personal practice was therefore considered (see, for example, 1.6.2, p.21, 5.2, p.118) alongside the concentration on clay, where the focus of attention is how clay functions as an adjunct to human 'being in the world', and how it performs in contemporary ceramic art practice.

In discussing the material, both 'clay', broadly describing raw and fired ceramic, and 'ceramic' – particularly utilised for established terms, e.g. 'ceramic art practice' – are useful terms.

As the thesis demonstrates through contemporary examples, makers are at ease with clay in both raw and fired states. While Jones (2007) would undoubtedly argue that transformation by fire is necessary in defining 'ceramic', other contemporary makers and commentators accept broader definitions of the material in an art context:

The engagement of the singular material clay remains the central occupation for the majority of ceramic practitioners. Use of clay, within contemporary observation, falls into distinct categories, notably unfired and post-fired. Livingstone (2011, unpaginated)

For some, using clay has been the recuperation of 'unmediated' materiality. The powerful sense of clay as earth, as the great

³⁹ Browning: Time's wheel runs back or stops: potter and clay endure (Rabbi ben Ezra, xxvii); Shakespeare: Men are but gilded loam or painted clay (Richard II, I.i.177); FitzGerald: *Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?* (Omar Khayyam, ed.1, ix)

⁴⁰ natural fibres - I have particularly focused on wool in my research

formless void, allowed them a kind of expression they could not attain through other materials. de Waal (2003, p.212)

Firing turns clay into ceramic. Indeed, in some opinions, anything made of clay that is not fired has nothing to do with ceramics. Even so, be it artefact or installation, both 'raw' and 'unfired' clay features in exploratory approaches to making... Withholding the closure that firing engenders and denying permanence to the artefact means that, although work that is not fired can be articulated in terms of the expanded field, it is overtly transgressive of traditional core ceramic values. Dahn (2015, p.87)

Given a leaning in personal practice towards conceptualism (e.g. *Fallacy*), I embrace all forms of clay in its artistic expressivity and contend that contemporary artists utilising clay in their impermanent expression are moving beyond the chemical transformation of clay into ceramic through the process of firing, and utilise the material as concept and metaphor.

David Cushway's *Plate Spinner: Spode* (see 4.1.1, pp.82-83) and Caroline Tattersall's *Spode Towers* (**Figure 8.7**) both took location – a decommissioned factory in the Potteries – as the stimulus for performance work at the British Ceramic Biennial, 2011. Both used Spode forms: Cushway performed with fired and decorated pieces while Tattersall's towers were constructed from raw bone china. Both works articulated a metaphor of the loss of the English pottery industry in Stoke, through the destruction of Spode-related pieces. The resonance of the material was crucial to making this connection in both.

The *Fallacy of Mass Production* installation, in the *Traces of China* project which I undertook at Durham Oriental Museum in 2014, addressed a range of research objectives: to devise and present impermanent ceramic installation work for a museum setting; to explore the variety implicit in multiple clay bodies, glazes and firing processes; to work in collaboration with other artist' work; to engage a broad audience given the constraints of an institutional setting; to express a cross-cultural message through impermanent clay work; and to explore research themes of impermanence, materiality, siting and performativity in support of the research process.

The work experimented with material, form and audience engagement (see further in Appendix 1.iv). Intrusion of work into display cabinets in a permanent collection of fine historic Chinese ceramics at the Durham Oriental Museum drew visitor attention to the permanent collection and posed questions regarding value and beauty; collaborative work by British makers within a traditional Chinese context integrated with the historic pieces identified connections and contrasts; and the whole exhibition celebrated clay, ceramic, tradition and experiment, and blurred boundaries between maker, curator and audience roles. The nature of the free-standing *Fallacy* installation proved irresistible to visitors. Despite the usual psychological restrictions on touching that a museum environment imposes, *Fallacy* was played with, re-arranged, fondled and – for some – proved tempting enough to remove.

Impermanent work (both in terms of pieces themselves and longevity of temporary exhibitions) can demonstrably be located successfully within a museum setting. Given the development of a strong relationship with museum staff, imagination was the only constraint - every proposal for engagement with the collection was positively received.

Fallacy combined seven clay bodies with nine glazes in four firing programmes to articulate a socio-political message: regimes may attempt to mould populations to their policies, but everyone is individual and even Mao had differing facets. The repetition of the form together with varieties of clay bodies was personally important in this work. The process of making deliberately explored contrasts between Chinese and British materials. Four clays (including three porcelains) sourced from Jingdezhen were matched with English attempts to replicate prized exotic materials: bone china, commercial porcelain and Parian ware (a British nineteenth century invention to emulate marble). The glazes were variations on celadon⁴¹ which, in combination with porcelain is accepted as the apogee of Chinese ceramic

⁴¹ Two from Jingdezhen, the remainder from potters' handbooks and colleagues on my ceramic network

mastery. Regimes with two kilns⁴² ranged from biscuit to high firing, with or without glaze. Some pieces were not fired at all.



Figure 5.1 Sarah Gee *Fallacy of Mass Production*, Traces of China installation, Durham Oriental Museum. July-November 2014. Detail: variety resulting from differences in body and treatment (dimensions as earlier image)

Unlike the rest of the installation where, for instance, clay dust from traditional Chinese potteries was exhibited alongside fine historic Chinese pieces, *Fallacy* was physically accessible to museum visitors, many of whom handled and re-arranged the pile of faces. As anticipated, some elements crumbled, and some broke during the exhibition, at an attrition rate of roughly 25%; and on occasion in the gallery it was possible to hear and see visitors physically interacting with them. The diversity in the material (approximately one hundred variations) resulted in little repetition in its three hundred elements. The opportunity to appropriate a face that ‘spoke’ to the percipient was irresistible for some⁴³. The variety held different messages for maker and percipients (7.1, pp.158-162) explores these shifting relationships); in both cases the material with its significances was the focus. The experience takes Mills’ thesis to a more acquisitive level:

⁴² Gas kiln (reduction) and electric kiln (oxidation)

⁴³ In fact, one volunteer custodian was heard telling visitors they could take a Mao face if they wished

The aesthetic experience that results from a face-to-face encounter with art... has the potential to shift the viewer out of ordinary thinking and into a primarily reflective mode. Mills (1991, p.36)

5.2 CLAY AS SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC FRAME

Miller's (2005) contextualisation of theories of materiality (itself contextualised by the discipline of anthropology) discusses how we perceive art work in its context (in Miller's term the 'frame' for material culture):

Gombrich argued that when a frame is appropriate we simply don't see it, because it seamlessly conveys to us the appropriate mode by which we should encounter that which it frames. It is mainly when it is inappropriate (a Titian framed in perspex, a Picasso in baroque gilt) that we are suddenly aware that there is indeed a frame... The surprising conclusion is that objects are important, not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not 'see' them. The less we are aware of them the more powerfully they can determine our expectations, by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge. Miller (2005, p.5)

Transferring the concept from a painting's physical frame to clay material as 'framing' the objects which it forms, it is possible to see how ceramic is usually viewed (i.e. often unnoticed). This appears to be a social as well as aesthetic phenomenon and the act of making impermanent work in clay inevitably tests assumptions regarding the material itself.

Rather than consciously perceiving ceramic – 'transformed' clay – as a stable, reliable and durable material, experience indicates that it is socially hardly perceived at all. It surrounds us in our everyday existence (house bricks, drainpipes, drinking vessels and tap washers); we attend to ceramic when it loses its functionality, but otherwise ignore it (Livingstone 2008a).

Miller's view resonates strongly with Brown's 'thing' theory regarding the difference between the un-noted 'thing' and consciously observed 'object' and it is true that clay in the form of everyday items plays an unnoticed part in

daily life, only being re-framed when these do not behave as usual. Being intentionally impermanent – dissolving, collapsing, fragmenting – draws attention to such ‘objects’ (as they must be called in this context, having been noticed), to the extent of generating visceral responses such as amusement, incredulity, dismay, depending on the circumstances of their unexpected behaviour.

In Miller’s words (2005, p.7) ‘there exist for each social group certain underlying parameters by which they come to apprehend the world, an order they come to assume and expect in any new set of objects they encounter’. Ceramic is habitually assumed to be permanent, and his thesis suggests that ceramic objects underpin our understanding of human history and pre-history because of their fixedness.

Due to its ubiquity, stability and readiness to take different shapes, fired clay is among the few materials that can speak to us of the distant past. For instance, archaeologists rely on evolution of pottery forms and decoration to date ceramic contexts with accuracy, e.g. Joyner (2007) on cooking pots.

The perspective of material engagement theory (Malafouris and Renfrew, 2010; Hodder, 2012) builds on Miller’s thesis: that ceramic is embedded as an extension of the human self, such that society does not survive without it. The assumption behind these theories is that the ceramic in question is durable.

Gombrich’s concept of the frame is thereby supported, as something only perceived in the exceptional case – in this context when an impermanent ceramic object is presented for consideration. It is incongruous given the contextualising norms by which society (and aesthetics) operates.

During the research journey, this issue of relationships with clay and ceramic frequently drew attention to itself. All the case study artists indicated a strong connection with clay. While they may work with other media (for instance Cushway and Livingstone with video and photography), they made statements in response to enquiry (see Appendix 5) such as:

- The clay is as important as the body and liveness. Their coincidence is essential to my work. (Lee)
- Clay/ceramic is vital in the work I make as no other material could offer the same possibilities. (Tattersall)
- I argue that I use a fundamental material to do that with [work about the three fundamentals of the human condition – sex, life and death], which is clay. Which is why I continually come back to it. Because it is THE most fundamental material, clay is. (Cushway)
- 90% I would say of the ideas I have are based around clay. But when I talk about clay I mean clay in terms of its broadest sense: in terms of material I suppose; in terms of its place in society – it's social, it's political. (Livingstone)

Apart from this inevitable generation of statements regarding clay as a material due to the research investigation, the frequency with which ceramic artists generally refer to their material is noteworthy. For instance, discussing her site-specific work, such as *Between* (2005, domestic setting), *Untitled* (in the ceramics residency studio, V&A, 2012), and *Cella* (Hawaii, 2013), Cummings stated in her presentation, *Site – Material– Process*, at the CARCUoS SITE colloquium, 09.05.14: 'Part of the thing that attracted me to working with clay is that idea that it can continue. I'm not really cutting off that life span of the material'. Equally, the chapter head Maiolino quotation indicates how this particular material inspires in its very physicality.

The research programme provoked reflection on ceramic artists' conscious concern with material. It was puzzling, and Mormoz's (2013) remark⁴⁴ that '[i]n fine art you don't talk about the canvas. You talk about what is ON the canvas', resonated with a personal note written in 2012:

Oil painters don't go on about grinding pigments. But there is an obsessional attitude to clay. Is that within the artist? Or is it in society in general? Where does the 'aura' come from for clay?

⁴⁴ Gallery talk on the exhibition *From Vallauris to Fat Lava*, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 28.06.13 (during International Ceramics Festival 2013)

Part of clay's uniqueness for ceramic artists is that, as an amorphous yet resilient substance, it can be manipulated in its form, as well as its capacity to perform and transform, whether fired or raw (as Maiolino's words cited at the chapter head describe).

1.7.2, p.26, indicates that the use of clay as an impermanent material, in Shklovsky's terms, effectively de-familiarises it. In a fragile or otherwise transient form, it challenges the percipient to reconsider assumptions about consistency and stability. Gombrich might say it forces a review of the frame it usually provides.



Figure 5.2 Clare Twomey *Is it madness Is it beauty*. Elements approx. 5" diameter. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. March 2015. Indicating the physicality of shattered raw clay pots.

To reconsider the material, given the sometimes dynamic form its impermanence takes – exploding⁴⁵ with a report in the case of Twomey's unfired bone china pots in *IIMIB* (**Figure 5.2**); dissolving with vigour in Xinghe River, Wuyuan in *Converse:Mao*⁴⁶ (Appendix 1.v) – draws attention to the clay's active, unpredictable, character. Without becoming entangled in issues of intentionality, its vibrancy permits it – in Bennett's (2010) terms – to alter our environment, and our behaviour.

⁴⁵ As defined by *Chambers* (2003, p.527: ... to burst with violence and usually a loud noise

⁴⁶ See vimeo.com/141902397

Although detailed exploration of Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005) is beyond the focus for this research, clay was compared with textile as an aspect of practical research in the context of his idea of agency and actancy associated with material. The aim of *RePlace* (see also 1.6.2 (pp.23-24) and Appendix 1.i) was to return transformed material to its place of origin. Both clay and yarn were involved in the multiple installations, sometimes apart (**Figure 5.3.a/b**) and sometimes together (**Figure 5.4**).



Figure 5.3a/b Sarah Gee *RePlace* (a) raw clay Neolithic midden-soil eggs for Brodgar II (b) Yarnwife with swag bag, Orkney-sourced yarn and sand with fired porcelain tag, Balfour Battery Hoxa. 2012

There is considerable evidence of interaction with the work, physically in its persistence, and even more in its disappearance. In several cases (see Appendix 1.i), the work has been altered, damaged or moved. This occurred with both clay and textile elements.

Work such as *Nag Puja* (7.2.1, pp.165-168) and *Fallacy* (7.1, pp.160-161) demonstrate the capacity for direct interaction with clay-related installations, and *RePlace* likewise shows the ability of textile pieces to engage and encourage interaction, although reasons are not always clear. I will probably never comprehend the disappearance without trace of the work in **Figure 5.4**, for instance, although explicable for its remover. I am fortunate in having better understanding of Njalsdottir's attention (see 9.3.3, pp.216-217) to the pieces installed in North Ronaldsay (see also Appendix 1.i). Her concern for the work was at least partly connected with the porcelain tag with its title (taken as instruction) 'RePlace'.



Figure 5.4 *RePlace Brodgar I*. Raw clay and fired eggs (as Figure 6.3.a) and felted pockets using Orkney wool. Approx. 96"x6"x9". 2012

Demonstrably, the materiality of both clay and yarn can stimulate interaction, whether adaption, appropriation or destruction. Factors inferred as relevant in all these cases are intimacy of scale, familiarity of form and, probably, personally feeling comfortable in the space, with its hint of craftivistic aesthetics (see Chapter 7 for discussion of place). My personal motivation in locating installations in the countryside parallels that of Lothian (in Greer, 2015) in relation to urban craftivist practice.

... the importance of having lovely things happen to us cannot be overstated. That is why I make small handcrafted artworks to leave on the streets of cities around the world for people to find and take. I practice [*sic*] random acts of guerrilla kindness to lift people's moods and make them happy. Greer (2015, p.11)

5.3 PERCEPTIONS OF CLAY

5.3.1 Stability

Reflection on the nature of the human relationship with clay indicates the pertinence of the claim that:

Our biologies, our technologies, societies and cultures, our psychologies and cognition all flow from the past, often the deep past.... So to some degree Arendt was right that we depend on an apparent durability of things. Objects do objectively stand up against our transient and uncertain lives, and our daily traffic counts on this stability... Hodder (2012, p.5, citing Arendt, 1958)

While things made of ceramic are assumed, even relied on, to conform to certain expectations, they may sometimes rot and be difficult to handle, with resulting loss of integrity, as archaeologists find, for instance with low-fired pottery with unrefined grog in the acid context of the Neolithic matrix of the Ness of Brodgar, Orkney (conversation with Finds Officer, Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology 2008. See **Figure 5.5**).



Figure 5.5 Neolithic potsherds, Ness of Brodgar Excavations 06.08.08

Our basic assumption that clay is stable helps to clarify how we relate to ceramic impermanence, particularly in an art context when this

condition is intentional rather than accidental. Further, it is recognised (e.g. in Niedderer, 2007, pp.1-2) that the design of objects (which clearly includes the chosen material) impacts on how the object is perceived (engagement is further discussed in **Chapter 7**).

5.3.2 Re-viewing material

As the words of Portuguese thinker Pessoa suggest, ‘noticing all things for the first time, not apocalyptically as revelations of the Mystery, but directly as flowerings of Reality,’⁴⁷ results from looking with care at what is normally unregarded. It is relatively unusual to be presented with impermanent ceramics, and it excites curiosity. Rolnik (2002) describes the work of Brazil-based Anna Maria Maiolino (**Figure 5.6**), thus:

with simple materials like clay, with primordial gestures and rudimentary forms, she invents a world... on the border between sculpture and installation...As the artist has said, ‘it is clay that indicates its own means of existence, its way of taking shape.’ Rolnik (2002, p.5)

For Maiolino, raw clay – recyclable and re-formable – expresses the continuity of life’s cycle. Fer (2008) describes this graphically:

By placing the idea of a first event in such intimate proximity to the idea of repetition, [Maiolino] scrambles preconceptions about temporality. (p.156)

The fact that the clay is unfired is not to be underestimated. This means that it maintains its dry powdery quality and feel of incompleteness (at least from a ceramicist’s point of view). The pieces can also be recycled and reused. (p.160)

⁴⁷ Quoted by Rolnik (2002) at chapter head ‘Flowerings of Reality’ on Maiolino



Figure 5.6 Anna Maria Maiolino *Continuous*, Camden Arts Centre, 2010. Detail of hardly-formed elements

5.3.3 Animated clay

The incongruity of clay impermanence was known to our prehistoric forebears. Cook (2013) suggests that Ice Age potters in Dolní Věstonice deliberately generated it through thermal shock (see **Figure 5.7**), placing wet or under-fired clay figures in a kiln or hearth to produce explosions: ‘the occurrence of all the ceramics in and around the kilns and hearths could indicate that their pyrotechnic behaviour was some form of performance art related to magical or religious practices’ (Cook, 2013, 147-149). The proportion of shattered ceramic shards excavated at this site is unlikely to be fortuitous. It is probable that the impact of (explosive) ceramic impermanence was utilised to challenge the assumptions of a prehistoric audience. Lemonnier’s (2012, p.20) remark about ‘how things intervene in social relationships because of their most basic material characteristics’ illuminates the tantalising traces of this prehistoric activity, as does Gell’s invitation, cited in Lemonnier (2012, p.60) to:



Figure 5.7 Zoomorphic ceramic figurine (mammoth), deliberately damaged during firing, Dolní Věstonice. Dimensions unknown. Available at: <http://www.donsmaps.com/dolnivpottery.html> [Last accessed 01.02.16]

define as a candidate artwork any object or performance that potentially rewards scrutiny because it embodies intentionalities that are complex, demanding of attention and [particularly pertinent here] difficult to reconstruct fully.

Clay can act on us in Latour's agentic fashion and even seem, as Jones (2007, p.194) suggests, to manipulate our response:

clay in its many states is taken as the symbol of the material that is acted upon by human presence in the environment. We cease to be the actors, and, cleverly stage-managed by the artists, we become instead the audience, merely observing the effects of our presence within this microcosm of the Earth.

I contend that contemporary ceramic artists exploit this powerful dimension of clay by its use in various impermanent forms across the spectrum of objects, installations and performance works; and Chapter 7 explores our relationships with, and the performativity of, clay in more detail.

5.4 EXPLOITING THE MUTABILITY OF CLAY

Having made the argument about the importance of clay as an impermanent material in challenging perceptions, it is pertinent to illustrate, and reflect on this from the viewpoint of contemporary ceramic art (e.g. 6.1, pp.109-110).

Livingstone speaks of his use of liquid slip (**Figure 5.8**) in *Auto-Materiality*:

I have always been intrigued by the sparse artistic attention to the material clay in its wet state. In *Auto-materiality*, a wet clay figure is slowly fed by its own material – suggesting both nourishment and sustainability. It is presented to contrast with a finished glazed figure which remains constant and devoid of physical change... Livingstone (2008b, p.40)

He also states:

...my real purpose in this work is to develop the materiality of clay as a conceptual tool... The exposure of the material itself in its unfired state presents a juxtaposed reading where the symbiosis between the unfired and post-fired material is significantly enhanced. Livingstone (2008b, p.40)

As is true also of the case study artists involved in this research, Twomey's work in clay, including *IIIIIB* (see Chapters 5 and 7), has the material and its qualities of impermanence as integral to meaning, whether through loss, degradation or destruction.

In his exploration of entanglement theory and its explication of the mutual dependences between humans and things, Hodder (2012) offers an elucidation for the persistent expectation that ceramic will be fixed in some way, permanent, of constant form – not decaying, degrading or destroyed. In this, he reflects Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* – the beingness of humans in the world – with its density of relationships as Bolt (2011) describes:

The 'there' of our world, with its complex physical, ideological, cultural and technological space/place provides a set of possibilities and limitations that structure our lives. Bolt (2011, 18)



Figure 5.8 Andrew Livingstone *Auto-Materiality*, 2006. (Contrasting raw and fired figures). Image © Dr. A. Livingstone

Hodder, however, moves a step further than Heidegger by focusing on materiality and the place of things and of objects in their reciprocal relationships. He explains the long history of human/thing reliance, built on experience and predictability of the way in which materials and artefacts behave, or can be made to behave (see 5.3.1, pp.119-124).

In Livingstone's (and in other artists') work of this type, the behaviour of clay, almost animate, is drawn to the observer's attention in a way impossible in an

inert, static object. The capacity to alter, sometimes before the percipient's gaze, is a powerful means for engagement.

5.4.1 Purposes for impermanence

Although the research explores the temporality of clay in aesthetic terms, there is no insuperable divide between utility and art regarding im/permanence. While functionality would dictate permanence, social custom may demand the opposite, for instance in proffering low-fired single-use cups to drinkers in India as a hygiene measure; and in breaking pottery – a German custom – for newly-weds to clear up together, as an indicator for a happy marriage.

Equally, there are innumerable examples of permanent ceramic works, as in Gurcharan Singh's ceramic lattice screens, being both functional and aesthetically pleasing (**Figure 5.9**).

There is a millennia-long custom for human interments to be accompanied by grave goods, which in many cases include important, intimate personal items for the individual, demonstrating their role in society, their status and wealth. Ceramic vessels occur frequently in prehistoric burials, perhaps providing

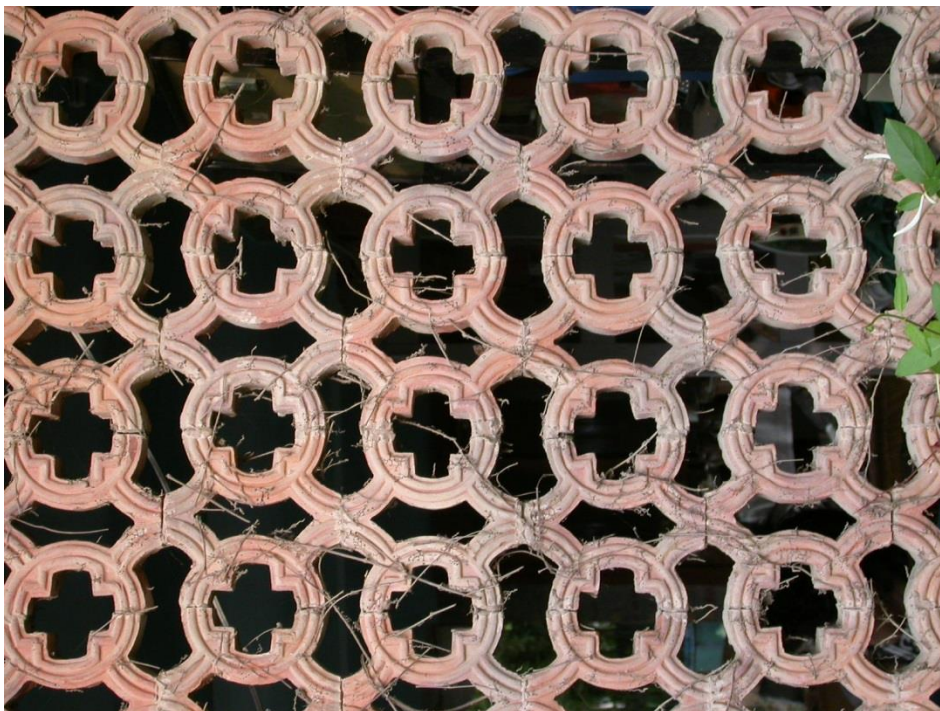


Figure 5.9 P.S. Gurcharan Singh. Lattice screen. (Singh studied ceramics in Japan from 1919-21, meeting Bernard Leach and Yanagi Soetsu.) Photographed in Andretta, 2006.

the dead with sustenance on their journey in eternity. Interestingly, deliberately broken vessels were interred in graves, suggesting a distinction between functional and non-functional, specifically related to important rites of passage.

The custom persists for some tribes in sub-Saharan Africa, to punch holes in food pots – to decommission them – before placing them by their owner's grave (Barley, 1994, p.13). In ceremonial and ritual terms, the message of breakage is therefore telling.

The deliberate breaking, particularly of vessels, is also apparent in contemporary ceramic art practice (as indicated in 4.1.2, p.86, I classify this as 'dynamic installation'). Twomey's *IIMIB* (see 7.2.2, p.178) destroyed more than five hundred raw clay pots, challenging expectations regarding their usual water-holding functionality. Runa Islam's film *Be the first to see what you see as you see it*⁴⁸ presented the seemingly gratuitous breaking of white porcelain vessels, in slow-motion capture of the shattering fragments. In Gray's (2013) terms this iconoclasm – this rejection of artistic norms – triggers shock in the viewer. Our normal frame of reference is disturbed by such work.

The symbolism associated with such deliberate breakage (whether iconoclastic or in gentler – though insistent – craftivist mode) enables interesting interactions with attitudes to and relationships with an otherwise reliable, permanent, ceramic object, this being far from an act of degradation of its utility. In both ritual and aesthetic settings, it elevates the clay vessel from its everyday functionality to a more abstracted or conceptual role.

5.5 DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Reflecting on practical experience and theoretical constructs, including anthropology generally and material engagement in particular, leads towards the view that adaptation and consolidation of experience are strong drives in enabling humans to manage our environment and survival.

⁴⁸ 2004, Turner Prize 2008

Taking this as a statement of likely fact into the arena of impermanent ceramic art, I argue that such art has a strong impact on the observer or percipient, because here is no fixing, mending or adapting it to conserve or control it. It has to be let go – and not letting go is so embedded in the human experience that it is quite shocking to be faced with the necessity. The frisson generated by the lack of control of seeing an art work degrading, perhaps in real time, perhaps over an extended period, plays exactly against this controlling preference, and thus triggers attention, if not a tension.

Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarisation assists in supporting this thesis. His concept from performance theory encompasses such developments as Brecht's determination that the audience should never let go of the reality outside the auditorium. They will never be so engrossed in the performance before them that they can forget that it is just that. Similarly, a percipient of impermanent ceramic work – particularly dynamic installations – is dealing with a dissonance, which is hard to resolve even when aware of the likelihood of destruction or dissolution.

To me, such defamiliarisation is similar to detachment as a means of enabling a second look at things, relationships, experiences thought to be thoroughly understood and known: to enable reconsideration of a rose (such as raw bone china, *Losing It*), to allow it to speak of a different experience, a different context, a different future. (To be presented with an object or installation in the process of undoing itself is intriguing, however familiar the concept. Questions abound: how will it change? what happens next? how long will it take?)

These conceptual/philosophical strands all lead to the same conclusion: that clay in art-work is generally accepted as (a) stable and lasting (b) useful, admirable (as in having capacity to be wondered at rather than using the word as a judgement of value) or beautiful. There is generally also a third expectation: (c) that ceramic has value in itself (drawn to the visitors' attention particularly in *Traces*: see 5.1, pp.108-113).

This last expectation can be linked to Michael Thompson's rubbish theory, and the articulation of value that he addresses in his argument that things

vanish when they lose value, connecting also with Brown's 'thing' theory. They become rubbish and are 'not seen'. But impermanent ceramic art has a time when it is perceptible. In this it occupies a liminal space, being but not being – in a state of becoming other than it is – and in so doing, denies valuelessness.

It seems important to demonstrate that some of the power of 'ceramic expectation' in contemporary Western society (probably also in the East, despite or perhaps because of *wabi sabi*) has a very long history. It is part of what we are as humans.

Thus the exploration of archaeology as a source of argument is not just about materiality per se – the use of clay, or firing technology, or tracing history through the developments in ceramics technology, style and decoration – but also about the development of homo sapiens in societal and cultural terms. We seem as a species to have a strong explorative aspect, but we also seem to have a very strong conservative trait.

Both evidently play their part in the development of impermanent contemporary ceramic art. After all, change and development would not be possible if it were not for the experimental, explorative aspect of humanity. Equally, art would not have its impact – in the form of objects or events that offer different experiences or considerations – if humanity were utterly explorative. The strong conservative strand is required both to keep things together (dealing with humanity's ever-growing entanglements – ensuring some stability) and to provide the reaction to the new.

Arendt, the anthropologist, is cited in support of this idea:

The notion that things are stable and fixed, at least inanimate material things, is widely assumed. Thus: 'it is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their "objectivity" which makes them withstand, "stand against" and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users. From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the

fact that... (we) can retrieve their sameness'.
Arendt (1958, p.137, cited in Hodder, 2012, p.4)⁴⁹

When extended into the sphere of clay-based work deliberately made to be impermanent a tension may be perceived: if objects bring stability to human lives by their sameness, their persistence, and their reliability, then impermanent clay objects (as well as short-lived processes and events involving clay) upset and agitate that expectation.

This is consistent with the perspective that 'things are really just stages in the process of the transformation of matter' (Hodder, 2012, p.5). While Hodder is no doubt talking in general terms about relatively stable things, this can be expanded in relation to for instance Caroline Tattersall's *Spode Tower* with its inbuilt collapse from a readily understood form to amorphosity on the floor of the Spode Works (see **Figures 5.10, 8.7**).



Figure 5.10 Caroline Tattersall *Spode Tower* collapsing. 04.11.11. Approx. 5' x 5'

Hodder's play on, or reference back to, 'thing' as an assembly, and his acceptance that an object draws together an assemblage of memories,

⁴⁹ For similar statements see Latour (2005), Olsen (2010, p.139)

functions, resonances etc., is notable. The object has complexity and history that can be teased out, depending on context and form of presentation.

Bolt (2011, p.36) in her discussion of 'the artworld' references Danto making sense of Warhol's Brillo Box, followed by George Dickie. According to them, there is a closed shop – an artefact (in the context of this discussion, an 'object' perhaps) can only be considered 'art' if it is accepted by the artworld. The issue of Art Worlds and Becker's (2008) perspective is important. An artist points up the issue: 'I began to see that the art market was flocked with vultures and my notion that if I didn't hang in a good gallery, I was a nobody. I turned my thinking on its head and took to the streets.' (de Pajaro, 2013) The tension between the policing of an economic and political boundary and the making of art warrants further consideration in another context. It is sufficient for current purposes to note this tension and the challenges to the established art market.

5.6 REFLEXION ON MATERIAL AND MEANING

This chapter argues that if objects bring a stability to human lives by their reliability, then impermanent clay objects confuse that expectation. Because it cannot be controlled or conserved, it follows that impermanent clay-based art may impact powerfully on the percipient, even in circumstances when the alteration or destruction of a piece is anticipated.

The dissonance engendered by the effect of a material behaving in an unexpected way provides an opportunity to re-view what the work expresses, to reflect upon the art itself and the personal response – an interpretive and engaging experience unique to each percipient. The argument for identifying a different way of evaluating material impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice is advanced by this finding.

Chapter 5 has considered the significance of clay as a material for contemporary artists from the ceramic tradition. It has offered an interpretation of material agency as an active element of expressivity,

creating a dissonance with a long-standing cultural context in which clay and ceramic are constant, dependable and unchanging.

Chapter 6 identifies and interprets the second major theme in the research exploration: the importance of location and placement of impermanent contemporary ceramic work.

CHAPTER 6 SITING WORK: CITING MEANING

The worlds we study are created, in part, through the texts we write and perform about them... These texts are always dialogical - the site at which the voices of the other, alongside the voices of the author, come alive and interact with one another.

Denzin (1997, p.xiii)

As a major theme for the research programme, Chapter 5 discussed the significance of clay as material per se, specifically focusing on the dissonances of clay in inconstant form. This chapter examines siting of work, as a further major characteristic of contemporary ceramic practice utilising impermanence. Location and placement of impermanent work are considered, as experimented with in personal practice and illustrated in that of contemporaries. Implications of siting and placement are discussed as a means of setting such practice in a wider theoretical context.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The power that siting of art objects has on their impact and construed meaning has a long history:

Where an artwork is seen – be it in a cave, a church, a palace, a museum, a commercial gallery, an outdoor space, or a private home – and where it is placed within that chosen space can confer a meaning... It is a key issue in the appreciation of art.
Newhouse (2005, p.8)

At the start of the research programme a variety of experimental pieces were made, engaging with impermanence in non-gallery locations. In retrospect, it is clear that among other issues, such as the significance of material (Chapter 6) and the role of record (Chapter 9), this was a way of intuitively testing the importance of place in personal practice. Site was explored as destructive force (*Tidal Transience*), as statement (*Converse:Mao*) and as

collaborator (*Traces*). The issue of site for work has been considered for each installation, often being the direct stimulus for work.

6.1.1 Engagement with place

The fourteen elements making up *Converse:Mao* (**Figure 4.2**, see also 2.2.1, p.42) were carried daily on a birding visit to China. The press-moulded faces in British-sourced raw clay connected with the earlier gallery-installed *Fallacy*⁵⁰. Here they personified the stringencies of the Mao regime, and the two-week trip was spent reflecting on the way contemporary Chinese society works in the context of a Western (admittedly narrow) understanding of Chinese communism. Each day there was a wait for a location to present itself pointing up issues of Maoism, resulting in varied sites – a field latrine, a ditch full of dead fish, an incense-holder at a Buddhist temple, a drainage outfall etc. A publication (Appendix 10, book archive of the work) with diary entries indicates all the sites.

The way the faces were installed (see **Figure 6.1**) was also stimulated by their context. Each response to site was different, some positive towards, some rejecting of, the Mao regime, and the experience emphasised the variation in response which location can stimulate, in association with personal mood and circumstance.

The frequency with which siting is an important (while not ubiquitous) feature in my impermanent clay-based work led into investigation in order to better understand its significance. This review of connection to place in personal and case study work (e.g. Eden, Cushway, Tattersall, also Cummings, Twomey, Cummins and Piper, and Gormley) explores the phenomenon and contextualises it as a distinctive strand of ceramic art practice engaging with impermanence.

Due to its frequency and complexity, this aspect could be the basis for a thesis in its own right. A selective approach was therefore taken to draw out strands of specific interest to my own praxical development.

⁵⁰ They used a similar intaglio mould made by the same Jingdezhen ceramic artist, Joe Fan



Figure 6.1 Installing *Converse:Mao, No.4*, 31.10.14. The vastness of the industrial landscape was oppressive here, hence an urge to crush the piece underfoot. Image © Dr. J. Eccles

6.1.2 Categorising location

(a) *Site-specificity*. An historic definition is:

an artist's intervention in a specific locale, creating a work that is integrated with its surroundings and that explores its relationship to the topography of its locale... The term also applies to an environmental installation or sculpture created especially for a particular gallery space or public site. Guggenheim website (undated)

Reflection and experimentation during the research programme led to the identification of scales of importance for location in impermanent work using clay. The term 'site-specificity' is used in the more restricted sense to encompass cultural and historic resonances of place as well as the usual topographical aspects. I endorse Aitchison's view (2005, p.1): 'It strikes me as ironic that the term site-specific is generally employed as shorthand for work that takes place outside of cultural spaces like theatres and galleries': practitioners, including myself, may use institutional sites where appropriate to work and its personal meaning.

In 1985 (and cited by Kwon, 1997 p.86), Richard Serra stated a key characteristic of site-specificity to be that:

to remove the work is to destroy the work... The scale, size, and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure. The works become part of the site and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site. Serra (1985)

Whether a work impacts in such a way on a site that it alters it physically or not, for some personal work there is only one possible physical site because the maker's meaning embedded for that work⁵¹ is directly connected with a place or event, as was the case for *Converse:Mao* (6.1.1, p.133). *Nag Puja*, see 7.2.1, pp.165-168, is another example of a site holding particular meaning. The term site-specificity is thus used to indicate resonance unique to an individual site. When material also relates to such a site, as in *RePlace* (see 9.3.2, pp.214-216), that site has heightened specificity.

I recognise a latent paradox in desiring a specific site for the purposes of personal meanings, with the knowledge that others may (and frequently do) remove installations. However, as indicated elsewhere, in my own practice installations and their meanings are gifted to finders to engage with at their own discretion, unconditionally. Potential appropriation is a crucial part of personal meaning as the work's instigator, with the expectation that this is an

⁵¹ Given discussion elsewhere about personal meanings for impermanent work, I do not automatically extend meaningfulness to other percipients. My meanings may – or may not – be applicable for them

individual (perhaps singular) response. Relationship between maker and percipients is as evanescent as the work frequently is itself (e.g. *RePlace* and *Converse:Mao*). Intimacy of scale enhances the capacity for adoption by a finder in an open setting.

(b) *Site-sensitivity*. For work that is relevant to a site but could also be located elsewhere without loss of meaning, the term 'site-sensitivity' is used. Work such as the *Traces* exhibition (see also 5.1, pp.110-113) created a dialogue with a permanent collection of important Chinese ceramics, requiring a setting such as the Oriental Museum, Durham, with its fine MacDonald ceramic collection. It would equally have held its meaning in a similar setting, such as the Sir Percival David collection at the British Museum. It was site-sensitive in connecting directly with an environment with the characteristics to enable meanings to be drawn.

(c) *Site-allusiveness*. Other work, such as *ReCollection* (6.2.3, p.145), could be re-located with little impact on meaning, this being bound up with form, its disintegration and its narrative. Placing it in a historic/museum setting added gravitas. The site's pebble matrix (**Figure 6.7**) physically enhanced the work and its dissolution unexpectedly, as the elements gradually subsided into their surroundings. Such a setting is site-allusive in providing a sympathetic, appropriate environment without specific connection for the work's meaning (this would have altered had it been installed at the Roman villa inspiring it).

The personal work referenced in the thesis has been categorised in **Table 6.A** in relation to these three terms, indicating the importance of clarifying meanings:

- Site-specificity (1)
- Site-sensitivity (2)
- Site-allusiveness(3)

TABLE 6.A LOCATIONS FOR RESEARCH-RELATED WORK				
TYPE	TITLE	YEAR	LOCATION	SITE RELEVANCE
3	<i>Tidal Transience</i>	2009	Tideline Hartlepool	Allusive: tsunami/ environmental comment
2	<i>Losing It</i>	2010	Allotment Hartlepool	Sensitive: industrial decline/political comment
3	<i>ReCollection</i>	2011	Bede's World Jarrow	Allusive: history/social comment
1	<i>Nag Puja</i>	2011	Chitwan Nepal	Specific: personal experience/audience response
1	<i>Return to Koshi</i>	2011	Saptakoshi River Nepal	Specific: material/ environmental comment
3	<i>No. 11 Tea Ceremony</i>	2011	Domestic Parlour Saltaire	Allusive: material performativity/ social comment
1	<i>Sanbao Respect</i>	2011	Jingdezhen China	Specific: material performativity/ social comment
1	<i>RePlace</i>	2012	Environment (various) Orkney	Specific: material/ audience response
2	<i>Traces including Fallacy</i>	2014	Oriental Museum Durham	Sensitive: material/ cultural comment/ audience
1	<i>Converse:Mao</i>	2014	Jiangsu & Jiangxi China	Specific: cultural/ social/ political comment

6.2 ROLES OF PLACE IN PERSONAL PRACTICE

Personal practice clearly engages with place. Locating work is part of its personal meaning for me as installer, even if irrelevant for finders. While use of place has varied during the research journey, a recurring feature is placing work away from the home base. Use is frequently made of the opportunities that foreign travel provides, when planning in advance, for instance taking prepared pieces (as for *Converse:Mao*, 6.1.1, p.133, also Chapters 5, 8 and 9 for consideration of this work), or asking a local agent to supply local clay in lowland Nepal in 2011. However, while a trip may include the wherewithal to

make work, it is usually unclear what may be made, where, or what it may mean, until what feels to be the 'right' location is reached with an appropriate stimulus, such as Chitwan Forest Camp in Nepal (see 7.2.1, pp.165-168 for analysis of *Nag Puja*).

Devising the categories and tabulating personal work (see **Table 6.A**), has prompted reflection regarding the proportion of practice occurring away from the home environment, whether elsewhere in the United Kingdom, or in different cultural milieux, a post-studio practice comparable with that of Cushway (who describes himself as 'someone who didn't really have a studio and hasn't worked in one for an awful long time'⁵²) and Cummings (stating that: 'I'm thinking particularly about site as material, how the site might inform the making process; site as a studio space.' Conversely she also states: 'with the residency I did at the V&A in 2010 I was given a specific studio space which I really approached more like a site.'⁵³).

Making work while travelling correlates with return visits (the only installation in a previously unvisited location – in Sweden in 2013 – was unsuccessful due to material and connotative dissonance). While exceeding the remit for this research, this trend warrants further research in terms of praxis development.

The siting of work is bound also to the form and material of the pieces made. Reflection on experimental/non studio-based practice helps to make explicit a number of characteristics for my work. These encompass intimate size, domesticated form and common materials, together with presentation in an accessible, unthreatening environment (whether Mao faces on a garden wall or eggs in a spoil heap) to prompt reaction from finders such as: What is going on here? What do I make of it? What am I supposed to make of it? The combination of aspects is deliberately made to provoke reaction, and preferably engagement (see 9.3.3, pp.216-217). As the maker, the capacity to make work away from a studio environment widens horizons regarding

⁵² *Museum as Site* presentation, CARCUoS SITE colloquium 09.05.14

⁵³ *Site – Material – Process* presentation, CARCUoS SITE colloquium 09.05.14

materials, processes and forms, and the resultant unexpected character of an installation and its (often dynamic) interaction with context are crucial to its reception. Answers and explanations are not offered. There is a testing of boundaries, sometimes transgressive, that, as instigator, I hope will stimulate a psychological – even a physically active – response.

These preferences, confirmed by experience, lead me to endorse Kwon's (2004) rejection of the conception that:

all site-specific gestures would have to be understood as reactive, cultivating what is presumed to be there already rather than generating new identities and histories...

Indeed, the deterritorialization of the site has produced liberating effects... introducing possibilities for the production of multiple identities, allegiances, and meanings, based not on normative conformities but on the nonrational convergences forged by chance encounters and circumstances. Kwon (2004, pp.164-5)

As the statement of praxis indicates (9.4, pp.223-225), the creativity instigated by the work placed in landscape and other unexpected contexts has different meanings for those in contact with it, to the point that it may not be perceived creatively at all. As it is appropriated, either physically or psychologically (as with my utilisation of Joe Fan's intaglio Mao face in *Fallacy* and *Converse:Mao*) its historic continuity is dislocated, reshaped – maybe rejected – and rebuilt. And much of this engagement is on an intuitive, rather than intellectual, level.

6.2.1 Place and record

When making *Tidal Transience* (2009, see 4.4, pp.103-104), tests were undertaken to understand tidal action on similar pieces, and the installation was timed for the turn of high tide. The creative intention was to experience a deliberate loss of work, while the research aim was to explore the ramifications of not making a personal documentary record of work.

Individuals were invited to witness the work, which was in public view, so passers-by could, and did, stop to watch. The likelihood that this would be a performance piece was not considered, but this is in effect what it was (see **Figure 6.2**. Chapter 7 considers audience relations and performativity in

detail). Although a deliberate decision was for no personal record of the work, invited witnesses did photograph and video the event, providing unsolicited copies of images.

The sea was a crucial element of this work. As Cummings indicated in her 2014 CARCUoS presentation, regarding site in her practice: 'I'm thinking particularly about site as material'. The keels personally evoked the debris strewn by the power of the 2004 tsunami – the wreckage participated as an agent of destructive change, breaking up the hulls, burying some in the tidal sand, and sucking some into deeper water.



Figure 6.2 Installing *Tidal Transience* 20.09.09. Image © P. Tierney 2009

Despite its relevance as a destroyer of work and as a reference to the strength of a tsunami, however, the location itself was not central to the work (i.e. the tideline was a necessary, but not sufficient element). It was allusive:

any coast with tidal currents would have sufficed. It would have been more telling if undertaken on a tsunami-hit coast, where it would have connected directly with local experience, and perhaps provoked personal memories of the tsunami's impact.



Figure 6.3 *Tidal Transience*, detail. 20.09.09. Headland, Hartlepool. Image © M. J. Gee 2009

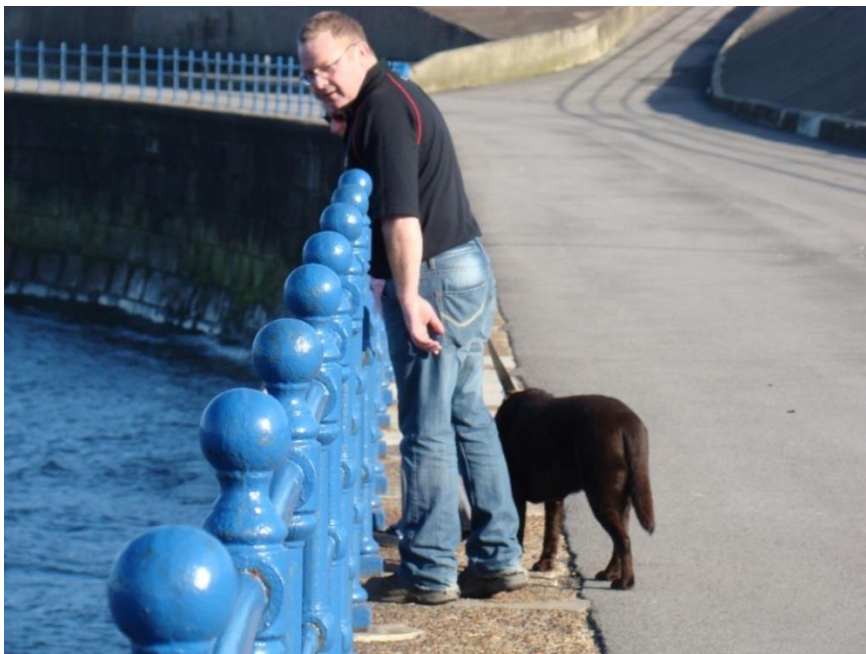


Figure 6.4 *Witnessing Tidal Transience*. 20.09.09. Headland, Hartlepool. Image © M. J. Gee 2009

Passers-by were interested but not engaged: the work had no local narrative to bring it to life for those witnessing it, invited or by chance, while being personally cathartic as maker.

Eden's work *February 5th 2004* (2007, see 4.1.2, p.89, **Figure 6.5** and Appendix 6) also relates closely to tide as site. This installation of twenty-three fired elements commemorates the twenty-three Chinese cockle pickers who lost their lives on Morecambe Bay's mudflats, overcome by high tide on 5 February 2004. Eden made the work in response to the tragedy, screen-printing newspaper reports and individual names onto each of the elements. They were initially exhibited in a gallery setting in Rhyl during the COAST exhibition (June–July 2007), before she placed them in the tide close to where the drownings occurred in Morecambe Bay⁵⁴, which she describes



Figure 6.5 Victoria Eden *February 5th 2004*. First environmental installation at Sandside, Morecambe Bay, close where 23 Chinese cockle-pickers died. Image © V. Eden (2007)

(personal communication 29.01.15) as 'definitely the most important showing for me'. At the time she did not consider this an impermanent piece of work:

I don't think I thought much about this [the work's impermanence] as I was making the piece, the urge to make it was strong and it was only later that I began to think about its ultimate fate and

⁵⁴ During the FRED Cumbria Outdoor Art Event, 29-30.09.07

impermanence became important. Eden (Personal communication, 06.01.15)

The installation was filmed⁵⁵ in August 2007 when the pieces were set out at Red Bank in sight of the part of the Bay where the cockle-pickers were lost, but Eden did not make a documentary record of it in any medium (see Chapter 8 regarding the role of record) – indeed, she did not consider its installation for filming as part of the work:

the filming wasn't done in real time as it was just about made when Alex [McErlain] found out what I was doing. The plaster cast and the making sequences were done just for him and Steve the photographer.

I think that because I was remaking a piece for the film it wasn't as difficult as it might have been if I was working on the original piece. Eden (Personal communication. 08.02.15)

February 5th 2004 was later installed on dry ground as part of a group exhibition, on the tenth anniversary of the drownings. As the cited comment of 06.02.15 indicates, Eden now sees the work as private, transient and site-specific, having released several of the elements to tidal action close to where the events took place, the only potential witnesses being passers-by.

The story of Eden's work is mixed, given the connection of its original outdoor setting to the event it commemorates, while its first installation was not even in the same country (Rhyl, North Wales). Its status as an 'impermanent installation' is also uncertain, given her intention for it to be taken by the tide while also planning to keep one or two elements to remind her of the work⁵⁶. It could shift from Class 1.i in **Table 4.A**, to 3.i – or even 4.

Despite changes from initial intentions, the original outdoor location for the work and the site for the final demise of some of its elements are directly linked to the meaning of Eden's work. While its integral site-specificity has

⁵⁵ See *On the Night of February 5th*. DVD recording by McErlain *et al*, Visual Resources Centre, Faculty of Art and Design, Manchester Metropolitan University 2007 (www.artdes.mmu.ac.uk/visualresources/)

⁵⁶ Eden's new website <http://www.victoria-eden.uk/> indicates she has now decided to commit one element annually to the tide until they have all gone (30.04.15)

been impacted by time and events, the original link to where the tragedy occurred is strong and clear, as indicated in 4.1.2, p.89.

6.2.2 Place and Access

Losing It (**Figure 6.6**) explored the absence of audience and the use of photography to evidence work. As with Eden's latest iteration of her installation, the intention was to make work in private, in order to explore the position of 'art for art's sake' and also the place of photographic record. The main element was an environmental installation and the wider 'Losing It' project (Appendix 1.vi) explored the use of different materials as carriers of meaning (see 5.2, pp.113-118 for general discussion regarding textile).

Losing It Tablecloth was a textile version with heirloom materials: tablecloth, buttons, and sewing thread, while durational work involving dead fish and drawings was exposed to weather.



Figure 6.6 *Losing It* disappearing into a brassica bed (16.05.10)

The main (raw clay) *Rose Field* installation was an intuitive response to meeting a Potteries flower-maker, who had just been made redundant: a commentary on the decline of the English pottery industry in Staffordshire resulted.

Losing It also explored the importance of site – and sight. It was in a private location, seen only by two others, despite enduring for several months; and it disappeared inexorably through new vegetative growth, a metaphor for hope. A trigger for siting the work is reflected in Thomas Gray’s poem (*An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*):

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The site has no geographical or other physical connection with the subject matter. The work is described as site-sensitive, because the horticultural setting was pertinent to its form, and was secluded (unnoticed like the declining pottery industry). While the allotment provided opportunities to examine issues of evidence and record, this particular location enhanced, but was not crucial to, the work; a deserted factory site in the Potteries, for instance, would have made it directly site-specific.

6.2.3 Place and history

ReCollection (see 6.1.2, p.136, **Figures 8.1-3**) is an installation in a museum setting, devised for a research student exhibition at Bede’s World, Jarrow. It responded to news of the excavation of the remains of ninety-seven infants at a Roman villa site in Buckinghamshire – male and female, all seemingly healthy neonates. It was opportune to make an installation piece to respond to this strange circumstance, and the location was available, rather than sought. The opportunity was taken to find a location viewable from within the museum (flat roof with a thick layer of pebbles, adjacent to French windows).

The installation has persisted until the time of writing, decaying and settling back into the pebble matrix which surrounds it (**Figure 6.7**). It was effectively adopted by museum staff, who retained and curated the work after the exhibition closed⁵⁷. Although location and subject matter have slight cultural connections, there is no essential match between the subject and the location. The impact of the work is still strong, however, because of its

⁵⁷ As Bede’s World Trust went into administration in February 2016, it is not clear whether the work survives

persistence and interaction between pebble matrix and disintegrating pieces, which seem to have a mutual affinity.



Figure 6.7 *ReCollection* after four years. Overall dimensions approx. 6x6 yds. 17.03.15

Twomey's installation of 2003 at Gibside Hall, *Lost Rituals* (**Figure 6.8**) contrasts with *Re-Collection* in the closer relationship of the former between content, site and, therefore, meaning:

Lost Rituals was a site-specific installation commissioned for the Gibside Estate, a National Trust site in Gateshead, Newcastle. It comprised a 25-metre work made from porcelain powder that lay on the ground in front of the building and reflected the silhouettes of the windows and doors of the massive seventeenth century building that was used as a stable on this grand estate. Several high-fired porcelain objects lay hidden within the powder that told narratives of the building's purpose; these objects were revealed as the rain washed away the unfired porcelain powder. This in 2003 was my first investigation into external temporary works in clay. The work was a vulnerable work that activity disintegrated day by day. This alluded to the continual battle that The Stables have with time and the elements. Creating fragility that was empathetic to the buildings lamentable beauty. Twomey (Personal communication, 01.12.15)



Figure 6.8 Clare Twomey (2003) *Lost Rituals* Gibside Hall. Dimensions variable. Images © C. Twomey

Unlike *ReCollection*, *Lost Rituals* was embedded in the history of its location: the raw clay 'ghost' of the building's fenestration was left to weather and deteriorate, from which the fired replicas of period domestic items emerged.

Twomey's work often makes use of connections between content and place, as Rena (2004, unpaginated) indicates:

Historical places of the sort that Twomey works with have their own particular moods, and her installations search out and evoke that mood. It is this that makes her work contemporary – an elegiac sensitivity to the fading spirit of places.

Exchange, Twomey's large work with cups and saucers installed (2013) in the Foundling Museum, was specific to place and also engaged directly with visitors to create meaning. The combination of local connectivity and evocative domestic form in such work is striking to the percipient and impacts powerfully.

Reviewing experiments in relation to other artists' engagement with site has clarified the powerful impact location has on the reception of impermanent installation work, which is explored further in experimental practice, including *Nag Puja* and *RePlace*. The former installation was embraced by local people to the extent that they responded by installing a permanent shrine to Shiva (see 7.2.1, pp165-168). The raw midden-clay egg element of the latter work so engaged an archaeologist at the Ness of Brodgar that one was resited to embody her/his own meaning (9.3.2, pp.214-216).

6.2.4 Place and material

As indicated above, my understanding of site-specificity is 'quintessentialised' in the use of material with direct local resonance.

Return to Koshi (**Figure 4.1**, Appendix 1.vii) was an extremely brief event-piece, undertaken at a point on Koshi River, southeast Nepal, where the current of this important water source was running smoothly and relatively clearly. *Return* consisted of clay slip, made from local brick clay. In a brief act, bottles of slip were inverted over the river, allowing the contents to trail and disperse into the water, returning the local sedimentary soil to its fluvial source. The work's meaning was directly related to place (the river, itself changing from moment to moment) and the material's origin and formlessness. The inextricable ties between these elements made the work unique to place. An addition to this equation, which would bind it even closer would be if, as in *February 5th 2004*, the time of the intervention had significance for the place as well.

Reflecting on personal experience in practice and relevant conceptual frameworks, it is clear that the significance of event in impermanent ceramic art practice – while considered in Chapter 7 – warrants fuller research beyond the remit of the current programme, particularly in exploring the pertinence of event- and performance-related aesthetic frameworks (see 10.6.a, p.235).

Consideration of event and performative work by peers certainly demonstrates strong bonds between location and material, as well as brevity. Cushway's *Plate Spinner/Spode* and Tattersall's *Spode Tower*, in referencing the Spode Works, indicate the link with place in their titles. The material aspect, as well as the timing (the recent demise of the Spode works as an economically viable industrial site) strengthen the impact of these transient works (also variously discussed in 4.1.1, pp.83-84; 5.1, p.110).

Clay is not unique in generating impact through a combination of timing, site, topography and form, which is also evident in impermanent textile installation such as *London Olympics 2012* on Saltburn Pier by the anonymous Saltburn

Yarn Stormers⁵⁸ (**Figure 6.9**). SYS mark sporting events with guerrilla knitting



Figure 6.9 SYS. *Synchronised swimming: London Olympics 2012. Saltburn Pier (2012)* installations, apparently always sited at this location, thereby adding another dimension to site-specificity, i.e. public expectation.

6.3 MEANINGS AND DEFINITIONS

Connection with place evidently varies, as 6.2 above indicates. Thus, consideration of this aspect of contemporary impermanent work from the ceramic tradition allows a distinction to be made between situations where only a single site is appropriate, those where work could be located within a restricted area, those whose sympathetic characteristics enhance impact and those in which location is of little, if any, relevance. Variations exist in the strength of physical links to site, not just between artists, but also within the work of individual artists, and experimentation with site and meaning was a theme in developing personal praxis.

⁵⁸ SYS

6.3.1 Defining and illustrating 'site'

In summary, use of the term 'site-sensitivity' describes work with a significant relationship with its location. For such work the physical context is connected with meaning, but the link between meaning and location can – and often does – extend to cultural, historical or political features associated with place. While 'site-specific' is used for work that could not physically exist elsewhere while retaining the same meaning, the issue of specificity and sensitivity to place is highly nuanced.

The first element of the Guggenheim website description cited in 6.1.2, p.134 clearly implies environmental work or land art, while the second element broadens this out, encompassing much of the impermanent ceramic installation work relevant to this research.⁵⁹

Aitchison's (2005) term 'collaboration with location', with its implications of unmediated personal and psychological relationship to place, is more subtle. The issue of mediatisation of impermanent ceramic work is explored in Chapter 8, in regard to evidence and record. It is sufficient here to note that connecting place with impermanence implies the need for the percipient to be present in order to engage with the work. Impermanent work (like a live event) cannot necessarily be revisited, as is also discussed in Chapter 7.

Respect (15.04.11) which lasted less than ten minutes was utterly site-specific. The diary for 13.04.11 records:

I have a small performance in mind for Friday...
dropping the reject rice wine bottle I was given at the bottle factory into the gabion tower across the road. It already contains rice wine bottles. This would shift the status of the bottle from consumable (potential) to rubbish [in the discard pile at the factory] to durable (given as a gift) to rubbish and/or art. Perfect!...

Generalising the concept of site-specificity embraces work that cannot be undertaken elsewhere while retaining the meaning intended by its maker,

⁵⁹ institutional settings excepted

whether this is specifically embedded in the piece itself, or a prompt for the percipient to reflect and respond (the complexity of personal experience being indicated in **Diagram 7.1**, p.184).

Respect (**Figure 6.10**) involved a gabion at the entrance to Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute in Jingdezhen, which had been filled with ceramic rice wine bottles by the owners of the institute to create a very clear landmark and signpost for the pottery. The bottles were persistently removed by tourists and passers-by, to the owners' distress. While in Sanbao, my group visited a rice wine bottle factory, each member being invited to take a reject fired bottle from its waste heap. All did so, most of the group intending to bring theirs home.

The group was assembled, each member given an incense stick (provided by the family of makers in mountainous Guizhou Province), and told of my intention to place my reject bottle in the gabion as a mark of respect, to redress some of the loss of Sanbao's landmark. The group was asked to process through the pottery to its entrance, where the bottle was thrown into the gabion, breaking as it hit others. The incense sticks were lit by the group and placed in the necks of the remaining bottles, being watched as the pungent smoke rose from the gabion.

This performative piece (combining performance and the act of respect it indicates) related to a specific feature in the environment and a particular occasion. It would not have carried the same impact or significance if it had been undertaken elsewhere or at a different time (see Appendix 1.viii). There is no information regarding the response of the percipient/ performers, whose interpretations of the event, though framed by the announcement to them, may all be utterly different.



Figure 6.10 Sarah Gee performing *Sanbao Respect* Jingdezhen 2011. (Wire gabion, containing rice wine bottles) Image © C-A. Richards.

As 6.1.2, p.136 indicates, the installation *Traces* (**Figure 6.11** and Appendix 1.iv) was site-sensitive, exploring relationships between raw porcelain as unremarkable dust and fine examples of historic fired porcelain from imperial and similar prestigious sources. The link between raw material and finished



Figure 6.11 *Traces*. Detail of installation: celadon glazed porcelain bowl (centre) containing 'older brother' clay from seventh generation dragon kiln, Longquan, with funerary urn decorated with entwined dragon (DOM, 2014)

work of historic significance was important, but the installation would have worked in the context of a similar permanent collection of Chinese porcelains from the same area (particularly with pieces from imperial kilns in Longquan, Hangzhou and Jingdezhen). It was therefore relevant to its setting, and gained contextual meaning, while that specific location was not essential. The installation was designed to deliberately blur boundaries between new and old, unvalued and valued, and challenged the visitor to look carefully to distinguish it from the permanent collection (see <https://vimeo.com/141900204> and <https://vimeo.com/141901780>).

By contrast, Cummins' and Piper's temporary installation of ceramic poppies at the Tower of London, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, (**Figure 6.12**) is not site-specific. While the Tower moat is an interesting place to install a short-term memorial to the dead soldiers of World War One (and the impact



Figure 6.12 Paul Cummins and Tom Piper *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* centenary installation, Tower of London. 2014 Image by Andrew Davidson (Creative Commons Attribution Licence 3.0)

on visitors was powerful), it is not an essential location for this work or its meaning. Flanders fields or Ypres trenches could be more telling. However, because the Tower of London has historic resonance as a symbol of English national character, its impact has been powerfully allusive. The subsequent scattering of the poppies across Great Britain (**Figure 6.13**) means (as with Twomey's *Trophy*) that this aspect of the overall installation can never be reconstructed, adding to the sense of responsibility for those possessing one of its elements, and recalling the ephemerality of the flower and the fate of the men it symbolises.



Figure 6.13 Single poppy from *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* in a domestic garden, Hartlepool. 22.06.15

A number of iterations of Antony Gormley's *Field* have been made since the first in 1989. The initial *Field* was site-specific in that it was (in Guggenheim, undated, terms) made in 1991 in Cholula, Mexico, by a family under Gormley's guidance as a commission for a specific location, using locally sourced red clay. The *Fields* that followed, being made by local people with local materials in the place where they were first exhibited, may have been site-sensitive in their compliance with Gormley's specifications for the short-term placing of the thousands of small-fired clay figures, which should:

completely occupy the space in which they are installed, taking the form of the building and excluding us, but allowing visual access... always seen from a single threshold. The dimensions of the viewing area are equivalent to no less than one sixth of the

total floor area of the piece. This viewing area is completely empty. Gormley (undated)

However, they have toured to different venues within their countries of origin, and therefore while impactful are only marginally site-sensitive in terms of the geography of place.

My own environmental work in particular responds to locations because of their character, their history, their materials, their cultural patterns, with an expressive response which acknowledges both the special and individual nature of place, and also seeks to work with those local qualities and – for however short a period – to make some physical difference. Attention is drawn to what is already ‘there’ in a place, for percipients to experience taking a fresh look at the world around them, if only to question why the instigator has made a transient intervention in that particular place. As the hope is to leave something in their memories and their emotions, site-sensitivity meaning ‘aware of and responsive to the actual space in the moment’ (Aitchison, 2005, unpaginated) evokes its meaning.

6.4 REFLEXION ON SITING

A number of interlinking themes regarding impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice have been identified through the research programme, addressed in Chapters 4-8, i.e. materiality, performativity, ownership (by which is meant pro-active engagement by others), and evidence and record. Threading through all these themes is the crucial nature of site and the placement of work, and how this enables engagement with percipients.

In the experimental work undertaken during the programme these themes formed a matrix, none being discrete or independent. Thus, the focus on work through the programme has been exploring impermanence in relation to location that also connects with:

- the material itself and its active character (*RePlace* and *Fallacy*)
- collaboration and audience relationships (*RePlace* and *Nag Puja*)
- evidence and record (*Losing It*)

The frequency with which location presents as an important feature in impermanent contemporary ceramic practice shifts the dynamic from 'art as object' towards 'art as event', particularly – as indicated in the Denzin chapter head quotation – when provoking percipient response. The combination of place and time with the uniqueness described in Chapter 4 regarding the specific, unenduring nature of impermanent artistic expression indicates a need for co-presence of work and percipient for meaning to be generated. This leads to the exploration of live art as a coherent model within which effectively to articulate work with such interlinked features.

This chapter has characterised the nature of location and siting in contemporary impermanent ceramic art work, and has offered an interpretation of its significance.

Consolidating and extending these aspects, Chapter 7 considers the next major theme in the research exploration: shifts in the framing and presentation of impermanent contemporary ceramic work, considering its 'aliveness', and contextualising it in a performance aesthetic.

CHAPTER 7 FROM PLINTH TO PERFORMANCE

[Herrmann's] definition of performance as an event between actors and spectators – that is, not fixed or transferable but ephemeral and transient (p.33)

The performance is regarded as art not because it enjoys the status of an artwork but because it takes place as an event (p.35)

Fischer-Lichte (2008)

The assumption is that artefacts can stimulate the user's behaviour by means of their function, thus causing mindful reflection and interaction.

Niedderer (2007, p.3)

Chapters 4 to 6 have assembled elements with which to venture an analysis of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, having so far discussed the nature of impermanence itself, materiality and location as major prisms through which to view the phenomenon. Chapter 7 progresses this by discussing an artistic shift which contemporary ceramic practitioners have pioneered, that of performance, framed by a different aesthetic from that which ceramicists have traditionally sought to construct. It identifies and explores the final major theme in the research programme, the change in relationship between the 'audience', the artist and contemporary ceramic creativity.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis takes a nesting, Russian doll-like, perspective of the research area, looking at each layer that envelops my impermanent ceramic practice and that of my contemporaries, in order to offer an analysis for academics and practitioners to consider and develop further.

Attention moved from contemporary ceramic art practice in general to that which uses impermanence as its form of expression. The focus then shifted to clay as the material of choice, before moving in to examine the use of location.

This chapter examines a further aspect characterising impermanent contemporary ceramic art practice: its relationship to 'audience'. Discussion elsewhere (particularly 9.3.3, pp.216-217 and 9.4, pp.223-225) indicates that the noun 'audience' is inappropriate in this setting because of its inherent passivity. A broad context for this developing position is offered by articulation of relational art as 'taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space' (Bourriaud, 2010, p.14, original emphasis), particularly when interpreted thus:

In Bourriaud's words 'relational aesthetics is not about the artist arriving like the god and saying 'ok, this is the meaning of the artwork', it is about open structures which allow room to the beholder, visitor of the exhibition. Damir (2013, p.5)

This aspect – relationship to 'audience' – has a number of interconnected facets.

Earlier chapters argued that impermanent ceramic work in the contemporary context is not static, to be absorbed by a passive viewer. Such work stimulates meaning through the language of clay, evoking a complex of cultural and social allusions through resonances of place and form, and at its core acknowledging the ubiquity of change and mortality through its transience.

In this conception of the role of art, the viewer has a more central role than that of unassertive recipient. The work activates when it is engaged with (see Baker, 1980⁶⁰ and Kuspit, 1982⁶¹, both unpaginated) and the percipient (see Definitions and Clarifications, p.xiv and 1.7.2(c), pp.27-28, regarding use of this term) makes that creative connection in a wholly personal way. As Kuspit remarked (to Guasch, 2008, p.7): 'in postmodernism the audience has as much importance as the artist', a point reinforced in Niedderer's perception of

⁶⁰ 'Carl Andre remarked in conversation...that one way to judge a "good" sculpture is by the sound it makes when you strike it... Andre's quip is interesting in that it draws attention to the notion that works of art can resonate with the effects of our activities as "spectators."... I am arguing that works of art matter because of what we can do with them' (Baker, 1980)

⁶¹ whose writing is described thus: 'It is criticism that attends to what the artist evokes – not just what the artist's work signifies.' (Wadlington, 1996)

the triangular relationship between maker, work and recipient/percipient in the design field (Niederer, 2007, pp.6-7).

Having positive engagement with something perceived as creative, the percipient is stimulated by the encounter to accept an implicit invitation to participate in it actively, or at least to acknowledge and reflect on it. The creative work is not the object in the gallery. It is agentic, active and of the moment. In Latour's (2005) terms, the work is an actant, connecting and relating to its percipient. In Damir's (2013) view cited above, it seeks equality between instigator and percipient (these being terms through which I seek to avoid equation of artist = creator = controller of work and meaning), collaboratively generating the art. *Nag Puja* (see 7.2.1, pp.165-168) illustrates this relationship, in its collaborative developmental character (as does *RePlace*, see Chapter 6). In Bourriaud's terms, there is a horizontality between instigator and percipient, enabling a sharing, an equality in meaning-making and ownership of the creation that ensues, as indicated below and in 7.2 below.

Installing work in the environment is a provocation to the percipient to become engaged, as discussion of *RePlace* indicates (1.1.1, pp.8-9). Objects sited for discovery in public spaces belong, in many people's minds, to the finder. Openly accessible environmental installations thus invite engagement, particularly when they simulate items or situations familiar to the finder. The proposition is that objects in such situations perform – are active – although stopping short of saying they evince intentionality (see Bennett, 2010, *passim*). In such situations there is no hierarchy between instigator, work and percipient. They all 'do their own thing' and there is no sense of obligation connecting any of them.

Remarkably, *Fallacy*⁶² demonstrates that, even in a gallery piece, a similar unmediated interaction is possible, to the extent of shared ownership enabled through direct access to an impermanent installatory piece. Appropriation of elements of *Fallacy* occurred to a significant extent – an attrition rate of

⁶² *Traces* exhibition, 2014

approximately 25% in four months (see also 5.1, pp.110-113 regarding this project). Fortunately some contact was possible⁶³, with new owners stating:

when I saw this pile of little faces, I thought I wonder if anybody is here to give them away? And in fact, someone more or less gave me permission⁶⁴. So my hand immediately sort of – well, it wasn't immediate – but was drawn to him, rather like choosing a crystal. Well, you don't choose a crystal. A crystal chooses you... I'm entirely delighted because - thank you for giving me the pleasure of this little china man!
Anon (Sound bite, 18.07.14. Appendix 7)

Something can look perfect until you pick it up, and that whole additional level of engagement can transform the object, can transform the way that you engage and understand and appreciate the object. What these little devils [two Mao heads] do is they allow you to engage. They are mine now! ...They are great because you can physically engage with the process of making. And you can physically engage through the medium of the object with the maker. Craig Barclay (Interview. 23.03.15)

The work in both contexts actively engages percipients, in attracting attention, not just observation, and stimulating inter/action along the spectrum from appropriation to addition (from the appropriations from *Fallacy* to *RePlace*, where a plastic butterfly was added to a textile installation), as well as care and nurture (Njalsdottir's involvement in *RePlace Orkney*, see 9.3.3, pp.216-217; two female travel companions in China, interested in the daily installations of *Converse:Mao* - seeking out sites and checking condition of work). This has the effect, seen from a performance and live art perspective, that 'dichotomous pairs such as subject/object and signifier/signified lose their polarity and clear definition in performance; once set up they begin to oscillate' (Fisher-Lichte, 2008, p.25).

Tacit in 2006, in which Livingstone (2011) 'investigated both process and technique' offers a contrast; described by him as:

⁶³ See 8.4, p.201 regarding general challenges of obtaining feedback from percipients

⁶⁴ In fact, museum staff stated that, if asked whether a piece of the installation could be taken, they responded that it was an element in an exhibition in a permanent collection in a museum; enquirers would have to make their own moral decision about the appropriateness of removing any of it

an installation piece that consists of a CCTV monitored space which explores elements associated with the maker's hand. Participants are invited to construct a basic clay pot following instructions whilst being scrutinised by closed circuit television. The work aims to expose both the maker and the function of the hand within contemporary art practice. (Available at <http://www.andrewlivingstone.com/content/tacit-exhibition-view>, last accessed 23.11.15)

In this work, both the spectator (Livingstone's term) and the material were engaged in a performance. The spectators were, however, offered a specific task to undertake (or not). There is an implicit hierarchy here, embodied in written instructions. The instigator was evident, not in physical presence but in the camera's eye recording the activity, of which the spectators were informed. The dynamic between instigator, installation and percipient here contrasts with that of the more open work of *RePlace*, *Converse:Mao* and *Fallacy*: outcome for the percipient must be affected by knowledge of the artist's expectations.

Live art and also a performative viewpoint makes more sense of this developmental area of contemporary ceramics than a visual art aesthetic and performativity in this context is not the sole remit of the live engagement of the artist with the work – the clay also has significantly performative qualities (see 7.2.3, pp.178-182), and Niedderer, 2007, p.4).

7.2 MOVING FROM THE GALLERY

Personally, my practice focus has shifted from a search for a purposeful location in the gallery to a wider arena. To illustrate this, several works are considered here alongside those of other contemporary artists in the ceramic tradition (Gillian Clarke, David Cushway, Keith Harrison and Phillip Lee) as evidence of an imperative embedded in the way work is developing, i.e. to re-locate. Particular features tend to remove this work from the gallery and consequently alter the relationship between maker, work and audience.

Early in personal ceramic practice efforts were made to create work suitable for the gallery. *Three Cylinders*, for instance, was a static work demonstrating

transience in high-temperature, reduction-fired clay-free material, which I originally devised for my B.A. programme, contrasting a pillar-like form – resonating with stability and endurance – with patent material fragility (**Figure 7.1**).



Figure 7.1 Sarah Gee *Three Cylinders*. Parallels and Connections conference, NGC Sunderland. 18–20.03.09. Each element approx. 11x5.5” diameter

However, such work did not, as I wished, invite engagement given curatorial constraints of a standard gallery setting, where physical engagement is discouraged, even forbidden, particularly with fragile pieces. Exploring impermanence during the research programme, different contexts for work gained importance because of a growing interest in material (see Chapter 5), enabling the pursuit of different types of work, and also an emerging sensitivity to location (see Chapter 6), encouraging greater exploitation of place in generating meaning.

Increasingly, practitioners seek contexts compatible with a performative turn in ceramics, particularly in the light of connections between site and meaning in expressing impermanence (as evidenced in the variety of work involved in the research). Development of such work draws in a number of perspectives and each artist clearly negotiates these individually, whether derived directly from a shift in attitudes to impermanent work or from a general acceptance that artists wish to make and present work in their own way.

For instance, Cushway's work is increasingly film or video based. It is interesting, in discussing the constraints of the formal gallery setting, to note his comment about how his video work has come to be presented:

the other two films [apart from *Fragments*] are in a glass case in a vitrine in the Museum of the Mind in the National Gallery⁶⁵, which I think is quite interesting because they are in a context that I thought they would never be shown in. But they look amazing.

They are inside a glass case, but they are only films, so they don't need the protection of the glass case, but they've removed a section of the ceramics collection to put two monitors in. But the work still works fundamentally because it's how the work was intended as a purely visual thing, something that you take in with your eyes...

So it's *really* interesting that they are inside glass vitrines because that comes loaded with all kinds of interesting baggage. Cushway (Interview 10.11.11, Appendix 5)

As he hints, the glass case is anachronistic, but acts symbolically to endorse the value of a video work. The work, although not designed necessarily for it, has been worked into a standard gallery setting, an indication of how the gallery increasingly accommodates contemporary art, including new media.

Other artists, as this section also indicates, have found ways of presenting their work in a more meaningful way than the gallery context would historically permit, during site-specific events.

⁶⁵ National Museum and Art Gallery of Wales, Cardiff

7.2.1 Impermanence and intent

A feature of contemporary ceramic art emerging as impermanent expression from an institutional environment is redirection of the maker's original intentions (discussed below, pp.168-173 and elsewhere). As indicated in 7.1, pp.1158-162, the reframing of ceramic work, in particular where its character is fragile, ephemeral or mutable, lies increasingly within the context of live art, event or performance. This is explored through *Nag Puja* and Clarke's accidentally impermanent piece.

(a) *Nag Puja*: an environmental installation in a nature park, in lowland Nepal during a bird-watching tour was generated from a personal idea, and enriched by its development as a collaborative venture. It was thoroughly site- and occasion-specific. The outcome was completely unpredicted (also unpredictable), enriched and altered by the crossing of cultural boundaries. (Appendix 1.ix).

Figure 7.2 Sarah Gee *Nag Puja*, Chitwan National Park, Nepal. 05-06.05.11. General view prior to firing

A chance encounter with a cobra with a den close to, but undisturbed by, our camp had a huge impact. It was remarkable to be near a large snake so unperturbed by close human activity (only close encounters with Gray Whale mothers and calves have evinced a similar level of trust) and local people's accommodating attitude towards it was striking, at a time when stimuli for



making work in the forest were sought.

A snake was made from a number of hand-pressed clay discs, a head and tail being fashioned also from local brick clay, for firing in the forest near the cobra's den, using dead sal tree leaves (*Shorea robusta* has religious significance for both Hindus and Buddhists) and wild elephant dung gathered from the forest.

The tour party and local tracker team had been involved in gathering the fuel and our tour leader, a Brahmin newly taking on his priestly responsibilities on the death of his father, helped to determine where the fire could safely be laid, in a small glade close to the camp (**Figure 7.2**).

Both tour party and local team became increasingly involved, discussing the installation and preparing the firing site (**Figure 7.3**).

Given the low-temperature open-firing technique, used previously for the series of 'hearths' during my BA programme, it was clear the work would not survive the monsoon season – experiments with a monsoon rainstorm and raw brick clay had been undertaken earlier on this tour, the pieces disintegrating within hours. When the Hindu trackers were made aware that the intention was to salute the cobra by means of an impermanent installation, they immediately said they would build a Shiva shrine close by, unconcerned by the installation's transience.

The Brahmin priest wished to preside over the firing, which everyone was involved in tending. The trackers and camp staff cleared a patch under the sal tree and made a shrine from river-worn stones with tour party help. The fire cooled overnight. Ash and debris was cleared away at dawn, and simultaneously the new shrine to Shiva was consecrated, involving *puja* by the local workers, the Brahmin priest, and myself (see **Figure 7.4**).



Figure 7.3 Participation in *Nag Puja*. Chitwan National Park. 05.05.11



Figure 7.4 *Nag Puja* and Shiva shrine. Doing *puja* during consecration ceremony, Chitwan National Park. 06.05.11

The tracker who initiated the shrine-building ceremoniously gave me a yellow and red cord (*doro* in Nepali) to commemorate the installation, and said it would bind me permanently to the place and the event.

The work moved significantly from the first concept as personal homage to the cobra. It would have been very different without the Nepali input in particular. Installation and shrine blended to honour the presence of the cobra, a demigod in the Hindu pantheon, and associated with Shiva by the people at Chitwan⁶⁶.

The cooperative culmination of this installation was welcome, though unanticipated, and provoked personal consideration of a more central place for collaboration, as a type of Bourriaud-esque social engagement. Previously (e.g. *Tidal Transience*, see 6.2.1, pp.139-142) the involvement of others had been as witnesses rather than co-operators. *Nag Puja* was exhilarating in freeing me, while instigating the project, from total responsibility for its process and outcome, and in demonstrating the proactive capacity of others to engage, in Bourriaud's terms horizontally, in a creative enterprise initiated by someone else. I contend that such a result may emerge more readily from working in this 'open' way than from studio- and gallery-based practice, where the maker has a more directive locus.

you could almost define impermanence, as much as the obvious thing about quick disappearance against long-lasting existence, in terms of the willingness on the artist's part to embrace and to allow that appropriation, or an unwillingness to. The more permanent you want it to be, the more you make it of permanent material, put it behind [glass], build it big and immovable. M. J. Gee (Discussion, 13.02.15. Appendix 8)

(b) *Accidental impermanence*: The performative aspect of Clarke's 2013 vessel (discussed below) was engendered by material and process. While resident at Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute (October 2013, see Appendix 9 for journal extracts) we were part of a group undertaking a paper kiln/fume firing workshop, experimenting with various additions to biscuit fired pieces and

⁶⁶ Our Brahmin colleague, who knew about my interest in impermanence, donated a trident for the shrine. Shiva's trident connects with the theme of impermanence, connecting time past, time present, and time future.

undertook kiln construction and firing. Clarke made a particularly intriguing piece – a sphere using local porcelain – binding it with packets of oxides for fume-firing⁶⁷, her intention being to bring it home following the ceramic-related trip.

On removal from the kiln (a one-off firing construction), the hollow porcelain sphere broke in her hand, probably as a result of thermal shock in conjunction with material weakness. I was admiring, and photographing the fume effects on the piece, when its disintegration commenced (see **Figures 7.5 a/b/c** and **7.6**).

While this active alteration (this ceramic performance) and its outcome were positively enjoyable for me as a maker engaged in impermanence, Clarke was dismayed. On returning to England she considered and wrote about it:

So what of my broken pot from Sanbao? It will never be impermanent, given the nature of fired clay. I suppose if I ground it into dust it could disappear into the soil or [be] scattered in the sea, but maybe then it could still have a significance, a bit like people's ashes when they die?... already the band around it has created a lot of black dust. It is sitting on a piece of Chinese newspaper [**Figure 7.6**] because I like the black dust...I put a bit of masking tape round it to keep it together until I decide how to let it fall to pieces... I actually think it is very beautiful and a bit of me wants to glue it back together... for now, I'm going to leave it alone and see what happens to it and see how I feel about it as time goes on. Clarke (Personal communication, November 2013)

I responded:

it is such a beautiful piece partly because it prompts us to use memory to re-create the moment it came out of the firing, that fleeting moment of being in one piece, its exquisite perfection and our amazement. I can still feel the excitement of seeing it nestling in your hand, of you turning it in your hand, so we were able to see the complexity and elegance it embodied. And partly

⁶⁷ An unpredictable technique, in this case using a paper kiln, with chemical interaction between clay and packets of oxides



Figure 7.5 a/b/c Clarke's accidentally impermanent piece as it emerged from paper kiln firing, Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute, Jingdezhen, China. 27.10.13

it is because it is taking its own course without human intervention. It has engaged us both through its beauty, its uniqueness and its aliveness.
Sarah Gee (Personal correspondence, 19.11.13)

Clarke replied:

It is interesting what you say about the importance of the medium in thinking about impermanence. I used to teach art to children and they always wanted to keep their ceramic pieces but were only too happy to discard paintings and drawings to the bin. It seemed the 2D work was rarely good enough but the ceramic pieces had a life of their own, independent of their maker. (Personal correspondence, 16.12.13.)

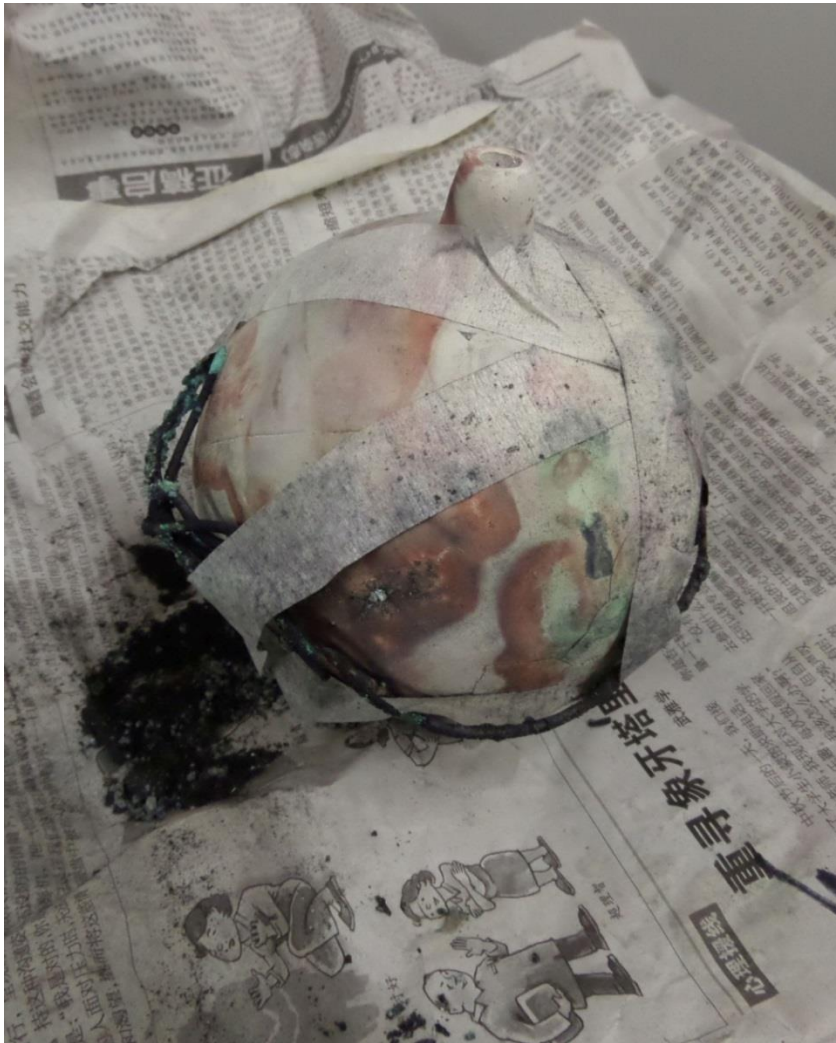


Figure 7.6 Gillian Clarke's impermanent piece, Isle of Wight. December 2013

This work is accidental impermanence rather than a failed firing due firstly to the response to the event, and the maker's consideration of the

object (it was still sitting undisturbed on its Chinese newspaper in her studio on a visit in 2014); secondly the connection between object and maker having developed since its firing, possibly rendering it difficult for her to consider it a failed pot; and thirdly, as percipient, a personal view of it is as an aesthetic experience – one which the gallery could not capture, as co-presence was essential.

Correspondence with Clarke is quoted at length to indicate the performative nature and independence of the piece from the maker's original intention. In a materialist's terms (Bennett, 2010, p.17), this piece has 'vitality', which she explains (Bennett, 2010, p.viii) as 'the capacity of things... not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own' (endorsed in the last extract from Clarke).

These two experiences provoked a spiral of reflection, examination and testing regarding intent, manifested in other research-programme work, particularly *RePlace*, described in Chapter 5. They illustrate a shift in the role of the maker from studio work, to more direct engagement of others, and in the role of material, from passive means of expression to active player, in shaping work and its meaning. In both respects, relationships have changed and dynamism has been generated.

Exploration of the role and place of the artist as a particular outcome of this experience offers a comparator for considering the practice of other ceramic artists currently working with clay impermanence through Bourriaud's (2010) relational-art prism, moderated by critiques of Bishop (2004) and Damir (2013), among others⁶⁸.

The transient physical object or event being more elusive as a container for a maker's meaning than a durable art work, it is evident that impermanent ceramic art loosens the artist's control over the 'meaning' integral to an object as opposed to that embodied in experience. Through impermanent expressivity artists are focusing more on the nature of process, the

⁶⁸ Bourriaud's work has engendered a large volume of responses, critiques and follow-ups, beyond the restricted scope of this thesis

materiality presented by an object, and the engagement of the percipient. As the object alters or disintegrates, the opportunity for meaning-creation passes between maker and percipient, being lodged more in the memory and the mind than in a physical reference point. Interpretation being no longer privileged to the creator, artistic intention has to focus differently, or at the least the maker must loosen control, as indicated in the quotation in 7.2.1(a), p.168 (also Appendix 8).

Emerging from this review of practice, in addition, is recognition that impermanence is as much about change as it is about destruction; indeed, perhaps even more so. Clarke (and also Livingstone, in 4.2.1, p.92) makes a significant point about the durability of ceramic, even when form is lost beyond recognition. However, despite chemical endurance, in the situations studied in this thesis the 'object' dissolving into an unconsidered 'thing' (Brown, 2003, cited in Knappett, 2014, p.175) has lost its physical form, and even its material presence. In terms of this research, it has lost its integrity and the resulting unrecognisability renders it invisible; thus impermanence is an appropriate descriptor.

This loss of physicality in the form of the object is more than a loss in the form of expression of an idea because it is simultaneously an opportunity for the percipient to interpret and generate a narrative, based on her/his own experience of the trigger-work (the impermanent piece). As indicated in the discussion quoted in 7.2.1(a), pp.165-168, while reasons for making the work, determining its process, form and realisation, are inevitably important to the artist, in making impermanence a major characteristic she/he is able to relinquish ownership, empowering the percipient to engage directly, physically, emotionally and intellectually, and thus create personal meaning/s without the burden of second-guessing the artist's desired response.

7.2.2 Ceramic presence

The role of the clay itself was important in the genesis and realisation of *Nag Puja*, as in the work discussed in Chapter 5. Following an earlier visit to the *tera*⁶⁹, it was planned to make environmental work in the forest, firing pieces

⁶⁹ The band of savannah, marshy, and forested lowlands south of the Himalayas

in hollow trees which had been observed acting like chimneys when local people did the seasonal burning of forest under-storey. In the event, this was not feasible, but having pre-ordered some local clay, several days were spent experimenting to understand its qualities and limits. It was very crumbly, gritty brick body, difficult to work.⁷⁰ I resorted to squashing it between my palms to make a number of flattish discs as well as simple pinch-pots – about the only forms the clay’s friability would tolerate (**Figure 7.7**).



Figure 7.7 Clay elements for *Nag Puja*, showing friable nature of the raw clay. 5 May 2011

This simple process stimulated very direct engagement with the material. Also, because it was locally sourced, it was familiar to the Nepali people involved. Making work with local relevance, with local material, deepened the work’s personal significance for all involved.

⁷⁰ To use a baking analogy, it was very ‘short’

All clay bodies dictate to some degree how they can be handled and formed. Respect for a material's specifics and its match with appropriate processes is a crucial element of the skill-base in ceramics. As Hodder (2012, p.48) states: 'the forms of things at least partly derive from the materials'; and '[T]he potters [sic] knowledge of the performance characteristics of different materials... will affect her decisions as she aims at certain goals' (p.56), supporting the anthropologist's contention regarding 'the idea that things render tangible or *actualise in a performative way* important aspects of social organisation, culture, systems of thought, or actions'⁷¹ (Lemonnier, 2012, p.14). In the case of *Nag Puja*, the material was particularly awkward, behaving as if it was exerting its will, in its resistance to shaping; and the performativity combined material, process, maker and collaborators.

The physicality of clay is noted by other ceramicists; for instance Sorimin (2007) says 'I am curious about the fractured, unpredictable, wet spaces of ceramics'. Maiolino similarly is attracted by its very formlessness (cited at head of Chapter 5).

Reflection on *Nag Puja* and similar experience as a maker (e.g. *Return to Koshi*, utilising the same clay in slip form; see Chapter 4 for discussion of this event-work) offers support to a Latourian actor-network interpretation of relationships between objects and humans.

Kim and Siefert (2007, p.235), seeking to articulate shifts in art-based aesthetics, state: 'Performativity is... not related to the concept of an intending subject that seems to underlie certain goal-related actions' – a statement endorsed by the way clay behaves in impermanent art works. Without the contentious concept of intentionality⁷², materials can and do impact on percipients (as in *Fallacy*) and on their immediate context (as in *Rift*).

⁷¹ My italics

⁷² For which Latour's Actor-Network Theory is often criticised

The adoption of work (such as Njalsdottir's of *RePlace*) can be read in Fischer-Lichte's (2008) terms regarding the connection between material and percipient generating performance; and she tellingly also states:

The performance brings forth its materiality exclusively in the present and immediately destroys it again the moment it is created, setting in motion a continuous cycle of generating materiality. Fischer-Lichte (2008, p.76. See also chapter head quotation, p.159)

Both the material and the humans performed during the cobra installation; the clay continues to perform unseen as it alters, disintegrating in the now abandoned tourist camp. Equally, each Mao head⁷³ appropriated from *Fallacy* still engages those attracted to them⁷⁴, altering its relationship with the percipient each time it is touched or seen (its elements having persistence, and thus categorisable in terms of Table 4.A both as 'classic'– 1.i and as 'materially degrading' installation – 3.ii, due to the variable firings).

Looking for similarities and contrasts among contemporaries leads to Cushway's *Plate Spinner* (2011, **Figure 4.4**; <https://vimeo.com/124954273>), manifestly classifiable as performance or live art given the artist's presence in the piece. Its immediacy is patent, engaging an audience in the theatrical sense of observers of the action. As with other examples of impermanent contemporary ceramics discussed in this thesis, it does not fit comfortably within an historical view of art as fixed, durable, conservable and unchanging.

Cushway's performance piece with plates was commissioned for the Second British Ceramic Biennial, held in the former Spode Works in the Potteries (see <https://vimeo.com/124954273>). On the works floor, the artist, dressed in a sober dark suit, proceeds to set a plate spinning on a stick (Spode form and design, Spode materials and decals), before placing the stick in a hole drilled in the floor. This action is repeated as many times as there are plates and sticks available. As he undertakes this task, plates stop spinning, some maintaining balance on the stick, others crashing to the floor. The performer,

⁷³ All fired heads as far as I can detect

⁷⁴ Confirmed by personal contact with two new custodians

undistracted, carries on until his pile of plates and sticks is utterly depleted. He exits the space, leaving the remains of his performance.

Cushway comments:

I can quite easily detach myself from that performance. You know, instantly I've finished it. Part of the work really, you know, is to be removed from the situation, and just leave the residue...

I do quite easily detach myself from things like that really. And in terms of *Plate Spinning* I guess that's part of the idea of it really. And a lot of my work deals with absence anyway, so the lack of presence...

The focus of the work was about the ludicrous act of trying to balance plates, to spin plates, and the fact that you are immediately aware of the outcome the minute it starts. You know what's going to happen to those plates, eventually. And I think that's one of the more important aspects of the work really. It's also the same with *Sublimation*, the dissolving head – that the viewer, the minute they engage with the work from the very beginning – you know what's going to happen. You are aware of the outcome before it's happened. But it still manages to hold people's attention. Cushway (Interview 10.11.11. Appendix 5)

In contrast with other examples of his work, such as the video pieces *Sublimation* (2000) and *Fragment Series* (2007), *Plate Spinner* (*Spode*) required the artist's physical presence – and equally his absence. The traces of the performance were as important as the event itself, and in interview Cushway noted the effectiveness of wearing a dark suit (with its private meaning for him, belonging to a deceased friend), which acted as camouflage, minimising his presence in the performance (see Appendix 5). The plates provided the evidence of the live event, their physical presence, as fragments littering the floor, offering a narrative. As 'live' work this is more difficult to contain in a gallery setting, which is in any case negated for this performance by its site-specificity, as discussed in Chapter 6.

While differences between the two pieces⁷⁵ are clear – ceramic being handmade versus industrial design, raw versus pre-fired, outdoors versus indoors, and engaged collaborators versus interested observers – the focus

⁷⁵ *Plate Spinner* and *Nag Puja*

for both was the material and how it might perform, the place and its resonances for everyone involved, and the personal triggers for making from the instigators' points of view.

IIMIB, described by the artist as a performative work, contrasts with both these pieces. Twomey has designed *IIMIB* so the human agency within it has no greater importance than the other agents/actants, raw clay and water. The script is tightly determined, permitting relatively little expressivity for the performer who, it is therefore argued as indicated in 4.3.1, p.101, takes part in a tableau ultra-vivant. However, in performance terms, Twomey's instruction for performers to wear 'theatre blacks' echoes Cushway's use of a dark suit: to make the human element as neutral as possible and to enable the ceramic material to draw the audience's focus. (Another aspect of *IIMIB*, setting it apart from the majority of impermanent ceramic work studied for research purposes, is its non-participatory character. Twomey stated in her briefing for Acts of Making that it was a 'non-engaging' work and trained the performers to ignore attempts by gallery visitors to engage them during performance sessions. Visitors were expected to be passive observers.)

7.2.3 Revisiting materiality

A need was indicated in 7.2.2 above to re-consider the traditional role of material in the generation of an aesthetic experience. In this I argue from the perspective of a maker in the ceramic tradition that the materiality of clay is (in Latour's terms) an actant in the dynamic of art-creation, as also is the percipient.

The practice of a number of contemporary ceramicists illustrates and expands on this proposition.

Bustleholme: Napalm Death (2013), a collaborative installation/performance integrating sound and material, by Harrison (professor at Bath Spa University and active practitioner from a ceramics background), with a very different ceramic involvement, contrasts in the experimental character of its performativity with the active nature of clay in an environmental work such as *Nag Puja*, as discussed in 7.2.2. While

Harrison's and my approach to the material differ, clay itself is a significant actor in both works, and crucial to the response of percipients.

Harrison's work was conceptualised as the ultimate lunchtime concert in a museum setting, but was cancelled by the V&A on safety grounds. Blocks incorporating sound systems were created with tile-hung sides and filled with clay slip. The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, was offered as a venue.

Grindcore band Napalm Death played with high decibel amplification through the blocks to a live audience (video footage available at:

<http://www.thevinylfactory.com/vinyl-factory-films/bustleholme-napalm-death-keith-harrison-video/>⁷⁶ for the performance in November 2013).

Harrison reflected on the work soon after the event in his presentation *Bustleholme – Site and Sound*, at the CARCUoS SITE colloquium (09.05.14):

Site and sound: increasingly I've used sound alongside work in clay... and it's resulted in this piece I've done called *Napalm Death*.

... [In] the first piece where sound started to become part of it, I used electrical elements to make heat and to try and cook this clay. In this piece I also embedded speakers, so you also get the sound of what's going on...They are public performances whereby there is potential for that whole process to go from one state to the other and to be seen within a time span.

I did a piece where I was trying to circulate the sound, from my record player, through clay through various sound equipment and back on itself to close the loop...So that idea of a sound system – I wanted to use *Napalm Death*⁷⁷ as the last disruption, lunchtime disruption...

This meeting of a music venue and arts venue – I wanted to bring those two worlds together, so this place would be the venue, this would be the site... the De La Warr...

I was really keen that whilst it should be an event, it shouldn't just be a theatrical performance. I wanted it to be something else, a

⁷⁶ [Last accessed 14.05.15]

⁷⁷ Harrison described the band as 'the most extreme form of noise/music that you could possibly encounter'

little bit more severe and less comfortable... And we had a big explosion really.

*Bustleholme: Napalm Death*⁷⁸ as a live event embedded interaction on the part of the material (clay and loudspeaker systems), the musicians (Napalm Death), and the audience, some of whom felt an irrepressible desire to involve themselves in the work to the extent of breaking up the installation. Harrison intended to discover the impact of the band's music when played through his ceramic structure. He anticipated this as a destructive process, at least as far as the ceramic structure was concerned. (It is indicative of the perceived risk that safety concerns led to cancellation of the planned event as part of Harrison's V&A 2012-13 ceramic residency.)

Ceramic, in the form of tiling as well as slip to muffle the sound system, was central to the work; and the nature of its response to sound levels, in cracking and breaking down, was clearly crucial – to the extent of goading the audience into action. The way clay [mis]behaves in Harrison's experimental performative work is also evident in *Brother*⁷⁹ (2009, **Figure 7.8**), for which he constructed a sculpture of Marx's head, seeking to fire his 'hair' (clay-clad electrical elements) during the temporary exhibition, until the gallery's fire alarms insisted on activating as the elements heated up.

A visual art gallery setting can find it difficult to contain Harrison's highly performative and deliberately experimental work, as the MIMA and V&A responses both indicate.

⁷⁸ Interestingly in the light of the discussion in Chapter 6, inspired by place, the Bustleholme tower blocks

⁷⁹ A performative installation, MIMA, part of *Possibilities and Losses: transitions in clay*, an exhibition co-curated by Clare Twomey and MIMA, 22.05-16.08.09.

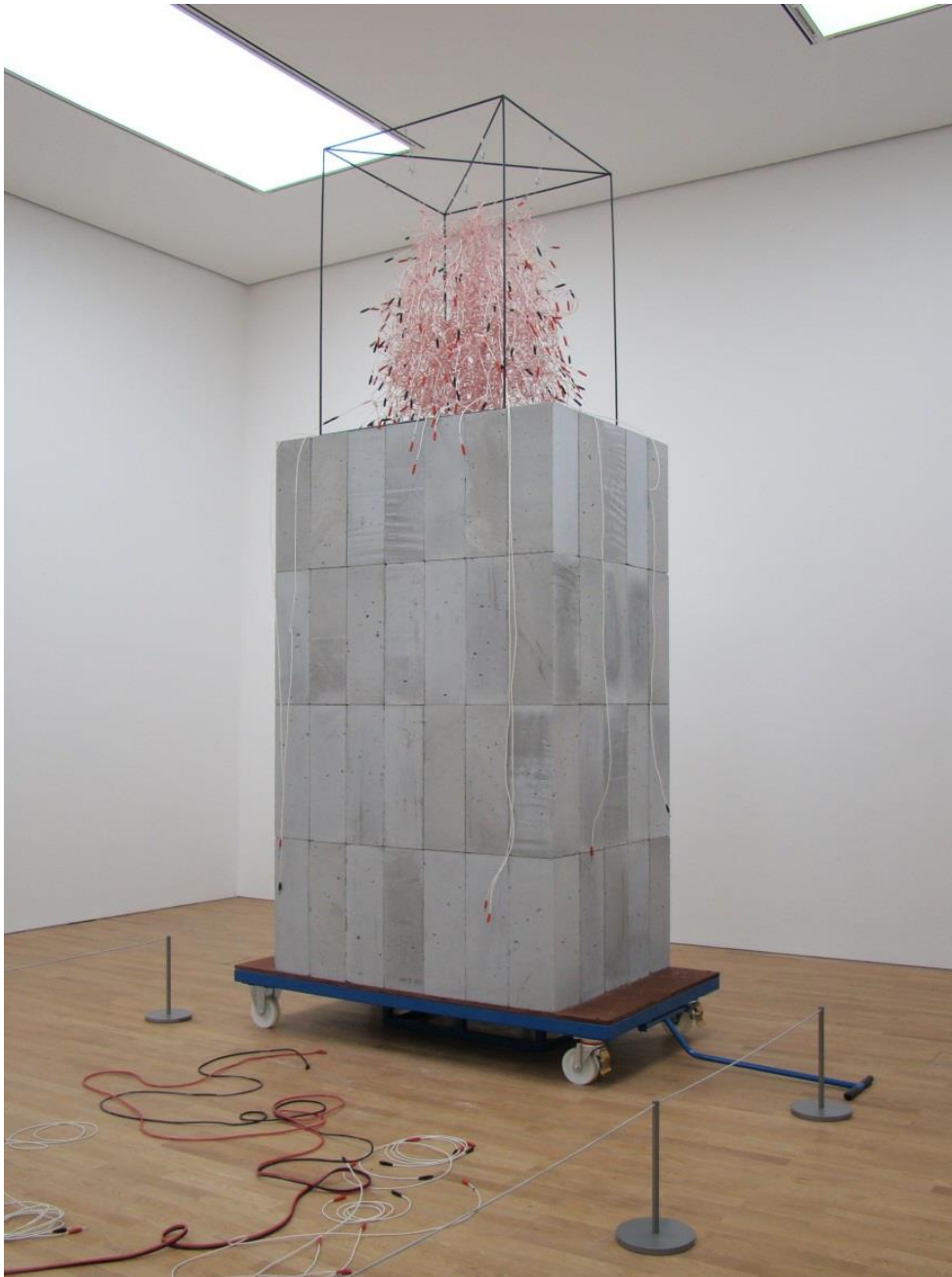


Figure 7.8 Keith Harrison *Brother, Possibilities and Losses*, MIMA. 22.05-16.08.11

It is important to note that work with transient materiality can act/perform, in work as varied as *RePlace*, *Spode Tower*, *IIMIIB*, *Converse:Mao* and *Trophy*. The physical presence of the artist/instigator is not essential for performance, or dynamic action, to occur. While the maker does perform in some impermanent clay-based work (e.g. Lee's *Spode Slip*, Cushway's *Plate Spinner*), the material itself contains sufficient dynamism to take the stage and engage the audience – to act as opposed to being a prop.

To reiterate: impermanent work in clay can and does act independently of the maker.

7.2.4 Revisiting location

Researching the idea of placement for non-gallery work further is illustrated by the contribution to *No. 11 Our House: Tea Ceremony (No. 11)*, a location- and time-specific performance piece designed and presented by E. Gee/R. Ellis/B. Rothera, during Saltaire Arts Trail 2012 (5-6.05.12): a weekend of 'open house' activity in Titus Salt's historic workers' residential development for Salt's Mill (see Appendix 1.x).

The venue was the front room of 'Number 11' in Saltaire, utilised found ceramic objects in the form of tea paraphernalia, collected and sited by the directors of the piece, and was time-bound, not just to the date of the Arts Trail but also to time of day.

Each contributor was allotted fifteen minutes for their own version of the tea ceremony. My input was somewhat anarchic, hijacking the ground rules and script provided by the performance/theatre-trained directors. It celebrated the function of the parlour in English history, particularly relating to family. People touring local houses during the Arts Trail entered the space and were offered tea and cake – as would have happened had they been invited guests or family members visiting relatives on Sundays in 1950s Britain (**Figure 7.9**, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jip3eupd8g>).

The event was embodied and site-sensitive practice taking place in a patently physical sense – it was not sculpture, or representation of an experience. Its meaning would have been utterly different in a gallery setting, but similar in the front room or parlour of another British house.

The work was performative both with human and object as participant: I made tea and offered cake to an audience, the ceramic objects performing their traditional role of enabling hospitality and endeavouring to make visitors feel at home. It complied with an event aesthetic, being restricted in duration



Figure 7.9 Performing *No.11: Tea Ceremony*, Saltaire Arts Trail. 05.05.12. Image © J. M. P. Bradley

and the experience for each visitor different and unrepeatable. The engagement was the experience, and each participant had a different sense of what was happening, dependent on their own interpretation and reading of the event.

Generating a hypothetical bipartite network diagram (see Knappett, 2014, p.47) indicating the relationships with individuals and experience in this work as nodes would result in a complex of connections (vertices in Knappett's terminology) quite unpredictable in their variety – perhaps even more intriguing in the evidencing of non-connectivity, such as that related to childhood experience of 'Sunday afternoon tea'. As indicated in **Diagram 7.1**, which shows the variety of individual experiences (even in simplified form), this variety of outcomes from exposure to the same artistic experience

indicates the complex nature of the aesthetic experience, particularly when enabled by 'open' invitation to percipients to make a personal interpretation.

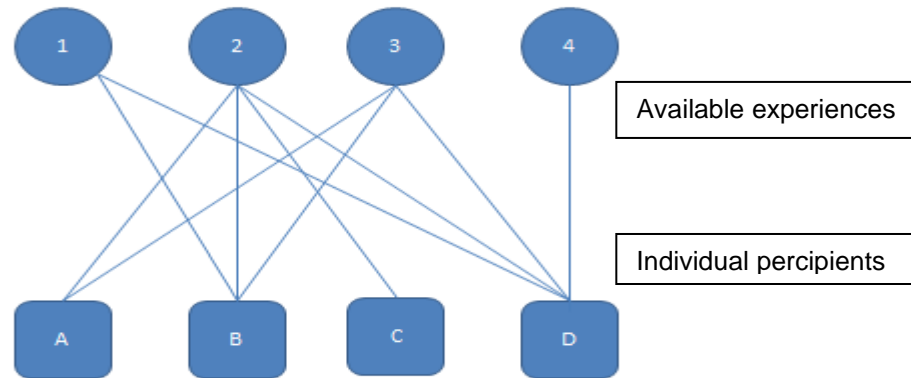


Diagram 7.1 Experience/Individual relationships based on Knappett, 2014

Philip Lee's (2011) *Spode Slip* (with Cally Trench) further illustrates impermanent ceramic-based work that does not fit readily into a gallery format. The work is described (Lee, 2012) as 'a live performance with red and white clay, red and black iron oxides, and three Spode plates'. As was the case with Cushway's *Plate Spinner (Spode)*, this performance was commissioned for *Live at Spode and Context and Content – Ceramics Practice as Research Symposium*, during the second British Ceramic Biennial, at the Spode Works, Stoke-on-Trent, and was site-specific⁸⁰.

A naked man enters the space, stands in front of a canvas cloth and blindfolds himself. A woman clothed in black enters the space and proceeds to throw red clay slip at him, thoroughly coating him, before flinging powdered oxides at him. She stops; the man moves forward, takes off the blindfold. Having blindfolded her, he places her carefully on the floor and covers her gently with white slip, then scatters powdered oxide over her supine body. She stands up and they then clean each other up, before leaving the space (see <http://www.philiplee.co.uk/portfolio/performance/spode-slip/> for edited footage of the 15-20 minute performance).

⁸⁰ As were Cushway and Tattersall works, also referenced

Lee responded to a request for information following the piece:

My work is about the body and clay in performance. I have been exhibiting and performing throughout the UK since November 2000. My installations and performances integrate live body mark-making and sculptural display. I use earth materials in transformations that may be durational or theatrical and usually involve endurance. Installations reflect the performances showing traces of the live event, with video projections or photographs documenting the actions. Currently I work with Cally Trench, a portrait painter and curator. Cally applies the clay to my naked body in performances during which we follow rules unknown to the audience and at times to each other, and the power oscillates between us...

I privilege the live and so the primary work only exists at the time of the performance. It is intrinsically impermanent and this is what I want...

My work has to respond to the limits of the performance space and the event. Most respond to the characteristics of the site and venue and may include objects or meaning from the location. Spode Slip at Stoke was devised with the venue and space in mind, and included original Spode plates, which we used to apply the clay to each other's bodies. Lee (Survey response, 11.1.12. Appendix 5)

The piece, as with *No. 11*, involved both human and ceramic materials, here mainly in raw amorphous form as opposed to the ready-made (and fully-dressed) functional forms of *No. 11*. The buckets of clay slip were, as anyone working with slip can vouch, very cold to the touch. It was possible to see the performers' involuntary shivering, both at the unexpectedness of the wet slip, and its temperature. The liquid clay splattered not just the bodies in the performance space, but the backcloth and floor-covering too. The white and red slips did not merge to any appreciable degree, maintaining their distinctiveness despite the general splattering of the whole area, performing symbolically as well as physically.

This was a physically and psychologically testing piece for participants and thought- and emotion-provoking for the audience. Sitting at the Spode Works connected with the material used. No artefact emerges from the event apart

from random traces on the canvas backdrop, and although Lee and Trench present such performances in different locations, their character as a site-sensitive event, with locally resonant material in this case, makes each presentation unique.

The differences between the nature of the ceramic presence in these two pieces draw attention to the adaptable performativity of the material and the importance of non-gallery locations for live ceramic events.

7.3 THE EVENT AESTHETIC AND MATERIALITY

In common with other modes of artistic expression, as indicated in Chapter 2, contemporary ceramics is colonising post-modern territory in re-defining the role of artist, creative activity, and recipient, as Denzin (1997, p.xiii, see also Chapter 6 citation, p.132) would concur. This is particularly emphatic in the development of impermanent ceramic expression, precisely because the work is not collectable or conservable in the time-honoured fashion of the gallery and the museum.

Even where it is contained in a glass case, as with Livingstone's *The English Scene*, **Figure 7.10** (also Cushway's *Sublimation*, where the aesthetic shift for ceramic expression is clearly evident in being a video loop, and not a physical object at all), rather than protecting the object from damage and deterioration as might be expected, its environment actively alters the work. As Livingstone states, this work (and *Auto-Materiality*)⁸¹, 'may be understood in terms of the conditions of clay within the context of process art or a continuous performance' (Livingstone, 2011).

Thus, as the gallery and museum perspective on, in Bennett's (2010) terms, 'vibrant' clay work alters, moving from discomfort in the presence of installations to embracing them as accepted and expected fare for the contemporary gallery visitor, the development of impermanent ceramics moves on, leaving them needing to adapt and re-consider their role in the

⁸¹ <http://www.andrewlivingstone.com/content/auto-materiality-detail>

presentation of this rebellious, sometimes anarchic, sometimes subversive, form of art.



Figure 7.10 Andrew Livingstone *The English Scene*. 2008. Image © D. Williams

A key characteristic of the impermanent form for ceramic art currently is its liveness, in being of the moment and for the moment, in being – in effect – event or performance related rather than an object, presentable on a plinth or in a case. This has required an adaptation to a changed relationship between maker, recipient and the intermediary. In fact, in many cases there is no longer an intermediary at all. Artists are making work where and when they want, by finding residency and other opportunities, which fit what they require in order to express their creativity, as exemplified by Cummings, who works directly on site, not utilising a studio. Adamson is accurate in describing ‘the post-studio condition’ in terms of:

the prevalence of installation art, and more recently the fashion for ‘relational aesthetics’, in which the site of production and the site of consumption are collapsed and the viewer is either a part of or co-author of the work. Adamson (2008, pp.4-5)

This is clearly not true for all situations. There are artists commissioned to make impermanent work in a gallery setting. But even here, the subversive or at the very least surprising nature of their work can be seen. Sormin’s *Rift*

(described in Chapter 4), for instance, demanded several bouts of active destruction with a hammer in full view of any visitors, several times during the exhibition. Twomey's *Consciousness/Conscience* not only entices visitors to cross its fragile low-fired tile floor to enter a gallery, breaking the tiles as they step on them, but also requires a re-laying of the floor during the duration of the installation. This is an actively destroyed work (in Gray, 2013, terms iconoclastic) reliant on the visitor to 'complete' the piece by standing on the low-fired floor and breaking it, in contrast to *IIMIB*, where the visitor is deterred from any direct engagement with the dissolution through soaking of the raw clay pots⁸².

However, much current impermanent ceramic art (unlike Lehmann's *Sediment Sampling*, see 4.1.1, pp.83-84) is elusive. It is increasingly likely to be found – post-studio and post-gallery – in residency, site-related or festival settings (e.g. Cummings, Hawaii; Cushway, BCB; Harrison, V&A).

Not only is ceramic-related performance in itself moving to a more central position in the world of contemporary art, it is also being adopted (even adapted) as an important vehicle for moving visual art out of the gallery (and – it seems – back in again, as the institution perceives the need to embrace this mode of expression more centrally). The maker's desire to test boundaries and engage the audience differently is matched by the gallery's need to attract more active audiences and to embrace newer ways of working.

7.4 REFLEXION ON THE SHIFT TO PERFORMANCE

Having constructed a framework for impermanent ceramic art practice involving descriptions of clay-based impermanence, the nature of clay materiality, and the contribution of location, the focus has moved to how work engages with 'audience' within these parameters.

⁸² Human performers in *IIMIB* (Gateshead 2015) were instructed not to engage, make eye contact with, or speak to museum visitors during performance sessions

In indicating that the relationship between instigator, work and percipient is more active and time-bound than in a visual art aesthetic, this chapter argues that:

- The viewer has a central role in animating the work and generating meaning
- The concept of relational art aesthetics is pertinent in highlighting the equality of input of instigator and percipient
- Non-hierarchical, impermanent, installatory work invites engagement, both in the environment and gallery setting
- Direct collaboration between instigator and percipient in such a setting can develop rewarding meanings which would otherwise be absent

Given these indicators, a performance aesthetic viewpoint is indicated as appropriate to illuminate and contextualise such work, which combines maker, audience and material in its creativity. A crucial feature is the unrepeatability of the resulting art – being of and for the moment and outside the instigator's control – and where repetition of the circumstances with different percipients alters its nature completely.

The adoption of the aesthetics of performance, of live art, with its corollary of non-mediatised engagement is wholly appropriate.

Chapter 7 has identified the progress which contemporary ceramic artists are making in framing creativity in ceramic impermanence, resulting in a major shift of the ceramic tradition into a significantly more dynamic arena, characterised by an event or performance aesthetic, and paralleled by adapted contexts for its presentation. It has also discussed the changing nature of the 'audience' in this more active arena of performance and live art.

Chapter 8 discusses issues of record in relation to impermanent contemporary ceramic art. It reflects on the impact of record in a performative aesthetic and on the tension created by the need to generate evidence for research purposes.

CHAPTER 8 RECORD AND THE RESEARCH IMPERATIVE

Chapter 7 discussed performativity in impermanent ceramic art practice. Chapter 8 considers challenges presented in recording impermanent artwork. It explores the mediatizing and adaptive effects of documentation, impacting on the immediacy of such practice, and notes particular issues raised by the requirement for research evidence.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed elsewhere (e.g. 4.2.4, pp.97-98), impermanent ceramic art can create dissonance, for example, within institutions managing permanent collections with concomitant responsibilities for conservation. The development of a performance aspect in personal practice, and that of contemporaries, creates an issue of record not arising for the stable, durable ceramic object, which may be viewed, stored and reviewed. A key question is thus posed in research terms: how important is the record of an impermanent piece of contemporary ceramic art?

In my developing practice I am confident as a maker of impermanent work, which by its very nature denies the importance of evidence, record or report of the creative act. This is partly predicated on the strongly-held view of the artist as an instigator, not the individual determining meaning (see 7.1, pp.158-162).

The issue is also crucially bound up in the impermanence of expression: if a work is impermanent, a record detracts from its fleeting nature. I support Phelan's (1993) passionate statement: 'Performance cannot be saved... once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.' This is emphatically so in the case of short-lived events, such as *Return to Koshi* (6.2.4, pp.148) whose meaning was imbricated in its very brevity, which ensured its impact. While fully aware of the need to evidence practice for the purposes of the research programme, this is a real and constant challenge.

Impermanent work, by its nature, is not necessarily available to present for review or examination; evidence is nevertheless required.

TABLE 8.A RECORDING PERSONAL PRACTICE 2009 - 2015		
Form of record	Work	Date/Note
None	<i>Tidal Transience</i> <i>Return to Koshi</i> <i>Sanbao Respect</i>	2009 (Witness record in stills) 2011 (ditto) 2011
Still photography (including time lapse)	<i>Losing It</i> <i>Nag Puja</i> <i>RePlace</i> <i>Traces</i> <i>Converse:Mao</i>	2010 2011 2012 2013/14 2014
Photo Album	<i>ReCollection</i> <i>RePlace</i> <i>Converse:Mao</i>	2011 onward 2012 onward 2014
Social media	<i>RePlace</i> <i>Traces</i>	2012 (Blog) 2014 (Facebook)
Email correspondence	<i>RePlace</i>	2012 onward
Originator's record (video posted on YouTube)	<i>No.11 Tea Ceremony</i>	2012
Video on Vimeo	<i>Traces</i> <i>Converse:Mao</i>	2014 vimeo.com/141900204 2014 vimeo.com/141901780

The requirement to record, to demonstrate evidence of, personal creative work has therefore accompanied the research journey as a somewhat unruly presence. As 9.3.5, pp.218-220 indicates, it has created a tension as personal practice is increasingly environmental and anonymous in character, with potential for unknown outcomes as pieces are abandoned to their fate. However, the need to evidence has offered a creative challenge in finding compatible formats.

The place of record in practice has been explored in each piece as noted in **Table 8.A**. The format of record has ranged from none to multiple, predominantly images, and it is striking that some of the most telling work of the last five years has almost no physical record.

8.2 RECORDING INSTALLATION WORK

The status of the photographic record in particular has generated a challenging internal debate. As the only remains of much research-based work, is the image the 'art'? While I have a pride in my photographic technique, I do not consider myself primarily an artist/photographer, nor was an aesthetic outcome the purpose of much of the photography. There was also tension, if not conflict, between artistic practice and research requirements; the former contextualised by loss and letting-go, the latter by capture and retention. An initial response to the question whether the image is the 'art' is therefore negative.

However, working with photography as a necessity⁸³ has opened up options, some very playful and some deeply serious. For instance, in parallel with *Losing It*, experiments took place with non-ceramic 'field' work, including a photographic record of a ghost koi⁸⁴ as it lay dead by a garden pond over the same period of time⁸⁵. Eventually, the images were converted into a flip book, to show the decaying process, a form familiar in children's books.

By contrast, I have come to perceive the photographic record of the unexpected persistence of *ReCollection* as something more than mere evidence. This has a number of aspects. Firstly, the six-monthly photographic sessions to record the work involved individual images of its twenty five elements. It is unclear before each visit whether the work will still be *in situ* (staffing at Bede's World has changed several times). This generates psychological tension. It takes well over thirty minutes to complete the session; each piece is looked at and alterations observed, as well as at least three close-up photographs being taken of each. Inevitably, engagement with the work is intense and personal.

The visit made in early 2012 was a watershed. There was a severe hoar frost that day, which made the photography very interesting, but the conditions also made me consider the pieces anthropomorphically. As the session

⁸³ i.e. photographing work for documentary purposes, aesthetic considerations being secondary

⁸⁴ *Cyprinus carpio*, Common carp (nishikigoi in Japanese)

⁸⁵ Intriguingly it was not consumed by a cat or a gull over this time – it had not been expected that much of a record of the piece could be made.



Figure 8.1 *ReCollection*. General view 16.01.12. (installed 17.03.11)

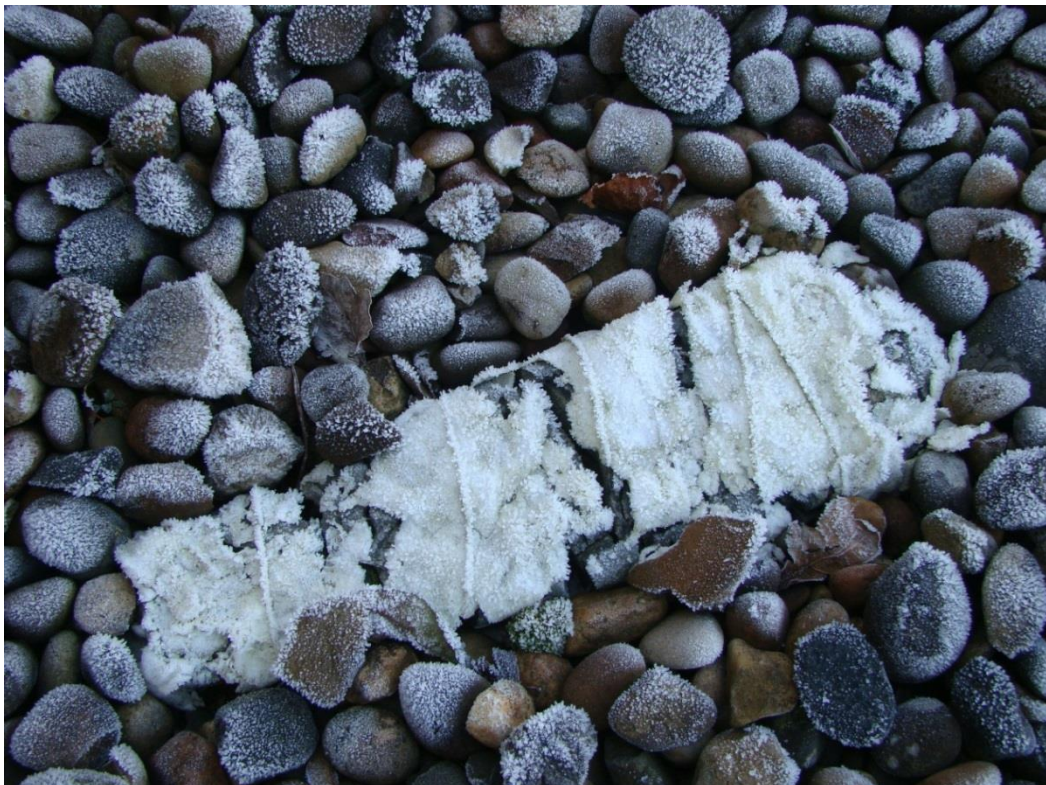


Figure 8.2 *ReCollection*. Element with hoar frost. Element approx. 12x3.5x1.5" 16.01.12

ended and I left, it really felt as though I were abandoning babies to the winter weather. The images taken that day in particular stimulate an emotional response (**Figures 8.1** and **8.2**), and not solely for me.

In order to explain the work to visitors, who may not have seen it as first installed, a photographic record was devised in album form, to present to Bede's World⁸⁶ as an interpretive aid (**Figure 8.3**). A further copy was printed for use as research evidence. It seems natural as the instigator to find it moving, given the emotions experienced when visiting the installation, but it is salutary to realise that other people feel emotional when they look at the simple record of changes to each wrapped infant form.

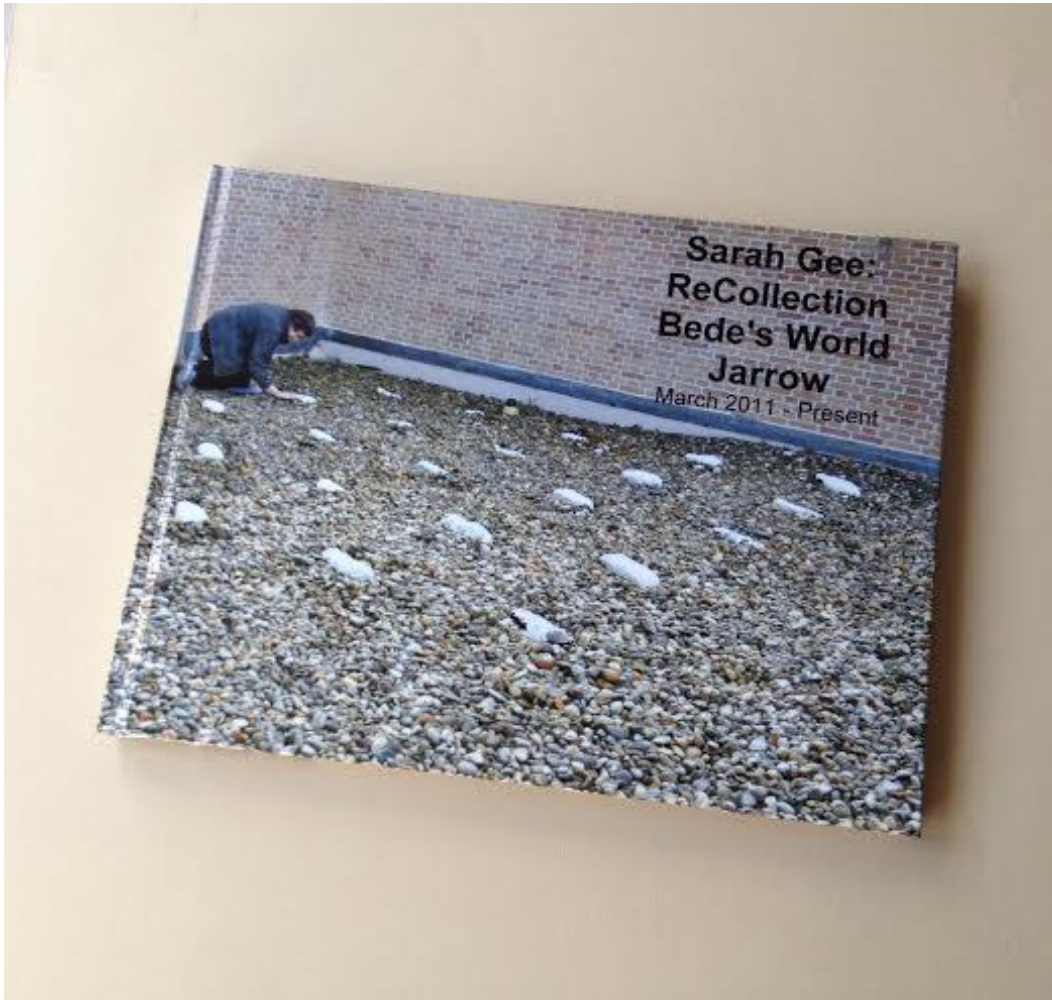


Figure 8.3 Evidence or art? Photo album of *ReCollection*. 2011 onwards (see Appendix 10)

It was instructive to consider the potential for a photographic record to develop its own aesthetic resonance. Taking still images of *Losing It Rose Field* over five months from deep winter to spring became more important personally as an experience than merely ensuring availability of evidence of the work. It personally became part of the art work when showing a time lapse of a single element at a research presentation to a group of 'life-long

⁸⁶ Museum of Early Mediaeval Northumbria at Jarrow (closed at the time of writing)

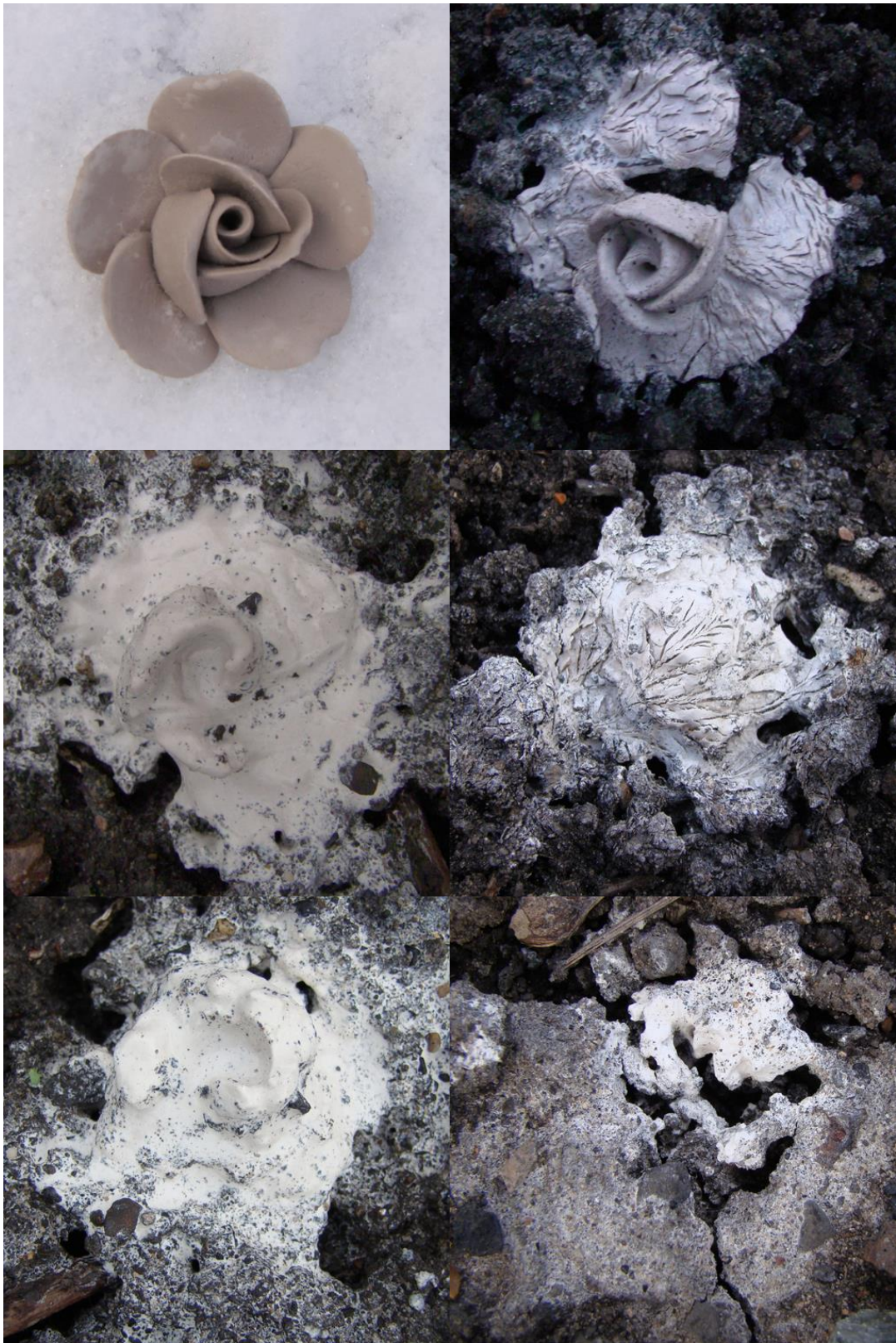


Figure 8.4 *Losing It*. Single full-blown rose element at intervals during installation.

learners' (mostly retired professional people) at Newcastle Arts Centre⁸⁷. They responded strongly to the images, seeing them as 'art' rather than

⁸⁷ Explore! Programme, Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre

'information', and enabled me to alter my perception of them (see **Figure 8.4**), contextualised by the experience of *ReCollection* in the hoar frost which occurred at about the same time.

Somewhat less intensely, the photo album made of *RePlace Orkney*, ostensibly for research purposes, also took on a different aspect. Generating text for this work had not been anticipated, but happened spontaneously as the images were being prepared. A saga-like story emerged, offering a narrative for the work (**Figure 8.5**), clearly more than research evidence, as 9.3.4, pp.217-218, indicates.



Figure 8.5 Artful evidence: story of *RePlace*. Book produced 2013

The issues experienced throughout the research journey regarding the place of record and boundaries between evidence and art were due to the fact that these are not clear-cut. The learning generated regarding personal practice demonstrates to me how little control I, as instigator, have over the nature of what is released into the world.

More recently the photo album format was deliberately used in creating *Converse:Mao*, and planned in advance as more than research evidence. (Figure 8.6, Appendix 10)

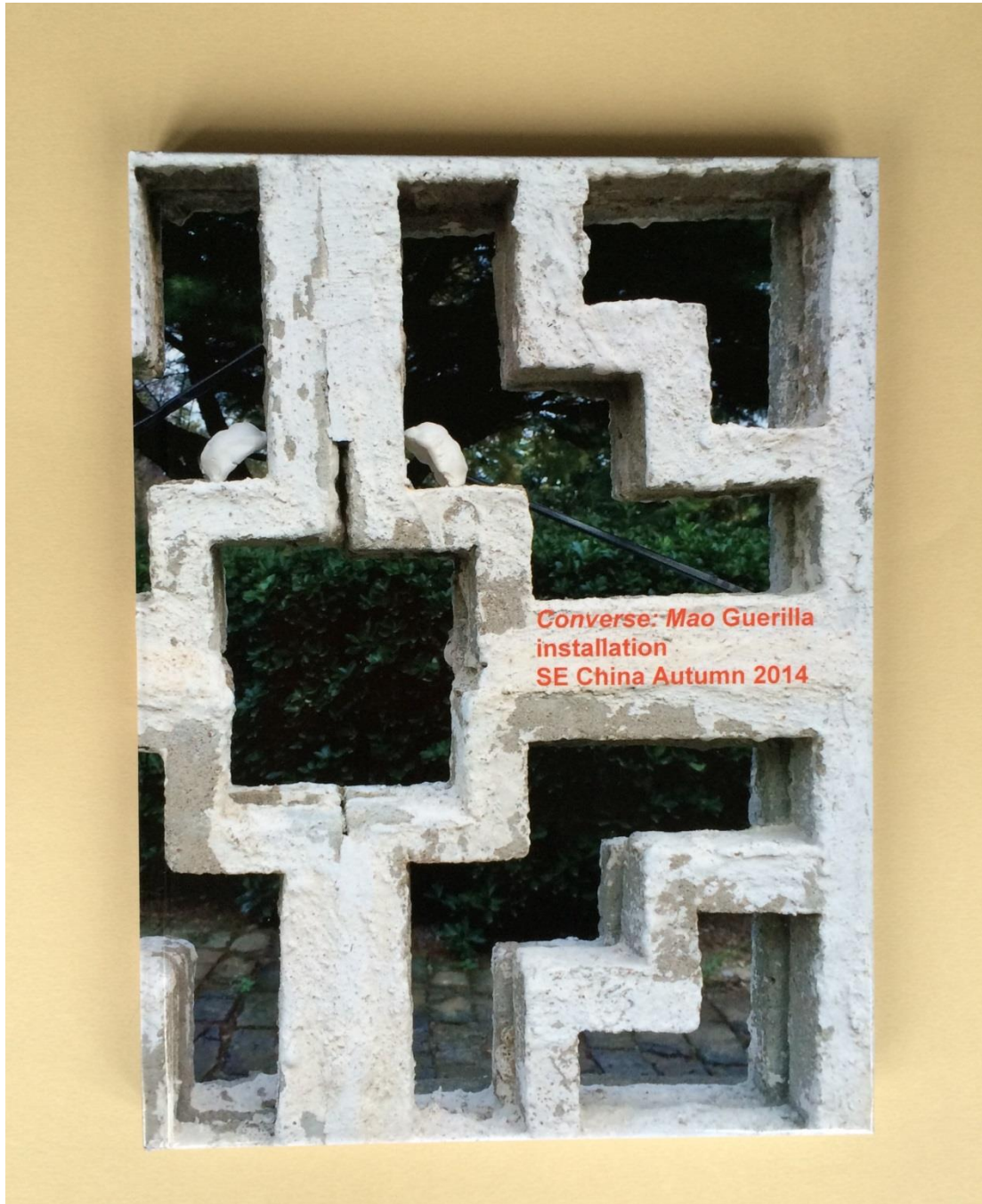


Figure 8.6 Evidence as art: journal of *Converse:Mao*. Book produced 2014

The guerilla installation took nearly a fortnight to complete, in various locations in south east China. I was provoked into leaving a raw clay Mao

mask⁸⁸ sometimes with found objects, by each place and its topography as I critiqued the Mao regime. As well as photographing and videoing locations (vimeo.com/141902397: Converse:Mao Dissolving), journal entries were made as experiences altered my negativity towards Mao's communism to a level of understanding and appreciation of challenges facing his regime (see also Chapter 6 regarding the importance of location).

Recording work during the research period has reflexively enabled an exploration of the role of evidence in relation to impermanent installation work, and a recognition of its aesthetic potential.

8.3 SHIFTING TO AN EVENT AESTHETIC

While coming to terms with the requirement for documentation of personal research work in the case of installation pieces, the issue of record for performative work magnifies the initial concerns indicated above.

Commissioning a photographer brings a tension to the relationship with percipients, which is extraneous to the experience. Equally, the setting up of a camera on auto can distract from, if not threaten, the immediacy of work. As demonstrated by a video clip of Caroline Tattersall's *Spode Tower* (available at <https://vimeo.com/125067018>, **Figure 8.7**), insistent clicking of the shutter on time-lapse diverts attention, mediatizing and distorting experience, however unintentionally.

The video-recording of a performance with the artist involved may also lead to loss of meaning. *No. 11* did not feel personally anything like it looks on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jip3eupd8g>). The directorial power of camera operator and editor detracts from my experience and raises the issue of whose meaning is paramount. Unlike the direct connection between percipient (who owns the interpretation made) and work, the directorial and editorial mediation of the video-recordist inserts an unwanted filter between researcher and evidence, as well as between artist/performer and percipient.

⁸⁸ Linking to *Fallacy* in the *Traces* exhibition, 2014



Figure 8.7 Caroline Tattersall *Spode Tower*, BCB 2011. Approx. 4' x 3'5".

The involvement of percipients as witnesses is personally the most appropriate means of ensuring a record, albeit not necessarily fulfilling research requirements. It achieves the artistic purpose of work by transferring to the witness (the percipient) experience of the creative act for her/him to decide whether to absorb, adopt, adapt or ignore. As memory and recall are at the core of my work, this transfer and transformation of experience within

another person ensures that record has (or is) a living and changing reality. The work survives as another's experience, subject at least to consideration, and potentially to physical, as well as emotional, appropriation. It realises the collaborative act to generate art, which is my aim as maker.

8.4 EVIDENCE VERSUS EXPERIENCE

The performative quality of the un-mediatised experience focuses on the percipient and the piece. What they make of each other is something the instigator sets in motion, but cannot know as an outcome. It is not even possible to know what the physical changes to the work are, and capturing how the work has impacted is even less likely. Although feedback via a blog and by email (*RePlace Orkney*) was encouraged, few comments ensued. Indeed, on the last day of *Traces* (see Chapter 5 for discussion) elements of *Fallacy*⁸⁹ were offered in return for information (see **Figure 8.8**), and although elements were taken (being in the gallery space all day, I observed visitors interacting with the piece and fellow visitors), no direct feedback was received despite the proposition (see 7.1, pp.160-161 regarding appropriation of Mao faces). It is not possible, therefore, to encompass the impact of the work from more than one or two percipient perspectives. It has to be accepted at some level as existent, but unevidenced.

What is clear from the research experience is that the transient, performative, creative act can be seriously undermined, if not negated, by the generation of physical record and evidence: the camera shutter collecting a record of *Spode Towers* affects the way the installation is perceived; a video clip of the curator performing in Sormin's *Rift* does not encompass the visitor's experience of the whole installation.

⁸⁹ *Pace Twomey and Trophy* (2006), Victoria and Albert Museum, where visitors removing the ceramic birds which made up the piece were asked to provide the artist with photographs of them in their new locations



Figure 8.8 *Fallacy*. Request for feedback. 16.11.14.

Performance theorists support the contention that mediatisation alters the creative act that Chapter 7 has argued to be performance.

Phelan (1993, p.146), for instance, considers that:

Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented... once it does, it becomes something other than performance.

Fischer-Lichte (2008, p.75) makes a related point, also supporting the thesis argument (4.3, pp.98-99) regarding the nature of impermanence:

The apparent tension between its transience and attempts to fix performance through documentation... emphasizes ever more clearly the fundamental ephemerality and uniqueness characteristic of performance.

Such issues are inevitably intertwined.

In relation to a practice-led research project, in accordance with UoS regulations, the written thesis alone for the Ph.D. in Creative Arts and Design is presented for examination. 'Research evidence' is submitted as a trace of the work⁹⁰, rather than proof of it. It speaks only partially about the nature of the work, which, as live/performative art in the context of event aesthetic, cannot be preserved archivally (as Schneider, 2001, would concur) and offered up for consideration at another time. In arguing that a physical object is not the only legitimate way of enabling a record, she articulates the position clearly:

The definition of performance as that which disappears, which is continually lost in time, vanishing even as it appears... has gathered added steam over the last 40 years... well suited to the concerns of art history, the rise of action and installation art and the pressure to understand performance in the museal context where performance appears to challenge object status and seems to refuse the archive its privileged 'savable' original. Schneider (2001, p.101)

Impermanent ceramic installation and performance work changes over time and even physical traces are subject to alteration. It was therefore the persisting trace of practice and articulation of praxis which were offered for consideration at the oral examination alongside this narrative of the thesis.

In the light of this, and generally in the context of practice-led as opposed to practice-based research (3.3, pp.63-66), rather than an exhibition of work as a product of the research programme, an exposition (i.e. a presentation) was offered, of material to evidence processes, ideas, findings, remains and other traces of the practical work and praxical development over the duration of the research programme. The exposition sought to give a sense of work, which is no longer here to be presented in physical form. While physical vestiges of

⁹⁰ Rather than remains/ruins, I perceive this as vestige/mark.

some work can be found, they do not convey a full story of the connection with, and appropriation by, others, particularly in the engagement and interaction with its organic – sometimes dynamic – ephemerality. Capturing such a narrative comprehensively seems impossible.

8.5 REFLEXION ON RECORD AND EVIDENCE

The research investigation demonstrates that mediatisation alters the nature and perception of the impermanent contemporary ceramic work that Chapter 7 has argued to be performance-related. It is therefore contended that transient (sometimes live) creative clay-based art may be seriously undermined, if not negated, by the generation of physical record and evidence.

Building on the findings from preceding chapters, this endorses further the appropriateness of re-casting impermanent contemporary ceramic art practice within an aesthetic framework applicable to live and performance art.

Chapter 8 has addressed issues regarding record of impermanent work, particularly in the context of its performative character. It has also considered the imperative to present evidence in the research context.

Chapter 9 considers the nature of my praxical development as a result of the research process, enabling a statement of praxis to be articulated.

CHAPTER 9: PRACTICE TO PRAXIS

Praxis as the manner in which we are engaged in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any explicit formulation of that understanding.

Schrag (2003, p.21)

As the culmination of the practice-focused research narrative, Chapter 9 identifies personal practice, its development into praxis and associated research issues.

9.1 THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The programme has been a cyclical journey with practice at its core, opportunities being taken (see previous chapters) to compare praxis development with that of peers, utilising the methods outlined in 3.4 and 3.5, pp.66-72.

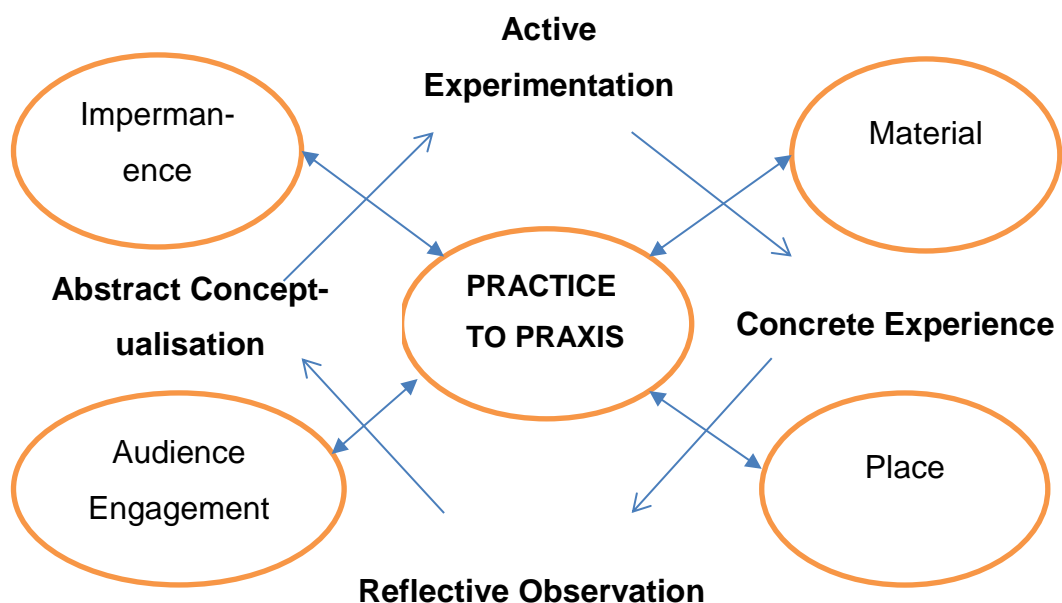


Diagram 9.1 Method of research learning

The research investigation has enabled a 'niche' for impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice to be posited (Chapter 7, particularly 7.3,

pp.186-189) within an event/performance domain and its major characteristics being clarified (10.2.1, pp.229-230). The focus throughout has been on practice engaging with the ceramic tradition while challenging aesthetic and conceptual boundaries (using 'tradition' to embrace a broad history of ceramic creativity, rather than a specific genre).

In order to clarify the developmental process, 1.6 (pp.20-24) indicated the nature of personal creative practice in the early research period, before outlining aspects of the shift from practice (making work intuitively) to praxis (combining an aesthetic philosophy with making work) in 1.7 (pp.24-28). The term 'praxis' is used broadly in Nelson's (2013, p.5) formulation as 'theory imbricated within practice... or what some call intelligent practice or material thinking'.

9.2 below offers a record of the developmental process encompassed in the research journey, which underpins the intellectual and practical shifts identified in 1.6.1, pp.20-21. 9.3 below identifies key implications of impermanence in personal ceramic art practice. 9.4 (pp.223-225) expands on the personal statement of praxis presented in 1.7 (pp.24-28) and 9.5 (pp.225-226) sums up the chapter's arguments and findings.

9.2 EMERGENT ASPECTS OF PRACTICE

(a) *Stimuli for work*: From the very personal focus of undergraduate work (*Wrapped Attention*, **Figure 1.5**, for instance, articulated grief at the death of our only son), personal creativity is currently mainly stimulated by broad social, cultural and political issues. To date these include:

- demise of the Staffordshire pottery industry: *Losing It*, 2010 (**Figure 9.1**, also 1.6.2, pp.22-23; 2.2.1, pp.42-43) – subject matter of interest to a number of contemporary ceramic-based practitioners;



Figure 9.1a Sarah Gee. *Losing It*: on installation day, Olive Street Allotment No.1, Hartlepool. Unfired handmade bone china roses, commissioned from a modeller recently made redundant by Coalport Porcelain Works. 03.01.10



Figure 9.1b *Losing It*. 19.01.10 Detail following frost

- discovery of remains of ninety seven healthy new-born infants at a Roman villa: *ReCollection*. (Figure 9.2, also 4.4, pp.104-105);



Figure 9.2a Sarah Gee *ReCollection*, Bede's World Jarrow 17.03.11. Day of installation



Figure 9.2b Detail of *ReCollection*. 17.03.15. Fourth anniversary of installation

- disconnection between unvalued clay dust and highly valued Chinese dynastic ceramic objects: *Traces*, 2014 (**Figure 9.3**, considered in 5.1, pp.110-112, 6.3.1, pp.152-153);



Figure 9.3a Sarah Gee *Traces* (celadon bowl with clay dust from seventh generation Longquan celadon pottery alongside items in permanent collection). DOM. 2014



Figure 9.3b Close-up of celadon bowl with clay dust seen in Figure 4.10. DOM. 2014

- impact on Chinese society, culture and environment of the Mao regime:
Converse:Mao, 2014. (**Figure 9.4**, discussed e.g. in 2.2.1, p.42, 5.2, p.116
and 6.1.1, p.133).



Figure 9.4a Sarah Gee. *Converse:Mao* No. 4 Rudong fish farm, Jiangsu Province People's Republic of China. Nov. 2014. (close-up with soya bean and dead fish)



Figure 9.4b *Converse:Mao*
Mao No.4 in fish ditch

(b) *The character of the artist*: The role as maker has been interrogated as an aspect of the research process. A number of ways in which an artist may function have been tested (Chapter 7 on performativity and the role of 'audience' considers this further).



Figure 9.5 Sarah Gee *No.11 Tea Ceremony*, Saltaire Arts Trail. 2012. Image © J. M. P. Bradley

The 'non-artist', an un-noticed presence, observing visitors to her work has also been explored as a role. In the context of Barthes' (1968) consideration of the engagement of the audience, *Traces*, 2014 (**Figure 9.3**) enabled spectatorship rather than speculation about audience reaction (see 5.1, pp.110-113 and 7.1, pp.159-162).

I also worked as a guerrilla artist, in order to place work in public. While transgressive 'clay-bombing' in unexpected places may seem playful, risk of discovery in undertaking daily installations for *Converse:Mao*, 2014 (**Figure 9.4**) was a more serious matter in the People's Republic of China. This way of working is very different from being the performer/artist, engaging directly with 'audience' in the form of visitors to an 'open' house: *No.11 Tea Ceremony*, 2012 (**Figure 9.5**, see 7.2.4, pp.182-183, for discussion).

For many projects I undertook work on return visits to relatively unfamiliar locations, as widely scattered as the Northern Isles of Great Britain and the lowlands of Nepal. As noted in 6.2, pp.137-138, this pattern of practice has enabled me to absorb different cultures and environments and to respond *in situ*, as a commentator, whether critical or sympathetic. (I travel extensively and not solely to undertake art projects.)

Finally, the role of the instigator was explored, placing materials to intrigue and draw in the individual who finds them, encouraging interaction of some sort through the work's openness and accessibility. This is perceived as collaboration of a different order from compliance with, or performance in, 'someone else's' work, a finder's creativity with an installation in this case being shared with the instigator through the found objects. This is evident in environmental installations undertaken throughout the research period, such as *Nag Puja* (see Chapter 7), *RePlace* and *Traces*, 2014 (both considered in Chapter 5).

Resulting from experimentation, the instigator role was found to be increasingly harmonious with praxical development, given the perception of interconnected roles of maker, object and audience. It seems likely this will become an increasingly embedded mode of working beyond the formal research programme.

(c) *Importance of process*: Equally important to the testing of practice was attention to process. This was approached in a number of ways and in each the personal involvement in the act of making, and installing, deepened the personal significance of the final piece.

The repetitious wrapping and dipping elements in bone china slip, and the process of making the slip itself, for *ReCollection* generated a meditational mood similar to the frame of mind achieved while performing Twomey's *IIMIB*, where simple tasks of repeatedly filling unfired bone china pots with water and dealing with the consequences, proved to be immersive with their rhythmic kinetic patterns.



Figure 9.6 Performing Twomey's *Is it madness. Is it beauty*. Crafts Council Acts of Making Festival, Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. 17-21 March 2015. Image © M. J. Gee

Press-moulding elements in eight different clay bodies and glazing with nine different celadon glazes, as a technical and aesthetic exploration for *Fallacy* (installed in *Traces*) similarly led to concentrated mental, technical and physical absorption. Seeking to perfect the process of producing a compacted, smooth, uniform surface, by press-moulding and burnishing raw clay egg forms for a number of installations, was also engrossing processually.

All of these repetitive tasks led to heightened awareness of material and its behaviour, skill development in achieving improved results, and mental and emotional focus.

9.3 WORKING WITH IMPERMANENCE

RePlace, a collaborative work, undertaken in 2012 (Appendix 1.i), was a series of installations in ten locations in Orkney, connected by the fact that they all hold archaeological, historic or cultural significance.

It provided data on a number of aspects of impermanent ceramic creativity in personal project work in support of praxis development, which form the core of the research exploration. It is used here to illustrate emergent research issues: the maker's role, location-significance of material, individuals' engagement with/in projects, the character of impermanence in a creative context, and issues relating to record.

It was also a stimulus for recognising the shift in my practice away from a studio base, which, while true for earlier work in Nepal and China, had not been seen as a praxical 'post-studio' pattern at that stage.

9.3.1 Roles for the artist

RePlace scrutinised the notion of artist as an unremarked instigator of work, setting up installations for individuals to find, engage with and take ownership of, as they felt inclined. To find out how such individuals engaged with the installations they discovered, anonymity was sacrificed to enable feedback, particularly for research purposes (discussed in Chapter 8). The avatar⁹¹ hegasaer, anagrammatising my name, was therefore created, and persists

⁹¹ cf. computer gaming

as a persona assumed when seeking to detach the self from direct connection with work.

The role of the artist here was to draw attention, ask questions, not to offer answers. On reflection both on and in the action of this project, opportunities were set up for those encountering the work to ponder, participate, contribute, collaborate, and take over. It felt appropriately democratic and open to offer the project up unconditionally, although it was suggested that this exposed the work to danger, e.g. theft, damage or destruction. This is seen personally as a similar *modus operandi* to Marina Abramovic's surrender of self to audience (though not at her personal risk, as in *Lips of Thomas*, 1975) and also, in Barthes' terms, to some degree realising the 'death of the author'. The Schönian approach enabled the discovery that work does not personally realise its potential unless and until an encounter leads to the taking on of some form of responsibility and ownership by finders. In this, my approach is in stark contrast to that of an artist such as Cady Noland, who is described by feminist commentator, Cynthia Cruz (2014) as having 'absolute control over what her work relays to the viewer'.

9.3.2 Site-sensitivity

Another aspect of *RePlace* involved the nature of the material used (also testing the notion of clay's special character, considered in Chapter 5 on its materiality). All the material originated from Orkney, being removed and returned in a different form: yarn as knitted pieces, midden soil as processed clay body. The wool was either Orcadian in origin or purchased in Orkney, personally knitted into items for installation and also by family members and friends. This included knitting North Ronaldsay yarn and installing the resulting sheep as three herds on the North Ronaldsay coast, with a supervising yarnwife (playing on 'yarn' as story and thread, 'wife' as woman in Old English and Proto German). The clay originated at the Heart of Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site at the Ness of Brodgar in a Neolithic midden, and, as raw clay eggs, was buried in the spoil heap on site. The process of repeated soaking and sieving, then moulding into shape and burnishing, changed the clay sufficiently for it to be recognisably different to

an archaeologist, despite the fact that it was not chemically altered (as would be the case with fired clay).

As the collaborating artist for *RePlace* (Rik Hammond) discovered, at least one raw clay egg was unearthed by an archaeologist, and re-sited in an active excavation:

I mentioned [to one of the archaeologists] about placing the eggs two years ago... He said: Oh, were they like a little Kinder Egg, a little brown egg? I said yes, thinking he'd seen them on the internet or something like that. He said: Oh, we found one of those last year, in 2013, in a wall in Structure 12, during the excavations... it's thought [a digger] placed it in Structure 12 just down at the bottom of the spoil heap, to fool another excavator when they came across it and found this egg 'Wow – there's a Neolithic stone ball!' And of course it turned out to be an egg. Hammond (Interview 28.02.15. Appendix 4.i)

Site sensitivity is demonstrably important, as meaning varies from individual to individual.

It emerges on reflection that site-sensitivity is made more personally complex by the fact that response to site often comes about on a re-visit. In the case of *RePlace*, Orkney had been visited several times over the previous years (hence the exploitable stash of yarn), and this is true also of work in Nepal, China and India. The opportunity to absorb and cherish memories of a place, its people and its cultural uniqueness is significant in the work then made and the locations chosen. The fact that much personal work is made in East Asia also reflects an interest in Eastern philosophy and aesthetics, for which, as Chapter 2 indicates, the concept of impermanence has a different character from its connotations in the West. Travel heightens awareness of many differences, but equally of many parallels, between the experiences of people abroad and at home.

Socio-political issues also stimulate work. *Converse:Mao* (**Figure 6.1**) emerged as a result of reflection on the Communist regime and its impact on the population of China. *Losing It* was directly inspired by meeting Denise Lilley, who demonstrated her exquisite skills in flower-making during a visit to

the Potteries, at the very time she was facing redundancy (**Figure 9.7** and <https://vimeo.com/127702749>).



Figure 9.7 Denise Lilley demonstrating her 'redundant' flower-making skills, Stoke-on-Trent. 26.11.09

9.3.3 Audience and engagement

Progressing from the private character of *Losing It*, a key aspect of *RePlace* was the involvement of others in varied ways. Here (as indicated above) this variously consisted of family and friends making knitted items to their own design from Orkney-sourced yarn, assisting in installing, and taking responsibility for deciding place and time for installing the raw clay eggs in the Ness of Brodgar spoil heap; and also (previously) unknown individuals – mainly people discovering project sites – taking over aspects of the installations, such as determining future location, and continued existence.

The individuals involved in preparing and installing the project were asked for written feedback regarding their perception of the roles they had undertaken (Appendix 4.ii). Spontaneous feedback also emerged via social media (particularly by Njalsdottir), either directly to the hegasaer blog, set up

specifically to enable participants to comment on experience of the project, or indirectly through family members' interaction on social media.

Engagement with domestic craft skills in this installation may have made a significant difference to the way the installation was adopted and adapted by others – an aspect considered in Chapter 7. Where there is an available record, it is notably women such as Njalsdottir who predominantly engaged with, and even transformed, the work.

It was, however, difficult to gauge responses to the work generally, as few individuals used the opportunity of commenting via the blog site⁹². However, there was a rich source of material originating from Njalsdottir, the individual who also engaged physically with the work, adopting the North Ronaldsay herd at Bridesness Pund⁹³, devising her own persona, knitting an additional yarnwife as companion to the first, and removing and re-siting the installation when threatened by rebuilding of the pund walls following a violent winter storm. Njalsdottir is truly a collaborator on the project.

Reflection on the various ways in which this project was engaged with has enabled further development of engagement in practice, to the extent of adopting the term 'percipient' (7.1, pp.158-162) to describe the active role of those engaging with work.

9.3.4 Impacts of impermanence

Understanding the effect that knowledge of its impermanence had on those encountering work was of interest, and identifying whether it might stimulate reflection, a sense of responsibility to remember, a wish to protect, change, or interfere with the work.

It seemed that the *RePlace* project might stimulate one or all of those responses, and was unlikely to leave anyone with no reaction whatsoever because of the character and material of the pieces. All verbal/electronic contact regarding the work was positive; some was also emotional. Although there are definite issues regarding the ability to obtain direct feedback on

⁹² As indicated in Chapter 9, this is by no means unique

⁹³ sheepfold

anonymised and 'abandoned' work, the specific information that was offered regarding the work is of interest in its own right, as well as important for review purposes.

The specific form of impermanence utilised here centred on vulnerability of the material. Yarn, usually protected from the depredations of the weather, and raw clay, a material usually subjected to further processing, were exposed in the environment.

Other projects also used weathering as a means of challenging material integrity (e.g. *ReCollection*). More immediate interaction with natural forces was used in *Tidal Transience* and *Return to Koshi*.

Human interference also featured in *RePlace* with aspects of various installations being either moved or removed, which was also an interesting aspect of audience engagement in *Fallacy*.

Converse:Mao encapsulated most of the forms of impermanence to be found in personal work: raw clay pieces suffered abandonment, dissolving in water, crushing, part-firing and (potential) human engagement.

9.3.5 Record and trace

Personal practice is embedded in the transience of work and recording of creative practice generates some tension, particularly in the light of the requirement to provide evidence for research purposes, as discussed in Chapter 8. As practice has developed, confidence in rejecting record as a necessary feature of work has grown. The work presented for examination, however, required that feature and as part of the process of reflection, analysis and conceptualisation of the issue, experimentation was undertaken with a variety of forms of record, always attempting to avoid compromising an aesthetic imperative for anonymity and transience. It was intriguing to find occasions when the requirement for research record offered a form of evidence with which I feel relatively comfortable; *RePlace* illustrates this.

The question of what constitutes the work, and what is the document, arose for this project as elsewhere. Experimentation and subsequent reflection indicate that photography in some format can be more than simply a record.

A photo book was produced for *RePlace* (see 8.2, p.1976). Originally intended to evidence the installations, the process of collating images generated a narrative for the project, and the record is thus more than a mere sign of evidence. Reflecting-in and reflecting-on this aspect of the research process has resulted in recognition that attempting to document projects for evidential purposes can result in a faint reflection of the creative work, in its vitality, unpredictability and immediacy.

In effect, the documentation is a trace of the work, bearing elusive clues to the nature of the experience and its emotional charge. Perceived as an event, as opposed to an installation, the impact of impermanent 'objects' in the landscape is unique. It cannot be replicated, due to the work's transient materiality and also because the percipient's response to her/his exposure to that transience is affected by the particular circumstances. Objects in this situation are not passive and inert. They are active and changing, as is discussed in Chapter 5 on materiality. In Fischer-Lichte's (2008) terms, the connection between material and percipient generates performance, and as she states:

The apparent tension between its transience and attempts to fix performance [which in this instance might also be called 'event'] through documentation on video, film, photographs, and as descriptions emphasizes ever more clearly the fundamental ephemerality and uniqueness characteristic of performance. Fischer-Lichte (2008, p.75. My interpolation in square brackets)

In another example, the early research project, *Losing It*, existed for five months. The unfired bone china roses were laid out on virgin snow in a grid, and over time, the work disintegrated and disappeared (see **Figure 8.4**).

It was photographed periodically during its existence, and that library of images is almost all that physically remains of the installation⁹⁴. The photography commenced as project documentation, but significantly, when a series of images of one element altering and transforming during the winter was included in research presentations to fellow students and also a group of mature 'lifelong learners', the audiences were very clear that this was itself

⁹⁴ **Figure 5.7** shows the slight trace that by chance remains

an art work. Mood change during the presentations was palpable as individuals responded emotionally to the images, and the lifelong learners articulated that view explicitly after the presentation. The issue of evidence and record is complex, as discussed in Chapter 8.

9.3.6 Mixing materials

RePlace initiated a conscious exploration of the idea that clay may be comparable to other materials in its long-term association with human social development, the resultant familiarity persisting to the present. Knitted wool was introduced alongside clay, both of them taking the form of familiar items (woollen textile and playthings, and clay and ceramic eggs).

Combining different materials and found objects with clay in various states has continued as a strong theme in succeeding work throughout the research period, and is now an embedded aspect of my practice. Chapter 5 explores issues regarding clay, its materiality and similarity to (also differences from) other materials used in impermanent ceramic art practice.

The expectation that it would be feasible to gather evidence regarding responses to the differing materials via comments from social media sources did not materialise. This stimulated reflection on the difficulty of obtaining direct feedback on projects sited in public spaces, without the intrusion of, for instance, hidden video cameras and microphones, and was also evident in the case of *Fallacy* (see also Chapter 8). It also provides another angle on the issue of mediatised experience as discussed in 9.3.5, above.

9.3.7 Impermanence and agency

Despite difficulties in obtaining direct feedback, it was possible to monitor some changes to *RePlace* through return visits, and from reports on social media such as Facebook by people who were aware of the work, though not necessarily of the identity of the installer. It was thus possible to understand a little of what happened to objects, a hint of the agency involved, as well as to note deterioration in the material from which they were made.

Some pieces disappeared very quickly. Egg pouches attached to a gate were removed completely and without trace within five weeks of installation. A

knitted yarnwife installed on a tidal island (close to the Historic Scotland Pictish/Norse Brough of Birsay site) was moved and placed prominently in the centre of the Neolithic standing stones at the World Heritage Ring of Brodgar some miles away.



Figure 9.8 Sarah Gee *RePlace Orkney*. Birsay yarnwife discovered at the Ring of Brodgar. 02.09.12. Image © D. Ford

She was then adopted for the summer season by World Heritage site rangers before being replaced in her original (Birsay) position some months later (see Appendix 1.i and **Figure 9.8**). The installation of knitted pieces including a yarnwife at the Second World War gun battery on Hoxa Head in South Ronaldsay was left *in situ* to weather for approximately two years, before someone moved her (she was found in a puddle), the other knitted items also being removed. She has since been rehoused in the nearby village. News of these moves, losses and rediscoveries all came in the form of electronic communication (e.g. Facebook posts, email, blog posts).

Two of the human engagements with this project stand out particularly: interaction with the knitted sheep-related installations on North Ronaldsay, because of the care given, and with the raw clay eggs buried at the archaeological excavation, given the audacity involved in placing an alien object in a sensitive excavation site.

On North Ronaldsay, one of Njalsdottir's early concerns was that she had 'interfered' with the installation. She then rescued the installation from the *pund* where it was located, wrecked by winter storms in 2013, and refurbished and re-located it at another *pund*. She has said that it is a visitor attraction on the island: at least one school party visited in 2014, indicating the extent of its unanticipated persistence.

Regarding the Ness of Brodgar, the collaborating artist, Rik Hammond, who originally decided where and when to bury the midden soil eggs (see **Figure 9.9**), returned two years later, excavating the spoil heap to check whether the egg forms had retained their shape (as expected of burnished, though raw, clay protected from the elements). He did not find them, partly because the spoil heap had been in active use and was much bigger than when he had installed.

As indicated in 9.3.2, p.215, he discovered that one of the eggs had been found in 'Structure 12', one of the important Neolithic constructions on the site. It is not clear how or why it had been discovered and moved, but it is speculated that one of the archaeologists found it and decided to place it somewhere incongruous as a joke.



Figure 9.9 *RePlace*. Installation view of *Ness of Brodgar Eggs* element, 2012. Ness of Brodgar World Heritage Site. Image © R. Hammond, 2012.

9.4 STATEMENT OF PRAXIS

My praxis, through which ‘theory is imbricated within practice’, as Nelson (2013) describes, has developed via the duration, and agency, of the research programme and in doing so links directly with the propositions laid out in 1.5, p.19. This exploration of how I am ‘engaged in the world and with

others' (Schrag, 2003, p.21) thus makes articulation of a statement of praxis possible.

A reflective, more self-critical and objective approach to practice has been adopted. Description of the nature and origin of practical work and relating it to my experiential, social and cultural context are possible as a result.

As indicated throughout the thesis, research reading offers a social constructivist, phenomenographic framework for personal work, connecting with theories of the extended mind and material studies, also relying significantly on an eastern meditational perspective, thus supporting both intuitive creativity and analytical reflection. My personal position – and that of impermanent work – is perceived as that of 'becoming' in Buddhist terminology, as opposed to 'being'. Embedded in this is a monist approach: a dualist interpretation of the world, in which mind is separated from matter, is rejected. Indeed, the concept of the extended mind is embraced, 'that human cognitive, affective and emotional states and/or processes, literally, comprise elements in their surrounding environment' (Malafouris and Renfrew, 2010, p.8), together with an acceptance of the agentic nature of objects and – by extension – materials: 'the highly skilled potter may even choose to be led by the clay's properties... The capacity to act would seem at least in part to be inherent in the materials in play.' (Knappett 2014, pp.172-173).

Personal praxis is particularly characterised by an a-formal, open approach to art-making; a concept of artist as the only interpreter of artistic content and meaning (often presented via objects in a formal exhibition), being antipathetic.

My work is often anonymous, and offers an implicit invitation to anyone perceiving it to make what she/he wishes of it, emotionally and physically. Personally, art-making is tripartite, with instigator (artist), offering (art object) and percipient (interactor) all essential to the creative act. In this model 'audience' is a term contrary to the active role of an individual engaging with installations and objects. It has been a challenge to find an appropriate noun to reflect this relationship: 'percipient' has been adopted to connote the person who perceives as defined in *Chambers* (2003, p.1114): 'to become or

be aware of through the senses; to get knowledge of by the mind; to see, see clearly; to understand; to discern; to view subjectively'. It is not used in its secondary dictionary definition as 'someone who receives impressions telepathically'. (*Chambers*, 2003, *ibid.*)

While impermanent gallery-based work *is* undertaken, work is usually located in the environment, accessible in that it is usually not on private property. Work is left to be discovered, is unannounced and unpublicised. In fact, it is usually also installed without permission in craftivist fashion, comparable to guerrilla knitting. For some people who come across an installation, it is questionable whether it is art at all. In such a case, it is not art for them, as they do not perceive it to be, while it may be perceived as such by the next person to find it. For me, it *is* art, as that was the purpose in placing it such that others may engage with it.

Installed pieces are left for natural forces to change, alter or destroy, or to be adopted, adapted or destroyed by human interaction. The instigator takes no particular responsibility for them once they have been placed in the public domain. I let them go.

Impermanence of, and alteration in, the work is a fundamental aspect of its character and meaning. It is necessary, therefore, to articulate the nature of impermanence in the context of this statement of praxis and that of other contemporary ceramic arts practitioners, in order to identify its nature both as a means of expression and as a means of engaging percipients.

9.5 REFLEXION ON DEVELOPING PRAXIS

Having developed over the duration of the research programme, my praxis is now typified by an egalitarian and open approach to art-making, often offering commentaries on cultural and social practices other than my own. The work is characteristically Impermanent and subject to change, and its meaning for me as maker is bound up with its physicality. Risk-taking in siting installations and undertaking performative work are increasingly central to personal meaning.

Addressing both Research Aims, such art-making has a three-part nature, with instigator (artist), offering (art object) and percipient (interactor) all being integral to the creation of a work., 'percipient' (as indicated throughout) being my preferred term for an individual engaging with this form of impermanent clay-based creativity, reflecting the active nature of the role. Clarification of 'impermanence' in the contemporary ceramic art context in Chapter 4 offers a prism through which a description is developed and the nature of impermanent ceramic art practice may be understood.

Chapters 4-8 focused on distinguishing features of impermanent ceramic creativity, exploring its possible provenance, purpose, character and challenges, contextualised by comparison with the work of others, and by sympathetic theoretical constructs. Chapter 9, as the culmination of the research exploration, has considered the developing nature of personal artistic praxis and its main characteristics. The final section has noted a prism of laissez-faire and openness through which impermanent contemporary ceramics may be contextualised and understood.

Chapter 10 draws together the findings and arguments presented in the thesis. It makes conclusions and offers an perspective on contemporary ceramic art practice engaging with impermanence of the form described. It identifies the contribution to knowledge of this research programme, and indicates areas for further research.

CHAPTER 10 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The object of interpretation is understanding... Understanding is the outcome of organizing and contextualizing essentially contestable, completely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way... The requirement... is verisimilitude or 'trust likeness,' and that is a compound of coherence and pragmatic utility.

Bruner (1996, cited in Sullivan, 2005, p.49)

Chapter 10 summarises the research findings in order to elucidate impermanence in my own ceramic art practice, and that of contemporary practitioners from the ceramic tradition. This is offered for interrogation and further development, supported by the research evidence presented in Chapters 4 - 9.

Research aims and hypotheses are reviewed, current praxis is stated, contributions to knowledge are identified, and areas for potential further research are indicated.

10.1 REVIEW OF RESEARCH AIMS

Chapters 4-9 explored relevant data regarding the contemporary practice of ceramic impermanence, and findings for each aspect are summarised in the final (Reflection) sections of the relevant chapter. These preliminary conclusions have been drawn based on both practical and theoretical strands to address the research aims outlined in Chapter 1.

This chapter refers to these findings and summarises the research conclusions in the context of Bruner's research terms, cited at the head of the chapter.

10.1.1 Research aims

1. To explore practical applications of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, together with relevant theoretical frameworks.

Evidence of my research-related work, and that of contemporaries, is illuminated by consideration of the contemporary discourse on ceramics in the expanded field along with other art forms, and contextualised within the frameworks of social constructivism, phenomenography and the aesthetics of performance art.

Features encompassing the variety of means by which contemporary artists use ceramic impermanence are presented below as the basis for consideration, refinement and further development by practitioners and academics in the field.

2. To evidence praxis as a means of articulating bonds between theory and practice in this area.

Personal praxical development is charted, a statement of praxis being presented together with reflection on the process of its development and current character, which argues for its location within a performance context, rather than that of visual art.

10.1.2 Considering research propositions

The research programme enabled the identification and examination of four propositions. The arguments regarding each are summarised below:

a. The impermanent use of clay is confirmed as having significance beyond merely being a vehicle for artistic expression

Examples which illustrate my own practice and that of contemporaries demonstrate that clay is used in impermanent form by makers from the ceramic tradition for its impact (making the material perceptible rather than invisible), and for its resonances (being invested with cultural meaning regarding reliability and stability) in addition to being a medium for the presentation of ideas regarding history, loss, memory, etc.

- b. *The fact that artists are working with impermanence in a medium generally perceived to be durable and permanent impacts significantly on its reception.*

Dissonance between received wisdom regarding artists' use of clay (to produce durable, permanent work) and contemporary developments (to generate changing, impermanent work) relates to the deeper material significance identified at (a); historical as well as contemporary examples are offered as evidence.

- c. *Such developments are shifting contemporary ceramic art practice significantly into a time-based arena*

The elements identified by the research as essential for the characterisation of this form of art align closely with performance and event art, consequently diverging from a visual art aesthetic. In support, particular features (e.g. co-presence of work and audience, material performativity, time-based work) are identified in contemporary practice and links made to theories in performance art.

- d. *Record and evidence of what is essentially a transient form of art is challenging per se. This may confound the artist's intention in making deliberately impermanent work.*

Evidence from case study time-based work demonstrates that the making of record impacts on meanings of impermanent work. Such mediatisation parallels the negative effects of record and documentation in the context of live art and performance, endorsing the thesis that the aesthetic of performance art is a more suitable context for consideration of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice.

10.2 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

10.2.1 Features of ceramic impermanence

The use of clay in impermanent artistic expression is multifarious, as indicated by the illustrative material (both written and physical) shown at oral examination and the commentary provided by this thesis. The research has studied its variety and provided a number of frames through which to consider and characterise its essential features.

Thus five aspects characterising this form of expression have been identified, which contribute to understanding of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice:

1. *Aspects of impermanence* Descriptors of ceramic impermanence include: maker's intentions (which may change over time); expression (realisation rather than representation) of impermanence; unrepeatability; embeddedness of meaning in the conjunction of material, its transience and location.
2. *The material* Dissonance generated by material acting in an incongruous fashion (e.g. collapsing, dissolving, exploding) stimulates a different response from that generated by work made with stable materials, intended to last. While clay is not unique in this respect, it is such a basic and ubiquitous material that its 'misbehaviour' makes a strong impact. Experimentation demonstrates that textile has similar properties when used impermanently.
3. *Location* Siting of impermanent contemporary clay-based work is a significant aspect in both case study material and the wider field of contemporary ceramics. The majority of work is framed by site, whether this relates to a location's physical nature or its cultural and other resonances.
4. *Performativity and artist/audience relations* Impermanent ceramic work is performative due to its changing nature (whether short-lived or indeterminate in duration). Co-presence between work and percipient (including the instigator when she/he undertakes a directly performative role) is essential, for which a performance aesthetic is an appropriate theoretical framework
5. *Record* Mediatisation alters the nature and perception of impermanent creativity to the extent of destroying meaning

10.2.2 Classifying ceramic impermanence

The classification system described in 4.1.2, pp.85-92 (see **Table 4.A**) indicates the nature of the shift from a visual art to a performance arena as an appropriate framework for impermanence in contemporary ceramic art

practice. Class 1.i, the 'classic installation', embeds art in an historically familiar context, in which passive objects are displayed to visitors consciously entering a space dedicated to art. This contrasts significantly with Class 4, the 'performance/event', in which the work (and sometimes the artist) performs and engages the audience directly, with meanings generated through that direct interaction.

The shift in focus supports the characterisation of this mode of ceramic creativity below.

10.3 CHARACTERISING IMPERMANENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CERAMIC ART PRACTICE

In any one of the above features of impermanence, ceramics may have similarities with other contemporary art forms. The combination of all the features connotes a form, which is significant, if not unique:

- The maker intends that the work in clay should not persist
- Duration for work may be seconds- or years-long
- Work may alter in form or location, may self-destruct, disintegrate, be scattered or destroyed, be impacted by physical or human forces to generate meaning
- Audience engagement results from the material change in the clay itself
- Work is unrepeatable
- Co-presence of work and percipient (though not always the instigator) is necessary: record and documentation alter the nature and meaning of work

These statements essentially describe impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice. In addition, siting generally has significance, and is actually a central feature of my own work, where material from a site is, where possible, used in work.

These essential aspects are more indicative of live than visual art. A shift from the visual art aesthetic to the event aesthetic of the performance arena

is therefore offered as the appropriate 'niche' for the performative nature of contemporary ceramic art practice involving impermanence.

The particular nature of unrepeatability also has connotations regarding the marketability of work. In the form of a classic installation (Class 1.i, Table 4.A), there is potential for work (*qua* objects) to be sold, where elements of installations are durable. Accessing impermanent work in the form of an event (Class 4, Table 4.A) is subject to different market criteria.

10.3.1 (Lack of) evidence

As indicated by statements made in 1.9.1 (pp.30-31) and 8.4 (pp.202-203), remains of practical work were presented at oral examination as traces of what is inevitably lost given a research subject of (and generated with) impermanent physicality. Traces were salvaged and collected to offer an indication of the work undertaken. As such, they provided circumstantial evidence which, given the discussion of the mediatizing impact of record, furnished a partial clue to the nature, quality and impact of work as and when it was made.

Incorporation of evidence in the form of images, electronic links and transcripts in the written thesis and its appendices has been a key aim.

10.4 DEVELOPMENT OF PRAXIS

Artistic development and academic enquiry were integrated in the research, enabling development of my praxis, which both informed, and was informed by, exploration via the practice-led approach. The character of this developing praxis was not anticipated, though personally pleasing. The research opportunity, which enabled this journey of self-discovery through practice in ceramics, is of real and continuing value to me.

Impermanence intrigues and prompts reconsideration of assumptions, and review of understanding of personal experiences and contexts. As a maker I share the act of creativity with percipients through the medium of impermanent work. As meanings for work are personal, I have no prior right or wish to author-ise them. I have, however, the privilege of stimulating

meaning-making for others, whether solemn or light-hearted, personal or shared, ephemeral or lasting.

Personal praxis is embedded in a search for understanding. The research is one stage of a longer journey, which will continue within the context of reflection and reflexivity.

10.5 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Research aim 1 *To explore practical applications of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, together with relevant theoretical frameworks.*

- Identification of the appropriateness of the performance arena as an aesthetic base for impermanent contemporary ceramic art practice, supported by distinguishable features aligning it with performance, contributes a new perspective to theoretical frameworks relevant to, and providing convincing contexts for, this area of creative practice.
- Identification and exploration of the unique features of my personal practice.

Research aim 2 *To evidence praxis as a means of articulating bonds between theory and practice in this area.*

- The bond between theory and practice developed within a combined application of Schönian and Kolbian models. The contribution to methods which the research demonstrates relates to the interconnectivity of personal (primary) and contextual/case study (secondary) research. This offers a transferable research model for practice-led Ph.D. research.

In addressing both these research aims, the development and exploration of my personal praxis offer an original contribution to knowledge, of value to academics, practitioners and commentators in the field of contemporary ceramic art practice, and a basis for further personal research.

Methodology

The construction of the argument for the 'third way' method for undertaking robust research in the creative domain argued in 3.1 contributes towards the comprehension and application of practice-based theory.

Associated contributions

Incorporated in the exploration is articulation of a new perspective on ceramic impermanence: demonstrably work can and does persist without losing the character of impermanence. Material change is one aspect of this apparent paradox (see 4.2.1, p.92 onwards). Maker intention is another, as I discussed with one of my collaborators:

I put work out into the world which I feel a visceral urge to make, perceiving it as transient, and it is adopted and it morphs into something more potent than I could have imagined.
Gee (Personal correspondence with Njalsdottir, 15.05.13)

Percipient memory is a third aspect, this being an integral characteristic of performance art. The existing term 'percipient' has been applied throughout the thesis as a more appropriate term than 'audience' in the context of contemporary ceramic impermanence. The need for the recognition of a different relationship between artist and the public underpins the research narrative, and 'percipient' reflects an equality in the generation of creativity in the 'open' installatory work which characterises personal praxis. Thus, the percipient is not only a holder of record, a witness, but also a proactive maker of meaning in appropriating, adopting and adapting work (see 7.2.1, pp.165-173).

Various forms of classification and tabulation have been devised for the purposes of this research (e.g. Table 4.A, Diagrams 3.2 and 9.1). These forms of presentation of the issues and challenges encountered in seeking to interpret impermanent ceramics are anticipated to be of value to, and contribute towards, work in both research and practice arenas.

These contributions to knowledge support further exploration of an area of research, which since the commencement of this programme in 2009, has witnessed an upsurge in academic and practitioner interest, in terms of

investigation of practice, associated research approaches and theoretical models.

10.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the search for knowledge, there is always capacity for better understanding and clearer articulation of what has been discovered.

As anticipated, a key outcome of this research is recognition of opportunities for further research in:

- a. scrutinising the significance of event in impermanent ceramic art practice, particularly in developing arguments regarding the pertinence of event and performance aesthetic frameworks (e.g. 6.2.4, p.148)
- b. considering further the development both of theory in relation to practice-led research, and of methodology crossing disciplinary boundaries
- c. maturing the statements of essential aspects underpinning the characterisation of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice
- d. considering transferability of this characterisation of impermanence to other art arenas
- e. examining curation in the context of impermanence in art making. While identified as a core area for consideration at the outset of the research, and for which data was gathered, it became clear that it was a significant area for further study (see 3.5, pp.71-72)
- f. examining further the importance of site-specificity for impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice (Chapter 6)
- g. exploring the engagement of impermanence aesthetics in small-scale art, for instance, as an aspect of the development of craftivist and twenty-first century feminist art movements
- h. investigating the role of transgressiveness in installatory/performative art, both ceramic and more generally, as an aspect of feminist theory and other perspectives

On a personal basis there will also be further exploration and consolidation of understanding of the instigator role for the maker of work, which the current research has illuminated as a rewarding approach to work and audience (7.4, pp.188-189). There is also an imperative to investigate further the pattern of praxis, in creating work on return, as opposed to initial, visits to unfamiliar settings, identified as an aspect of the research (6.2, pp.137-138).

There will also be consideration of the dichotomy between 'Augustan' and 'Romantic', 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian', intellectual and instinctive, as tensions in the artistic context. While mention of these binaries is implicit rather than explicit in the thesis, they have been apparent in practical terms, for instance in the tension between 'traditional' museum principles of care and conservation and makers' transient provocations.

CODA

Life doesn't last; art doesn't last. It doesn't matter.

Hesse (1970)

Life doesn't last. Art does last. It isn't matter.

My understanding of ephemeral events only points towards a beginning of meaning, never meaning as such; it is not a closure of meaning... But like poetry itself a call for meaning.

Martinon (2001)

My articulation of impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice only points towards a beginning of understanding, never understanding as such; it is not a closure of understanding... But like art itself a call for understanding.



Zen Egg. Charney Manor, Oxon. 6-9.08.14

And man is born, and dies, and does not come again...

Old Dinka song (Trask, 1966)

Women persist.

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PRACTICE REPORT EXTRACTS

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PRACTICE REPORT *REPLACE, ORKNEY* MAY 2012: EXTRACT (*full report and images available*)

OUTLINE

Environmental installation project to return materials of various kinds to Orkney in the form of art work.

Project conceived as direct result of identifying possibility of acquiring soil from a major archaeological excavation on Orkney.

Challenge: to realise long-held wish to combine clay impermanently with textile in a major installation.

Devised as cooperative project with six others who produced knitted contributions to their own design, utilising yarn previously sourced from Orkney (indigenous knitting wool from North Ronaldsay and knitting yarn imported to Orkney for commercial purposes), resulting in guerrilla art⁹⁵.

Relative anonymity in presenting work in public domain enabling reflection on principles and practicalities of record, witness and interaction⁹⁶.

LOCATION AND DATE

Map 1 (p.2) of the six sites in Orkney for the project installations.

Criteria for project sites included:

- association with sites of archaeological and/or cultural importance. For instance, the only installation to involve clay was placed as close as was feasible to its source⁹⁷; the installation created from North Ronaldsay wool was placed in three locations on North Ronaldsay
- physical endeavour in order to gain access. This included using ferry, scheduled flight, crossing to a tidal island at low tide, and hiking (experiencing hail, snow and high wind). All installations were made away from public roads, were not signalled and tended to merge into the landscape.
- coverage of compass points. Orkney was to be 'quartered', as far as possible in the time available.

⁹⁵ Guerrilla art, also referred to as "street art", is a method of art making where the artist leaves anonymous art pieces in public places. It is often an installation in an unauthorized location." Quotation accessed 15 June 2012 from <http://guerilla-art.wikidot.com/what-is-guerilla-art>

⁹⁶ 'Audience' is an inappropriate term for those members of the public who engage with artistic endeavour, and are crucial in completing a loop between the piece(s), the maker(s), and the public domain, thus generating the work as art. 'Interactor' is currently the preferred term, because of its connotations of mutual or reciprocal action or influence. It is intended to give consideration of this important aspect of the art-making cycle in a further paper during Year 4.

⁹⁷ Because the spoil soil originated at a seasonal archaeological site, which is only opened in the summer, access was not feasible at the time. A further installation of raw egg forms using soil originating from this site took place when the site was accessible by collaborating artist, Rik Hammond.

Identifying sites with appropriate features such as concealment, anchorage points, neutrality (in terms of ownership) was undertaken in the period 8-14.05.12, and installation 15-20.05.12.



Map 1: Sites for RePlace installations May 2012

RePlace 1	The Partick Stane, Dwarfie Hamars, Hoy	15.05.12
RePlace 2	North Ronaldsay	16.05.12
	- north of Matches Dyke	
	- west of Bride's Ness	
	- Linklet Bay	
RePlace 3	Brough of Birsay (tidal island)	18.05.12
RePlace 4	north east shore, Loch of Stenness	19.05.12
	(between Ring of Brodgar and Ness of Brodgar)	
RePlace 5	Wideford Hill	20.05.12

(south west of Wideford Cairn)

RePlace 6 Balfour Battery, Hoxa Head

20.05.12

The four points of the compass are covered.

PREPARATION AND TESTING

Minimal testing for a project with a certain character of spontaneity. Making egg forms (although not the preparation of clay from soil) prefigured in work previously using egg forms.

Some experimentation with knitted work undertaken.

The only other testing which took place was advance identification of suitable sites, in the week preceding installation.

ARTISTIC INTENT AND ACTION

Drive to make this work on and for Orkney was spontaneous, and the project presented itself almost immediately once I was aware that spoil soil could be accessed.

Reflection enables identification of reasons supporting this desire:

- Availability of locally-sourced material (particularly soil with particular associations to be processed into clay)
- Archaeological heritage (the landscape being full of signs of earlier human activity - a trigger for recent environmental installations)
- Personal associations (Orkney visited on a number of occasions since the 1970s, and links with family who are resident)

It also seemed important to involve others, and to invite participation as co-artists, rather than as fabricators:

1. given the scale of the enterprise and the time and opportunity available, it was impractical for one individual to create sufficient work with the materials as earmarked.
2. an opportunity for cooperative venture, enabling individuals to make elements as freely as they wished, within parameters, i.e.:
 - Making knitted items suitable for attaching to aspects of the landscape in Orkney (e.g. a relatively tree-less environment)
 - Using materials supplied (i.e. yarn purchased from suppliers in Orkney itself)
 - Using yarn to create whatever form of knitting the individual wanted to make
 - Returning items by 01.05.12 to be available for transport to Orkney.
 - Permitting me to utilise the resulting items as dictated by the environment in which they would be installed.

Primary focus was using soil from an archaeological excavation, which required the preparation of a clay body. Artistic intent to stretch self technically (unfamiliar

process). Resulting material used in both low-fired and un-fired forms in the project.

I was also keen for low personal profile for this project, which had the character of a guerrilla installation; also not to take sole/personal ownership of work given the involvement of co-artists, the tricoteuses.

I therefore devised a persona and fired porcelain tags were secured to each installation, inscribed with title of work (RePlace) and name of persona⁹⁸ (hegasaer). Character of hegasaer was also made material as a knitted figure⁹⁹, present at each installation.



Figure 1 hegasaer figure near Wideford Hill installation site, Mainland, Orkney 12 May 2012

Blog also generated with the 'hegasaer' persona, and geocaching¹⁰⁰ persona devised with this name and using the figure as identifier.

While travelling north through Scotland, and investigating potential sites in Orkney, clues were left for geocachers in the form of a magnetic plastic letter at seven geocache sites, spelling out a phrase regarding the installation project. Clues are logged on the dates at which they were visited at www.geocaching.com for the following geocaches:

GC1A4VN
GC2ZAZC

GC1DEK0
GC2A710

GC1HXNN
GC3DFZ8

GC2PRB4

OUTCOMES

⁹⁸ In Jungian terms, the appearance being presented to the world

⁹⁹ Made from Orkney-sourced yarn

¹⁰⁰ Geo-caching resembles a treasure hunt, where clues require to be solved in order to locate the cache/treasure, using global positioning system (GPS) technology as a navigation aid.

Witness, record and the worldwide web Useful exercise in considering record and witness. While gentle subsidence of material into the soil of Orkney would be absolutely suitable as a result of the installation work – even loss by human removal would be possible and acceptable – it is a bonus to have direct feedback regarding discoveries.

The somewhat allusive clues provided regarding the project have been picked up. For instance, someone found the tags at the installations at Birsay and Wideford Hill, searched the internet for ‘hegasaer’ and found the blog. This person then left a comment on the blog site.

At least one individual has come across the Balfour Battery installation while geocaching and has contacted me by email, having noted similarities between the knitted figure¹⁰¹ (yarnwife) left at the site, and identifier for my geocaching persona.

I personally observed the Hoy installation being found within a couple of hours of its installation - one group of people at the site, and another making their way to it.

Blog was maintained for some time, as project record as well as offering an opportunity for individuals to make contact regarding ‘finds’.

Logs on the worldwide geocaching website were monitored for the geocache sites where clues were left, to pick up responses to requests for information of the whereabouts of the magnetic plastic letters left at the sites in the preliminary phase of the project. There have been none.

Cooperation and collaboration Level of involvement of tricoteuses varied, and it is valuable to reflect on the plan, the process and the level of participation.

Feedback has been obtained from those involved (Appendix 4ii). The group’s involvement has been marked by presenting each with a yarnwife.

It was striking to experience the commitment and enthusiasm of the group, which laid an unpredicted sense of responsibility on me as the installer. I certainly felt responsibility for ensuring the installations were as effective and impactful as possible.

Artistic outcome As the instigator, outcome is pleasing in fulfilling original intention to repopulate Orkney with material that had been physically removed from the Isles. The character of the installations varied, partly due to site constraints, but mainly because of the different styles of individual contributors; overall the aesthetic was pleasing, and suited to the environment of a windswept and ancient landscape.

I had not anticipated that this would be as significant a piece of personal artistic work as it turned out to be in reality. It was demanding organisationally, physically, mentally and emotionally. The project was an important artistic

¹⁰¹ I made six knitted figures which I call yarnwives, one to be installed at each of the sites so that there is some continuity between the different installations, which otherwise have different characteristics, given the number of tricoteuses involved in making pieces for the project

enterprise for me, and not approached merely as an experimental, research-related exercise. Were I to consider it as the latter, the psychological outcome would disabuse me: completing the installation as I had envisaged it has given me significant and continuing personal and artistic satisfaction.

The project itself is not yet over, although its survival is expected to be short-lived. It is hoped to obtain feedback on the continuing existence (or disappearance) of elements of the installations either by re-visiting myself, receiving messages from percipients who have come across the work and followed up the clues, or by asking agents on the ground to check the sites (latest information available, August 2014).

The final installation took place during the summer seasonal archaeological excavation at a site of global importance, the final clutch of raw clay egg forms being returned to the dig's spoil heap to be re-absorbed into their parent material by collaborating artist, Rik Hammond (who accompanied me on the initial expeditions to install work in May 2012). See Appendix 4i for follow-up of this installation.

REFLECTION

This project was quite a different enterprise from previous experience of making art and required a certain amount of on-the-spot problem-solving. In one sense the determination to see it through was the most deliberate aspect of what was otherwise the undertaking of something unusually off-the-cuff, and escaping much prior reflection.

One important driver was the undeniable need to do the work and another was the wish to combine textile and ceramic in one major installation. Although, quantitatively, clay was a minor element, it was in fact the trigger and the focus for the whole work.

My experience in team-work, problem-solving and project planning was very useful and the drive generated by the strong desire to make this work enabled me to address issues creatively in novel ways.

A lasting collaboration for the North Ronaldsay element of the work was unanticipated and very rewarding (see Appendix 4iii for the reflection it enabled me to make on this and other research-related work).

PRACTICE REPORT *TIDAL TRANSIENCE* 20.09.09 EXTRACT (*full report and photographic record available*)

OUTLINE

Tidal work involving keels recycled from *Tsunami* (BA piece, 2009) originally intended solely as an installation work of limited duration. Unrecorded event. Invited witnesses not prevented from recording it.

LOCATION AND DATE

Convenient location where big high tides wash against the sea wall. Date and time (4 p.m. 20.09.09) selected for high tide during daylight hours.

PLAN

- Restricted duration
- Impermanence of material
- Uncontrollable forces (time and tide)
- Accessibility for the public
- Presence of invited audience
- No artist's record for the work

ARTISTIC INTENT

Use of elements of existing work on the tsunami of 2004 permitted personal connection between the north east coast of the UK and a distant site of devastation and death (evidence still visible in 2008 at Pondicherry).

Work enabled resolution of personal reactions to the disaster, which had a devastating local impact on the population, environment and economy of the Coromandel Coast.

Making no record of the event enabled experience of both practical and emotional consequences of a lack of physical documentation of impermanent work.

An invited audience enabled me to experience for myself issues, both as artist and audience member, of witness, participation, performance and memory, stimulating personal reflection. In the event, and on further reflection, this was a very liberating way of working, because of the unpredictable nature of the evidence of the work of which I, as the instigator, am aware - in harmony with an artistic desire to use my means of expression to draw attention to things (such as emotions, history, injustices and trauma) by bringing unexpected aspects of life together, encouraging observers, audience, percipients, to experience and reflect on these conjunctions for themselves.

Making work in a public space provided an explicit opportunity for interaction and engagement with members of the public.

PREPARATION AND TESTING

Test 'study' work undertaken in advance on the tide line when the tide was rising to its highest, to the north of Hartlepool Headland beacon, at south end of Fairy

Cove beach where the sand runs out, in an area of exposed rock and rock pools. The purpose of the 6 tests was to check:

- Behaviour of material
- Predictability of process
- Tidal agency
- Access for installation
- Spectator access
- Artist response to 'loss' of work (specifically Tests E and F)

The outcome was satisfactory in terms of deciding an appropriate location for the work itself, the process to be used, and suitability of the previously selected readymade pieces. Discussion with, and feedback from, the informed witness enabled me to reflect on effects of the technical decisions and of the likely impact on those invited to be involved with the work. This discussion and feedback was a particularly valuable aspect of the testing process at a time in the development of an impermanent way of working which was relatively novel.

OUTCOMES AND REFLECTIONS

Descriptor The nature of the work, with pieces being placed in position in public, in the presence of witnesses, changed the intended focus of the work from straightforward, time-restricted, environmental installation into performative work.

The way the work had been planned, prepared and executed by its nature gave it a performative aspect; I had not considered in advance that this would be an integral aspect. The recognition of this has, on reflection, informed the artistic and research-based practice I have undertaken since, including *Sanbao Respect* (China), *Nag Puja* (Nepal), and *No. 11 Tea Ceremony*, (UK) in 2012.

Witness The lack of a personal record of the work was, on balance, a positive experience. The reliance on others to sustain the work through memory and their own documentation¹⁰², was found on reflection to be a confirmation of a preferred way of working as well as a means of highlighting the core nature of much of my work: recall, ceremony, memory, resolution through surrender to the elements. Reflecting on the work with witnesses has provided means of reinforcing and refreshing recollection of the work, obviating personal want of documentation. Avoidance of personal documentation of the life of an impermanent piece was explored further in *RePlace Orkney* (UK), where an installation was left in the environment with clues to enable witnesses to contact me, if they wished to.

Responsibility Releasing ceramic work into the marine environment raises environmental issues (admittedly post-event). This was a relatively small act of pollution. Nevertheless it was a deliberate act and I take responsibility for releasing a certain amount of Plaster of Paris (hydrated calcium sulphate), moločite (calcined kaolin), oxide traces and fired bone china (bone ash, feldspathic material and kaolin) into the environment.

¹⁰² Witness records were not 'required' of those attending, though I was gratified to receive copies of the images that were made, as an indicator of the seriousness with which people participated in the event

This awareness has certainly impacted on later environmental work, for instance *RePlace, Orkney*, where materials were used which had been sourced from the place in which the work was then installed. The textile pieces were as far as possible stuffed with wool-gatherings, bracken and lichen, gathered on walks undertaken in Scotland. The use of nylon ties for attaching the individual elements to the environment was only done where it was impractical to use natural materials.

Exposure Making the work in public in my own neighbourhood was a challenge. I had no clear idea how fellow users of the area would respond to what I was doing. Two people showed interest before continuing their walk.

Artistic outcome The whole event was emotionally liberating for myself as its generator: I had not realised until I witnessed the washing of the pieces by the tidal waves, and their subsequent burial in the sand, how important a psychological closure this was for me. I had been affected by the scenes of destruction photographed in Pondicherry, and had made a work in response, and yet that had not given me the release that this final act of return to the sea had delivered.

The performative aspect of the work, while unexpected, was inevitable. The experience itself, and consequent reflection, drew my attention to the fact that this was an implicit aspect of much of my practical work. This recognition has had a liberating effect on my approach to art-making as well as providing further food for thought about attitudes to the role of the artist and audience (see below) in making art.

The involvement of witnesses during the setting up of the installation, waiting for the tide to rise and its engagement with the work, and observing the scattering into the water and submerging by sand of the fragments of the pieces, generated a richer experience and perspective on the work. Those involved had different personal responses to the experience, which was the hoped-for outcome, as I wish work that I instigate to belong to those involved, rather than being 'received' as a definitive message from the artist.

The fact that three witnesses made photographic records, which were then offered to me as a resource, endorsed the impression that the event had importance beyond that which I had personally felt as the generator of the experience.

PRACTICE REPORT *RECOLLECTION, BEDE'S WORLD JARROW. 2011 onward. EXTRACT* (full report and images available)

OUTLINE

Environmental installation involving experimental utilisation of fired ceramic material devised to alter *in situ* over time:

- Conceived as direct and intuitive response to an archaeological excavation and follow-up report (Eyers 2011), and as a study for a larger installation
- Exploring several research strands: expressive focus, materials and making, location and public access
- Also, though unplanned, testing the role of photography
- Specifically stimulated by invitation to contribute to time-limited research-in-progress group exhibition

DATE AND LOCATION

17 March 2011-present: stimulus being group exhibition for University of Sunderland researchers in Glass and Ceramics, curated by Professor Sylva Petrova (*A Journey, Bede's World, Jarrow, March-May 2011*). At Bede's World, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear.

AIMS AND INTENTIONS

Specifically addresses Research Aim One: to survey current practical applications involving impermanence as a major feature of contemporary artistic expression for individuals (in this case myself) working with ceramics;

Contributes to Research Aim Two: to evidence (my own) praxis, reflectively combining theoretical and creative aspects as a means of articulating the bond between theory and practice in this area of contemporary ceramic art practice;

Clarifies initial exploration of aspects of "impermanence" in contemporary ceramic art practice.

Compliance with approach adopted for data gathering and analysis.

Specific objectives were to utilise self as case study material to experiment with:

Subject matter: to examine whether work with ceramics involving other than socio-political commentary is effective using an impermanent mode of expression, compared with *Losing It, Return to Koshi* or *Sanbao Respect*.

Material and process: seeking to identify the importance of materials (how significant is the utilisation of ceramic material?) and process (a purely functional stage?).

Siting: to compare issues both of public exhibition in an institutional setting with those of open-air installation work anticipated to be of very short duration, such as *Tidal Transience*; and of site-sensitivity as opposed to site-specific work such as *Return to Koshi* and *Nag Puja*.

Artistic intent Main focus: articulation of expressive work, publicly accessible, subject to weather. Specific purpose was to undertake a restricted 'study' project to test both practical and artistic aspects of installation work with multiples (one element for each child interred at Yewden). This has 25 elements. The finished work (working title: *97 Infants*) will be four times the size at a more subject-sensitive site.

Having felt a drive to make a piece of work in response to the discovery of the 97 infants buried at a Roman villa site, identifying appropriate means of expression in impermanent ceramic installation was straightforward.

PROJECT REALITY

Timespan It was expected that severe weather (e.g. frost, spring rain) would occur during the exhibition period, impacting on the work, which would deteriorate and decay. In fact the weather was unseasonably mild and the work did not alter significantly between March and May 2011. The Customer Services Manager agreed to leave it *in situ* and to curate (a relationship akin to adoption). The work remains four years later.

Making and 'owning' This is the most persistent of the field projects, impacting on my relationship to work, venue and public understanding. Interview with its curator reflects visitor response:

People look and they notice them all, so they have commented a lot. When we tell them the inspiration of the work, that it's a really wonderful thing... but when they were first installed I would say, no. But since they've weathered, a lot more people do... With the builders, they were 'well, why on earth would you put a piece of work on there if you want it to rot?' Do you know what I mean? It's 'well, it's just daft. I don't understand that'. But then they've come back. They can see the purpose absolutely. Again it's something about conservation and preservation. Do you preserve it, so that everyone can enjoy it, or do you let things take their natural course? Because people will enjoy it and there will still be that memory of it. [Laura Lamp. Interview transcript 12.09.2012]

Although the drive to make it was emotional, as was the making process, the degree of personal attachment to the installation is unexpected.

The relationship between museum and maker has proved positive and has enriched visitor experience through protection from unnecessary disturbance as well as provision of interpretation of the work.

Because the work has changed physically over the time it has been on display it was appropriate to provide a series of images to show how the elements have altered – as a publication tracking each element over a three-year period and is an outcome of the piece's persistence, rather than part of the project as planned.

SUBJECT MATTER

Earlier experimental work within the research programme had political, as well as personal, perspectives. *ReCollection*, in contrast, has a personal and social

cast, in its more intimate concerns (value of life, unpredictability of death, parenting and lost opportunity).

The need to respond creatively was stimulated, directly and unplanned, from the knowledge that over a period of decades (rogueclassicism.com blog 2011) – perhaps over a century – and in one location, ninety seven individuals had not survived the perinatal period. Their number, healthiness and the lack of discrimination between sexes make contemporary understanding of this situation difficult.

The motivation for installation was to bring some order, care and respect to bear on this knowledge.

The title *ReCollection*, which – like almost all the other aspects – surfaced unbidden, seemed apt in drawing attention to the history of these individuals and their parents (recollection = remembrance), as well as drawing them together as a group (re-collection = re-assembling).

MATERIAL AND PROCESS

The project enabled two specific questions to be posed:

- (i) To what extent is the material from which work is made important? This enabled testing of a proposition that there is something special, if not unique, about using ceramic as a material for impermanent expression.
- (ii) Is the making process of aesthetic value or merely a technical stage? This was triggered by observations of case study subjects, such as Sormin and Maiolino, embedding work in a processual fashion, where the making process is integral to the work's significance.

Material importance Given its conception and generation, it was appropriate for the installation to utilise plaster-based ceramic material devised in 2008, with elements being the weight of a new-born infant (2.5 - 3 kg prior to drying and firing), in the form of slightly abstracted infant bodies. Each solid form was wrapped prior to firing in slip-soaked cotton, utilising bone china slip.

Making From a very early stage it was clear what would be installed, how it would be set out, how it would be made, what materials would be used, and the process to be followed, well before a location was identified.

I decided to fire pieces as with earlier work using this material. The forms responded individually to the firing process; some showing little impact of, others significantly altered by, the steep temperature ramp, unpredictability of top temperature (see cones in Fig 6) and speedy cooling.

My mood became meditative as I worked, psychologically withdrawn from my surroundings; I felt subdued, methodical, calm and respectful of the materials and the processes in which I was involved. As the kiln was unpacked, each form was handled with care, as much because of what they expressed - as infants - as the fact that the pieces were inherently fragile.

While there was clear recognition of technical involvement in the process, there was also a sense of being drawn in – as if the activity and attitude of the maker were absorbed into the content, and becoming an aspect of the expression, of the work.

SITING

Serious consideration was given to an appropriate setting. The ideal location would have been the Roman villa at Yewden itself. Permission was unlikely for an installation *in situ*, partly because of the possibility of disturbance of an archaeological site. Therefore, artistic imperatives for siting the work were:

- Minimum of five square metres of outdoor space
- Ground capable of absorbing 'deteriorating' material
- Context appropriate to an archaeological theme
- Exposure to weather and other forces for change
- Public access

Bede's World had particular connections with history and a layout which enabled public viewing at close quarters. As a study for a larger piece, the location has been adequate. Siting for the full project with ninety seven elements will take account of this experience.

This work contrasts quite significantly with *RePlace Orkney*, where materials and methods of making were more closely connected directly to the locations used, and even with 'gallery' work such as *Traces*, where location in a specialist museum has strong bonds with the issues explored in the work. *ReCollection* could easily be re-sited without losing relevance.

RECORDING THE INSTALLATION

This installation has been a useful means of exploring record and its status in relation to the 'art work'.

The photographic record extends from an early stage in the making process, including images of dry wrapped, then dipped wrapped forms, the packing and unpacking of the kiln, and each individual fired form.

Once installed, it seemed appropriate to return to take a series of photographs roughly every six months, which at a simple level offers an opportunity to record the changes that the work is undergoing over time, but also has an overlay of emotional energy, making visits more than photo-shoots.

Photography has emerged as an important aspect of the artistic process; attachment to the installation developing because of its persistence.

IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC

One of the unanticipated issues emerging from the project was public involvement.

ReCollection has cast the maker in the role of 'artist' – the individual who knows what the work means, can (and should) explain it to others, and who is expected to have proprietorial emotions about the work, as its 'owner'. Certainly, a sense of responsibility has led to the production of the photo-book, as a means for better public understanding, contrasting with *Losing It*, and witnessed work such as *Tidal Transience*.

REFLECTING ON THE PROJECT

Reviewing the project has identified a number of factors which combined to generate the work:

- Need to test ways of making and presenting impermanent work within the research programme, resulting in the exploration of a number of variables, i.e. evidencing and recording, materials and media, location, duration; and the identification of new themes requiring consideration, such as longevity, authorship, ownership and audience.
- Opportunism in the form of the research exhibition of work in progress, combined with suitability of its location
- Continuity of artistic practice developed at undergraduate level, including the devising of non-clay ceramic material with the capacity to fragment and decay following firing
- Publicity surrounding post-excavation work on the infant human remains discovered at Yewden and consequent triggering of a desire to make work in response.

The role of photography The installation has enabled exploration of record and its status. The strong desire to record the making and the installation processes for *ReCollection* included a drive to undertake this respectfully and carefully. There was a psychological imperative to connect directly with the subject matter through photography. I was showing respect to the ninety seven children the work was commemorating: in the process, the content, and the curation of the piece.

Repeated photography has also been crucial in generating an evidence base for the installation.

Material and process Clay is a 'sign' in history and mythology of the human condition, the term 'sign' being used here in Lévi-Strauss's sense that 'signs resemble images in being concrete entities but they resemble concepts in their powers of reference'. (Levi-Strauss 1966, p.18)

While the base material selected for these solid pieces was clay-free (made from a combination of Plaster of Paris and molochite, to a recipe and firing regime devised by myself, it was generated in a ceramic technological environment. Connotations of the use of specific materials have emerged as being of some significance: using ceramic material was appropriate not simply for its physical qualities, but also because it connects, intuitively rather than intellectually, with complex layers of cultural connections.

The non-ceramic material has personal significance in being devised by myself, and the use of bone china references both the world of organic existence and the English pottery tradition. The fragility of the material is striking. The hard, brittle material appears to be soft and enveloping, presenting a visual and tactile conflict, thus demanding reconsideration. The deliberate resemblance of the solid forms, in size and shape (and also in pre-fired weight) to the bodies of young babies, also contributes to this defamiliarising impact.

I put an equivalent amount of psychological energy into the making process for *ReCollection* as for the installation process for *Losing It*. However, whether because of its longevity or its associations, there is a deeper level of personal concern for *ReCollection*.

Relating to an persisting work Initially there was relatively little emotional investment in site visits. However, there are some occasions on which it feels necessary to re-order disturbed parts of the installation, and on others there is no imperative to do so. The longer the process of slow dissolution of the forms, their absorption into their pebble matrix, and the growth of vegetation on some of them, the stronger is the recognition of these as integral parts of the work, despite the fact that these changes had not been anticipated to be significant.

OUTCOMES

The reflective mode, both 'in' and 'on' the practice, in this piece has generated learning and identified potential patterns of making and outcome worthy of further study.

10.4.1 Public perception of 'the artist'

The experience of identification as 'the artist' (compared with collaborative work such as *Nag Puja* and *RePlace*) adds a sense of responsibility for visitor experience in contrast to projects where such responsibility is shared. In some cases, concern for work non-existent because there is no direct connection with, or feedback from, those engaging with the work; therefore relationships are tenuous.

Adoption and adaption of an installation by others (for instance, in the cases of *Nag Puja* and *RePlace*) generate a markedly different feeling of responsibility as the maker, where there is a palpable sense of collaboration, of shared enterprise which is liberating and energising.

Experience of different research-related projects indicates that the initiator's role is linked to the form of work, including maker, instigator, artist, collaborator, partner, and art object. Significant factors appear to include: preparatory collaboration (*Nag Puja* and *Return to Koshi*; *RePlace Orkney*), location, for instance environmental or gallery/museum setting (*ReCollection*; *RePlace Orkney*; *Traces*), proactive engagement with, or alteration of, work (*Nag Puja*; *RePlace*; anonymity (*Losing It Rose Field*; *RePlace Orkney*), and performativity (*Tidal Transience*).

'Impermanence, but not as we know it...' Experiencing an unexpectedly different form of impermanence in a project, as change rather than transience, stimulates reflection and analysis.

Over the period of the research, artistic intent has shifted in the light of experience of the experimental projects. The upshot of this experience was recognition that impermanence can have widely different forms and yet remain within any definition of 'impermanence':

- Destruction (*Tidal Transience*)
- Brevity (*Return to Koshi*)
- Unrepeatability (*Return to Koshi*)
- Alteration over time (*ReCollection* itself)
- Adoption and adaption (*RePlace*)

It has been valuable learning to recognise the possibility of working with a variety of forms of transience without losing attention to, and the integrity of, its core content.

The project in general has provided an opportunity to consider installations' unexpected longevity. Because the artistic intent is in general to leave

installations to their fate, this alteration to expected life span is appropriate. In fact, the sense of shared interest – even shared ownership - which it generates is very rewarding. This is more compatible with participative performance as artistic practice than with a fine art aesthetic (see Machon 2013, p.28 etc.). There is an immersive element to environmental work which is particularly evident in *Nag Puja* and *RePlace Orkney*. In the case of *Nag Puja*, engagement with process (gathering material, creating an open firing, and clearing ash from the fired snake), triggered a level of ownership in the participants which moved the work significantly away from original expectations. In the case of *ReTrace Orkney*, objects and their presentation as non- (perhaps even dys-) functional offered unstructured opportunities to interact with them and their setting which took the various installations in different directions, all dependent on the individuals concerned, as they engaged with the material which they discovered. *ReCollection* differs from both these examples in its 'institutional' setting, enabling visitors to view the work through glass. Here, the curator has taken responsibility for the installation, protecting it from unnecessary damage.

Book as record, book as explicator or book as art The role of the photographic image has been as important in *ReCollection* as in *Losing It*. As evidence, the photographic image in this case also illuminated the aims and subject matter of the work. It is apparent that there is also an explicatory function to the image, in the nature of the aphorism: "Every picture speaks a thousand words." In *ReCollection*, the purpose of the photographic process and record shifted during an extended period of time. It probably took as long as fifteen months for acceptance that there was an aesthetic dimension to the images, rather than simply evidential and illuminatory roles.

Siting, situating and positioning The relevance of site both as an instigator of work, its form and content, and as a context for the work with connotations for visitors and viewers, emerges from this work in particular.

Reflection-on-action

The method Thinking-with-making, reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action: all these processes have been aspects of the review process for this element of the research programme, which have proved helpful in generating provocative stimuli for consideration as a maker and researcher.

This work was made with directive intent for a time-limited exhibition. There was a significant planning and preparation period which has enabled the process of reflection-in-action to take place, i.e. the capacity to step outside the framework of making during the process, to observe, reflect on, and contextualise the experience.

Reflections on 'The Reflective Practitioner' The effect of making this work within the adopted reflexive methodological structure was to enable exploration of Schönian theory, in particular to explore the concept of unrecognised knowledge. At the outset I did not recognise clearly that extended duration of a work (over three years in this case) could be an integral part of its impermanence. The recognition of different forms of impermanence, as alteration as opposed to destruction, has therefore emerged from reflection-in- and reflection-on-practice.

There exists a potential conundrum in the role of reflective practitioner regarding the ability (or inherent inability) to articulate unarticulated knowledge and to recognise its existence. The way I articulate this enigma is to use the management tool of Luft and Ingham's (1955) Johari Window concept. There are four positions regarding self-knowledge described as panes in a window (expanding and contracting depending on levels of knowledge in each area), these being:

- You know what it is that you know
- You know what it is that you do not know
- You do not know what it is that you do not know

While the crucial state which may be an issue in Schön's attempts to get practitioners to reflect on their practice is embodied in the last pane:

- You do not know what it is that you know

It is utterly pertinent in this research programme to be as self-evaluating and self-aware as possible in regards to one's praxis, but Luft and Ingham provide a useful reminder that self-awareness is not a given. The proactive practitioner must, therefore make efforts to shrink the size of this pane in the Johari window to be as small as possible. She must also find the means of gaining data and subjecting it to review and analysis so that it may, as appropriate, alter her understanding of her own knowledge.

The case study methodology which was judged to be appropriate for this research programme included data gathering from others: artists and curators in relevant fields. The interviews and other information gathered from such sources enables light to be shed on impermanence as a mode of artistic expression, whoever the artist or maker. Of specific relevance to this environmental installation has been a recorded interview with the manager at Bede's World who has supported the installation as curator for most of its existence.

Reflection-as-artist

As with the Orkney installation (*RePlace*) I had not anticipated that this would be as significant a piece of personal artistic work as it has turned out. It gave me personal and artistic satisfaction to make the work, and continues to feel an important element of my praxis as it changes its physical and psychological nature – and will continue to do so as long as it persists.

The fact that *ReCollection* has been adopted so whole-heartedly by the institution which hosts it is as satisfying as it was unexpected. It is now a permanent exhibit, and visitors may currently peruse the photo-book which follows the changes it has undergone in its first three years of existence

The process of evidence-gathering through photography has been a feature of this project for research purposes, as well as providing an information resource for visitors. The photo-book, as a research tool, records the alteration in each element over time, presented in each case as double-page spread. It also acts as a reminder – in its repeating images of infant forms as each page is turned – of the number of babies involved in the initial trigger for the work.

CONCLUSIONS

This project and its review address the research aims through self as case study material: it illustrates a practical application involving impermanence in contemporary ceramic art practice, it evidences praxis, and it considers definitions of 'impermanence' in the context of contemporary ceramic art practice.

Research themes include:

Connections between creative practice and supporting theoretical approaches, extending to incorporate the other case studies

Arguments to underpin research propositions have been generated:

- a. Clay/Ceramic as more than a vehicle for artistic expression. The material holds its own message.
- b. Significance of the response to impermanence as expressed in ceramic terms. De-familiarisation/Re-familiarisation
- c. Positioning contemporary ceramics. Two strands: site and its impact on form and nature of impermanence, and situating impermanent ceramics as live-art rather than fine-art.

**TRACES OF CHINA EXHIBITION and FALLACY OF MASS PRODUCTION
INSTALLATION SUMMARY REPORT** (further information and background
material available)

OUTLINE

Installation of contemporary work within an historic collection of Chinese ceramics.

Experimentation with museum context; audience engagement; technical investigation with ceramic material, and curation.

LOCATION AND DATE Durham Oriental Museum (DOM). 18.07–16.11.14

EXHIBITION AIMS AND INTENTIONS

To work in collaboration with DOM to generate an installation:

- exploring importance of clay and ceramic as a means of communicating culture, ideas and emotions
- articulating personal experience of China, its people and ceramics
- engaging with a permanent collection (particularly Chinese ceramics)
- enhancing visitor experience to the Chinese Gallery and MacDonald Collection
- progressing PhD research, particularly research aims 1 and 2

PREPARATION AND TESTING

Four porcelain clays and two celadon glazes imported from Jingdezhen were matched with clays from Europe designed to mimic porcelain qualities. Glaze recipes were collected and made up.

Tests to compare the clay bodies were undertaken (results as firing tests presented in the exhibition).

Celadon glazes were tested and a pair (light and dark) developed.

Figure: Firing tests for clays and glazes (strips). Firing tests of clay compatibility and decoration (yin yang pieces), plus jigsaw of piece in DOM collection and Newman's 'inclusion' bowls. DOM. 18.07.14



ARTISTIC INTENT AND ACTION

As curator: to integrate contemporary with historic ceramic with a focus on Chinese porcelain and celadon traditions. To stimulate visitor interaction with a permanent collection via intrusion of transient work. To raise awareness of Chinese ceramic production, past and present.

As maker: to engage percipients with the variety and beauty of celadon and white clay; to offer a political, social and cultural commentary on Chinese ceramic and its tradition through impermanence (*Fallacy of Mass Production* consisting of raw, low-fired and high-fired elements in a range of bodies and glazes)

As researcher: to investigate concepts of site, value, audience engagement, and liminal boundaries (e.g. through unprocessed and unconventional material).

Descriptor

Multi-layered installation incorporating three makers' dialogues with materials and aesthetics of Chinese ceramics.

EXHIBITION MATERIAL

1. Three slide loops running during the exhibition period (*Chinese country pottery; Chinese celadon ware; Jingdezhen: porcelain capital of China*)
2. Ceramic-related items in exhibition cabinets, from personal collection:

Stacked tea bowls	Chinese porcelain Purchased from Gordon Reece Gallery, Knaresborough before 2007
Potsherd	Celadon ware Longquan 2013
Flower form	Glazed porcelain Jingdezhen 2013
Rice bowl	Blue and white porcelain Made in/purchased from potters' workshop, Ancient Kiln Museum, Jingdezhen 2013
Tea bowl	Glazed stoneware Made by/purchased from Lan Li Ling, student potter at Yexiu pottery studio, Hangzhou 2013
Polychrome pot	Glazed stoneware, with wave forms and mythical beasts Purchased Antiques Market, Jingdezhen 2011
Tea bowl	Celadon clay and dark celadon glaze Made by/purchased from Zeng Shi Ping, 7th generation potter, ancestral dragon kiln 2013
Calligraphy and potters' brushes	Wood, bamboo, wolf hair, goat hair, etc. Made at/purchased from Sanbao Ceramic Arts Institute, Jingdezhen 2011/ 2013 and Jiangshan 2013
Portrait Mao Zedong	Porcelain Made/gifted by Joe Fan, Jingdezhen 2013 (inspiration and source for <i>Fallacy</i> , also exhibited in

- Chinese text on porcelain
 Straight-sided pot with spoons
 Yi Xing teapot and box
- Traces. See below)*
 Contains images of potters working as well as blue and white ware
 Purchased from Shanghai Museum 2013
 Contemporary blue and white porcelain
 Purchased Jingdezhen 2011
 Horn spoons
 Purchased Longquan 2013
 Apprentice pot in purple Yi Xing clay, stamped as approved by teapot master Shao Fa Gang
 Purchased from Shao Fa Gang 2013
3. Process-related pieces:
- Five bowls
 Six yin yang
 Firing tests
 Broken plate jigsaw
 Personal work
- Sanbao extra white porcelain with clay intrusions:
 Tao Yao yellow clay, Anhui; Porcelain, Yexiu Ceramics Studio, Hangzhou; Yi Xing teapot clay, Jiangsu; Arts Academy porcelain, Hangzhou; Li Chen Hang's yellow celadon clay, Longquan.
 By Veronica Newman. Made in Jingdezhen 2013
 British porcelain, Bill Todd's celadon glaze
 Bone china, hand printed Chinese decal, no glaze
 Bone china, Mattison's porcelain celadon glaze
 Sanbao normal porcelain, dark Sanbao celadon glaze
 Parian ware, Sanbao 'goose egg' celadon and Sanbao dark celadon glazes
 Bone china, 'My friend Sue's' celadon glaze
 Two sets of glaze and shrinkage tests on seven different clay bodies (Sanbao stoneware, Sanbao normal, Sanbao medium, Sanbao extra white, porcelain, bone china and Parian ware)
 Jigsaw of plate fragments excavated in Durham City (see Case 18) By Tom Middleton (<http://www.walkaboutcrafts.com>)
 Big and Little Brother yin yang, 'bonzai' mountain, little dragons (encroaching on permanent displays)
4. Collaborative work
 (a) Sarah Gee
 Flat-back *Dragon*
Fallacy of Mass Production
- Porcelain paper clay, Sanbao celadon glaze
 Emulating Staffordshire technique of press-moulding to create flat-back decorative art
 Press-moulded Mao faces, using artwork by Joe Fan (see *Fallacy* Section for detail)



Traces: Tang Dynasty horse with dragon intruder. 25.11.14

(b) Veronica Newman
 Five porcelain bowls
 made at the Sanbao
 Ceramic Art Institute,
 Jingdezhen. 2013
 (intrusion material
 collected by SG and
 VN, 2013)

Sanbao extra white porcelain with clay intrusions:
 Tao Yao yellow clay, Anhui,
 Porcelain, Yexiu Ceramics Studio, Hangzhou
 Yi Xing teapot clay, Jiangsu
 Arts Academy porcelain, Hangzhou
 Li Chen Hang's yellow celadon clay, Longquan



Veronica Newman: five porcelain bowls with intrusions. 2013

(c) Robert Winter
 Bone china bowl with
 celadon glaze
 Clay dust: Terracotta
 Army Replica Factory,

Bone china
 18th century English answer to Chinese porcelain
 Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter
Celadon glaze British recipe
 By Steve Mattison

Xi'an	Made up and tested by Sarah Gee <u>Clay dust</u> Collected by Sarah Gee 2013
Chinese porcelain bowl with celadon glaze	'Normal' porcelain From Jingdezhen, Jiangxi – China's 'Porcelain Capital' Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter <u>Celadon glaze British recipe</u> By Steve Mattison
Clay dust: Longquan celadon clay, from workshop of fourth generation celadon potter	Made up and tested by Sarah Gee <u>Clay dust</u> Collected by Sarah Gee 2013
Chinese porcelain bowl with celadon glaze	'Extra White' porcelain From Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter <u>Celadon glaze British recipe</u> By Steve Mattison
Clay dust: Purple Yi Xing teapot clay from workshop of Yi Xing teapot maker	Made up and tested by Sarah Gee <u>Clay dust</u> Collected by Sarah Gee 2013
British porcelain bowl with celadon glaze	'Special' porcelain Standard British commercial porcelain Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter <u>Celadon glaze British recipe</u> By Steve Mattison
Clay dust: Porcelain from Jingdezhen Ancient Kiln Museum potters' workshop	Made up and tested by Sarah Gee <u>Clay dust</u> Collected by Sarah Gee 2013
Chinese celadon yin yang with raku glaze Clay from dragon kiln pottery, seventh generation potter, Longquan, Zhejiang	<u>Celadon clay</u> 'Older Brother' (red) and 'Younger Brother' (white) bodies, making perfect fit Handbuilt by Sarah Gee <u>Raku glaze</u> from Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute Fired in raku kiln at Sanbao <u>Clay body</u> Collected by Sarah Gee [Image: before firing to show the two clay bodies]
Chinese porcelain bowl with celadon glaze	'Medium' porcelain From Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter <u>Celadon glaze British recipe</u> By Steve Mattison.
Clay dust: Porcelain from Yexui Pottery Studio, Hangzhou, Zhejiang	Made up and tested by Sarah Gee <u>Clay dust</u> Collected by Sarah Gee 2013
Chinese stoneware miniature mountain with celadon glaze	<u>Sanbao stoneware and celadon glaze</u> From Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Handbuilt by Sarah Gee Fired in public kiln, Jingdezhen <u>Clay body</u>
English Parian ware	Provided by Sanbao CAI <u>Parian Ware</u> 19 th century English invention to

bowl with celadon glaze

Clay dust:
'Older Brother'
celadon clay, from
dragon kiln, seventh
generation potter

mimic Parian marble – a type of bisque porcelain
Thrown and glazed by Robert Winter

British recipe for celadon glaze

Recipe by Steve Mattison. Made up and tested by
Sarah Gee

Clay dust

Collected by Sarah Gee 2013



Robert Winter. Porcelain and celadon bowl with clay dust. 2014

OUTCOMES

Impermanence *Fallacy* installation: transgressive acquisition of elements

Materiality Combination of clay dust, raw body, biscuit fired body, fired body (with and without glaze): multi-layered exploration of what clay and ceramic can mean (the importance of un-noticed material)

Environment/Context Venue: intrusion into permanent display cases; accommodation by curation team and collections manager

Audience engagement Planned: workshops with children for direct physical engagement with porcelain, making celadon dragons (hand formed with young children) and tea bowls (thrown on the wheel and decorated). Unplanned: unauthorised acquisition of elements of free-standing installation

Collaboration Maker: personal interpretations, sharing ideas and processes. Museum: common purposes, cooperation, trust.

REFLECTIONS

Fallacy of Mass Production installation experimented with material, form and audience engagement. Intrusion of work into permanent display cabinets (e.g. 'bonzai' mountain, yin yang and dragons, as well as RW's bowls and clay dust)

drew visitor attention to the permanent collection and posed questions regarding value and beauty.

Collaborative work by British makers within a traditional Chinese context identified connections and contrasts.

The whole exhibition celebrated clay, ceramic, tradition and experiment, and blurred boundaries between maker, curator and audience roles.

As with making work directly, the gestation and curation of the exhibition were intuitive rather than planned.

Decisions regarding content, juxtaposition and variety emerged through direct engagement with material in China, and with Macdonald Collection in the Chinese Gallery at DOM.

Collaboration with other makers, and with curation and collection management - as well as education staff - at DOM provided creative opportunities which would not have been feasible if working in isolation.

***FALLACY OF MASS PRODUCTION* (free-standing installation)**



Fallacy, at start of *Traces of China* exhibition. 18.07.14 (above)

OUTLINE

300 press moulded faces of Chairman Mao on circular glass stand. Eight clay bodies. Nine celadon glazes (both reduction and oxidation firing). Two kilns. Four firing regimes (plus raw clay pieces). From art piece by Joe Fan (ceramic artist and technician at Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute, Jingdezhen).



Joe Fan. *Mod Square*, 2013. Porcelain. Used with the artist's permission for *Fallacy of Mass Production*, 2014 (left)

AIMS AND INTENTIONS

To devise and present impermanent ceramic installation work for a museum setting.

To explore the variety implicit in multiple clay bodies, glazes and firing processes.

To work in collaboration with another artist's

work.

To engage a broad audience given the constraints of an institutional setting.

To express a socio-political message through impermanent clay work.

To explore research themes of impermanence, materiality, siting and performativity to support the research process (addressing both research aims)

Extract from exhibition hand-list

Despite using the same mould over three hundred times, not one of the faces is the same as another. Differences in clay bodies, in glazes (or no glaze at all), in firing (and no firing either), all play their part in making each face individual.

However hard we may try, we cannot produce clones - we are all individual.

This pile of faces will shift and change during the four months of the installation. Some of the raw clay ones are likely to start to crumble, some may slide and fall, while some may disappear. So there will be alteration.

Nothing remains the same.

THE REALITY

Intervention with installation work within the tolerances of a museum setting is feasible and mutually rewarding (museum curator interviews indicate high degree of satisfaction with the show in general, and enjoyment of the free-standing *Fallacy* installation in particular).

Audience engagement outstripped expectation

Fallacy attracted so much attention that approximately 25% of it was removed by visitors; additional elements were made to re-stock it during the exhibition period (See Appendix 7)

- Museum visitor footfall was reportedly 10% greater than comparable period in 2013
- Young children (museum's under-fives *Little Dragons* group) hunted for porcelain dragons among the permanent collection before making their own porcelain dragons, later glazed in celadon and fired before being returned to them.
- Older children (museum's 7-11 *Durham Archaeology Explorers* group) were introduced to throwing porcelain to make tea bowls which they decorated for celadon glazing and firing and return

The nature of the free-standing installation proved irresistible to visitors. Despite the usual psychological restrictions on touching that a museum environment imposes, *Fallacy* was played with, re-arranged, fondled and – for some – proved tempting enough to remove.

Impermanent work (both in terms of pieces themselves and longevity of temporary exhibitions) can be successfully located within a museum setting. Given the development of a strong relationship with museum staff, imagination was the only constraint - every proposal for engagement with the collection was positively received.

REFLECTION

- Site sensitive temporary, and impermanent, installation within a permanent ceramic collection was demonstrably feasible.
- Experimentation with materiality was possible in a number of dimensions (clay dust, raw clay work, direct intervention with historic ceramics, ceramic paraphernalia)
- Audience engagement exceeded expectation in the subversive behaviour shown by a significant number of visitors, due to the performative, vibrant, agentic quality of the work.
- Sensitive intervention into permanent displays indicates potential for flexibility within curation and collection management parameters
- Unexpected, but welcome, was the transgressive,, acquisitive behaviour of visitors in removing elements from *Fallacy*. The engagement of the percipient is increasingly interesting as an aspect of praxis, and this experience was productive in psychological as well as intellectual terms.

PRACTICE REPORT CONVERSE:MAO October/November 2014 EXTRACT
(full report and images available)

OUTLINE

Fourteen raw clay Mao faces, press moulded from Joe Fan's work in various bodies, mainly porcelain, but also with some stoneware, sourced from Sanbao, JdZ. Carried to S E China for deposit daily during tour of an area organised as a birding trip.

INTENTION

To make a transient work – for others to engage with and interpret as they please – which for the maker has political significance. Offshoot of *Fallacy*, installed at Durham Oriental Museum - a personal commentary on Mao's legacy, seen through the eyes of a foreigner, in response to experience of China over three separate visits, lasting 14 weeks in total.

NATURE OF THE WORK

Repetitive installation of individual ceramic pieces in different locations as dictated by the itinerary of the tour, organised by a party utterly uninvolved in the work itself. The element of arbitrariness resulting from the link to an unrelated event/itinerary being tempered by choice of specific site as presented by each day of the tour.

Selection of site triggered by place and the imperative to install daily.

Simplicity, secrecy and subversiveness as features of the work (guerrilla installation); as far as possible unobserved by others, including companions on the trip; challenge to authority.

PROCESS AND REALISATION

Daily, commencing 28.10.14, environmental installation:

1. Single raw clay ceramic piece in the form of Chairman Mao's face
2. Semi-random location determined by internal trigger along the lines of: 'Don't forget you have to site a piece today'
3. Specific site determined by seeing a place which generates a comment if an element is added, such as on 29.10.14
4. Placing of piece undertaken as far as possible unobserved
5. Anonymous installation (no information regarding maker provided)
6. Additional items installed when the location offers them, e.g. 29.10.14.
7. Daily diary entry, including reference to installation of the day.
8. Photographic record made of each installation and, where feasible, the immediate environment.
9. Translation of title into Mandarin, to provide a record

RECORD OF INSTALLATION

DATE	TIME (hrs)	LOCATION	TITLE	COMMENT
26.10.14	-	-	-	No installation. Travel day
27.10.14	-	-	-	No installation. Travel day
28.10.14	08.08	Dry Marsh, Yangkou, Jiangsu Province.	1. Marsh Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. Close to, but not in shit hole. Lack of bottle!
29.10.14	09.46	Yangkou fishponds Jiangsu Province.,	2. Fish Ditch Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. In ditch lined with dead fish on edge of soy bean patch. Single soy bean also installed. Sustenance (honey from lion) reference.
30.10.14	08.15	Outside Buddhist temple compound, Yangkou, Jiangsu Province.	3. Temple Mao	Normal JdZ porcelain. On shelving compound wall, where on 29.10.14 I spotted Siberian Accentor (a very desired bird for the tour party). The same location where I first saw Siberian Rubythroat 28.10.14 (a very desirable bird for me – though not a tick). Spiritual reference.
31.10.14	14.58	Fishpond outfall, Yangkou, Jiangsu Province.	4. Reclamation Mao, aka Flat Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. Just below outfall from fishponds in the sea reclamation zone. Otherwise undeveloped area presumably reclaimed for industrial purposes. Face placed on soft mud and pressed in with foot. Recorder (Julie Eccles) described it later as ‘stamping’. Process of installation recorded by JE on my iPhone, otherwise unobserved. Pollution reference.
01.11.14	06.31	Dong Tai mudflats, Jiangsu Province.	5. Spoonbill Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. Inter tidal zone, at the feet of oblivious birdwatchers having found a Spoonbilled Sandpiper (I went on to find my own). Officially designated an endangered species. Numbers fell dramatically after PRC government instigated tidal reclamation programme. Mudflats in Rudong County used by this bird for rest/feeding on autumn migration to Taiwan, etc. Evidence of installation discovered by JE, who asked permission to photograph it.

DATE	TIME (hrs)	LOCATION	TITLE	COMMENT
				Raw porcelain immediately started to disintegrate on contact with water and mud. Environmental reference.
02.11.14	10.23	Yangkou Old Sea Wall, Rudong County, Jiangsu Province.	6. Turbine Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. On a square stone/concrete slab directly under a wind turbine, which is impressed with a circle and nothing else. Close to the solanum vine, and Flycatcher Alley. Bio-diversity reference.
03.11.14	13.40	Xiao Qi Village fields, Wuyuan County Jiangxi Province.	7. Split/Schizo Mao	Normal JdZ porcelain. Broken after drying out in UK. Placed in crevice in field wall, among villagers tending fields of vegetables (home consumption) surrounded by plots of yellow chrysanthemum (for market). Communism reference.
04.11.14	13.03	Kengkou Village west bank of river, Wuyuan County, Jiangxi Province	8. Dissolving Mao	Extra white JdZ porcelain. Dropped in still water of the river, close to farmstead and near shingle bank where 'vulnerable' species, Scaly-sided Merganser, clings to existence. Collective farming reference.
05.11.14	08.54	Kengkou Village paddies, Wuyuan County, Jiangxi Province	9. Pax Mao	JdZ stoneware, found 'Ming' potsherd from farmstead, and found red nylon twine, Kengkou village. Reconciliation reference – revival of tradition
06.11.14	10.06	Poyang Lake, Jiangxi Province	10. Broken Mao	JdZ stoneware and found modern blue and white ware potsherd from homestead, Poyang lakeside. Placed in front of PRC Communist Party roadside marker. Life goes on reference.
07.11.14	17.19	Poyang Lake Wucheng Village Lake View	11. Temple Dog Mao	Porcelain and Martin's gift of shard of B&W porcelain. Propped in crook of left front paw of temple guardian dog on steps to pavilion, overlooking shipping

DATE	TIME (hrs)	LOCATION	TITLE	COMMENT
		Pavilion (ditto)		channel. Dependence on strength of tradition reference.
08.11.14	-	-	12. Zero Mao	No installation. Ill with 'inner turmoil' (Colin's phrase according to Martin), followed by travelling all afternoon and evening to Nantong.
09.11.14	10.09	Yancheng Nature Reserve Forest Farm, Tinghu village, Sheyang County, Jiangsu Province	13. One Chopstick Mao	Porcelain and one black chopstick. In 'jali' screen wall, to right of yellow gateway in arboretum/tree nursery. Compares with one hand clapping. See diary for today for more detail.
10.11.14	15.52	Ditto	14. Two Chopsticks /Twin Mao	Porcelain and one black chopstick. In 'jali' screen wall, to right of yellow gateway in arboretum/tree nursery. Two leaders = as good as two chopsticks? Perhaps.
11.11.14	09.40	Buddhist Temple, Yangkou	15. Buddhist Mao	Stoneware and incense. In third incense cauldron, beyond main worship hall. Placed in hot incense ash. Reference impermanence/change/'becoming'.
12.11.14	-	-	-	No installation. Travel day

NOTES

See also notes in daily diary (and transferred to *Conversation with Mao*, Autumn 2014).

Conceptual This work is intended to explore ceramic impermanence further, building on previous work, including:

- collection of clay dust and raw clay from pottery workshops and kiln sites in China Autumn 2013
- installation *Traces*, concurrent (Durham Oriental Museum); specifically *Fallacy* (2014)

A further iteration as a technique for making work, which I have used intuitively before (e.g. *Wrapped* series for degree show 2009, as basis for *ReCollection* at Bede's World 2012 onwards). On this occasion, circumstance provided a surplus of 14 raw ceramic elements utilising the same making technique as for *Traces of China*, which itself built on work I had done for and in China in 2011. *RoofLight* (2011) utilised a specific clay body, in this case Jingdezhen porcelain, as *hommage* to Chinese tile making in an unexpected material. This was a site

specific installation integrated into the newly made roof of the climbing kiln at Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute [not included in thesis due to lack of space].

Fallacy required porcelain and stoneware clay bodies from Jingdezhen (imported directly from Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute) and the inspiration of Joe Fan's work], to make an installation in a site sensitive location (the Chinese porcelain and celadon collection of the University of Durham, from the MacDonald Collection).

The work also strongly referenced the materiality of the clay body itself (alongside the commentary provided by raw clay dust conversing with specific pieces from the collection) AND the society and culture of Maoist China, the legacy of which is clear in China today.

The comment common across the whole project is Mao's size, and the defacement to which his image has been subjected by a Chinese artist in the original piece which inspired work with Mao's image. So the generic message is belittlement of a dictator. Each daily installation stimulates personal commentary on Mao Zedong and the impact of his regime on the People's Republic of China. For instance, the location for 31.10.14 in a reclamation zone acknowledges the devastation of the environment caused by the drive for economic progress initiated under Mao. The present-day eating-up of landscape and the loss of habitat for wildlife parallels the scourging of the agricultural landscape initiated under the Communist regime, which included incentivising peasants to destroy the local wildlife to improve production on collective farms. There was a price on the heads of House sparrows to improve the cotton harvest yield because these birds were understood to eat seeds. The result was that the pests that the birds ate proliferated and harvests were decimated.

This personal commentary is private and not imparted in any way apart from the brief existence of the installation and its particular context.

Experiential A number of aspects of the project have been addressed during the installation process itself. These had not been anticipated.

- The guerrilla element, while important to the overall ethos of the work, has been flexed on specific occasions.
 1. Members of the group with which I am travelling became aware of the work through conversation. I have been asked daily (since the second installation) about the day's installation and whether it has happened. The third installation was found by two of them within minutes of completion (I was still in the vicinity). Photographs were taken by the finders, and I photographed this happening. The element was not touched or removed.
 2. The nature of the installation on 31.10.14 demanded a record of the installation process itself. As one of the group asked me at the selected location whether I had installed yet, I explained that it required a record, and she volunteered. This enabled the installation to be unobserved by any others, and this installation was therefore witnessed directly as well as being recorded by another person.
- The fate of the installations is generally expected to be unknown to me as instigator. However, because of the itinerary for this short stay in China,

Temple Mao was revisited at the end of the tour (on the day another installation was made nearby).

- It was planned to take a photographic record at the time of installation. A further record was made of Temple Mao - the downpour of rain which occurred on installation day had altered the work.

Where possible further photographic records were made when opportunity allowed. This took the form of documentation of the project, and is not deemed to be part of the work itself.

Where the stimulus exists for including other objects in the installation, this has been responded to. For instance, Fish Ditch Mao was accompanied by decaying fish corpses from the adjoining fishpond, plus one soy bean from the field itself.

Porcelain potsherds were installed in the environment where they were collected. Each installation at Yancheng was accompanied by a disposable chopstick.

MAJOR THEMES/CHARACTERISTICS

- Material importance/centrality
- Site sensitivity (social and political perspectives) and location
- Defamiliarisation – material and context
- Witness, record and the [lack of] involvement of others
- 'Clay bombing' and environmental installation
- Private meaning/public interpretation

PRACTICE REPORT *LOSING IT ROSE FIELD* January–May 2010 EXTRACT
(full report and images available)

OUTLINE

Environmental work: commissioned ceramic elements, an installation work of limited duration, of an essentially private nature.

Raw ceramic elements exposed to the weather, on open ground, over a period of five months, where they deteriorated, were absorbed into the soil and grown over by spring vegetation.

The progress of the work, of finite but un-predetermined duration, was recorded periodically with still photography.

LOCATION AND DATE

A flower maker, redundant from the pottery industry in Stoke on Trent, was commissioned in November 2009 to make 120 unfired bone china flowers (full-blown roses and rose buds)¹⁰³. An area in the artist's allotment was selected for the installation. The commissioned elements were delivered December 2009.

PLAN

The intention of the work was to combine:

- Restricted duration
- Impermanence of material
- Fabricator involvement
- Uncontrollable force (weather)
- Limited access to site (including no public access)
- Exploring meaning of the artist's record

ARTISTIC INTENT

The use of ceramic work made by a skilled craftswoman¹⁰⁴ was central to the artistic intention of responding to the perceived decline and failure of the British pottery industry, focusing on Stoke-on-Trent, paralleling the decline in the industry by leaving highly-crafted, but unfired, elements to the mercy of winter weather.

This work articulated personal reactions to a recent visit to the Potteries, where I lived for five years (1963-68), when the pottery industry was thriving. I decided to make impermanent work, dependent for its condition on the impact of weather,

¹⁰³ The nature of the project was discussed and the flower maker had no objection to her work being placed unfired in the environment for the weather to act on the clay body.

¹⁰⁴ Denise Lilley, trained maker of bone china flowers for Coalport Porcelain Works

and for its duration on external requirements, in a relatively private location¹⁰⁵, recorded using still photography.

Making work in a private space provided an explicit opportunity for consideration of the intent for artistic practice: is it for the artist or the wider world?

Recording the work using still photography on a 'time lapse' basis, was planned as a means of focusing on the purpose of artist record-making (Is the photographic image evidence of impermanent work? Is it a document of the work? Is it the art work itself?) and of testing out my personal attitude to this significant issue.

PREPARATION AND TESTING

Test 'study' work undertaken in advance to check:

- Form and dimensions for the installation
- Time lapse photography
- Weather impact
- Artist response to 'loss' of work
- Varying materials for work with the same aim

Test A *Losing It Cloth* 01.01.10

- Inherited domestic items (my mother's buttons and damask tablecloth), selected as models for raw clay roses on the ground
- 120 buttons picked randomly and placed in a strict grid on the tablecloth. Grid formation chosen as appropriate, practically and expressively
- Measurement calculated to be scaled up (10 x 10 cm = 2m square for allotment installation)
- 11 x 11 grid (121 elements for complete grid – central location left empty to indicate the empty heart of the industry)

Test B *Decay* Jan-Apr 2010

- Dead Koi carp fish found in garden pond after a very cold spell
- Left while working in the garden. Not disposed of by chance
- Undisturbed by local scavengers, therefore left *in situ* and photographed 63 times
- Test at end when fish body had dissolved
- Resulting series of photographs made into a 'flip' art book.

The observation and recording of the changes in decomposing was engrossing. Persistence of its materiality, and chance of it not being consumed by scavengers, were unexpected and changed perceptions of it as an object. Interesting complement to experience of recording *Losing It: Rose Field*. Both evoked a sense of memory and loss being recorded.

Test C Charcoal drawings Jan-March 2010

¹⁰⁵ An actively cultivated but isolated Council allotment, situated in the secluded remains of a Victorian high-walled garden, with no access to the public except key-holders.

- Automatic drawings made in charcoal as part of Buddhist meditation practice
- Drawings were placed in garden
- Impact of weather noted
- Photographic record
- Study ended when drawings blown away by high wind

Observing changes in weathering drawings not an enlivening experience. Photographic record became a chore rather than being engrossing, unlike parallel recording of roses and fish.

No engaged sense of loss due to uncontrolled deterioration in object – no emotional or intellectual attachment.

Reflections on the testing process The outcome of tests was satisfactory e.g. in deciding appropriate location and form for installation. Helpful to have experience of setting in motion, or capturing the history of decay in, objects of differing types.

Engagement with material explored, via commissioned pieces, found object and artist-made work. Contrast in personal response to Tests A and C was unexpected, - has stimulated reflection on the reasons.

Tests enabled issues relating to photographic documentation of art to be explored as they encompassed documenting through images of artist-made work as well as a 'found' art object.

Summary Test A was developed into free-standing work, with the buttons attached using sewing thread, gathered by a friend¹⁰⁶'s mother). Each element resonates with memories and family histories, complementing the character of the work for which it was initially prepared.

OUTCOMES AND REFLECTIONS

Descriptor Work was triggered by chance, meeting the fabricator when visiting BCB 2011 in Stoke. This generated a strong emotional response to the loss of historic craft skills in the British pottery, particularly for household names such as Coalport, Wedgwood and Royal Doulton: strong British brands of the twentieth century.

Idea for installation was immediate and intuitive. Execution was strongly influenced by chance (snowfall), and weather was integral to the work in general. The work was placed in position in private, without witnesses, and the public were completely excluded.

The exclusivity of the installation raised questions regarding artistic purpose. The experience focused attention on issues around artist's record, reasons for documenting work with images, and the nature of publication of images of art work.

Process Laying out roses in a strict grid formation on the snow in a two metre by two metre square was taxing, but engrossing. Challenge of avoiding marking the snow surface between the elements while arranging the work, requiring

¹⁰⁶ recently deceased

accuracy (elements could not be moved about), and physical control (leaning over the 2m² area of the work without placing a hand on the ground). Process itself was crucial to the whole work due to:

- Weather conditions
- Fragility of elements
- Process rigour
- Secluded location
- Physicality
- Emotional involvement

Process, with the rhythms and routines demanded of the maker, is a recurring aspect of work with which I experience the strongest engagement. The installation of *Losing It: Rose Field* highlighted this as a crucial part of making work for me. Reflection on making this work has ensured explicit recognition for me of its importance and integral position in making work, whether alone or with others.

Audience and Record Lack of audience for the duration of the installation stimulated useful questions which I followed up in the research process:

- Can work be private and still art, rather than (for instance) therapy?
- Why is it sometimes essential artistically to work alone, while most of the time I encourage the involvement and engagement of others?
- What is the nature of documentation of 'private' work? Is it the 'art work' itself, or merely a means of recording an activity or physical object, enhanced or not by the nature of the document?

Responsibility In general, my work relies on involvement of others to sustain it through sharing some element of the experience, through memory, witness and their personal documentation. *Losing It: Rose Field* provokes reconsideration of this statement. Experience and reflection since making the work indicate it could not be a wholly private affair. The very nature of the work and the impetus for its making requires me to make it public for two specific interrelated reasons:

- For the installation to reflect my concern for the British ceramic industry, it had to be published, or else it was merely a personal whim, not worthy of the subject matter
- To commission a fabricator to make elements for the work with this artistic intent gave me responsibility to her to ensure that it was made public

Publication Despite the above, I was initially unsure about reasons for making the work public, because of:

- The private character of its physical existence
- Personal ambivalence regarding the status of photographic images of installation work

The photographic record of the installation is extensive, covering the period from the date of its making to the late spring cultivation of the allotment. 664 images encompassing the field itself (the roses were laid out in a strict grid formation covering a two metre square), groups of elements, and individual elements,

were taken on twenty days over this period. It was paralleled by the photographic recording of the test work *Decay*, which was made during the same period.

A number of slide presentations have been made of the work, mainly in the form of sequences of images of individual elements deteriorating and decaying in prevailing weather conditions. The presentations had a documentary purpose. This felt appropriate in the circumstances.

However, when I made a slide sequence of individual elements for presentation to fellow postgraduate researchers in April 2012, I ran the slide sequence without narration. Consequently, the audience were enabled to respond to the work itself. The impact this had both on the audience and myself was significantly different in character from the usual explanatory presentation. They engaged with the work, and the comments made demonstrated that they were responding directly to the aesthetic of the images (this also occurred with the Engage audience).

I now have both audience and personal confirmation of the power of photography in expressing work, and appreciate how a photographic document can be the 'art' itself, rather than merely evidence of a work's existence.

Artistic outcome Working in private to set up the installation endorsed the importance of process in the artistic endeavour. I have clear recall of the sensory experience of laying out the work: kneeling on a wooden board in the silence following snowfall; leaning forward with a template to measure the distance between each rose as I placed it on the ground; feeling the cold on my fingers of snow and raw bone china; watching the roses sink slightly into the snow as they were placed; taking care not to brush the snow with sleeve or hand; taking care that petals did not detach; concentrating efforts to place the roses accurately.

The routine of photographing the work also had a process aspect which I appreciated; standing as far as possible in the same position, taking a series of images which could be matched with previous ones; noting the difference in light, weather and vegetative growth in the allotment; noting changes effected by the weather on the raw clay elements.

I built an attachment to the work, enhanced by the private nature of making and observing and the unpredictable impact of weather.

Both the weathering of the overall piece, and the minute changes in individual elements over the five months of its existence, gave me an aesthetic – and emotional - resolution. The parallels between sorrow at the decline of the Potteries and dissolution of the roses has realised my hopes for the work at a personal level. Recording the work commenced as a means of documentation, and has emerged through an extended process as work in its own right.

Identifying the art in the work Installation photography has become a confirmed part of my artistic, as well as my documentary, repertoire as a result. The overall experience has enabled me to take a position regarding the aesthetic nature of the photographic image in its own right.

Taking a reflexive stance enables me to utilise experience, knowledge and beliefs from the wider art and research arena in drawing out my learning from the challenges I set myself, and the paradoxes that the tests and installation itself have highlighted.

**PRACTICE REPORT *RETURN TO KOSHI, SAPTAKOSHI, NEPAL*. 08.05.11
EXTRACT (full report and images available)**

OUTLINE

An environmental event exploring:

- Responsiveness to site
- Material
- Transience

LOCATION AND DATE

Saptikoshi River, Koshi Tappu, Nepal, 08.05.11.

AIMS AND INTENTIONS

- To undertake and reflect on interaction between context, material, opportunity and emotion, and to reflect on practice
- To complete a cycle: returning to a familiar Nepali river the material which it had originally generated, as brick clay processed from sedimentary material in lowland Nepal.

REALITY

Event easily organised, during planned expedition on the river to observe the local landscape and wildlife.

Preparation was simple: clay body, retained following the making of *Nag Puja* installation. In advance, clay body was soaked with water and shaken into gritty slip in two 500 ml bottles, originally holding drinking water.

The event was very brief - no more than a minute or so each for the contents of two bottles of slip to be emptied into the river as the boat travelled.

Slip retained integrity very briefly, showing as a trail in the fast-flowing brown river water for a matter of seconds as the boat moved down-river.

Captive audience in the form of those on the boat at the time, i.e. European travelling companions, Nepali trip guide, and local Nepali boat crew - all cooperative, offering interest and support.

SUBJECT MATTER

Aim was to break into the material cycle, subverting the intent to make bricks by making slip, and losing the identity of the plastic body by re-introduction into the river, already carrying clay silt in brown, opaque suspension.

It also acknowledged the personal impact of return to this river, previously visited January 1997. The calmness of the river flow, the understated power of its current, its crucial importance as a source of water for Nepal and also India, all evoked a strong sense of respect, especially when not just in its presence, but supported by it.

The short-lived character of the work was dictated by the material and the process, and is – to date – the briefest of any work during the research programme. Its very brevity encapsulates the meaning which I attach to the event. It parallels the geological cycle of sedimentation, overlaid with human exploitation of the natural environment - itself is fleeting within the context of geological time.

Reflection Site-sensitivity for this work was central to its effectiveness. It would not be possible to make the work elsewhere in a way that would replicate its meaning in terms of the return of clay to the river.

This connection with location is a significant theme in the work of case study subjects, including my own practice (for instance *RePlace*). It is a strong element of the work of Tattersall (*Spode Tower*), Sormin (*Riff*) Cushway (*Plate Spinning*). Broadening out connection with site to contexts such as event, history, and temporality, a number of artists work with ceramic material and locate their work purposefully to have resonance with, or direct reference to, a place of particular importance (for instance: Eden *February 5th 2004* in Morecambe Bay, re-installed February 2014; and Brownsword with others *Marl Hole*, August 2009, at Gorsty Quarry, Newcastle-under-Lyme).

The work was extremely short-lived, both in terms of the action of pouring, and of the period during which the slip remained sufficiently integrated in the water to be identifiable by an observer.

While that brevity has made it difficult to undertake reflection-in-action for the event, reflection-on-action has been disproportionately rewarding. Post-event reflection and review has enabled connections to be developed between the full range of work undertaken within the research programme, and for those connections to mature into strands for the thesis, initiated and illuminated also by the work and narratives of other case study artists.

MATERIAL AND PROCESS

The material was of central significance in *Return to Koshi*, perhaps the more so for being barely altered. Clay slip is a very basic material, especially when raw, and the simplicity of its nature was crucial to the artistic expression embedded in this work. Also, the work would not have been possible with another medium, because the specific material used connects directly with the location of the work, being sourced from lowland Nepal where the event also took place.

The process of making was also elementary. It took no technical challenge to generate a pouring slip. The fact that the process was so straightforward paralleled the simplicity of the material involved.

Reflection The metaphor of the cycle of nature and its subversion would not have had any meaning without the clay which was so utterly at home in this place. The fact that it was processed locally as brick clay also has purpose and meaning within the work: it is redolent of the attempts *homo sapiens* makes to alter the environment to suit the species, and of the need for protection from natural forces – and other humans – that brick buildings connote.

The simplicity of the process for the work points up the fact that it is not necessary to use extensive processes to produce strong artistic statements. The elementary character of the making process also strengthened the impact of locally sourced material.

RECORDING THE EVENT

There was no prior intent to record the event, beyond the memory of its witnesses (as with *Tidal Transience*).

Reflection Apart from a few unrelated photographs taken on the river that day, and two specific images of slip pouring, taken by one of the witnesses, there is no archival evidence of the work. In this respect, the work aligns with performative artistic expression rather than visual art. The occasion, its impact

and the memory of it are important aesthetic characteristics. The nature of the piece overrides the need for evidence in the form of object or document, (Fischer-Lichte, 2008 p.55 and elsewhere). As Fischer-Lichte indicates (2004 p.101) in her reference to Lehmann (1999), 'an aesthetics of the performative is to be regarded as the aesthetics of presence', the point is that the event is not something that can be re-constituted or repeated. Its transient nature is crucial to its content and its message.

Connection between time, place and presence is crucial to meaning and interpretation. This aesthetic of the performative is evident in the work of case study makers for the research programme. In particular the performative character of Philip Lee's work (e.g. *Spode Slip*) dictates its own transience.

REVIEW

The reflective research perspective underpinning this extremely short-lived event enabled consideration of the experience and significance of devising an extremely brief artistic event, dictated to a large extent by circumstances, which were:

- Return to the Saptakoshi area, previously visited in early 1997
- Availability of local clay material (brick clay from Chitwan, Western lowland Nepal)
- Boat expedition on the Koshi River close to the confluence of its seven tributaries (Saptakoshi = Seven Rivers)

While this was a very simple event, it has significance for me as a maker of impermanent work. Reflection deepens its importance because of its context, i.e. answering the urge to respond to location and experience, and also because of its content. As with other work with both artistic and research relevance, it was conceived with facility. Its appropriateness to site and material was self-evident when the notion presented itself.

Further consideration highlights how central the connection of material with place was to this event on the Saptakoshi River, leading to connections with other experimental work on this research programme as clay, as material, the matrix in which meaning is embedded whatever form it may take, emerges as being of central significance.

The material is integral to meaning in this project, from its outset, as it is in *RePlace*, where access to Neolithic midden soil instigated the overall installatory project. Re-introduction of clay to source offers opportunities to engage with memory and cultural connections, to stimulate ripples of meaning for participants and witnesses, and to generate metaphors of, for instance, the cycle of creation and destruction, and of offer and response.

Later work involving very basic materials with fundamental associations with site and history provided the basis of an installation project, *Traces*. For this work, clay and soil samples collected from significant locations on a return journey to China are the basis of work and manifest, in physical form, links connecting with China's ceramic history.

Stimulated by the experience of this work, I have been led to reflect on practice in a Schönian sense, as a reflective practitioner, seeking to articulate the knowledge bound up in making work as an artist, which is usually unspoken and unexpressed, even internally. Further, I wished to explore reflection-on-practice further, to connect artistic activity directly with academic interrogation, as outlined by Gray and Malins:

Reflective practice [therefore] attempts to unite research and practice, thought and action, into a framework for inquiry which involves practice, and which acknowledges the special knowledge of the practitioner. Gray and Malins (2004). p.22

Schön's expectation was that this connection, between technical competence as a maker and academic analysis, would be 'undertaken on the spot'. Certainly in the case of *Return to Koshi I* I found that reflection did not take place 'in-action' (Schön 1983 pp. 308-309, quoted in Gray and Malins, 2004, p.22), but rather in retrospect. This was due largely to the fact that this was a speedily conceived and executed work. As the event itself recedes, it is possible to clarify context and meaning, and to explore my intuitive and analytical engagement with the event.

Reflection has also enabled recognition of the fact that *Return to Saptakoshi* has added a different way of working with ceramic material in an impermanent mode, and it articulated a novel engagement with material, its origin and with location. Prior to the research programme experiments with bone china slip had been undertaken on the tide line as a BA student. While enjoyable, there was not a significant aesthetic aspect to this exploration of clay and environmental forces, which reflection suggests was due to disconnection between location, activity and material. It was purely an intellectual exercise, and as such had no lasting impact.

Responsiveness to situation While the particular character of this work was its responsiveness to site, responsiveness to situation was equally important. The event could have taken place at a number of points on the river. The situation – having local clay at hand, travelling on the river, seeing silt in suspension in its flow, being with a group of people who had participated in an early event/installation on the same trip, for instance – was more crucial. It provided a nexus at which a number of diverse 'items' made a common connection.

'Audience' An unanticipated aspect of this work was the role of the other people in the boat. Issues of audience and witness have emerged as a particular strand in this research programme, as this event illustrates.

When I was pouring the slip into the river I was not self-conscious about what I was doing, although pleased to have the specific audience. Looking back, the audience was particularly appropriate for the event:

- My travelling companions had previously participated proactively with *Nag Puja*. Although their main concern was bird-watching and travel, they were supportive and understanding about the making of work on the trip, and interested in purposes, processes and content of the work
- As a friend and also a major contributor to the experience of *Nag Puja*, Dr. Hem Sagar Baral, the Nepali trip leader, was also an understanding observer. In fact, he thought sufficiently quickly to take a couple of photographs as the slip poured into the river, the only visual record of the work. As an academic, he also had an understanding of the research context in which this event was taking place
- The boat crew (local men whose knowledge of the river and its moods ensured our safety and enjoyment) who steadied the boat as I leaned over its side to return clay to water were positively engaged. I regret that I did not find the opportunity to speak to them directly with the help of an

interpreter to both explain what I was doing and to seek their reaction. However, my sense of their demonstrable interest, in steadying the boat and slowing it to watch the slip trail disappear, is that they seemed to appreciate the significance of what I was doing

In contrast to earlier work - *Losing It*, which was almost entirely unseen by others apart from myself as the maker and recorder, and *Nag Puja*, in which the anticipated role of observer was subverted by those concerned, and changed to that of support/participation for some and active maker for others – *Return to Koshi* was observed by some (possibly not everyone on board the inflatable), recorded by another, and made possible and acceptable by the third group.

Local acceptability has emerged as an important concern in the experimental work set in particular locations (see also the report on *RePlace*). It is not my intention to conflict with the sensitivities of local people when I make work in their environments. The nature of the work is to draw attention, not to generate conflict. It is therefore of significance that people in a locality who engage with the preparation or installation of work are at least neutral, and at best positively accept, the changes to their environment which are entailed.

Material The effect of *Return to Koshi* was to break into the material cycle, subverting body by re-introduction into the brown river, full of silt in suspension. Reflection-on-action and identification of themes in the work of case study subjects have both identified a characteristic of defamiliarisation in ceramic-based work which is predicated on impermanence. The phenomenon appears to be related to defamiliarisation with what is otherwise a predictable and ‘trusted’ material, which is a constant feature in the life of modern humans. Shklovsky presented the theory of *ostranenie* or defamiliarisation as a key aesthetic aspect of art:

The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. Shklovsky, 1925. p.12

While I would argue with Shklovsky’s use of ‘difficulty’ for those who engage with art, I would certainly agree with his view that art needs to draw attention. Equally, I do not accept his idea that art is to be perceived, but I think he would have a different perspective on art, had he been writing several decades later.

My research process also points up that the material with which it is concerned is traditionally associated with craft activity. By drawing attention to the fact that a pot does not always signify a vessel, makers are shifting attention towards the material of which it is made. By producing work with clay and ceramic that is impermanent, this distancing, de-familiarisation, even- at some extremes - alienation encourages the observer’s gaze to be more than passive. In effect, Shklovsky’s ‘invention’ of de-familiarisation enables ceramic to move not only from the craft arena to the art arena, but further still. It enables ceramic expression to move from the fine art arena to the performance arena, to the liminal space where audience becomes participant, being on both – or neither – side of the boundary between the work and its making.

SUMMARY REPORT SANBAO RESPECT, CHINA, 15.04.11 *(further information and background material available)*



Fig.1: Bottle-filled Gabion, Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute, Jingdezhen, China. 29.03.11



Raw clay slip-cast rice wine bottles
30.03.11



Discards (L) and treasured rice wine bottle (R) Longxiang bottle factory, Jingdezhen. 30.03.11

OUTLINE

Brief, participative, performative event, planned in advance, stimulated by and involving a readymade ceramic object.

DATE AND LOCATION

15.04.11. Duration approximately ten minutes. Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute (SCAI), Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province, China

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To undertake planning, preparation and performance of a short participative event to gather data and reflect on praxis in relation to all three research aims:

- To explore practical applications of impermanence
- To evidence praxis
- To explore a definition of impermanence

Specific objectives for research aims:

Aim 1: Improve understanding of how impermanent ceramic artistic expression can incorporate brief events and also of engaging a pro-active 'audience'

Aim 2: Connect Duchampian conceptual art within ceramic tradition (i.e. utilising a readymade) and event aesthetics. Also an opportunity to experience, and manage, the impulse to make work through application of reflecting-in-action on purposes and potential outcomes of intuitively generated ideas. The original intent was to hold a private ceremonial event, with no witnesses. While preparing for this solo action, reflection provided an opportunity to consider how research aims might be better met through a different approach

Aim 3: Exploring variant on impermanence, in the form of a unique (i.e. unrepeatable), brief piece of live art engaged with material, process and value

ARTISTIC INTENT

Demonstration of respect for the institution and its owner, who had made us extraordinarily welcome, had been generous to us with time, energy, resources and goodwill. To repair a loss.

To be stimulated, by items to hand (including a readymade), into making timely work consistent with my practice.

To make a piece of live art while engaging others.

SUBJECT MATTER

The piece showed respect to SCAI, whose road sign was a rice-wine-bottle-filled gabion at the entrance to the pottery compound. During the three weeks' residency at Sanbao, the gabion was robbed of bottles on a number of occasions by Chinese passers-by. This caused distress to the owner, our Director of Residencies.

The work was prompted by a discarded (re-valued) rice-wine bottle from the Longxiang bottle factory and played with notions of value. The bottle had no – or little - value to the factory owner being too faulty for commercial purposes. He invited our visiting group to take one each if we so wished.

The blue-and-white bottle had significance and value to me, as I chose it above all the others and was lucky to obtain it as other members of our group had also spotted it. I was doubtful whether I had room in my baggage to bring the bottle

back safely to England, but had no wish to discard it. I decided to place it in Sanbao's gabion as a small recompense for the stolen bottles. It would no doubt, in its turn, be perceived as worthless to passers-by, or might be removed as having some interest – i.e. value despite its lack of worth – in the future.

PROJECT REALITY

The event involved burning of incense sticks, used in China for significant occasions, such as tomb-sweeping and funeral ceremonies. Their value was, therefore, in their significance at rites of passage in Chinese society.

I devised the performance, which (as indicated elsewhere, I at first conceived as a solo, private event) the day before it took place. I considered that a private event would not fulfil as many aspects of my research aims as a participative work.

It took approximately five minutes to propose to my fellow ceramicists on the residency, and ten minutes to perform. I explained that I wished to show respect for Sanbao and our Director by returning the bottle to the gabion (everyone was aware that it was robbed several times). Everybody was willing to take part, indicating that they also felt uncomfortable about the loss of the bottles from the gabion. I indirectly suggested that others might like to follow suit in contributing their serendipitously acquired bottle, but in the event none of them did.

I issued everyone with several incense sticks, and we walked in procession to the roadside gabion, where I said a few words to indicate that this was an act of respect. I then threw the bottle in to join the others. It broke on impact. We lit our incense sticks and put them in the necks of bottles in the gabion. We stood and used our eyes, ears and noses to take in the experience, before proceeding back into the compound.

TYPE OF IMPERMANENCE

In terms of impermanence, the event took approximately ten minutes, the alteration from object to thing for the bottle being a matter of seconds.

It took the form of a prepared event (the percipient/participants being aware of its nature and their part in it beforehand).

RECORDING THE WORK

The images above are circumstantial. I took no photos (being active, this was not feasible in any case). No other participants took photos as far as I know. It was recorded, both in planning and after the event, in a handwritten journal (see 7.3.1 for extract).

REFLECTION

This could have been a piece at a number of points along the spectrum from unwitnessed/private to collaborative/public. Because of the public location and willing participation of others, who – however – did not proactively contribute, it was a participative/public event. The others did not collaborate in my definition of active involvement with personal contribution (unlike collaborators in *Nag Puja* and *RePlace*).

It was a performative event, involving myself and the bottle agentically (see 8.1), and also other human performers (cf. *Nag Puja*) and a readymade object (cf. *No. 11 Tea Ceremony*).

The breaking of the bottle was a calculated potential feature (I did not know whether this would happen in advance). It shifted the bottle from object, valued

and identifiable, to thing, almost imperceptible among other things in Brown's sense (see 4.2.3). The challenge of doing this with an object I valued aesthetically was eased by the knowledge that I could not keep it (no room in my luggage). I had to let go.

It was a transient event, leaving no specific evidence of its occurrence

On later reflection, I categorise it as a combination of 2.i and 4.ii in Table 4.A in the main text (5.1.2).

Unlike much of my work, this had no engagement with clay as a material to form objects, no direct ceramic process. My prior thinking for it, meditative as it was, concentrated on ideas and emotions, not the material. The idea of the event was triggered by concern regarding WL's distress, sight of the gabion and the possession of discarded bottle.

Siting was crucial, being site-specific in the strictest sense. It could not have been undertaken anywhere else with the same personal meaning.

It is similar in many respects to *Return to Koshi*, in both cases local material being placed where they belong in a fleeting event with witnesses/participants. It makes me ponder about the purposes of much of my work – the 'putting right' which I sometimes feel driven to perform, in a familiar yet alien environment, engaging with local material which carries its own meaning quite apart from its form.

The insistent nature of material (readymade in this case, amorphous clay in *Return to Koshi*, etc. etc.) is evident in this work. Hodder's explication of entanglement and Bennett's concept of vibrant matter both connect with my reflections on this very brief and (under-) evidenced piece.

FIELD JOURNAL NAG PUJA INSTALLATION 5 – 6.05.11 EXTRACT (*full report and images available*)

(also iPhone notes 05.05.11)

Installed open fired work at Machan Wildlife Resort using local Chitwan clay courtesy of Megh[raj] 'Hillman' [Naharki] of Dhading.

Approximately 40 flat elements plus modelled snake head and tail. Also small pinch pot and 7 slightly domed/fluted elements for each person on the trip: MG, HSB, MG, KS, IW, DC, SG (RHC, LK, KP – local staff).

Selected area for installation with HSB's help: with trees around and at the side of a little path.

HSB offered to undertake a Hindu ceremony as he is a Brahmin, able to conduct ceremonials. He recently had to undertake 13 days of mourning ceremonies, with the inevitable exposure to the gurus/priests. Dressed for the occasion with a trad Nepali cap, prayer shawl and smart clothes.

KP brought incense to use in the ceremony – I had decided to make the piece in recognition of the presence of the cobra [Monocellate Cobra, *Naja kaouthia*] in the camp and therefore made the piece into a spiral.

The location was near the foot of a Sal tree so the incense was Sal-derived. And I placed incense I had been given the previous day in the little pinch pot to serve as our group's acknowledgement of the place of the cobra as a 'big' reptile, also its position in Hindu religion: Nag the snake god.

Extracts from trip journal – Machan Wildlife Resort (*italics = commentary on journal entries, made during transcription 07.05.11 at Kosi Camp*)

Monday 2nd May 2011 Brief rest after lunch – it is very hot and sticky even after yesterday's storm.

Then I prepared some more clay – making it a bit moister than last time to try to overcome its crumbliness. HSB later suggested we could do a small firing, so I am targeting for that late afternoon on the last day, if possible, Made 4 test pieces: 2 'classic' elements, 2 domed elements

Tuesday 3rd May 2011 Reached dried-up river bed and drove up it. Spotted lots of elephant dung, from wild animals rather than the very fibrous and loose turds of the camp animals and thought of having some for the firing. HSB pointed out some river clay and asked if I wanted to take some back. I said I would rather take some of the very dry dung if possible, so he got Krishna and Kamal to gather some for me, near the Jeep when we returned...

Some excitement, as we settled down to a drink, as a Cobra was holed up on the bank below the terrace – pretty well straight along from the viewing platform. We all did see it, severally or singly, in the end (or at least its head). As a storm was really threatening, I brought in the clay pieces I made earlier in the afternoon: a couple of snake heads and tails and plenty of (scale-like) elements, so they wouldn't dissolve if it rained,



Monocellate Cobra,
Machan Wildlife Resort,
Chitwan, Nepal 04.05.11

I still have more clay to use, but wanted it a bit drier so I can make some more pieces and hope to have them dry for late Thursday afternoon....

Wednesday 4th May 2011 Task for the morning is making more elements for the snake piece to be fired tomorrow.

Making some duplicate pieces for safety's sake, so to match the 7 flared elements I have already made, I made 7 more, to deal with accidents. I modelled the 2 snake's heads I made, making a mouth. Plus 2 small vessels, marked the same way, before using the rest of the clay to make body elements. I think I will spiral the piece, with a tail in the centre and head at the [outer] end of the spiral. Maybe a more open spiral will look more snake-like?

Oh – and the stones in the clay will hopefully spit a bit viperishly when the thing fires.

Nearly finished making the elements when HSB told me KP had some incense for me, used for weddings and other such occasions – to go in the little offering pot. Perfect as a ceremonious and locally referent piece.

Thursday 5th May 2011 After lunch, HSB and MG started sussing out a site for the installation [while I was gathering the clay pieces together] and found an excellent patch of forest floor behind our cottage, close to, but not on, a regular little path the room boys use, close to a Sal tree, where we could sweep the dead leaves away and make a safe place for firing. Plenty of fuel around, too, with the dead leaves, straw and twigs, and some chopped Sal wood too.

The essentials for this project are that crucial things came together:

- The snake spiral was easy and effective to set [*the form had been suggested quite fortuitously, but fitted well with both a familiar mode of making and the challenging nature of this local clay. I need to find my references in the journal to its crumbly nature and elaborate on the testing I did both at MPV and MWL to make it as workable as possible*], and the cluster of flutes and the pinch pot looked right in association with it.
- HSB took it seriously [*I had been negotiating with Badri of Nature Safari for roughly 12 months to ensure I could undertake a research related ceramic project while in Nepal, so he must have informed Hem as our trip leader of the gist of my intentions, as I had not really talked to him directly about it since the start of the trip. He had, however, been on the Nepal Terai trip we*

did in 2007 when I observed the firing of the forest undergrowth at Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve – and the impact on termite mounds – and got excited about the ceramic possibilities, which I am sure I discussed with him at the time] and offered to do a ceremonious puja in his role as a Brahmin priest [again fortuitously his recent bereavement has enabled him to take this role more seriously than previously]. Dressed up for the occasion, he lit the first match after making a pronouncement [in Nepali,] once we had the bonfire in place.

- RHC and KP [camp manager and camp birding guide respectively] helped to sort the fire out – breaking up the elephant dung and gathering bundles of leaves, and they took it seriously too.
- The birding guys generally were interested to see the spiral set out and then to watch the firing which surely turned into a performance.
- I decided to leave the fire overnight, rather than cut the firing short and in the event this was perfect timing. [*The inauguration of the shrine was only possible the next day and 6 am happened also to be the only possible time because RHC had a visiting tour to lead at 6.30 am and we had to have breakfast at 6.30 as we were leaving at 7 a.m.*]
- RHC, KP, LK, the manager, who later said that the cobra had stopped appearing once I had set up the installation – nice bit of folk saying, because it had actually not been seen for a few hours before, but that is how myths are generated, when coincidence is put to use!] and other staff seemed spontaneously to decide to make a permanent shrine to Nag, the Snake God, at the installation site They [RHC and KP] set to and cleared stones from under the Sal tree and set up 3 shrine stones, representing 3 cobras, and made a stone edging for it from the cleared
- When I brushed the ashes away at 6 a.m. next morning, there was quite a crowd there, and the spiral emerged intact from the firing, looking as though it was a fossil being revealed. The firing looks quite thorough [*elephant dung was an inspired fuel ingredient. I had recollection of seeing cow dung used for cooking in India etc., and thought it would make a good fuel as well as being symbolic of the wild nature of the place we were in and the wildlife we were encountering on this trip*]
- When KP and RHC finished making the shrine, KP rushed off for red and white thread to adorn the middle idol and also brought back a thread for me which he said was for me to wear always [*in the same way that the shrine will be there always*] – it feels like a bond/promise. So I got him to tie it round my neck for me – and it looks a bit snake-like too, with yellow and red, knotted with black
- And then, as I sat contemplating the firing and the shrine, I heard Hooded Pitta calling [*I had missed an early morning walk round the camp to try to find it earlier in the week, only to learn afterwards that it had been showing well. And this is one of a family which is usually very difficult to see, being skulking by nature generally*], so I went to fetch Mike and we went on a search. And I spotted the Pitta only about 50 yards from the firing site, boldly sitting on the branch of a tree. Seeing it for myself just put the seal on the day. [*I remarked at the time that nature was being very good to me that afternoon*], and then we saw another...

Friday 6th May 2011

5. 30 a.m. wake-up call, though I was, as usual, already awake.

6.00 a.m. the appointed time to reveal the spiral snake installation which I did in conjunction with RHC, KP and a small gathering of staff, who assembled to do the first Nag puja at the new shrine, and the birding bunch [including HSB] who came to see how the installation had worked – and the proceedings in general.

The snake looked excellent and I was told it would remain undisturbed. The puja was undertaken by a member of staff I didn't know, who anointed each idol with a sprinkle of red colour, yellow colour and white rice. Followed by KP, HSB, and then – on invitation – by me on behalf of the visitors.



KP and myself with *tika*, Machan Wildlife Resort, Chitwan, 06.05.11

I then had to give myself a *tika* with moistened red powder, while the others were given one (by KP I think), except for HSB. He can't have a *tika* for the whole year until his mourning for his father is over. [end]

SUMMARY REPORT, NO.11 TEA CEREMONY, 05.05.12 (further information and background material available)



Above: No.11 Tea Ceremony William Henry Street, Saltaire (L) Tea paraphernalia (R). 05.05.12



Cake cutting (L)



Saltire Arts Trail visitors (R)

OUTLINE

Short performative event, with audience. Generated in impromptu fashion from script for a larger event at Saltaire Arts Trail, by Rio Ellis, Emma Gee and Ben Rothera.

DATE AND LOCATION

05.05.12. Duration approximately forty five minutes. No. 11, William Henry Street, Saltaire, West Yorkshire, BD18 4PP (billed as Live Art House).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To undertake planning, preparation and performance of a short participative event to gather data and reflect on praxis in relation to all three research aims:

- To explore practical applications of impermanence
- To evidence praxis
- To explore a definition of impermanence

Specific objectives for research aims:

Aim 1: Experimenting with performance, subverting other artists' script

Aim 2: Investigating materiality and audience engagement

Aim 3: Exploring impermanence as a unique (i.e. unrepeatable), brief piece of live art

ARTISTIC INTENT

Investigating the difference between the everyday (Sunday tea time) and performance (clearly framed as NOT every-day), i.e. live art.

Engaging with readymade items in a prepared environment (the front room at No.11 had been transformed into a set for the event by Ellis, Gee and Rothera)

Being stimulated by items to hand (including tea-time paraphernalia, homemade cake, other performers, visitors), into improvisatory work consistent with practice. The only prior decisions were to offer cups of tea and pieces of cake to those entering the space.

SUBJECT MATTER

The performance explored further the idea of object/material as actor/agent (e.g. *Sanbao Respect, Return to Koshi*), the human in the performance being a means to the objects' ends - here the tea paraphernalia insisted on being used for the imperative of occasion (weekend afternoon) and place (front parlour) and demanding the re-enactment of the ritual of afternoon tea. The cake also had actant qualities – it had to be cut, proffered and accepted by at least some of the visitors to the room.

PROJECT REALITY

The open house at No. 11 was billed as:

Nosey parker? Curtain twitcher? Wannabe fly on the wall? If you're interested in what happens behind closed doors then pay a visit to Number 11, a private viewing of a house. Cross the threshold and step inside, where performers exhibit the everyday, curate the commonplace and frame the frivolous to celebrate the theatre of the ordinary; be it cleaning the oven, folding washing or a well-earned brew. This is the first time we've included live art in SAT and we're excited to see what you make of it.

Having read the script for the tea ceremony slot, including instructions to approach the house from the railway station, I took only the structure into account, and ignored 'stage directions' (including duration and cues for entering and exiting the space).

Cake-making was a spur-of-the-moment decision taken the day before. It felt right to take a cake given the focus for this performance on tea making (other scripts involved kitchen cleaning, showering etc.).

On entering the space I made no positive decisions about action or words, taking my lead from the objects in the space. I did not time my performance. As visitors entered the space I welcomed people into the room, and as and when tea was available (dependent on other actors in kitchen and front room spaces), I offered tea and cake.

When the cake was used up and there were no more cups to pour tea into, I left the space. I only came out of role several minutes later, out on the street.

TYPE OF IMPERMANENCE

This was an untimed performative event (approximately 45 minutes), although the script specified thirty minutes.

The percipients, while possibly alerted to a live event by the SAT brochure, were unprepared. As such they were *de Facto* participants, and witnesses.

RECORDING THE WORK

The images above were part of a set taken by my sister/witness during the event, at my request. I took no photos (being active, this was not feasible in any case).

The directors/actors (when not performing) took video-recordings, possibly also still photographs. Search for *Our House: No 11 for Saltaire Arts Trail*, including <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jip3eupd8g>.)

REFLECTION

On reflection, much of this piece was about subversion of a script to suit my aesthetic aim, which was to experiment with performance where I was the prop or agent for the objects in the space. It worked effectively: I very much got into a role, absolutely oblivious to any cues to enable the directors' script to move forward or out of the space (I assume there may have been some from comments I received afterwards). I recall the slots as being thirty minutes, but they may have been fifteen minutes.

The material in the form of tea paraphernalia, front room, visitors, tea bags and tea dust covering horizontal surfaces, all prompted action.

As an event, this was an ephemeral piece. It had connotations of childhood experiences, when weekend afternoons spent with bare legs receiving the unwelcome imprint of uncut moquette on hard settees while adults spoke of obscure and irrelevant subjects to each other, seemed interminable. At the SAT event, the allotted slot sped past very quickly. Time is elastic.



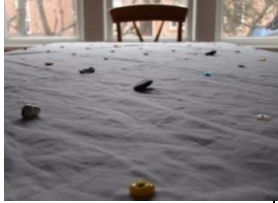
The location was crucial. The 'front room' experience for everyone was disorientating due to both the performance itself and the 'set' (living rooms are not usually liberally sprinkled with tea dust, or contain upward of thirty tea pots, with tea bags making up the picture over the mantelpiece). This gave an insight into Shklovskian defamiliarisation techniques and impacts.




It was liberating to collaborate in the deepest sense in someone else's work: I was able to make the piece my own, and develop an event which would have been impossible without their decisions and practical input prior to, and on, the day. This gave me material to reflect on artist>object/event>percipient relationships.




The evidence available for the event gives a very different impression of it from my personal experience (YouTube in particular presents it from the directors' point of view). This has prompted consideration both of the relationships between artist, work and percipients (Chapter 4) and roles of record and evidence (Chapter 9).



The experience of working to the prompts of objects and surroundings permits the development of theories regarding materiality (Chapter 6) while the experience of performativity in this and comparable pieces (*IIMIB*, *Tidal Transience*, *Return to Koshi*) has triggered consideration of the event aesthetic as a more appropriate frame for impermanent contemporary ceramic art practice than the visual art aesthetic within which it is more usually contextualised.



TABLE OF PRACTICAL WORK 2009 – 2014

DATE	TITLE	LOCA-TION	MATERIALS	KEY FEATURES	LINKS TO OTHER WORK	THEORETICAL LINKS	NOTES
20.09.09	<i>Tidal Transience</i> + preparatory work 	Hartlepool Headland tideline	'Ready-made' elements (fired bone china spheres, Keel forms in ceramic material for BA work: <i>Tsunami</i>)	Environmental event Natural forces: Tide timing Premeditation (prep work) Duration (short) Witness (invited observers)	<i>Return to Koshi:</i> duration of work, witness, lack of physical record. Victoria Eden: <i>February 4th</i> <i>2004:</i> involvement of tide	Performativity Event v. Visual Art Witness/Audience Site sensitivity Material (devised as impermanent)	Only work where particular witnesses were invited to be present Links with BA work using tide line
Jan - May 2010	<i>Losing It: Rose Field</i>  + <i>Losing It:</i> <i>Tablecloth</i>  + prep work: <i>Bobble Field,</i>	Hartlepool Headland allotment + garden	Commissioned Unfired bone china roses (maker: Denise Lilley) Heirloom tablecloth, buttons and sewing thread Available knitting yarn Existing tapestry kit	Environmental installation Natural forces: Weather, vegetative growth (& organic decay for flip book) Process as key element Unwitnessed Comprehensiv e photographic record Plan for	<i>Tidal Transience:</i> natural forces. <i>Finds&Binds:</i> heirloom items <i>ReCollection:</i> Multiples/grid formation, photographic sequence as record. <i>Plate Spinner (Spode),</i> David Cushway; <i>Spode Tower.</i> Caroline Tattersall subject matter	Auto-ethnography Materiality and communication 'Art for Art's Sake' Record Site-sensitivity Working is different materials Material (raw bone china redolent of valued porcelain, UK-style) Heirloom tablecloth, buttons and thread > auto- ethnography	Sole unwitness-able work Collaborative – materials collected from others - reflections collected from others

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	MATERIALS	KEY FEATURES	LINKS TO OTHER WORK	THEORETICAL LINKS	NOTES
	<p><i>Tree</i> (tapestry), <i>Decay</i> flip book</p> 		Remains of family fish Photography	physical destruction of Bobble Field and Tree Material difference		Fish: family pets memorialised	Curiously persistent (untouched by scavenging animals)
17.03.11 - present	<p><i>ReCollection</i></p> 	Bede's World, Jarrow	Fired ceramic material inc. bone china slip	Museum setting Duration (relatively long) Photographic record	<i>RePlace Orkney</i> : duration (relatively long) <i>Fusion</i> : public access	Installatory 'Gallery' aesthetic Site sensitivity Process Auto-performativity Material (plaster-based ceramic plus muslin/cotton and bone china slip – organic base, link to life and UK pottery industry)	'Evidence' maturing into work in its own right: publication and photo series
April 2011	<p><i>Sanbao Respect</i></p> 	Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province, China	Found objects: rice wine bottle, incense sticks, existing installation (gabion filled with rice wine bottles)	Performativity Involvement of others Brevity Message	<i>Return to Saptakoshi</i> : response to place and circumstance, simplicity	Socio-political nature Event aesthetics Site specificity Witness/Participation Performativity Material (gift-object/waster from bottle factory, re-joining similar)	Unpremeditated performative event

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	MATERIALS	KEY FEATURES	LINKS TO OTHER WORK	THEORETICAL LINKS	NOTES
05.05.11 onward	<i>Nag Puja</i> 	Chitwan National Park, Nepal	Local brick clay, dry wild elephant dung	Environmental installation Participatory event Duration (weather dependent)	<i>Communal Hearth</i> , <i>Etourneau</i> , <i>RePlace Orkney</i> : unanticipated development (t shrine to Krishna) <i>RePlace Orkney</i> : Site sensitivity	Participatory event aesthetic Site specificity Process Material (local brick clay, wild elephant dung, forest leaves)	Some resemblance to a community arts project Remains in memory – binding cord
08.05.11	<i>Return to Koshi</i> 	Sapta-koshi River, Koshi Tappu, Nepal	Local brick clay in suspension	Environmental event Duration (very brief) Audience Lack of record Response to place and circumstance	<i>Sanbao Respect</i> : response to place and circumstance, simplicity	Material Ephemerality Site specificity/sensitivity Audience/Performativity Material (local brick clay as slip)	More than meets the eye
15.5.12 - onward	<i>RePlace Orkney</i> 	Orkney – nine sites	Orkney-sourced yarn, clay body from Neolithic Orkney midden, nylon ties	Environmental installation Materiality Site-sensitivity Public access Unanticipated development of work Electronic feedback (dedicated blog site)	<i>Nag Puja</i> unpredictable development <i>Losing It: Rose Field</i> , <i>ReCollection</i> : serial photographic record Urban guerrilla knitting/yarn bombing	'Death of the Artist' Democratic/open ownership De-familiarisation Site sensitivity plus specificity (midden eggs) Collaboration Geurrilla/activism Material (Orkney yarn, Brodgar midden soil)	Rejection of artist-ownership

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	MATERIALS	KEY FEATURES	LINKS TO OTHER WORK	THEORETICAL LINKS	NOTES
05.05.12	<i>No. 11 Tea Ceremony</i> 	Saltaire	Objects provided by director Apple and cinnamon cake	Participatory Performative Environmental installation Direction Contribution to another's work	<i>Finds&Binds</i> self with Emma Gee; <i>Spode Slip</i> Philip Lee; <i>Plate Spinner</i> David Cushway: performativity	Conceptualism Anarchy Performativity Site/Contextual sensitivity Material (ready-mades) Material (readymade tea things, home-made cake)	De-familiarisation and 'bending' the script
July – Nov 2014	<i>ReTrace China</i> 	Oriental Museum, Durham	Raw clay from locations in China Found objects. Readymade objects. Photography Audio record Existing collection of Chinese ceramics Com-missioned objects: jigsaws Celadon porcelains & stoneware (some sourced China)	Installation Gallery setting Combination of new and existing objects Materiality	<i>Last Supper in the Glynn Vivian</i> David Cushway; <i>Trophy</i> Claire Twomey; <i>The Matter of Life and Death</i> Julian Stair: engagement with museum collection	Symbolism and linguistics Audience engagement Artist as audience as observer Collaboration Material (varied, inc jigsaw broken plates, varied porcelain bodies inc from JdZ, varied celadon glazes, ditto, Chinese artefacts, other people's work)	Objects varied – ceramic, raw clay, audio-visual display, direct engagement with visitors (inc 3-5 yr olds and 9 – 13 year olds), contact with raw clay, and transformation into fired objects

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	MATERIALS	KEY FEATURES	LINKS TO OTHER WORK	THEORETICAL LINKS	NOTES
27.10– 11.11.14	<i>Converse:Mao</i> 	14-15 locations Jiangxi and Jiangsu Provinces People's Republic of China	Raw St Thomas and anonymous clay body press- moulded into form of Mao face, found potsherds, plastic chopsticks, incense	Guerrilla installations, environmental stimulus for locations	<i>Traces of China</i> (Mao faces, but now unfired), <i>RePlace Orkney</i> , locations chosen with local cultural and historic resonance in mind, guerrilla tactics	Guerrilla Girls (maybe) Site sensitivity De-familiarisation Material (White St Thomas and anonymous raw clay, found objects)	Location stimulates reflection and alters relationships with the subject Risky undertaking given potential criticism of The Great Leader
17 & 19.03.15	<i>Is it madness Is it beauty</i> Clare Twomey performance piece 	Shipley Art Gallery, Gates- head	Raw clay vessels, water, performer, audience	Repetitive, impractical action, Direction by artist, performance role of No. 11 Tea Ceremony (but without opportunity for anarchism)	<i>No. 11 Tea Ceremony</i> , public, performance piece <i>Spode Towers</i> (Tattersall)	Fischer-Lichte, autopoietic feedback loops Material (self as directed performer, raw bone china, water) Site sensitivity Audience relationships	Meditative state – alertness to self and task, not to environment Challenge of lack of audience interactivity

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Appendix No.	Title	Page
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3.ii	Questions for artists (Oct 2011)	312
3.iii	Curation case study interview	313

DATA GATHERING

INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS OF IMPERMANENCE

1. Definition/function:

To obtain information directly from selected artists currently working with clay in an impermanent form about the purposes of their work with impermanence and clay, their working methods, and other data relevant to the research questions.

2. Context for use:

A pluralist, social constructionist philosophical framework has been identified as appropriate for the practice-led focus of this research programme, based in a strongly art-and-design context. A qualitative methodological approach has been adopted combining reflexivity (developed from Kolb's learning cycle and Schön's exposition of reflective practice) with phenomenological/phenomenographical perspectives.

3. Tools:

Within a case study framework, open interviews of approximately 45-60 minutes duration are undertaken with selected artists.

Criteria were identified for selecting currently active artists to approach for involvement, i.e.:

- a. Working with ceramic material for part or all of their artistic output
- b. Engaging with impermanence in some form in their artistic output
- c. Producing work of a non-traditional nature, e.g. outwith the decorative and studio pottery aesthetic traditions
- d. English speaking
- e. Available (e.g. geographically) to meet the researcher within the research programme timescale

Prompt questions were developed on a pilot basis with the cooperation of an artist who fulfilled the selection criteria, in order to provide some structure to the face-to-face data gathering process.

Artists were approached in person (e.g. at relevant conferences and exhibitions) or by email or telephone, to explain the research and the perceived relevance of their practice, and to ask if they are willing to participate. Interviews are then undertaken as convenient to the individual artist.

Audio recordings were made of the interviews with the explicit agreement of the artist, and transcribed by the researcher. The

transcript was made available to the participant for comment and amendment prior to direct quotation.

Raw data was analysed to identify common themes as well as topics for further exploration, each artist having confirmed their willingness to be involved in follow-up as appropriate.

This method was selected as suitable to identify and explore issues which the maker/researcher may not otherwise have articulated (e.g. from her own work or contextual research), and to explore and test out issues articulated as a result of auto-reflexive activity.

Note: the importance of data gathering performed by an engaged researcher is an accepted method of collecting qualitative data (Schleier, 1991; Livingstone (2008) within a reflexive methodological approach.

4. Advantages:

Previous contact by researcher putting participant at ease.

Participants prepared in advance of purpose and focus of the interview.

Direct contact between researcher and willing participant encouraging open engagement with the process.

Flexibility enabled by face-to-face, real-time contact.

Researcher presence enabling identification of areas for further exploration with the participant: for instance, unanticipated topics raised, body language or gestures suggesting availability of additional information.

Availability of full verbatim record.

Follow-up facilitated by previous contact and familiarity with the researcher

5. Potential disadvantages:

Lack of rapport between researcher and participant (deemed unlikely given previous contact/familiarity as indicated in (4))

Prompt questions constraining wider data gathering (avoided by researcher presence, enabling further discussion of ideas and issues raised as appropriate).

Interviews not totally comparable in terms of topics discussed and data gathered (accepted as a concomitant to qualitative research technique; focus on personal perspectives, not statistical robustness).

Participant inhibition due to audio recording (avoided by explaining its use and offering transcripts for review and editing by the subject. In the event, an initial concern for one subject only, and reassurance regarding the purpose and editorial control sufficed to reassure).

Physical availability of participants for interviews limiting data gathering to local aesthetic and cultural environments (accepted as a

potential disadvantage; conscious efforts made to involve artists from other national backgrounds).

Process of participant selection limiting data gathering (n.b. potential outcome bias not a significant issue within the phenomenological context of this research; other forms of data gathering included to extend and expand the reach of the research enquiry).

6. Ethical considerations: good research conduct, avoidance of questionable activities.

Personal approach by researcher enabled potential subjects to make a personal decision whether to be involved.

Transcripts of audio recordings made available to participants for their consideration and acceptance before being used for direct quotation. Participants' wishes regarding anonymity honoured.

In the event, all participants were willing for the transcript to be used, and to follow up with additional information as requested. The artist involved in the pilot interview undertook a further interview using the finalised checklist.

7. Further references: key texts/sources, and examples of validated research in which the method has been used.

Texts on methodological theory and practice:

Creswell, J. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. London: Sage Publications Limited

Gray, C. & Malins, J. (2004) *Visualizing Research: a Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited

Schleier, F. (ed.) (1991) *Research and Reflexivity*. London: Sage Publications Limited

Doctoral dissertation utilising the method:

Livingstone, A. (2008, unpublished). *The Authenticity of Clay and its Re-definition Within Contemporary Practice: Ceramic Familiarity and the Contribution to Expansion*. (Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Art and Design, University of Ulster)

QUESTIONS FOR ARTISTS (Oct 2011)

1. What is your work about? Prompts/checks if necessary: cycles of life and death, growth and decay, individuality, environmental challenges, human conflict....
2. How would you/do you describe your work?
3. How do you describe yourself?
4. How important to your work overall is (its) impermanence/transience?
5. How important to your work is/are the process/es you use?
6. How important to your work is interaction with the public?
7. How do you describe the people who see/visit/interact with your work?
8. What role does material/media play in the work?
9. How important is the use of clay/ceramic material to your work?
10. Fired or raw – (how much) does it matter?

Additional questions identified following initial interview with David Cushway in 2010

11. To what extent is there a transcendental aspect to your work? (How important is that?)
12. How important is the setting for your work?
13. Do you record the existence of work which is impermanent or transient? How do you categorise such records (are they 'the work' itself)?
14. How important to you is continuing evidence of the existence of work which no longer exists in its initial form?
15. How important is it to you to monitor the work once installed, e.g. by visiting/recording it over a period of time?
16. How do you value your work?

Additional questions for David Cushway 10.11.11

- 17 To what extent is there a transcendental aspect to your work? (How important is that?)
- 18 How important is the setting for your work?
- 19 Do you record the existence of work which is impermanent or transient? How do you categorise such records (are they 'the work' itself)?
- 20 How important to you is continuing evidence of the existence of work which no longer exists in its initial form?
- 21 How important is it to you to monitor the work once installed, e.g. by visiting/recording it over a period of time?
- 22 How do you value your impermanent work as opposed to other work you do/make?
- 23 To what extent is performance becoming more important in your impermanent ceramic work?

CURATION CASE STUDY INTERVIEW

Introduction:

Looking at how impermanent *ceramic* work sits in the world of contemporary art, and wanting to look at issues of curation and conservation.

NB: Recording/Permission

Q.1 Job title, background and training

Q.2 What does 'curating' mean to you?

Q.3 How do you describe the curator's role?

e.g. prompts: Facilitating?

Educational?

Authorial?

Impresario?

Q.4 Does any impermanent work that you have curated stand out in your mind?

(Not temporary shows, but work that will not exist in its current form in future)

Why?

Q.5 Is there anything particular about curating impermanent work?

Easier/more challenging/more or less enjoyable...

Q.5 How do you feel about impermanent ceramic work?

Is there a work you particularly like and why?

Q.6 Is there anything particular about curating impermanent ceramic work?

Q.7 Anything we haven't covered but seems interesting or important to you?

REPLACE ORKNEY: FEEDBACK EXTRACTS

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4.ii	<i>RePlace Orkney</i> 2012: Collaborator feedback	318

INTERVIEW RIK HAMMOND AND CLARE GEE RE BRODGAR EGGS**EXTRACT** (*full transcript available*)

SG Rik is going to tell me something about the Brodgar eggs which he told me last September, but which I didn't get him to record or write down.

RH I went back to the Ness of Brodgar in 2014 and watched the excavations. And while I was there I thought I would see if I could relocate your eggs made from the Brodgar spoil, which I put back in the spoil heap in 2013. I went back with both the GPS coordinate and the photograph that I'd taken of the location. After a couple of hours of looking, I suddenly realised that the spoil heap was about eight feet taller than it was in 2012.

So I promptly gave up because it would have required a huge excavation then, and more people. And as I took the trowel back to one of the archaeologists in Structure 12, he wondered what I was doing. I mentioned about placing the eggs two years ago (I hadn't chatted to him back then about this). He said: Oh, were they shaped like a little Kinder Egg, a little brown egg. I said yes and he said: Oh, we found one of those last year, in 2013, in a wall in Structure 12, during the excavations.

I said 'Really?' and checked again. I showed him the photograph of them. He said 'Yes, we found one of those in Structure 12.' I thought, well I buried them on a rainy day in 2012 when I think the site was... it was raining and I don't think...

CG It was raining and the site was closed. The only people on site were [NC] the site director, and project officer for ORCA. There was myself and Rik... And the finds officer was in the finds hut and apart from that... oh, and the only other person who was there was somebody who was interviewing NC, sat in his car out of the rain - nobody else on site.

RH And I had got permission to bury them again. I put them up there and buried them under... I put them in, not really deep. I did it by hand, but it was probably five or six inches maybe.

Later on I found out what had happened. It clearly was one of the eggs. What must have happened was that in 2013, the year after, there was a lot of work done on the spoil heap to make it safer because it was getting huge. It was really big. And a number of the diggers would have gone up on to the spoil heap to roughly where I'd buried them, to re-organise the plateau at the top of the spoil heap and must have come across them.

I don't know whether anybody knew they were anything to do with you or me. One of the diggers, it's thought, then placed it in Structure 12 just down at the bottom of the spoil heap, to fool another excavator when they came across it and found this egg. 'Wow - there's a Neolithic stone ball'. And of course it turned out to be an egg. We think we know who it was, but he hasn't yet claimed responsibility - an archaeologist called XXX. He was certainly giggling when he overheard them talking to the supervisor about this, so we

think it was him. And he was one of the people tasked with [sorting out the spoil heap].

SG So this was 2014.

RH Yes, when I was having the conversation it was 2014, because I buried them in 2012.

SG So he would have been there in 2013 as well?

RH Yes, he's been there for a number of years, digging. And I first met him in 2011 when I was there. I wasn't there much in 2012. In 2013 I wasn't there when they reorganised the spoil heap. It happened at another time. They were just buried away up there – I left them there.

SG So we think it's a prank.

RH Yes, a prank. But whether or not only one was found or whether more, whether there are four left in the ground, we don't know. Unfortunately it's so deep now, the pile.

SG Unfortunately? I don't know about that!

RH I don't know what happened to the one that was found. I think it was tossed back on to the spoil heap. Who knows – we'll see next year, whether or not any more turn up.

SG Do you think the spoil heap's likely to be disturbed again? Does that happen on a regular basis?.

RH Possibly not in the next couple of years. But at some point, all that soil is going back into the trench – however many thousands of tons of it. So at some point it will be put back into the actual place it came from. I doubt the area where they were buried will be disturbed. It's got a lot of long grass growing over it. Actually, in 2014, retrospective planning permission had to be granted on the spoil heap because it has now come to be seen by Planning as a permanent landscape feature. So technically it might be that they don't need to refill. It may become a new hill.

SG So it might become eggs in the hill.

RH To be discovered in a few thousand years, by more archaeologists!

SG I think it's very interesting that it survived its experience in the spoil heap so that it was actually still identifiable. That burnishing that I'd done to it had matted it enough for that not to fall apart.

RH I hadn't seen it but from what the site supervisor at Structure 12 said, who saw it and handled it, when I showed him the photograph of it from 2012, he said 'Yep. A bit darker. Exactly the same, exactly the same'.

SG It would be darker, because when you buried them they were quite dry.

RH They didn't know it was soil until they picked at it a bit and went 'It's just mud!' It was still burnished.

CG They will have had to make sure it wasn't archaeological.

RH Until it became known it was a prank... there's only so long you can have a prank like that until you are severely told off by someone! And I wonder whether someone else – there are other people in that Structure 12 who will have probably seen the photograph, or know about it. They may have then said, 'I think that's something to do with Rik', but not known it was your piece. They may have gone: 'I've seen that in another context.'

SG Well it was a collaborative piece in the end, wasn't it.

RH I think something I linked to on line – linked to your blog that had the photos on – it wouldn't surprise me. There are a couple of the diggers there who follow what's going on. But Jim didn't know what it was. Where it's gone now, who knows! But we'll see if anymore turn up because we don't know. He's not even saying it was him, but we think it was. There isn't anybody else! Whether or not there was only one found. Did he find one, or did he find the whole cache of them.

SG When you are saying 'him', are you talking about XXX?

RH Yes. He's the suspect.

SG Who seemed amused when it was being discussed...

RH And when asked wouldn't say anything. But just giggled.

SG Right. Well, it sounds likely.

RH But whether he found all of them – because they were in a line, a cache of them. Or whether he only found one, who knows.

SG Thank you very much, Rik.

[end]

REPLACE ORKNEY 2012: COLLABORATOR FEEDBACK (MAY 2013)

PROMPT Qs	COLLABORATOR 1 (Engager/Reinstaller/Knitter)	COLLABORATOR 2 (Installer/Agent)	COLLABORATOR 3 (Knitter/Agent)	COLLABORATOR 4 (Knitter)	COLLABORATOR 5 (Knitter)	COLLABORATOR 6 (Supporter)	COLLABORATOR 7 (Tricoteuse/PhD researcher)_
1. How involved in <i>RePlace Orkney</i> did/do you personally feel?	After finding the installations in August 2012, in North Ronaldsay, I was intrigued and fascinated by the idea of mysterious flocks of knitted sheep left in secret places where the native sheep are constantly on the move, and the tides ebb and flow. The name HEGASAER puzzled me. And what did RePlace mean? Most people who saw the work thought it meant - if you lift them up to study them, replace them in situ. There has always been a taboo in North Ronaldsay about removing what someone else has placed, for instance driftwood above the tideline. However, someone had had fun making the sheep climb up a steep slope of driftwood and made the ram perch on top of a fencing post. After I had thought about it, and especially the yarnwife keeping her vigil alone, I decided to make one for fun, to keep her company. I felt very involved then, because I used mostly handspun wool, but gave her red curly hair from an unravelled jumper from a charity shop in	Very involved. I live and work in Orkney, and have close ties to the project personally and artistically.	Very involved on lots of different levels. As a maker and advocate, as a publicist and as a host.	Thanks for keeping me up to speed with your installation project, and I was glad to have played a very small part in the knitting stage. However, I haven't completed your questionnaire as I didn't feel able to contribute anything useful, though I am delighted it has proved so interesting.	Very. I have felt part of what you were doing throughout, and have had lots of images and reports about what's been happening. I only wish I could have been there!	I didn't/don't feel involved (in the sense of having any influence on, or contribution to, the project) at all but became very interested in the meaning and progress of the project both before (specifically dating from Poolewe) and much more after the placement of the pieces.	On a scale of 1-10 – in making about an 10, in placing 0, in following up on what is happening about 4/5

	<p>Devon. I gave her the name Njalsdottir, because it is Icelandic for daughter of Neil, and this croft had an Icelandic Norse name. I felt it was in keeping with the wildness and primitive environment into which the installation had been placed. By naming the second yarnwife, I gave her a persona.</p> <p>A friend from Paris became very involved with the idea. We did not want anyone to know who had added a second yarnwife, so we took her on a quiet Sunday evening. We had fun making the tag and placing her beside the original yarnwife. It pleased me very much to see them together, like a pair of wifies gossiping while keeping an eye on the flock. This is such an isolated place, and the yarnwife emphasised this loneliness. I felt very attached to them, and checked on them from time to time. Although we visited the flock at Ryasgeo, and our neighbour Edith found the flock on the rock, I didn't have the same affection for them.</p>						
<p>2. How would you describe the project? And what do you think it is/was about?</p>	<p>I think the project is about placing objects created by seven women in significant and symbolic locations, and leaving them to be found, examined, discussed, perhaps damaged or removed, or admired, cared for, moved on, becoming part of others' experience. The objects were given back to the environment, but were all made from natural substances, wool, clay, recycled netting, driftwood,</p>	<p>As a collaborative (perhaps multi-authored is a better term?) time-based, site-specific installation. I think it is about notions such as: sense of place, memory, landscape, history, travel, journey(s), family (especially 'sisterhood', 'craft',</p>	<p>I would describe it as a site specific installation or site specific installations, about a number of different things including women's craft and skills, the movement of materials and people across the world, the interaction of active and</p>		<p>Difficult, because I haven't tried to put it into words. History, pre-history, place, women, survival, fibre, knitting, weather, islands, response to public art, community.....</p>	<p>It was a project to place at various parts of the Orkney landscape objects made from materials directly from Orkney (wool & clay). They were made by the artist herself and a group of friends and family. The objects were themselves related to aspects of Orkney life or the artists family life on Orkney (sheep, eggs, archaeology). The objects were placed in significant</p>	<p>For me it was about responding to a request to knit – I made it my own by following a couple of self-imposed rules or rationales – I'm a relatively poor knitter compared to the other knitters in my family and I have a pathological hatred of unravelling knitting so with the flat pieces I knitted in a way to incorporate</p>

	<p>so were being re-placed having been transformed by women's creative skills. The project is a continuing process, because the yarnwives and their flocks have mostly survived and are now part of the experience and memory of all who found them and were influenced to act in a specific way. Who placed the butterfly to keep the yarnwife company? Who would have imagined the rangers would take a sister everywhere before returning her?</p>	<p>weather, visual dialogue, archaeology, agriculture, time and seasons, 'objectness' (found, lost, treasure etc.)</p>	<p>passive audience, the celebration of place, the celebration of knitting, the celebration of mud, the highlighting of archaeological practice and the celebration of the past, the highlighting of the fragility of remote places, the celebration of chance and the joy of colour.</p>			<p>locations, either in relation to the objects themselves or to the artist's journeying there. They were placed almost anonymously (a cryptic clue was left for finders to follow up which still would not lead to her true identity). Finders were left to make their own meanings, even to alter the placement by rearrangement, addition, subtraction or removal. The objects were not durable and in one instance buried. I think the meaning is to do with honouring and celebrating a place (Orkney) - a place of significance for the artist through visits, memory, ancient history and family residence. It was done by returning to it things made from its own essence. I think the things made, if not originally conceived as such, added a powerful sense caring for the place as well as gratitude but I think this only developed for me after returning to the sites. Perhaps this led in turn to the objects (particularly the yarn wives) having a separate life of their own as detailed in the photo book which emerged at a later date. I also think that the project has revealed an alter-ego for the artist which is both fun and a rich source of future work.</p>	<p>mistakes made and refused to undo anything. I carried on this 'rule' when knitting the sheep – and added a rule of knitting one sheep to represent each day of a family holiday. I did a couple of subversive sheep; one with a coloured jumper and one with coloured actual fleece – sort of wrong but right!</p> <p>The project was about returning yarn bought in Orkney back to Orkney and about creating or marking 'sites' and seeing what engagement, if any, they generated – its about putting it out there, an invitation, a risk, loss, gains and the things in between, about time, about the elements, landscape, repatriation, invasion, imposition, enhancement or detraction.</p> <p>It was about women and knitting. About friendship groups.</p> <p>It was about Mum. About an alias. About presence in a quiet almost reticent way, about being transgressive and bolshie surreptitiously so inevitably its about contradiction.</p>
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<p>3. What do you think of the way I have gone about involving you?</p>	<p>People other than the tricoteuses involved themselves entirely by choice. I was mystified by the name Hegasaer and searched until I located the blog. Then I started a blog myself to pass on photographs to Hegasaer. I had never blogged, so it was a useful lesson. The encouragement to become involved was therefore subtle and indirect, entirely left to the individual. I thought it was like a treasure hunt with clues. It was fun. I love mysteries and clues, and respect the knitting skills of others.</p>	<p>Very interesting, as there is a crossover with some elements of my recent work - even to the point of inclusion of some physical elements and similar locations - taking some ideas in alternate directions etc. Initially, not fully knowing the direction, but as the project unfolded more and more ties with similar artistic concerns.</p>	<p>Fine - though I can't remember how it started! It just seemed to emerge or exist as an idea!</p>		<p>I've enjoyed it, and I've appreciated the care and trouble you've taken to keep us all participating.</p>	<p>I am much more interested in thinking about what a piece of art is about than in the making so I have much appreciated being able at any time to talk about what has struck me as I have intermittently thought about the work. I have been fascinated by the subsequent life of the objects and have enjoyed visiting some of the sites. I also enjoyed the development of the project into a pictorial story.</p>	<p>It was nice to be asked. It was helpful to be sent links to updates on the website - I wasn't proactive about that because I'm very lazy and incompetent on the web.</p>
<p>4. How much interest do you have in what has happened to the installations?</p>	<p>I have a great deal of interest in what happens to them. So much time and care went into the planning and knitting, so they have significance. They are very attractive, and I feel they deserve to be cared for and protected. I would feel sad if they were damaged or treated badly.</p>	<p>A great deal - and by their very nature and location - will probably continue to have a continued vested interest. Without planning it, the work will probably end up being reflected in my future work.</p>	<p>Lots - but that is because they are in my backyard and partly because they have engaged people I know in other walks of life.</p>		<p>I'm FASCINATED!</p>	<p>I think I have answered this in 3) above.</p>	<p>About a 9 when I'm sent info - but if you were to measure my proactive attempts to find out it would be about 2 - it's the format not the actual event I can't really be bothered with</p>
<p>5. How do you view your own contribution to the project?</p>	<p>I am ambivalent about my own contribution. Because of the catastrophic damage to Bridesness Pund, and to the dykes, we were sure nothing would be left. They would indeed have been transient inhabitants. The sheep flock on the shore had been washed away, although in autumn someone had lifted them above the hightide line. When we found the poor yarnwifies and the flock soaking and bedraggled,</p>	<p>Interesting - in one way heavily involved - but taking the role, to some degree, as an unwitting collaborator, artistically - which is interesting (in terms of notions about participants/ author).</p>	<p>With pride.</p>		<p>Fun and thought-provoking.</p>	<p>Again I think the answer to this is implicit in what I have said so far except to make clear my enjoyment in the visiting of sites and thinking about the work</p>	<p>Close - this is my Mum's work Close - this is an artists request to another artist Close - this is an emerging academic's request to another emerging academic Distant - I did my bit and handed it over Close ish - I followed the links to see how it was going and was really keen to know</p>

	<p>hanging from a wrecked dyke, it seemed right to rescue them. Their tags were lost. I laid them out on the wooden floor which is from a shipwreck in 1925, a ship from Archangel, wood once part of a Russian forest. This was significant, as it also has been rescued from a storm and Re-Placed! I washed them and mended one of the sheep, the only other damage was to Njalsdottir's curly mop. I replaced it. We dried them above the range, and found a piece of driftwood, fixing them with baler twine. A safe place was found at Backness Pund, below the lighthouse.</p>						<p>Close – I mentioned this work on a panel I presented on for Exhibiting Performance Conference, Uni of Westminster, March 2013 – in respect of a question about participation favouring the immediate response – it strikes me that this piece has been all about a slow burn, fits and starts, and scope to keep going</p>
<p>6. How would you describe the role of the artist in this project?</p>	<p>I think the role of the artist was to act as a catalyst, to instigate discussion, involvement, thought and perhaps action in others, by giving them the chance to participate in their own way, uninfluenced by Hegasaer. It is like a stone thrown in water. The ripples spread outwards, who knows where they will end?</p>	<p>Artist as catalyst, author, curator <i>(difficult question!)</i></p>	<p>Depends what you mean by <i>the</i> artist – I consider it has been part of my own collaborative practice, so I don't see one artist. But there was also a puppet master in a sense. I enjoyed having no responsibility for what / how / where / when / why, but all participants were self-directed which showed some bravery too.</p>		<p>Creative juice, imagination, adventure, determination, enthusing others, communicating.</p>	<p>I am sure the collaborators enjoyed their involvement at a fun level but I feel the 'art' is the artists pretty much alone, except of course for the role of the people who have seen the work. It is clear that some of them have in different ways made the work their own.</p>	<p>Instigator Originating Artist Inviter Enquirer Enthusiast Transgressor Activist Writer Narrator Galvaniser</p>
<p>7. How does the knowledge of the installations' impermanence</p>	<p>Although apparently so fragile, the installations have survived amazingly well. In spite of atrocious weather, sea and salt and gales, they are virtually unscathed. The North Ronaldsay wool is virtually as</p>	<p>The impermanence of the works is crucial to the project, I believe. Although they would work on one level produced for a permanent</p>	<p>It didn't bother me that the work might not survive, due to weather, theft (or removal) etc... I have made and exhibited work in</p>		<p>It's part of the overall fascination. Not just impermanence as decay, but also as disappearance, deliberate change.</p>	<p>From the point of view of a finder of the pieces their obvious fragility and inevitable dissolution raises intriguing possibilities and thoughts. Is the land they 'watch over' as impermanent as they? Do they</p>	<p>It was a given from the off I'm a theatre/performance practitioner so impermanence or ephemerality is hardwired into my work – so nothing new there</p>

<p>ence affect you as someone involved in creating them?</p>	<p>good as new part from slight fading, it has not shrunk or matted. Women's crafts are usually impermanent, knitting is going on all the time, but seldom can last for generations. What is important is that it gives comfort and warmth to the wearer and happiness to the knitter. However, by putting the whole experience into a book, the installations have been given permanence and a future. Their story has been written down and their beautiful photographs have been preserved for people to enjoy who were not involved. This is another dimension which has added depth to the project.</p>	<p>setting – the dialogue they participate within is strengthened by their fragility and vulnerability to weather and human 'interference'.</p>	<p>similar circumstances and there is almost a relief or release when the work disappears. I am aware from contact from friends (usually via facebook) that coming across the work has given lots of joy and surprise.</p>		<p>Clearly people who have encountered your installations have sometimes felt very strongly the urge to take part!</p>	<p>need protection as much as the place? and if so, how? Can they be moved or taken?</p>	<p>I'm surprised they are lasting this long Once I handed over the pieces I'd made they stopped being mine More concerned with the Yarn Wifies than I'd expected – especially my favourite one, Mossy in Hoxa(?)</p>
<p>8. How important is the use of women's craft skills in installation art of this kind? (And do you think it may make a difference to how the project is received?)</p>	<p>Skills are indispensable. Everyone who saw them commented on the fineness of the work, the imagination, the skill and variety. The small size also engenders a desire to protect and care. Most who saw them would be knitters who appreciate others' skills. Manufactured objects would have interested but had no lasting impact. There is a direct link between the knitter and the finder.</p>	<p>In terms of tradition and history there's a clear link (re. women's traditional crafts, how 'crafts' are seen generally etc. - and with the subject(s) of 'yarnwives' and 'eggs' etc., there's a clear and obvious narrative there. I'm not sure how 'important' it is... does the nature of what have been considered primarily women's craft skills influence the meaning, play a part in how someone reads or reacts to the work when they find it in the landscape (e.g. is an</p>	<p>I'm not sure that we all showed much in terms of skill with some of the pieces (I am slightly embarrassed that my holey piece is still sitting there!) but I do think that the use of knitting could have had negative and positive impacts – some people just assumed 'yarn bombing' which I think may have meant that people didn't look quite as closely at the work as they would have done if the intervention had used a different medium. But the link with yarn</p>		<p>Important to me, and to you of course. Not sure about the answer to the second question.</p>	<p>The objects do seem to celebrate women's crafts and to relate to perceived female characteristics such as care, protection, nurture, mystery, so I suspect that women will engage more with the work than men though by no means exclusively</p>	<p>Yarn bombing is very 'in' right now It makes women visible in the landscape It belies the transgressive nature of the event or it makes it non threatening – a soft material, something fun eg sheep and yarn wives – I think the nets and bags and strings were more flotsam and jetsam like, more strange and disturbing Humour as a way of belying truths</p>

		audience more 'accepting' of a guerilla, site-specific piece of work if it is made this way... would the reaction be different if it were made of bronze/steel etc.?). I'm not sure – but it very much a key thematic in the work, in my opinion (e.g. how does someone 'read' a piece of artwork in the landscape and what constructs inform their reaction). e.g why is yarn-bombing seen as more acceptable than painted graffiti? (and is it?) - is it more to do with class/social history than materials used?	bombing also meant that there was a level of understanding already in place when some people came across the work. I don't think this particular piece would have worked as well if in another format. Particularly the North Ronaldsay element.				
9. What impact does the use of social media such as Facebook, the blog, and email contact about <i>RePlace Orkney</i> have on your	I loved tracking down Hegasaer's blog, it was fun, and I felt involved because I could post photos of the installations and felt part of the project. It gave an immediacy.	Personally, I think the use of the Internet and social media enhances not only the process of involvement/collaboration, but also plays a positive role in publicising/documenting and displaying artwork. With a project/artwork with no particular centre or venue (e.g. a gallery), it's perfect to use the Internet	Massive impact from facebook as I saw other people's responses when they didn't know my involvement – it was kind of like being the artist in a gallery when viewers don't know you are the artist. I always prefer FB to blogs and things – with blogs you have to remember to go and look and see if there		I have to admit it's crucial, despite my resistance to Facebook.	I can't answer this one except to note that some very important responses to the work have been enhanced/promoted/encouraged by subsequent contact through those media	I only engaged with this when sent links to updates via email It gave the project scope to have the slow burn response and ongoing presence It links up folk over distances too far to travel Mediated via the originating artist – was there scope to chat direct to each other without that mediation? See my technical ignorance here?

sense of involvement with the project?		as a means of disseminating information/progress etc.	is anything new whereas via facebook it just appears without being pro-active, and the comments / photos are not only (or mainly) from the perspective of the artist.				
10. If you consider there is anything lasting/permanent about this project, what might that be?	It has been a happy experience, completely surprising and unique, which will always be remembered, and the photo book will be treasured as a keepsake of the yarnwives and their flocks. They have taken on lives of their own, and personalities, so are characters in their own right. Thank you for the fun!	As an artist (with a connection the the location, process and material subject of the work) it is now impossible for me to avoid not relating future work to this piece – so on a personal level, that's permanent. The locations will always be the sites of the work, even after the physical objects have gone or disappeared.	My damn holey piece will no doubt outlast me!!! I think for me the lasting or permanent remnants are in my thinking about the places the installations have been and that those places will always remind me of the work. Quite potent then!		Lasting: changing people's ways of looking at and thinking about our surroundings, and how we interact with them. Permanent: well, I don't know!	I guess the effects are all in the mind. For me, added richness in my relationship to Orkney, fun, being even more excited about where you are going as an artist, seeing you in ever new lights. For others I think anything that intrigues and make one wonder and think is good, and obviously for some it is creating meaningful relationships with the artist. But these are all as impermanent as the work but as all is in the end impermanent anyway what the hell!	Memory Memory of involvement – your part in something bigger The idea of slow burn response in participatory practice – something I want to explore in my own work – so the influence on other/new work/ other artists It would be nice to think the sheep could last as long as their wool holds good Landscapes – sites Stories – yarns!!!!
Additional comments	Quick note re feedback, thinking about ambivalence, by adding Njalsdottir I was changing the installation, and by rescuing them from the inevitable destruction I intervened. I think this is an interesting point!						

SG/28.05.13

APPENDIX 5

ARTIST CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: TRANSCRIPT EXTRACTS (FULL TRANSCRIPTS AVAILABLE)

PL	Philip Lee Interview 11.11.11
CT	Caroline Tattersall Questionnaire March 2012
DC	David Cushway Two interviews 16.03.10/10.11.11
LS	Linda Sormin Interview 28 October 2011
AL	Andrew Livingstone Interview 05.04.12
VE	Victoria Eden Questionnaire 21.07.11/emails/interview 26.05.14

DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS				
ARTIST	CATEGORISING WORK	DESCRIBING SELF	DESCRIBING AUDIENCE	VALUING WORK
PL	Live body performance	Performance artist	Spectators	The impermanence of the performance is paramount
CT	Ceramic sculpture	Artist	Audience	Within the experience of the viewer
DC	Socially-engaged practice	I see myself as an artist. And let other people worry about it to be honest	Viewers NB in presentations also describes as 'audience'	
LS	Installation [? – not explicit]	Not asked, but she referred to 'artists' and different roles mentioned in relation to installation, e.g. audience	People, just people MNB She referred to 'audience' for Bergen work	That's so personal, so personal (laughs)
AL	Ideas – making a commentary	A maker and a purveyor of ideas	Activators	Not asked?
VE	Installation and sculptural work	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked

What is work about?

Dark green = performance/live art

Dark blue = installation

Black = record, documentation

Red = [un]predictability

Mauve = material/ity

Pink = duration, impermanence

Brown = collaboration/interaction

Orange = process

Light green = site specificity/sensitivity

Grey (light) = audience relationships

Light blue = transformatiON

Light brown = meaning/artistic purpose

PERFORMANCE/LIVE ART – DARK GREEN

PL My work is about the body and clay in performance... I use earth materials in transformations that may be durational or theatrical and usually involve endurance.

How would you categorise your work? Live body performance.

How would you describe yourself in relation to your work...? Performance artist.

I privilege the live and so the primary work only exists at the time of the performance. It is intrinsically impermanent and this is what I want.

The live moment is the work.

DC I think there's a huge field in relation to ceramics and film, ceramics and performance. There's a lot more people in ceramics that are working with film and video, but then, film and video – its' part of a broader culture, isn't it. I have now made a couple of pieces of film where the ceramics objects I am being filmed with are part of the residue of the object.... so the residue of the performance.

[He says he no longer owns work that has left the studio – Q: is it the same with performance?] I think so. I can quite easily detach myself from that

performance... part of the work really... is to be removed from the situation, and just leave the residue... It's only through doing that [wearing his dead friend's suit to do Plate Spinning] that I became aware of the anonymity of... a black suit... I did the performance first in Leipzig... it was purely a performance... The resonance for Leipzig was that I was offered the opportunity. I subsequently found out that one of the friends that died was a physical performer... And one of his first performances was in Leipzig... I thought there was a visceral feeling within the film work.... And the plate spinning, that I couldn't achieve through an object.... what is also important about the performance work, you've got nowhere to hide as an artist, as an individual.

You know, you can hide behind an object. I can put the object there on a plinth or floor... and to all intents and purposes a film piece too. And it can be viewed completely and utterly in my absence. Whereas *Plate Spinning*... that's not going to happen without me being instrumental in that work. So that's kind of interesting to me as an individual, as an artist, really. Uncomfortable though I feel with 'performing' in inverted commas... I get incredibly stage-sick... makes me feel physically ill. Whereas the plate spinning thing was kind of fine really... I almost wasn't performing. It was just an activity that I was engaged in regardless of the audience, really... So in that way, it was kind of not necessarily performance, but certainly performative... with the plate-spinning performance it's much more about something that personally I'm engaged in... I think the power of the work comes because people are emotionally engaged with it. Performance and participatory practice, to name two aspects of this expansion, are directly involved with and requires an examination of the audience, consideration of the audience and their expectations. Live art and audience participation brings to the fore issues and subtexts previously not considered as part of MY practice... What I had done was pre-drilled little holes in the floor and in the performance and the space emerged. As I carried on, more people drifted in alerted by the sound of smashing china... I like this idea that you can come across this residue of a performance but still understand the performance – you can still draw the narrative and understand effectively what has occurred... It allows the artist to have a physical presence, a performer, a mediator, a negotiator, a director.

[Following *Last Supper at the Glynn Vivian*] I spoke to the curator and asked him if we could take a tea service out of the national collection and use it for its intended purpose, i.e. to make and drink tea. This is in the actual National Museum's collection of Swansea china... I should stress this is a film piece, but I just haven't got the time to show it... here are some quite interesting things you can do. I'm addressing this idea that this museum brings with it an aura of authenticity... and setting this performative piece within that.

LS [Describing *Rift* at MIMA] I invited [the curator at MIMA] to physically move through the space, to come out through a hole in the wall high up above the audience and to crawl through the Plexiglas tube, to literally break open the piece that I had made, of earthenware grids, for several months in my studio in

Providence....So this breaking open of the work was something I wanted to feel as a material change, an event, in the work.

[re *Are You Land or Water* in Bergen] ... as I bend knees or move myself from side to side, that affects where the work moves, and how it moves and perhaps how other people may wish to move or choose to move [indecipherable] it. Which to me is very important... sometimes we all perform different roles

INSTALLATION – DARK BLUE

PL My installations and performances integrate live body mark-making and sculptural display... Installations reflect the performances showing traces of the live event

CT The aim of the installation, 'The Aftermath' was to create an uncanny environment, one of anticipation, which exists and changes over time... The installation creates a feeling of tension yet over time an element of catharsis and relief... My work belongs to a moment of time and has its own lifetime.

DC Perhaps more importantly is the ceramics discourse expanding through installation or fired clay objects, film, performance, photography, and socially engaged practice.

AL I made an installation once which was one-off. I did a residency. I took a load of plates. I smashed them. I suspended them. I made this conversation piece... And all the bits moved, and it lasted for a week and then it never existed again.

VE The idea of casting the sand patterns was something I had been interested in for some time and seemed appropriate for this installation [*Cockle Pickers*]

LS Sometimes when I'm in the installation [*Are You Land or Water?*], or with the installation, and people are walking through, I'm the audience...

RECORD, DOCUMENTATION - BLACK

PL video projections or photographs documenting the actions... The work is *all* process.... and photographic and video documentation is also and [sic] essential part of that process... I record performances carefully in photographs and video. These are not the work and I refer to this material as documentation. For some events... I will make a video for monitor or projection and this will be a separate piece that is stand alone. It will be related to the live performance, and may be the result of developmental work but it will be a work in its own right... I am keen to have evidence of my performances in order to have further opportunities. I use a portfolio website to store this evidence and make it

available to prospective curators... As soon as the performance is recorded it stops being performance for me. I am particularly sympathetic to the ontology that Peggy Phelan described in Unmarked: the politics of performance (1993).

CT ... Firing then becomes a way of recording this, almost like taking a photograph... In *The Aftermath* the fired work became a record, almost like a photograph of the process capturing the decay in a specific amount of time... After the Spode towers had finished and the show had been removed the BCB asked if they could fire some of the pieces left as a record. Once fired these objects were of no interest to me, they no longer had a sense of movement and potential for change. They were static and lifeless... I find it important to keep a record of this [refs the fact that her work is of short duration and has its own lifetime] through firing, drawing and photography but have no wish to leave evidence of its existence. I have previously recorded time based works on video but ultimately decided that this, through editing had it's own language and became very different from experiencing the work first hand. I since made the decision I would not show a video of the work. I would just keep this for my own records.

DC *His whole assumption is that film and video = art work, not documentation or a record of 'the work'. This is true in both interviews – he speaks of the film and video work purely in artistic terms.*

And then it's quite important to me to leave the residue because I wanted people to come to something, a post-performance, really... Whilst making the film I decided to photograph each volunteer with their chosen object. The photographs of the volunteers act in the same way as the objects themselves in that they are removed from the presumed protection of the glass case and the rendering of the three dimensional object through a two dimensional image... As James Putnam points out – he's the go-to man for anything to do with the museum as medium - Photography [?]also provides the opportunity to examine and question the presentation of art in the context of its institutional framing. That's offering a profound insight into relationships between the museum and its visitors. This democracy of the digital comes in removed lived or real experience, of tension and sense of alienation. The same removed experience because I guess if you're twelve, thirteen or fourteen then the digital removed experience is quite real to you. We experience the virtual digital world of art than? the physical one. Conversely film and photography can engage in new and compelling ways by making available something that is not ordinarily available... Then where does this work in its physical form which consists of film, photography, dialogue and performance fit within the ceramics discourse, if at all?

[UN]PREDICTABILITY - RED

PL We follow rules unknown to the audience and at times to each other, and the power oscillates between us.

CT It's taken me two years to then develop how I'd want to show that piece to really feel that idea of fragility... But then once the pieces are defrosted, and some of them are from the private view on the first evening, that have completely gone and dried out, they kind of have this new language... It [clay] exists in two states the plastic, tactile, uncommitted state (the raw) and the hard, permanent, committed state (the fired).// I am interested in destructive processes and how these occur over time... Once fired these objects were of no interest to me, they no longer had a sense of movement and potential for change. They were static and lifeless.

DC I wanted to make something that was very ephemeral so that I have done a lot of drawing, painting, just using clay and water and pencil... What I find really interesting is that these things have a life after they are framed... a lot of the images are very fluid. [Ephemerality] was one of the driving [*unclear* – *maybe forces*] of the work. You know, this bit has fallen off, and you can see that. And I think that's quite important that that's visible.

It comes back to this notion that nothing is ever really finished. Everything is kind of fluid in that respect... I quite like changing the way a work looks, is shown, the format. And it comes back to this thing about – you've got no control over it once it leaves the studio... I do have a certain ambivalence about the work once it's finished, and once it goes out of the studio and it's shown. And I think that's to do with that I no longer own it in a sense... it's out in the world really and the world owns it rather than me... the other two films are in a glass case in a vitrine in the Museum of the Mind in the National Gallery... So it's really interesting that they are inside glass vitrines because that comes loaded with all kinds of interesting baggage. But it still works!

[*from website*] The drawings are imbued with a transitory sense, at any moment the clay could be washed from the surface of the paper to leave nothing but a stain...

LS [*re Rift at MIMA*] So by his cracking open the piece in the tubes and also in a Plexiglas oval enclosure that had a pond and a moat around it. He'd [the curator] walk through a door and go through stepping stones and break in... This happened... maybe six times during the installation. It was over three months, so this happened at regular intervals... The curator is always involved... And I think that's really interesting – just as active a part in the work as any other thing, as the lighting, as the artist, as the audience, as the site... It wasn't so much about the breaking necessarily, although the fracture is... a startling physical thing that can happen in a space that I am interested in...

[Q: And when we were standing in it, noticing that some of it had 'opened', and actually someone walked backwards into it when you were talking to them about fragility and so forth... Is there a trend in your work where that activity either of a spectator or a curator - you know, a direct intervention, whether it is meant of unforeseen - actually is important to the work?] Well, I think there is always that

risk, that vulnerability, in ceramics, when you put it into a space. [Q; How did you feel when that person walked backwards and bumped into it?] It's part of the way the work behaves. It's part of the thing. It's the way the thing IS in the world. You know, if you're standing that closely behind someone, or someone's standing that closely in front of it, then... change is bound to happen through proximity.

AL I think when you make so many pieces of work it can go to other places. But then it has a life of its own, that probably wasn't my intention.

MATERIALITY – MAUVE

PL I use earth materials in transformations that may be durational or theatrical and usually involve endurance... The clay is as important as the body and liveness. Their coincidence is essential to my work...Unfired.

CT My idea was to build a series of towers – going back to the process I used a few years ago on my degree, in Cardiff, of freezing clay... I have always had an experimental approach to material. I chose to specialise in clay because it lends itself to this way of working... I have found a language within clay that I have used to explore ideas that consider the notion of home and the domestic... My work embodies a sensitivity to material. I consider the various qualities of clay/ceramic and the process of firing is significant to the language of the material... The material and processes used upon the material are the starting point but also the clay and its language are significant to the meaning of the work... I am fascinated with materiality and meaning. I think clay and ceramic have a very unique language in which I feel there are many possibilities to explore. Clay/ceramic is vital in the work I make as no other material could offer the same possibilities... I use the material as language and the firing or unfired work becomes a statement.

DC These are quite small, these drawings. They are about A5 [Q: So you are using slip?] Just grinding up dry clay. [Q: Earthenware?] Yes, just a red... when I found the colour that I had and consistency that I wanted, and what I felt was right for the work, then I just used it. And this is literally just water and clay that's thrown on to the surface... I argue that I use a fundamental material to do that with [work about the three fundamentals of the human condition – sex, life and death], which is clay. Which is why I continually come back to it. Because it is THE most fundamental material, clay is. [And it is crucial for you. Even your drawings are made with clay]

[You are using film...] But there is a ceramic content to all of those things... I am obsessed with the material. I am materially obsessed and I would be the first to admit that... I can see so much potential in it and... if you limit yourself to a material, which I am quite keen to do, ultimately it just... focuses my ideas. It's about: how can I interpret this idea through clay and it still be relevant in clay. If I

didn't think the idea was relevant in clay, then I wouldn't make it in clay... if someone came across *Sublimation*, they are not necessarily going to understand that it's clay. But it's important to me that it IS clay, because it returns to the landscape. You know, the image dissolves to a landscape and then the object remakes itself... re-forms itself... ceramics has undergone a sea change in the limited time that I've been involved in it really. You know, people like me didn't exist last twenty five years ago, so I came out – there must be a logic in that. People like myself and Clare Twomey, yourself and Andrew.

[Q: Is that filmic strand of your work more important to you than, say, working directly with materials?] Not at all. [Q: What about 'Spinning Plates'? Was it important that they were made of ceramic?] Yes. Because of the cultural resonance of plate spinning – because ceramics is so much of our lives from life to death [sic], it exists in all aspects of our lives. I'm always looking for extended metaphors and methods, of the way that ceramics have been used, traditionally, historically... The film in Leipzig and in Stoke-on-Trent... I thought there was a visceral feeling within the film work, particularly 'Sublimation' and 'Reconstructing Culture' and the plate spinning, that I couldn't achieve through an object... MIMA is a very permissive environment – triggering new ideas about materiality, form and function... Like the ceramic artefact itself, there's an underlying stoical resilience. I'm interested in this idea of the collapse really, because I do think that there's all kinds of other interesting things happening all over the place... As I carried on, more people drifted in alerted by the sound of smashing china... it was apparent that the objects are being used as memory locators, as a way of understanding and taking pride in one's own personal history and context... The arguments come to life through anecdote, story, ceasing to be inanimate things. We're closer to a lived experience. It illustrates how important our relationship to the artefact is. I think the film critiques the notion of reality of display while presenting an intimate social history of the volunteers' lives glimpsed by an engagement with an object which is not ordinarily available. In some cases the objects act as structures for recollection through the intimate experience of them, the pleasure and joy that the sense of touch brings.

This idea of personal history and the way that these objects become so important to people – you know, they're used as memory locators, repositories for memories. In some ways the objects are more real than the experiences. It all covered really interesting things. This idea of an heirloom, that an object isn't static, it gets handed on, it means something else to someone else... Particularly interesting is this idea of the neutralised object, once it's removed from the day-to-day experience. It's removed behind a piece of glass. An object intended to function removed to a shelf, put behind glass. Is that as the curator said "killing off the performative function of the object"? I mean, Andrew also felt that he was involved in a transgressive act

LS I'm interested in that live quality of the material and its presence in a space, on the floor, in the same space that I'm in as someone walking through it and by

it... [Q; It isn't just a chip to put in a bin – of a part of the installation knocked off by accident by a 'spectator'] I think it's just... maybe another way of collecting material... I think the unfired parts in 'Are You Land or Water?' are kinetic, are meant to be kinetic. They mean to serve as ways that the work moves literally, and create a different speed – a very quick movement in and out, in and out, that's related to activities like knitting and weaving, and quick, sketchy, gestural drawing... [Q: So there's a whole variety of material] What role do they play?... I choose to work with different materials for different reasons. The most physical way I can answer that is that the denseness and... I [indecipherable but perhaps 'really'?] like too are the different states of clay, so the denseness and the firing quality, the brittleness of certain fired elements, I choose to use them – even if I might have made them, I'm still choosing them when I am installing. So in a way odd materials are found, in the moment, in the process of building it, in the space and responding to the space... floorboards that we found in demolished floors of renovated homes here in Bergen. So we took those... They're worn. The paint comes from the colours people have chosen to decorate their homes with. So that history is soaked into those floors. So those floorboards – I'm choosing them for that kind of reason. When I go to the thrift shops, it's similar things. Live I've chosen to bring these objects into the intimate space and somehow they found their way back into a place where I can buy them and borrow them... [Importance of having clay or ceramic in the work itself] I've spent time with it. I've spent many years with learning how it moves, how it melts, how it changes in the kiln. That language is something that is very central to the way I understand the world and how I tell stories... I think it matters [whether the ceramic is fired or not] because in the parts that I use, the fired parts have a certain strength and a particular strength – a very... sometimes a brittle strength, sometimes a dense and uncompromising strength. And the unfired materials could be slabs of wet clay that have just had a wire pulled through them, so that there's a certain kind of smell that happens with that, and a certain kind of moist quality that is exciting for me... a broad range of possibilities available to us as makers in all kinds of materials and a wide range in clay, ceramic, unfired, half-fired, bisque, un-bisque, half-bisque, all of those – it's like sound, you know. It's important to have loud music or soft music.

AL 90% I would say of the ideas I have are based around clay. But when I talk about clay I mean clay in terms of its broadest sense: in terms of material I suppose; in terms of its place in society – it's social, it's political. Because it is everywhere – from under our feet to housing us. So I suppose the ideas stem from that... I suppose I've painted. I make films, so it would probably be 90%. But maybe even those films connect to clay. So maybe I do connect with clay... a lot. I think working with a familiar material you can actually get into someone's [un]conscious much easier. [Q: Familiar to them?] Familiar to them. You know, I use a lot of ready-mades. I use clay in a way that... it's not some abstract lump of something that people can't identify with, but it's actually little figurines. Or it's elements that people sometimes overlook. The work I did with the willow pattern... you know, we don't see it, it's so familiar... I never have that luxury or

that capacity to go and just play with material... [Q: Is there something that you can always recognize as being a trigger for making work with ceramic rather than other material, or words?] I don't know how it comes into being. It just tends to happen... The clay there [in Automateriality], as I say, acts as a sort of tool in terms of that – this wet clay thing that dries in the gallery actually because it doesn't stay wet... [a bit later in the same part of the discussion] It's something in flux, as opposed to fired clay... It's using the material as a conceptual tool, and I talk quite a lot about the material having this conceptual capacity.

[Q: Tell me about the importance of clay in your work artistically] Clay-based, but not always the material clay. So if I show a film I also claim that as derivative of clay or clay experienced through another medium. I don't know why I engage with the material... but I suppose having studied the material, enjoyed the material, now worked with the material, teach with the material, it almost becomes part of who you are. And I don't know whether it's a mission, but it's certainly one thing I strive for, is opening up the material, and expanding it in its broadest sense. Because I think there is an interesting arena which is untouched. OK, clay has always been acceptable to the sculptor, but the work they make is traditional. quite stale... there's a lot exciting work going on in terms of looking at this material, and expanding it... Tomorrow I could step out and just get a studio and work with any material, but I feel there's so much to do in terms of ceramic... [Q: ceramic as 'auto-referential', as material that speaks about itself, or more as a metaphor for other aspects of life?] Probably both those things, I think. Because it is so ingrained within our existence. It has been historically and is still now. It's everywhere. It's everywhere and you don't see it. It's in car parks; it's in plane engines... so it's a wonderful material. You can probably think of a few materials that have that capacity... I think about people who are working in textiles and expanding that field as well... I suppose my interest is that you probably never could exhaust this material, or its capacity to step into so many parts of society and lives. From waking in the morning, the first thing you probably do is encounter ceramic in the bathroom, eat off it, you are surrounded by it because your house is brick. All of those things, it's just a minefield in terms of how many ways you can look, discuss, make, interpret – all of those sorts of things... But if I hadn't gone down a tutor/academic route, if I were a maker in a studio, whether I'd have pursued just clay – I think it might be a different sort of story... but I think when you are embedded in working four days a week with the material, teaching the material, writing about the material, just as part of obviously what's expected of you – it's no good me being a welder in a ceramic department. But yes, if I'd just gone into the studio out of an undergraduate degree I could be working with soap – I don't know. I've worked with soap before actually.

VE I chose grogged red earthenware because the colour is not too far removed from that of the muddy sands of Morecambe Bay and it's [a] medium I understand quite well... I have done other work that is intended to rot and return

to nature. I made pieces based on Yemeni stelas out of clay mixed with hay and with glass faces inserted into them.

DURATION, IMPERMANENCE - PINK

PL I use earth materials in transformations that may be durational or theatrical and usually involve endurance...I privilege the live and so the primary work only exists at the time of the performance. It is intrinsically impermanent and this is what I want... The impermanence of the performance is paramount. The live moment is the work.

CT I chose towers because I had this idea that they are built to collapse almost, like I think of the Twin Towers, and the idea that people are always trying to build something that looks like it might topple over – I think of the Leaning Tower of Pisa... It [Clay] exists in two states the plastic, tactile, uncommitted state (the unfired) and the hard, permanent, committed state (the fired). I am interested in destructive processes and how these occur over time... my current project looks at permanence and trapping objects inside of each other and through the firing process... The aim of the installation 'The Aftermath' was to create an uncanny environment, one of anticipation, which exists and changes over time. [see also *Installation*]... Whether work is fired or unfired I am not particularly interested in making work that will survive for a long period of time as I see it as belonging to a certain moment in time and have no wish in making it last forever... My work exists and belongs to a moment of time and has its own lifetime. [see also *Installation*]

DC Like the ceramic artefact itself, there's an underlying stoical resilience. I'm interested in this idea of the collapse really, because I do think that there's all kinds of other interesting things happening all over the place... As I carried on, more people drifted in alerted by the sound of smashing china... In terms of my normal role as collaborator with an artist, in making what they want to happen, happen, no. In terms in which the basic idea is that you break the pot rather than preserving the pot, yes. I think that might be easy to play that end up too much at the expense of playing up the role that the curators play in making an artwork happen.

LS I am very interested in work not being seen as completely finished, which in this particular work [Rift], opening durationally over time. It wasn't so much about the breaking necessarily, although the fracture is a physical – a startling physical – thing that can happen in a space that I'm interested in. but it's also just the meaning of what it means to unravel work, or open up work, or un-skin, or to skin, a work.

AL [Re impermanence] well, pieces that use ostensibly unfired clay, I suppose, they're the pieces that we can talk about. Or use that in terms of its conceptual status, in terms of the material... particularly those pieces of work [that] deal with

the figure... you can think about The English Scene, where the figurines are sweating and rotting as a direct reference to the container ship coming across the Channel with the Chinese immigrant suffocated... Also with the piece with the IV bag – political comment in terms of the decimation of the UK ceramics industry... it will always remain wet. It's going to rot. It's feeding this thing, where this thing's already dried out. It has actually physically died... so that's my use in terms of that, in terms of impermanence is in those aspects, using that unfired clay. But one could say that they actually are still permanent because there's a physicality to them... so whether they are impermanent, I'd probably say not. There is an impermanence to the material. But it's still a physical presence, so it's not impermanent... I wouldn't say it's impermanent because there is a permanence to it... I made an installation once which was one off... I took a load of plates. I smashed them. I suspended them. I made this conversation piece... all the bits moved, and it lasted for a week and then it never existed again... So I'm semi-impermanent! Or ongoing impermanent. It's not impermanent – ongoing fluidity. I don't know.

VE During the festival [FRED Cumbria 2007] one piece washed away but the other pieces survived the tides and I now have them here at home... I have done other work that is intended to rot and return to nature... They are not site-specific [see also *Site Specificity/Sensitivity*] but are intended to be placed outdoors where they will be destroyed by the weather.

COLLABORATION/ INTERACTION - BROWN

PL Currently I work with **... we follow rules unknown to the audience and at times to each other, and the power oscillates between us.

CT I like the idea of people beginning to interact with the piece. So the idea that people climb the stairs and look from the inside out and then how that changes the experience... **CT Q:** *How important is interaction with the public?* It's essential. I want my work to have a relationship with body. In 'The Aftermath' the relationship is one of bodily memory... The Spode towers were built to the height of a human adult again I wanted them to have a relationship with the body...

DC [Q: What is the relationship between the film and the ceramic or clay?] I think there's an interesting relationship in time – about time... the archaeological time, geologic time. I think there's time-based medium. I'm still coming to terms with that now. I have now made a couple of pieces of film where the ceramics objects I am being filmed with are part of the residue of the object... so the residue of the performance... I wanted to make something that was very ephemeral. [Ephemerality] was one of the driving [*unclear* - ?FORCES] of the work ..

Everything has moved on but people still want to see this work [cup breaking and reforming]... Two shows abroad I've had this year that both have had films and it was I think nearly seven years ago that I made them... I think the saving

grace is when the work changes in the way that it's shown. The two cup pieces... are inside a glass vitrine on monitors, within the ceramics collection... that's not something I've seen, so I can then get excited about the work again, just by the context of what is seen...I wanted to subvert or address the museum's structure through allowing volunteers to touch and handle the objects and record their readings of the objects. [ALSO IN Site Specificity]

LS When I met James, the curator, I was able to ask him in a couple of minutes, "Would you be willing to perform in the work? Would you be willing to enact things upon the work?"... The curator is always involved. You just never see, usually, what they do. The audience isn't aware of that and I think it's a very live presence and a very vital contribution. And in some cases directions are taken because of the input of the perspective and the values of the curators. And I think that's really interesting – just as active a part in the work as any other thing, as the lighting, as the artist, as the audience, as the site... The space is something I'm hoping the work is infiltrating as well as inviting the people into a kind of experience that might involve climbing up on to boardwalks or climbing through a work or ducking around the corner or stooping and moving your body lower so that you can see things from other perspectives...

PROCESS - ORANGE

PL The work is *all* process. The development, preparation, performance and clearing away after, along with the preparation documents and photographic and video documentation is also and [sic] essential part of that process. In essence, I exhibit that process.

CT ... going back to the process I used a few years ago on my degree, in Cardiff, of freezing clay... I have explored freezing clay, adding other combustible materials to clay and looking at what is left when these are burned away, I have worked and manipulated clay that I have dug from the ground and researched dripping water onto unfired plates [*BCB ?Fresh 2009*]... It is through both kinetic work and fired object that I show my work.

More recently I have explored the process of firing and using glaze as a glue to build delicate structures and my current project looks at permanence and trapping objects inside of each other and through the firing process... Through the addition of water and freezing the work I built a series of towers in which each object depended on the one below to remain a structure as the work melted the towers one by one collapsed... The process is the starting point. I begin with exploring the potential of clay and experimenting with its qualities. These experiments then begin to develop into an idea. I then develop the idea with process to create a finished installation... The material and processes used upon the material are the starting point but...

DC I tend to make work in fits and starts, so I haven't really made anything for about a year. I choose to work that way, because I do thing about my work incredibly deeply, and I find I do take a long time to make work... What I have done is make a - take a - series of photos of myself falling or balancing, trying to balance... I think process for me is a means to an end. Unless process is part of the idea. In terms of the ceramic pieces that I made for... you know, the cups. They had to be perfect. So the process had to be right, because if those objects weren't believable as cups off shelves, then that piece of work wouldn't have worked... In terms of, say, a film making process, I have very little understanding of it. I get other people to do it... what I would say is that every process has a conceptual... weight really... The fact that the *Breath for Jordan* was two slabs rolled out, my finger marks all over it, was important. And in that way, process and method of making IS important because it adds to the concept... I'm quite serious about how things are made and why I make them in certain ways.

I'm wondering how I'm going to feel about the photographs that are in this show now [NGC, Kith and Kin I]... There's something about the method of drawing and the photographs that I took here now that there is much more of a kind of personal attachment to... which is quite interesting, I think... They [BCB] were uncomfortable about me going to them [Spode] and saying, would you make me forty plates and I'd like to break them, please.... I ended up making them myself. But I used the decals from the site, which have been left lying around.

LS [Q: the pieces that you make in your own studio before you come to assemble a piece – do you know where they are going to fit?] It's different for each piece... Often smaller pieces are made to begin a gesture and then those gestures are continued with found objects in a space or with extensions – a walkway, or sketching... And other times the small fragile bits that are unfired and unsupported in any way, are extremely fragile so that lends a different tone to that part of the piece. So I don't have a rule about how things need to be made by anyone, but for me I think the broad range of possibilities available to us as makers...

AL Well, I suppose if we get into this familiar pattern of tradition in terms of ceramic material, you know: you make it; you fire it; you glaze it; you fire it. It does step aside from that but I don't think that's impermanent.. [How important are processes?] It can be a means to an end, but I think in a number of works that I've made the exposure of process has become quite important.... Just to go back to that piece with the suffocation. That process of the change in the material is the centre of that piece of work. So a number of works that I have made, the actual exposure of process has become integral. [Q: I'm really asking you about the artistic process] It's a means to an end... You know, I made all those letters for Denise [Lillie from the Potteries] to cover, and just engaging with that process was phenomenal... But... if someone else had made those for me, I would not have had a problem with it.... If I had my work fabricated – fine, I mean, you know, I can relinquish ownership.

VE The idea of casting the sand patterns was something I had been interested in for some time and seemed appropriate for this installation [see *also Materiality*] and, as [see *also Meaning/Artistic purpose*] I had been using screen printing with students at the school where I work, I felt confident that I could get the images I wanted onto the cast pieces...

SITE SPECIFICITY/SENSITIVITY – LIGHT GREEN

PL Most [of his work] respond to the characteristics of the site and venue and may include objects or meaning from the location. *Spode Slip* [BCB 2011] at Stoke was devised with the venue and space in mind, and included original Spode plates, which we used to apply the clay to each other's bodies.

CT The second piece was part of the Explore project, and so was a response to the site. So I looked around all the old mould stores and found a whole series of moulds that kind of fitted the idea... I thought this was quite suitable maybe for Stoke... My work, currently is not site specific and isn't created with a specific site in mind. However I feel it only works in certain places and there are some restrictions with the scale required. I would rather place the work outside of the white cube as to give it a context and to make it more accessible to a wider audience.

DC [Plate Spinning in Leipzig, then Stoke-on-Trent] What I really wanted to do was adapt the work, because it has a different kind of cultural resonance if you start doing that in a redundant factory in the middle of Stoke-on-Trent – it's quite a different place... in terms of moving it to Stoke-on-Trent, I put the proposal to them because I felt that I could root the work... This thing about site and site specificity was quite interesting.

I was commissioned to create two plate-spinning performances for the British Ceramics Biennial at Stoke-on-Trent at the former Spode factory, the site I was invited to respond to by the curators. It was important for me to relate or locate the work in its immediate environment, to somehow absorb and address the emotional content of a building and industry which is on the point of collapse, if it hasn't collapsed... This idea of rooting the work within the context of the place where it was being shown was really quite important. So these decals that you see on the plates here are actually from Spode themselves. I just found them laying all over the floor... It's important to me to have that relationship with the building, the industry, something that is recognizable. These decals, that were then used to decorate the plates for the performance, embrace the cyclical nature of using something from the old site to develop work for the new site – because it was a new site I think... The cycling process, as it were, firmly rooted the work within its immediate location. ... This idea of the rooted work with

consideration to the location and context were issues that I wanted to pursue in other practice.

[3] I was asked as part of a commission to make a piece of work about the closing of a ceramics collection for two years while it was being refurbished. It's called *The Last Supper at the Glynn Vivian*. That's the Glynn Vivian, that's the ceramics collection, or part of it. It's stacked behind glass cases... Similarly with 'Plate Spinner' it was an opportunity to address the site – in this case the Glynn Vivian Museum. I wanted to subvert or address the museum's structure through allowing volunteers to touch and handle the objects and record their readings of the objects.

LS So MIMA... I worked to gather materials from the local scrapyards, so the Middlesbrough scrapyards allowed me to borrow a thousand pounds of metal scrap. So just by collecting the objects, and also going to thrift shops in the area, I was able to handpick bits of scrap, trash, souvenirs, things that could draw my perceptions of a place, imagined, and also in the surroundings that I wanted to move through... [*re the different spaces her work is exhibited in*] The place selects the work... I don't build with a plan for an unknown venue. Not usually. I haven't... There's no time... [Q: Is it important (to go back and look at work and consider it)?] Oh yes. Like last night. It's really important to me, because it can't ever be experienced the way it's experienced in the space. It's difficult to leave that, so when I had this chance to come back for a couple of days, I'm very grateful for that opportunity to spend more time with it, and to experience it in the space.

AL I might seek out a place that I want to show, or somebody I want to work with, like Tullie House. I approached them... So maybe... I look at approaching a specific place that has a context in which I can work, in terms of what I'm maybe trying to say with the next body of work.

VE The pieces for the cockle pickers... I showed it during the FRED festival in Cumbria in 2007 when I laid it out to create a pathway leading into the bay... My intention is to return the pieces to the bay again and let them be washed away, but I shall have to ask for permission and so far I have not done this. In the back of my mind I have the feeling that I want to do this on the 10th anniversary of the disaster in 2014... They [other work – intended to rot and return to nature] are not site specific but are intended to be placed out of doors where they will be destroyed by the weather

AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIPS/RESPONSE - GREY

PL The feedback loop between audience and performer is essential. From time to time I involve the audience in the application of clay or other materials [*NB delegated task not sharing of responsibility*] and their collusion in the abuse of

my body has been relevant to my project. [Abramovic...]... I usually refer to members of the audience as *spectators*

CT I like the idea of people beginning to interact with the piece. So the idea that people climb the stairs and look from the inside out and then how that changes the experience... I quite like the idea that the work is read in quite a different way after the event... For 'The Keyhouse' the audience are invited to climb the stairs and look from the inside out. I placed this piece off the ground partly because the action of climbing the stairs (stairs we are not quite sure if we are allowed to climb) become almost like a childhood adventure in which we are taken to a different space. The audience are invited to put themselves in an uncomfortable/vulnerable situation underneath this seemingly precarious structure and so viewing the work becomes more than just a visual experience.

As they [the Spode towers] fall the sound and dramatic collapse of the towers falling either toward or away from the viewer creates a sense of panic/anxiety. I felt this could only be created if the scale of the work had a relationship with the body... the focus turns to the experience of the work. The installation has a sense of 'the uncanny' and I hope that the installations allow the viewer to draw upon their own memory and experience and apply this to their interpretation of the work... I would rather place the work outside of the white cube as to give it a context and to make it more accessible to a wider audience... The value of the work is within the experience of the viewer.

DC [Q: If nobody saw your work, would that make a difference?] In some ways, no. Because I have a very ambiguous – sometimes ambivalent – relationship with my work once it's made... you have no control over what people say or write or think about your work once it leaves your studio... It's only through doing that [wearing a friend's suit] in that performance that I became aware of the anonymity of... a black suit. And then that became quite important because I noticed... after watching the film on the playback, that... people's attention *did* shift from me to the plates. And I spoke to people about that afterwards, and they said effectively all I was was the device for creating the... you know, the primary focus shifts from me to the spinning plates... It's also the same with 'Sublimation', the dissolving head – that the viewer, the minute they engage with the work from the very beginning, you know what's going to happen. You are aware of the outcome before it's happened. But it still manages to hold people's attention... The film in Leipzig and in Stoke-on-Trent – you can hear people gasping when the first plates start smashing. But there's a visceral, emotional attachment to that... piece of work... I spoke to the curator in Leipzig about it, and he was saying, well, it was something you came across as an audience or a viewer, and it was you engaging in some practice regardless really – you are doing something. So in that way, it was kind of not necessarily *performance*, but certainly *performative*... I think that the power of the work comes because people *are* emotionally engaged with it [see Performance Theory re theatre – playing a part – versus performance – being unique and individual, doing something]

[SG *Audience engagement for me is almost despite what I am doing, you know. It's happening because of the engagement with the activity involved or the imagery that people attach to the activity that I might be doing rather than me trying to emote or encourage an emotional response. I then mention Caroline Slotte's term: betraktere*] But do you not agree that the work is not complete without the audience?... It doesn't work without an audience. You need that, however disengaged you might be from the audience, or I think Kaprow has called it 'witnesses', whether people bear witness as opposed to an audience.

LS [Q: How important is it in your work in general that you have an interaction with the public?] That the work has an interaction? I think it's essential... Yes, it is important because the space is something that I'm hoping the work is infiltrating as well as inviting the people into a kind of experience that might involve climbing up on to boardwalks or climbing through a work... I'm constantly imagining what, or anticipating, or hoping that the response of someone else's body might be dynamic and curious in the space. How does a body express curiosity and engagement? ... sometimes we perform different roles. Sometimes when I'm in the installation.... I'm the audience... I think we shift into different roles.

AL Sometimes as artists we don't maybe think of our work existing in a certain place, but if that context changes, sometimes it can be a revelation in terms of how your work is perceived, how it's discussed... [Q: How important is the public?] The majority of us make, not just for ourself, but for others. Or we want to make a statement, or transmit our ideas to 'a other'.... If I'm engaging in that political, social commentary through work, it has to be some other, whatever that might be. So yeah, the public are integral to it... That piece of work in the Reg Vardy about three years ago, and X... came up afterwards and said "We spent three hours as a group in critique. We went to see the whole show and just stayed in front of your work, it created so much debate."... So in a sense they were receivers, but they were also activators, because it stemmed [sic] some other discussion or some other means.... You could be passive – acceptors - but for me it's about the activation... Of course, we're individuals, so some people are maybe not going to engage with my thought process, my ideas. They may see some totally different interpretation, but that's what makes the world great, in terms of people can have individual interpretations. It might trigger a personal memory, or association.

TRANSFORMATION – LIGHT BLUE

PL I use earth materials in transformations... Transcendental experience has been reported to me by spectators who have been present throughout long durational pieces. Similarly, I experience the transcendental while in performance mode.

CT The staging and experience of the work is by far the most important factor... The installation has a sense of the uncanny... [see also *Audience relationships*] this experience the [sic] becomes one beyond material... The value of the work is within the experience of the viewer.

DC There is a level of ambivalence I think about things that I've made or objects I've made once they leave the studio

VE My intention is to return the pieces to the bay again.... I can't actually pinpoint what made me wish to commemorate the disaster in this way, except that the events of Feb 5th had a great impact on me... My intention was that each ceramic piece would be a tribute to the life lost... Ultimately I believe that we are all trying to make sense of the world and are trying to understand why things are as they are, but simultaneously we also have to make a living, forge a life and deal with our own internal dialogues... In their [the cockle pickers] story I found many links to my own life... VSO in north eastern Thailand.... Sense of adventure and their attempt to enter a totally different culture.... My ancestors were fishermen so I have a personal relationship with the Bay... An important theme was the relationship of humans to nature, ultimately we all return to nature, in the sense that as matter can neither be created or destroyed our atoms return to the ecosystem... nature is still in control and we can be totally powerless in the face of natural forces, as the cockle pickers were.

MEANING/ARTISTIC PURPOSE – LIGHT BROWN

CT ..this idea that the objects would be built and one would be dependent on the other. So the idea that everything is ultimately dependent on the base and you build up from this. And if one goes the whole thing collapses... I am interested in destructive processes and how these occur over time... I have found a language within clay that I have used to explore ideas that consider the notion of home and the domestic. [see also *Materiality*]

DC Three friends died... in quite a short space of time of cancer and I wanted to make some work about that... I wanted that relationship again of body.... cyclical nature of life and death... I was aware of my own kind of failing physicality, really.... So I was quite interested in this idea of the fall of the body.... I would say it's a combination of both those things [intellect and intuition]. I do respond emotionally. A lot of my work is based on personal experience.... but ... I am really conscious of the fact that I want to appeal to the universal. I don't want the work just to be about me... Everything I made was a response to that incident [*possibly the death of several friends*]. Or to that series of incidents that happened at that time. My work fundamentally changed, and fundamentally changed the way I thought about what I made. And it made me want to make work about those types of issue. It made me want to make work

about fundamentals: sex, life and death. The three fundamentals of the human condition.

It's your ego as an artist that puts you there: "Look at me. This is what I'm doing and I think it's important". And it's incredibly egocentric. So in a way as long as I'm happy with that piece of work, you know, people are going to love it or hate it. And there's nothing I can do about that. So I tend not to think about it really... You know, people like me didn't exist twenty five years ago. So I came out – there must be a logic to that. People like myself and Clare Twomey, yourself and Andrew... You know, these people – these are artists that are kind of working and in some ways we are working in splendid isolation, but we are part of a bigger context that is either a reaction to studio pottery, or just an ambition, or the fact that the world has moved on and there is all kinds of other stuff available.... Because you are talking about a tradition that is largely object-based... I think all artists respond to what's happening in the world around them I always describe myself as a voyeur – someone who is on the outside looking in.

A lot of my work deals with absence, anyway, so the lack of presence [*DC had earlier talked of the equal importance of the remains of the performance – perhaps even greater importance in terms of the work – than purely the performance itself*] People stopped looking at me and in a way the work.... was never conceived about being about *me* doing it [Plate Spinning]. You know, if I was – say – naked, it would mean something completely different... The focus of the work was about the ludicrous act of trying to balance plates, to spin plates, and the fact that you are immediately aware of the outcome the minute it starts... Everything that I make, it kind of works with a cycle, from beginning to end and then back to the beginning again.... Technology can take us to places where we can't ordinarily go. So gain, it reminds us that we are... human... [Bill Viola's 'Nantes Triptych'] kind of prompted me to think: actually there's something here that I can't achieve by making objects... I'm always looking for extended metaphors and methods... it really was as simple as equating this idea of plate spinning with the ultimate fall... that we are all going to die... that's a really interesting kind of departure from what I normally do. And again, it's about pushing my practice [Plate Spinning]... I do think the analogy with music is quite interesting. Because you are actually trying to form an emotional bond with the audience... in terms of playing music. Whereas I'm not trying to do that in plate-spinning. I'm trying to engage and I'm hoping that the work will engage the audience as opposed to me...

LS [Q; What is your piece 'Riff' about?] I had been interested for some time in boardwalks and what it would mean to travel over uneven ground, or water, or other things that you need supportive structures to walk across... They are interesting to me as a metaphor... [re *Riff*] I wanted it to be quite present in the work [the role of the curator] so physically I invited him to... physically move through the space... So this breaking open of the work was something I wanted to feel as a material change, an event, in the work... But it's also just the

meaning of what it means to unravel work, or open up work, or un-skin, or to skin, a work.

AL My work is about ideas, I suppose. 90% I would say of the ideas I have are based around clay.... I suppose I like to make a commentary. A lot of my work has become political, in terms of me commenting a lot on society. I suppose the work I've made in the last five or six years does want to say something to people... [referring to the familiarity of ceramic in people's lives} But yet you can be quite intrusive in terms of a message you want to get across because you do have to analyse and look closer. So I suppose my work is about wanting to make commentary... I think it comes back again to purveyor of ideas... [There's] always a topic or purpose.... I suppose everyone makes for a purpose, but – you know – there has to be a defined thing that always triggers my making.

VE Expression of ideas and communication through art work.

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EMAILS VICTORIA EDEN: EXTRACT (FULL EMAIL STRING AVAILABLE)

VE 21.07.11

Thank you for your interest in my piece Feb 5th 2004...

The pieces for the cockle pickers were fired to 1000C. I showed it during the FRED festival in Cumbria in 2007 when I laid it out to create a pathway leading into the bay. During the festival one piece washed away but the other pieces survived the tides.... My intention is to return the pieces to the bay again and to let them be washed away... I want to do this on the 10th anniversary of the disaster in 2014... The piece that was washed away has never reappeared although I always keep an eye out for it on the sands.

I can't actually pinpoint what made me wish to commemorate the disaster in this way, except that the events of Feb 5th made a great impact on me. I chose gorged red earthenware because the colour is not too far removed from that of the muddy sands of Morecambe Bay and it is medium I understand quite well.

The idea of casting the sand patterns was something I had been interested in for some time and seemed appropriate for this installation... my intention was that each ceramic piece would be a tribute to the life lost.

Ultimately, I believe that we are all trying to make sense of the world and are trying to understand why things are as they are, but simultaneously we also have to make a living, forge a life and deal with our own internal dialogues. I was interested in the cockle pickers because many of them were not driven to the Bay by extreme poverty, but more, perhaps, by an adventurous spirit or a yearning to make a mark on the world as people of every nationality have done throughout history... Their inhuman treatment by the gang masters was redolent of the days of slavery and is evidence of how little humans learn from history and the cyclical nature of human behaviour...

Lancaster & Milnthorpe, was involved with slavery and slave money founded some of the larger houses around here and fed the economy to a certain extent. I was brought up on the edge of the Bay at Morecambe and my ancestors were fishermen so I have a personal relationship with the Bay.

An important theme was the relationship of humans to nature, ultimately we all return to nature, in the sense that as matter can neither be created or destroyed our atoms return to the ecosystem... ultimately nature it is still in control and we can be totally powerless in the face of natural forces, as the cockle pickers were.

Incidentally, I have done other work that is intended to rot and return to

nature. I made pieces based on Yemeni stelas out of clay mixed with hay and with glass faces inserted into them... They are not site specific but are intended to be placed outdoors where they will be destroyed by the weather.

SG 03.02.15

Alex [McErlain] has kindly sent me the DVD... which is very moving. I just wanted to check whether the filming was done 'real time', especially the making of the plaster cast on the sands? And I wonder how tricky it was for you to be filmed as you were making one of the stones in your studio? I found when I was making the 25 pieces for my work at Bede's World, Jarrow (*ReCollection*, responding to the forensic examination of the 97 newborn Roman babies found at Yewden villa which revealed them all to be healthy) that I was very withdrawn, very focused, almost meditative, as I made each one. Even though I was working in the slip-casting room in the university department, I was totally alone, and no-one interrupted me. For me the process was as important as anything else - I was caring for these babies in some odd way. Does that resemble your experience at all, during the making process, I wonder? Being filmed might add a complication?

VE 08.02.15

Unfortunately the filming wasn't done in real time as it was just about made when Alex found out what I was doing. The plaster cast and the making sequences were done just for him and Steve the photographer.

I think that because I was remaking a piece for the film it wasn't as difficult as it might have been if I was working on the original piece. Then I felt very involved in the creative process and many of my thoughts were with the lost cockler to whom the piece was dedicated as I tried to overcome technical challenges and put the slabs and the printed walls together. When I was being filmed I was much more aware of the camera and... under pressure to get the piece right in a technical sense. I think I said before that I found it hard to work with the camera on me and to talk about the work in a way that truly expressed my feelings- it was all beyond words.

Like you and the babies [*ReCollection*], being alone whilst I made the pieces was very important. The making took on a meditational quality that was a secular prayer to and for each person. I'm not sure prayer is the right word as I suppose it could be argued that prayer implies God and I don't wish to make that implication. It was so interesting to look at your photo book again in the light of our discussions... I think the installations cover much common ground in motivation, emotion and expression.

I sank another two pieces on Feb 5th and Mike photographed the sinking for me. It was a beautiful still and sunny morning, so unlike the day of the

tragedy and this heightened the feeling that life had moved on . All life is change... So six pieces have now been sunk and the process will continue. The sinkings have become an important part of the installation in a rather unplanned way and I am now wondering about keeping the other ovoids and just sinking one or two every 5th February, finishing the sinkings in 2027 (if I'm still here!) 23 years after the drownings.

VE 29.04.15

It's absolutely fine to use the image - it was Sandside in 2007 and I agree it's best seen in the environment it was made for.

SG 30.04.15

Thank you very much for your message and the permission to use the image... The website astounding... I quote back to you: "Sometimes what is inside is unknowable but often there will be small opening that gives the hope of a way forward." That is exactly what this presentation of your work...

I am glad to see you have decided to commit a piece of February 5th 2014 to the sea annually (you told me you were thinking about it, but it wasn't firmly decided then, I think)... It feels absolutely the appropriate way to commemorate those 23 individuals, and also fitting for the work.

VE 01.05.15

... As for Feb 5th, you would be more than welcome to come to the 2016 sinking... I have another friend who writes about the Bay who also wants to come, it's a powerful moment to share with like minds.

SOUNDBITE RE MAO FACE APPROPRIATION

18.07.14 EG'S RECORDING AT *TRACES OF CHINA* LAUNCH

[*My annotations in italics 14.04.15*]

EG ... to be anonymous. There you go! Well, you tell me about that...

Anon: Oh, alright. Well there was this little heap of faces [*Fallacy of Mass Production*], as we were discussing. So, I dipped among them out of curiosity and hoping the curator wasn't there to tick me off roundly!

But it reminded me of a talk we had at the Shipley Art Gallery by Elspeth... I can't remember what her other name is. She does very interesting and strange things like sleeping out overnight to see what happens, to grasses and things like that. [*Elspeth Owen gave the Henry Rothschild Centenary Memorial Lecture 21.11.13, focusing on the gift economy in art, and giving each member of the audience a piece of her work.*]

But her [point] was: things are made to be given away. And when I saw this pile of little faces, I thought I wonder if anybody is here to give them away? And in fact, someone more or less gave me permission. [*Museum staff, if and when asked whether a piece of the installation could be taken, would say that it was an element in an exhibition in a permanent collection in a museum, and enquirers would have to make their own moral decision about the appropriateness of removing any of it.*]

So my hand immediately sort of - well, it wasn't immediate – but was drawn to him, rather like choosing a crystal. Well, you don't choose a crystal. A crystal chooses you. And each opens.

I'm entirely delighted because -thank you for giving me the pleasure of this little China-man!

EG Well! I'll pass that on ...

SG PRAXIS DISCUSSION WITH MIKE GEE 13.02.15 EXTRACT (FULL TRANSCRIPT AVAILABLE)

MG ... in *Nag Puja* the place where one might have put the work to discuss in terms of the four categories: materiality, performance, record and site-specificity... [SG And impermanence itself] that actually changed from perhaps what your first themes were about, because materiality played a considerable [part]... because you made it from the mud and clay... and it changed. The outcome changed by it becoming a highly performative piece... and collaborative. So... one of the things that maybe happens with any piece of art work is that [given] the subsequent history of it... you would change where you placed it amongst those [categories]. The focus, the main thing about it would change positioning in those four areas you could discuss it in...

It seemed to me that that can be an appropriation... and it can go all the way from physical appropriation – in the case of the Mao masks [*Converse:Mao*] – to a mental appropriation, or change... you could almost define impermanence... in terms of the willingness on the artist's part to embrace and to allow that appropriation... The more permanent you want it to be, the more you make it of permanent material, put it behind cases, build it big and immovable.

SG You are talking about the permanence of the intention on the artist's part rather than the physical piece... You were also talking about people's acceptance of a piece, almost a supporting of a piece.... and appropriation being a particular end of the spectrum as well.

MG Yes. It doesn't have to change the intention of the person. I think for example that *Nag Puja* always had for you a Nepal site specificity. They turned it into something absolutely nailed to that spot. Whereas Mao [*Fallacy of Mass Production*] they were absolutely moving it physically from an appropriate site, for you - even an important site, for you - to an important site for them. but that was nowhere near your site...

SG [We] are talking about to a degree the artist's or maker's control over a piece... Whether by making it from permanent material and siting it out of physical reach you actually retain... [MG greater control] and greater meaning. You are the interpreter of the meaning to a greater extent, whereas if someone can appropriate it in [the] broader kind of non-extreme sense of appropriation – if people can do that physically or mentally, it moves on. And particularly... that kind of mental appropriation means the piece may change but it doesn't disappear. And the comment that I made was it makes the impermanence not destruction... but it actually alters. It continues to exist... It alters but it never disappears. It's almost like the conservation of matter. You never lose matter. I think you never lose the work. It just alters, really.

MG I think the willingness of the artist – indeed, more than the willingness, the desire – to work in material that has a shorter life, or in places where they to be removed from... is a kind of acknowledgement, or even... a kind of desire for that to happen. A desire to lose control.

SG It's an open invitation.

MG Yes... So along a continuum... control is the key thing. It helps to loosen control if you make it of stuff that can disappear fairly quickly and leave it in the mental realm of other people's meaning being important. And the degree to which you want to retain control, you would never pick impermanent material to work in. In fact you would probably want to work in metal rather than stone, because it doesn't wear as much.

I suppose it all started from that sense of being willing to let everybody play that game of where would you place this piece of paper... a piece of paper that describes *Nag Puja*, where would you put it? Whereas the controlling artist wants it to be in one place all the time...

SG... *Nag Puja*... started us talking about whether, when we'd done the exercise of matching projects which I've done over the research period with the four categories that I'm using, of Impermanence, Materiality, Site/Location and Audience/Record... whether those pieces of paper were being placed on those categories in relation to what my original intention had been, or what the learning had been out of the projects and reflection on them... Because you put *Nag Puja* down on the piece of paper about Audience from the point of view of what you thought my original intention was? Certainly for me it was about what came out of that. I don't know that my original intention had anything to do with people's participation. It was... more... about that material and definitely the site... It was because it was the location... where I saw the snake... even finding that location was participative, because I walked around with Hem to find an appropriate spot in the forest because I didn't want to cause problems, for instance lighting a fire that might cause damage or whatever.

So there was a practical aspect to that. But where I actually felt was right and which was endorsed by Hem was along a pathway around the perimeter, which was actually by a Sal tree, and Sal trees have their own real importance in religious terms for Hindus... So even at that early stage there was a participative thing. And that actually worked through the whole piece. That... was what was important about that piece. It was the first dawning of that understanding that by working collaboratively, by loosening control – not holding the control myself – it made something that had more embedded meaning, and importance for everyone around. For me in particular, I guess, as instigator of it, but actually for everybody.

MG I think I just introduced the notion of appropriation. And then moved on to the notion of intensifying the site-specificity AND increasing the permanence in a kind of way. Because your chosen material was both meant to – and demonstrably had – a very short life.

But the way they increased the [persistence] of it was not to protect the actual physical existence of the cobra piece, because that would have gone in the same way, though slightly less quickly because it had been partially fired... But they secured a permanence by surrounding it by both physical and mental processes... Some of those would live on in minds, and the altar stones would be there longer than the actual cobra piece now. So, they may well have moved the placing of the thing completely away from materiality. It may not have mattered to them what it was made of, and moved it very much into performance.

Then we talked about... the appropriation of the Maos... That didn't intensify the site-specificity. It... actually dissipated it. So those were just two contrasting things: the notion that people can do that. And I link that to the over-arching thing about impermanence, being to do with the willingness to allow that appropriation. You talked about control. That one way of maintaining control is to make it as permanent, long-lasting, untouchable as you can – the physical reality of the thing – as you can.

And it may well be that that is the artistic [motivation] behind it. You want to say this is my interpretation of this bit of the world, and I want people to engage with that, to respect it. I want to leave my mark... This is my statement. Whereas a willingness to say this is my take on it, but I think there are plenty of other takes on it, etc. is signalled by a willingness (a) let people physically engage with it, touch it, feel it, etc., but also [b] to take it away with them, both physically, again, and mentally.

The fact that you make it out of impermanent materials or in a place where it can't survive... is almost for the artist to say all those different meanings now live in people's heads. They are as important there as they were in my head.

SG ... One of the things I have had [whirling] round in my mind... is: I put a lot of meaning into this work but it's quite personal. I leave it there for people to put their own meaning into it. How important is it that the original instigator or maker, or creator - or however you might define the role of the artist – how important is it that their meaning is there intact, in any way?

I think that's really what we are describing because actually what I'm realising is that it's like a flip change. My meaning can be utterly important to me, and will continue to be utterly important to me. The crucial point, the crux, is the engagement with the physicality of the work, which allows the meaning almost to go through the eye of a needle, so it comes in from a kind of broad swathe, narrows into something, which is the point at which I put something into the world, and it comes out, and burgeons again the other side into other people's meaning. It's not important in a sense for the people who take on the meaning to know what my meaning was.

MG yes, yes. I agree with that entirely. I think that's exactly what we are talking about. I think we are also talking about perhaps that the artist, the struggle to get the meaning down on the part of the artist is what it's about. Its subsequent... In other words it's the process that's more important.

So the artist, in this particular case, you, have thoughts about things and what for you is the best way of expressing them. But having expressed them, you can let it go. Because... the act of doing it [has] allowed you to go: OK, that's what I feel about that.

SG Yes, that's the point of creative release, I guess.

MG Absolutely. Now if you want it to be very permanent, it's as if you're saying: I want the world to know I have come to this view. You're saying: I'm happy I've come to this view. The rest of the world can either follow me on that journey or can help it make them think about things. And if it's impermanent stuff, it doesn't really matter to me. I've done it now - I've let it go... In a way, you've given birth to something. That mattered to you, but it has kind of life of its own. AND if you

want a very odd analogy, but it might work: the parent who wants to steer their children into becoming a doctor or lawyer, because that's what they wanted to do, rather than saying: here's your life, I hope I've given you the best tools to do what you want to do... As opposed to: No, you're going to become a doctor...

SG The analogy is an interesting one. One of the other things it brings to mind is... that I've been dealing with is the importance to me of somehow naming the work that I do. The names come intuitively in the way the work does. So I, for instance, called the work that's currently in Jarrow *ReCollection/recollection*. And it's a play on words, but it actually has a lot of meaning for me. It's about gathering together, it's about reflecting on, it's about grouping, about collection, recollection, so all those plays on words.

The work in Orkney was *RePlace*. The work in the Oriental Museum might have been *ReTrace*... There's a 're-' bit to a lot of this, which is about going back to. But in particular I've always had this mental wrestling with the idea that people don't name their work... I wondered why I am titling work that goes out there to be appropriated, to be intensified or disjuncted, or whatever, distracted from my intentionality, by other people or whether it's been endorsed and strengthened by other people's appropriation.

Why am I titling it? And I think it actually works with that analogy of the work coming to a creative crux. It doesn't matter after that. I think actually in Orkney, the fact that I put labels on... I know in North Ronaldsay, having a label on it, calling it REPLACE, *made* people interpret it in a certain way, so that they have *not* appropriated it physically, or even have been anxious about appropriating it physically or protecting it. Because that was, for them, an instruction. If I hadn't put the work out there with that title to it, would that have made it easier for people to do that level of ownership and appropriation? I don't know, but it makes me think.

There's something else that's running along that same line of argument somehow. And it is about at some point saying: it's nothing to do with me any more. It matters to me up to that point. It's very important. The process is important. The intention is important. The naming is important. The material is important. The placement is important. The level of deterioration has some importance. But after that it's out there and it does its own thing. It has its own life and other people make it last longer, or change or disappear, and that's fine. It doesn't need a name after that – at least it doesn't need my name, my title.

MG Yes...I think that if in order to allow... or to encourage the possibility of people taking their own meanings away with them, if it helps by being something clearly impermanent or something that's going to disappear, and it physically goes, then *you* have to have a way of recalling to yourself the rationales and intentions you have, and the struggle that you had and your satisfaction if it was a work that you think got there, got IT, what you were wanting to get out there. And the name is a very powerful way for you, to sum up all your intentions and rationales.

So all your thoughts about dead babies etc. etc., and early death, and perhaps the casualness of chucking, discarding like rubbish... they pertain to your life. You have to make a meaning out of something that actually happened to you.

The word *ReCollect*, given that you don't constantly have those pieces of clay embedded, is a way for you of assembling all those things. Therefore you have made sense of something in your life and you've made sense of it through doing a piece of work. And you're happy, you've given it a name that helps bring together all those things that you were struggling to deal with, but now having achieved something, it can go. But if, in its life on that roof, it can provoke other people to think anything, then so be it...

Another way of thinking of it may be – the more permanent it is, I want you (the audience) to think what I thought. The more impermanent.... Or if that doesn't matter to you, if you are really saying: this is what I've thought, and I think it was quite an interesting thought, and it certainly means a hell of a lot to me, but you make what you like of it, which may be from utter indifference to '... That's brought back memories, done this, done that, done the other thing', then so be it. That's back to control I want you to think my thoughts.

Artists saying: I want you to think my thought, have my feeling, requires the object to be there, in front of them.

SG I think there's actually another level there as well. I don't know the extent to which this is true, but I'm thinking particularly of Grayson Perry, and the fact that he uses ceramic which is appealing in form, and then when you get closer to it, the imagery on it is dissonant to the form, so it shocks, and makes people recoil or react, or whatever. So it's not necessarily in that sense what the artist is feeling, wanting to reproduce that feeling... I think he's actually wanting to manipulate the response.

Am I wanting to manipulate response or am I just letting the response happen? Now that's an interesting question! Quite a lot of artists want to stage something. Talk about performativity! They want the work to create a character and maybe a dialogue with the recipient in such a way that there is only one script. So they may be defining the script. It may not be what they think, but it's what they want the audience to feel and to respond with.

MG. ... I think impermanence – or permanence if you like – is not something you seek in itself at all. It's a signal of what you want this work to do. So if you want to manipulate other people's responses, control them, manipulate them, share your particular view of the world and praise you for having thought that that's what life is about in that particular, etc., then it needs to be very, very permanent... It needs to have stability. If you want to fix and control a response, it hasn't got to change much. If you're not all that interested in... if in fact, to be honest, if doing the work is more important to you – I don't mean therapy – but if it's your way of making sense, and having made sense, move on, and if the object that you make that's helped you make that kind of sense, it can have its own life and disappear, doesn't really matter to you in a way. And you don't really mind whether people make the same sense of the world as you do, then... the imminent disappearance of it might concentrate minds quicker ...

You know that's why I think your *Rose Field* could be in a private place. The difference between putting it in a private place and putting it into Denise's garden for example, is that in a private place, you've worked something through. For something that mattered to you, doing that has resolved, or has helped you think about stuff – like the disappearance of an industry, and what sense does that have, that a whole [industry has disappeared]. Perhaps the *Rose Field* is a

kind of analogy, that important things just do disappear in this world, have short lives, and you have to live with that. Now you might want a load of other people to see if that triggers the same thing – OR NOT. Because the important thing is that for you, it has encapsulated your thoughts.

SG I've reflected on that work.. the whole thing is analogous to what was happening to the industry, in that it was being utterly ignored. And the beauty of it, in terms of what it created – I don't mean in terms of physical things but in terms of the skill and the knowledge of the people who worked in that industry has been abandonment. I suppose abandonment is about not being seen, being ignored, or whatever... And that's something... that Phoebe Cummings was saying about her work – she uses site as material; and I think that's what I was doing too in that work. The privacy of that piece was actually really part of its meaning, an integral part of its meaning. The fact that it wasn't seen by anybody is in a sense irrelevant. It's interesting, that stuff about Ruscha in the Guardian,... a rock in the Mojave Desert somewhere. And people think it's there, they understand that it's there. They are searching for it. Is it a piece of work? Well of course it is – it's prompted searching. It's there in the artist's mind. Even if people didn't know about it, if he had put it there - or even if he hadn't – if he thought about it, that for me is probably enough... again it's a collaborative piece, because Denise Lilley was willing to, and made, the elements for that work, knowing that it was going to disappear. She put all her skill and effort into that in a participative way.

CHINA JOURNAL 2013 EXTRACTS (FULL TEXT AVAILABLE)

Saturday 5 October 2013 UK Made a proper start with my art work for the trip - ReTrace¹⁰⁷. Rubbed soil from JMP's garden onto a page of my Sanbao notebook, recorded JMP's reaction. Checked coordinates, took pictures + soil sample. Then Bruno Latour –about assemblage and connections, just what *ReTrace* is about.

Sunday 6 October 2013 to Heathrow I had the wit to stop as soon as I saw the patch of earth once off bus at Heathrow and did a smear, a sample, audio clip and photo. Pretty seedy spot where people clearly hang out for a fag. Reading Bruno Latour on ANT - relevant to ReTrace work... bringing together otherwise unconnected things (in this case soil and clay) and making assemblages.

Monday 7 October 2013 Shanghai Yu Yuan Gardens this afternoon: managed sample collection, rubbing, ambient sound clip and some photography for *ReTrace*.

Wednesday 9 October 2013 Yi Xing Local dragon kiln 50 metres long - not firing today. Now got better handle on how they work. There are 40 or so fuelling holes along the kiln... different fuel used in the upper length (bamboo twigs rather than some kind of wood). Passed a mould maker's workshop. Then visited the workshop/showroom compound of a stratospherically high priced teapot master. Found pile of Yi Xing clay so I did my sampling, just finishing when C-A retraced her steps and warned me in admonitory fashion to be surreptitious as the local potters guard their clay and its secrets fiercely. I don't do surreptitious, and quite clear by this afternoon that Yi Xing secrecy about clay/chemical makeup is baloney - we bought a bag for experimenting with at Sanbao.

Accompanied by lesser, teapot master. Shao Fa Gang is not local, but trained in Yi Xing. Back to his modest workshop where he demonstrated making a traditional local teapot, breaking off for tea ceremony in the front shop which demonstrated that you should have two Yi Xing teapots on the go at once.

Thursday 10 October 2013 Tao Yao > Jiangxian Lunch at a village quite close to Tao Yao potters' village which is where Jackson [Jiansheng] Li [Wenyong's brother] made his video about big pot making and its dragon kiln. We wandered freely round the workshop area and poked about inside the dragon kiln too. Picked up a couple of hard pieces of clay – unformed though – and did my sampling etc. As Mao Mao had rendered a song from her village earlier I've got some good audio to go with the clay which is utterly unlike the Yi Xing purple clay from yesterday. Then on to Jiangxian.

Friday 11 October 2013 Taiping Into the Yellow Mountain area to visit one of these old ancestral places – actually a family's ceremonial hall rather than living accommodation. Further up, to Zhongshan Buddhist temple - interesting contrast to Nepalese Buddhist temples. Collected smear of soil from the bottom of the hill – it felt the right place, a key point in the trip and maybe auspicious.

¹⁰⁷ Working title. Final title: Traces of China

Saturday 12 October 2013 Huangshan Enjoyable day spent up the Yellow Mountain. Went up Lion Peak (where I did some sampling – and I did audio clips in various places today as well. And the soil is pretty yellow here like the mountain's name). Views were so like Chinese ink paintings of the mountains it was amazing.

Sunday 13 October 2013 Hangzhou [Southern Song Dynasty Official Kiln Museum] tells story of local celadon ware and imperial interest in a ceramic like jade. Intrigued by assemblage of pot sherds into part pots. Want to use it as the basis of work on value, de-value, and re-value. Took samples – would have taken a little of the matrix surrounding the workshop and [settling?] pond but a sharp-eyed curator was around. So I took it from the flower bed just outside the archaeological complex.

Monday 14 October 2013 Hangzhou To old and new university campuses today: Chinese painting and calligraphy at the old campus in Hangzhou City and ceramics at the new campus about 25-30 km out of town. Our potter/guide Xiaohui is a graduate of China Academy of Art and introduced us to staff as we went round. New campus very impressive with trees and water. We were shown around by lecturer in ceramics – graduate of the department which opened in 1998. They do not run a PhD and he was interested to hear about Sunderland's research arrangements. About 30 undergraduates - seem to work pretty well entirely in porcelain. Most of the work vessel- and wheel-based. Not quite so much with the MA work. After lunch to Xiaohui's ceramic studio in a village. (Yexui Ceramics Studio) - lovely old-style house... Students' work was laid out on benches in a courtyard area where tiled roofs provided shelter and shade. Then called inside the gallery for a recital of traditional Chinese music by Wan Zhong Liang who trained locally on the guqin (seven-string zither). Recorded the first and the third of these. They will be great to excerpt as part of the soundscape for *ReTrace*.

In the Academy's ceramic department I picked up discarded clay for the piece, and took photos, coordinates and audio clips but didn't have time to smear the page in my Sanbao note book. Had to do that later. Back to Hangzhou. Sorted clay samples out.

Wednesday 16 October 2013 Longquan To Longquan Celadon Museum. Struck by the number of objects which were clearly seconds or even wasters. Does that mean they can't afford really good pieces? There were certainly expensive contemporary pieces for sale in their shop, including a shallow bowl for 80,000 RMB [approx. £8,000]. Taken by the amount of shards on display, again. Kiln wasters and distorted pots of one form or another, displayed with pride, clearly valued. And one tiny dish, set in a plaster matrix because it had bits missing, must have taken months to put together. Very impressive Guided by local potter whose studio/workshop we were to see today... They apparently have about three grades of 'master potter' including provincial, of which there are about 30... and country master potters too, which is a lower grading. All regulated by a higher authority..

Thursday 17 October 2013 Longquan > Sanbao Yesterday: visits to studios and fourth dragon kiln of the trip. Visited 3 studios-cum-workshop-showrooms of Celadon Masters of various ranks of distinction. First, a Country Master (which I think might be the lowest official ranking, but pretty smart for all that). This was

the establishment of Xia Hou Wen, who is out of town, but whose son greeted us and showed us round his showroom and workshop.

Secondly we visited the palatial residence-cum-showroom of Xu Chao Xing, who was there. Marble everywhere, first floor showroom with antique pieces as well as those of himself and his son.... And he himself lives on the second. The one or two pieces I did like were either relatively small (a modest pot with beautiful crazing, part of the local artistry, which was one of his), or his son's, who clearly has a more contemporary aesthetic.

Visited our guide's workshop and showroom. Li Cheng Han... had some very interesting work. There then ensued an animated technical discussion about the characteristics of the glaze which revealed the rim and foot ring in a really quiet but distinctive way.

Final visit was out of town to a seventh-generation potter who runs a dragon kiln. It is only used for half its length these days, but is due to be fired next month - it is fired twice a year. The potter, Zeng Shi Ping, introduced us to his father, told us that his 10-year old son was starting to throw at the wheel, so there is an eighth generation coming up.

The delight in visiting this place was that it was clearly family-run, with activity going on all over the site, whether sloshing glaze around, throwing, fettling, or decorating. And as with practically everywhere else we have been, we were greeted and treated with generous good-naturedness. Mr Zeng had a little showroom at the foot of the dragon kiln and his wares were reasonable in price, and beautiful in themselves... I bought two tea bowls with a fish decoration applied to the side of the bowl (like a spiral in fact) at 60 RMB each (about £6).

As with everywhere else today (with one exception at the Provincial Master's where no pottery workshop was to be seen), I have been collecting clay samples, coordinates and photos, C-A having picked a bit of discarded porcelain for me from the wheel housing of the Country Master himself. I haven't been able to complete the whole process on site with these samples, having brought them back to the hotel to work on after we got back from our outing, but I have a whole clutch of them for this full day in Longquan..

Saturday 19 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen First day in the pottery or clay house as Wenying described it yesterday when we came over to see it and to meet Ma Shifu [master potter], Joe the technician.... I got a couple of kilos of raku porcelain and took it to the raku studio – after taking a sound clip or two. The clay proved to be very soft, very stony and very short [is it really porcelain?], so quite hard to work with. But I guess it would have been much harder for the throwers with the amount of coarse grog.

I helped V sort out the clays collected from potteries on our journey to Sanbao. Apart from identifying and sorting them, it gave me a chance to do the sampling for the 7th generation dragon kiln pottery that I hadn't been able to do at the time we visited. I used some of that clay to make a bonsai mountain – there are two clays, the red 'older brother' and the white 'younger brother' as they describe them in celadon terms, as they have different characteristics. Also one with the raku porcelain before using some extra white porcelain to make another pinch pot for paper kiln firing which should fume our pots. Also a spoon from raku porcelain. I want to use the two dragon kiln clays to make a yin and yang (it will

be interesting to see the shrinkage differential apart from anything else), but the clays were far too soft and floppy today.

Sunday 20 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen In the clay house, in the raku workshop most of the time. Tidied up pots and spoon from yesterday. And I took the two little mountains to the throwing room where the air circulates better so that they could dry out. Also made two yin and yang, one set from the Two Brothers celadon clays from the Longquan dragon kiln to fire allowing the clays to speak – one pale and the other dark. And the other I made as P had some raku porcelain rolled as a slab which she did not need. So I made that set in order to raku fire: one piece glazed bar a circle which will blacken on reduction, the other unglazed bar the spot, so the main part of it will blacken and contrast with the glazed spot.

I intended to make something with Yi Xing clay but there really isn't time to do it justice so I hope to be able to take that home. But I did take off a tiny amount to feel its texture. Very fine – beautiful clay ...

Tuesday 22 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen To the antiques market. Looked at loads of blue and white potsherds and throw outs from kilns, some of which I am convinced are fake – they look too neat. I suppose I am influenced by Neil Brownsword's take on wasters from the Potteries, where symmetry and stacking is certainly not part of their character. May be wrong, but it gets me thinking about value, context and assumptions.

Then to the ancient Kiln Museum, wandering round and seeing the elderly men who demonstrate the ancient techniques in their smart white pyjamas with tie-dye edgings going through their paces. It was very impressive to see how finely they can throw the local porcelain (which I got a sample of, thanks to Mao Mao's help). It clearly is quite strong. I hope today to do some testing with some of it.

Turning is quite a vigorous activity with the base of the pot being thwacked quite hard with a wooden paddle. Would break a pot which wasn't the right state of greenness. And so on through the whole process of making a rice bowl finishing with painting the decoration (actually demonstrating on a large vase, where the guy was delicately painting a chrysanthemum). Then on to the [chicken's egg] kiln, last fired in the 1980s. Sad to see it as a museum piece, given the live dragons we have encountered this trip.

Then on to the underglaze decal shop where it was hard to find a couple that were sufficiently small scale and sufficiently Chinese to take back - ended up with a sheet of blue abstract designs and a sheet of black fish for 8 yuan altogether. Then to the tile makers' village in JdZ. We wandered around it as well as going to the workshop we had visited before. When we arrived the tile maker was having a bit of a chunter about being expected to demonstrate... Makes me wonder how much these things are set up for us... when I went back to the making area of the ancient Kiln Museum, the guys were just lolling about waiting for the next influx of tourists - before it all started to get animated with men pushing through the throng with boards full of wet pots etc., to make it feel busy. It was all a performance! And I HAD wondered at the time where all these bowls get fired – clearly not in the ancient kiln...

I will remember the huge size of the panels being made in one workshop – five foot wide by about ten foot long! And also the sight of panel painters sitting in a

row on low chairs drawing on to unfired panels. One clearly a trainee doing pretty standard stuff, another painting the hairs of a couple of large squirrels one by one, someone else was drawing Mongol hordes from his head rather than – as with the others – from a pattern book. What a sight!

Back in time for...checking pots. Did some more burnishing on the little pot I want to fume... And made some buttons with various different clay bodies. Like the idea of making a full series with available clay. That would be great alongside the clay samples! Back to the clay house after lunch for paper kiln workshop - set up the base for the kiln in the yard. We made packets of copper carbonate – a couple for each pot – to be tied to the sides of our biscuit fired pots. Biscuit firing happens tonight to a top temp of 940 degrees.... we stripped copper wire to expose the fine copper wire which we will also use on our pots and gathered vegetable stuff which may also colour the pots. I have some persimmon rind, citrus leaves and a little rusty iron too.

Wednesday 23 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen I keep seeing this trip in terms of sound clips and photos – even video clips which I did a few of yesterday. M told C-A how much my presentation had been meaningful for her – how she came to China to hear it. Her work is about impermanence and she said that she didn't bring one piece because it was already in a state of decay. The one she did bring has a title that includes 'state of decay'.

Friday 25 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen Quite a few takers for a celadon firing, though no-one had put stuff in yesterday's biscuit firing with that in mind. Joe kindly said he could organise one and we could glaze at 2 pm so pots go down to the public kiln during the afternoon. I sent a small pinch tea bowl, a spoon and a little mountain in raku porcelain to the firing. Joe sprayed them with the glaze. No face mask and no extractor!!!

I'm putting a yin and yang – raku porcelain – a mountain of mixed dragon kiln clays (both brothers) and a small flat raku porcelain platter in the raku firing today. The yin and yang of the dragon kiln big brother and little brother clays shows after biscuit firing that there was good fit with these two clays.

In the afternoon we also prepped our stuff for the paper kiln. I just have one tiny extra-white porcelain bowl. I packed the interior with leaves and fruit skins plus a little iron, packets of copper carbonate on the outside, bound on with a cloth strip, some copper wire and another little bit of rusty iron. Morning spent prepping work for the test raku firing this afternoon. And we built and packed the paper kiln also for firing this afternoon. Made more buttons today: raku stoneware – oblong - and large thin middle quality porcelain.

Saturday 26 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen Yesterday: both paper kiln firing and test raku firing. I put my raku yin and yang in to the test firing - worked well. J managed the paper kiln firing beautifully. I packed my little pot for M (extra-white porcelain, burnished as far as possible with a spoon and biscuit fired to 940 degrees) with citrus leaves, some rusty iron and a packet of Chinese copper carbonate inside, and wrapped some fine copper wire over another packet of copper carbonate and a packet of Sharon fruit skin on the outside. Temperature must have reached over 800 degrees, and J kept it going for a couple of hours. We went back after dinner to check out the raku tests which had been sitting in damp sawdust for a couple of hours. The yin yang looked lovely and some of the glazes look particularly interesting.

First thing this morning down to the pottery to see what the firing had done. J disappointed with results as the chemicals haven't had expected effects – pink from salt and greens etc. from copper carbonate etc. We can't quite work out why the salt didn't work because it taste like salt... But the copper carbonate I reckon is like Indian copper carbonate – and not nearly as pure as ours... However, after the main raku firing this afternoon people had an opportunity to re-fire their paper kiln pots or new ones in the raku kiln – using aluminium foil for a saggar effect apparently in a gas firing can work for fuming – not electric because of the fumes.

Sunday 27 October 2013 Sanbao/Jingdezhen To the clay house straight after breakfast to check 2nd raku firing and the gas/aluminium foil firing. Raku firing pretty disappointing for me (and mixed fortunes for others) – knicker pink slab and unreduced glaze on my mountain. And the fumed firing was a bit of a flop. Though GC had a lovely piece from that firing which was cracked and falling to pieces – right up my street!

We then got into a pretty packed timetable of demonstrations. The best was the first for me – Da Li, graduate of JdZ Ceramic Institute who specialised in traditional blue and white porcelain painting - did a traditional tree peony design on to green-ware... Celadon firing came back from the public kiln... So successful pieces form all three firings: raku yin and yang, fumed pot, celadon spoon and mountain.

Tuesday 29 October 2013 Sanbao > Xi'an Yesterday was packing and tying up loose ends day. Taxi ride to the public kiln to pick up second celadon firing – and pieces of mine and R's missing when the first firing came back a couple of days ago... The public kiln – or are there several of them? – is in the student market area where Takeshi's Red House studio is, but the other side of the road. The celadon tea bowl has come out far better than expected. There were loads of ceramic flowers being fired, which reminds me very much of Rose Field, so I took a number of photos. We wandered round the lanes for a while as well and saw another possibly public kiln in the next lane. Very clever. It had two trollies for packing and firing pieces on. And track leading straight into the kiln and also one at right angles. So one can be unpacked while the other is being stacked. Saves time... we went into a lovely old factory space to see some great work, including a very ambitious dish which was 1.5 metres across at least, I guess. It was decorated with cobalt including what looked like marks made by cloth or paper soaked in a cobalt solution and laid on the raw clay... Also to a slip casting workshop making models of horses like the one P has been making from Yi Xing clay.

Leaving party after dinner. We did the presentations at the party and Joe gave us all a porcelain mould of Mao which he had altered. He called it Mod Square and he has made 50 all told. Not sure I understand the title but it references the capability of making our own Maos rather than him moulding us, I think! I went over to the studio to pick up my buttons from the second biscuit firing. And I got them packed with the RePlace eggs which I took down from the gallery exhibition yesterday.

Wednesday 30 October 2013 Xi'an Hotel in the walled city of old Xi'an. First stop the replica factory where they make cast models from life size down of the terracotta warriors. The workshop and kiln were interesting as was being able to take a sample of the local clay used now and originally for the figures. Then to

the pit site which, though touristic, was fascinating. Took loads of images and mused on the fact that the emperor thought it appropriate to build his eternal universe using clay. Reminded me of all the myths where man is referred to as clay.

Visited all three pits at the site. Then to Banpo Neolithic village museum in Xi'an which was also fascinating. These were serious potters with six kilns, supposedly 6,000 years ago. And they buried children differently from adults in pots close to the home rather than laid out in a cemetery like the adults; and the pots used to cap these burials are holed – as in Africa – to let the soul in and out... significant numbers of prone burials at this site too Hits quite a few buttons for me.

Friday 1 November 2013 Xi'an > Beijing Yesterday to Shaanxi History Museum... resembled the Shanghai Museum in layout and richness of its collection. It has two floors and an exhibition hall... engrossing prehistoric exhibition... Though the labels were pretty vague about dates (5,000-3,000 BC covers a lot of ground), we could detect developments. Forms were striking as was the variation in sophistication of the making techniques from pretty coarsely made pots to rather refined forms with thin walls and early signs of burnishing as a finishing technique... Second gallery: fantastic collection with lots of ceramic which is what I had decided to concentrate on. Lovely sculptures. Horses, humans, camels, villages...

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