In a screen-driven, idea-laden, fast-paced world, a tangible connection to something fundamentally of the earth is somehow reassuring.

– Cath Fogarty, Curator, Clay Intersections
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The Australian Design Centre is a leading centre for contemporary craft and design in Australia. We play a critical role in building a significant design culture for this country by nurturing a nation of innovative makers and thinkers and inspiring audiences to use design in their lives.

Presenting the work and innovative practices of artists across a range of craft and design disciplines is central to all our work and our touring program has an unprecedented national reach that reinforces our role as a significant national organisation.

Touring has been central to our work for 50 years. Since the 1970s ADC has toured nationally and been at the forefront of providing regional Australia with access to cutting edge work and ideas and since 2006, more than 50% of our touring venues have been regionally based.

Presenting our exhibitions, education and public program events, research and digital content across the country is just one of the many ways we actively nurture innovation in making and the development of new audiences for craft, art and design in Australia.

Our annual program features more than 200 designers and our 2017 touring program will present the work of 50 artists in five exhibitions at 9 venues nationally.

Since 2005 we have presented 28 touring exhibitions that have made more than 200 stops at 64 different arts organisations across all states & territories. Collectively and to date, more than 1.2 million people have seen these exhibitions.

Four exhibitions have also toured internationally to great acclaim, including Global Local to the Victoria & Albert Museum, London in 2005 & the 2nd International Triennale of Craft at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan in 2013.

One of ADC’s most important touring series is Living Treasures, which celebrates some of Australia’s most respected and iconic contemporary craft artists. Over 300,000 people have visited a Living Treasures exhibition to date and the eighth exhibition, Lola Greeno: Cultural Jewels, is currently undertaking a record-breaking 14 stop national tour.

Partnerships are a central part of the touring work undertaken by ADC and in the last two years two significant partnerships have been established to help develop two different touring exhibitions & their related education and public programs. Lola Greeno was developed in partnership with the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston and in 2015 ADC worked with Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo to produce the exhibition Shapeshifters 3D: Printing the Future.
Clay Intersections: the exhibition

This education kit explores the inspiration, influences, techniques and aesthetic concerns behind the work of some of Australia’s leading ceramic artists. The information provided presents teachers and students with background knowledge that should assist them in building a greater understanding of the artists’ work and the expressive possibilities of ceramics. The questions, research and making activities will support students to develop their own projects and create awareness of the artists’ methods.

Throughout the kit you will find references to symbols, they refer to:

- **Enquire**: Investigate and research before you visit
- **Experience**: The exhibition through questions and activities
- **Extend**: Your knowledge by further research, making, creating and designing

The Artists: 
Bridget Bodenham

Regale Offerings

Bridget feels a connection to her surrounding landscape and interprets the tones and textures in her work. She takes great care in creating each piece by hand and firing them up to three times in her large gas kiln. This collection of forms is suggestive of a ceremonial offering inviting interaction. Bridget has approached this series of work as an exploration into the joy and function of serving and preparing food. Connected by gold embellishments and playful relationships between forms, these objects invite use. Bridget is asking for a connection to be made through the eyes and hands of the user. The pieces retain the energy and evidence of the maker’s hand through the traces of fingerprints and indentations and the movement marks of tools. Her love of texture and the materiality of clay can be seen in the use of contrast across the work from rough raku to fine translucent porcelains.

Bridget defines herself as a potter because of the sheer volume of work she produces from her home based studio near Daylesford in Victoria. She works full time making sculptural and original serving ware, tableware, utensils and jewellery as well as planter pots and flower vases.

Clay bodies and hand building

The choice of clay body is an important consideration for a ceramicist. Clay bodies come in a wide range of colours (white, red or black) and different textures (roush, groggy or smooth). The style and shape of the vessel, decoration, function and firing are influenced by the type of clay. Many of the low-fire clays are not waterproof unless sealed using a glaze or non-fired sealer.

The three main types of clay used in ceramics are:

**Low-fire earthenware**
Terracotta, earthenware and raku
(fired to 900-1000 degrees Celsius)

**Mid-fire earthenware**
Earthenware and stoneware
(fired to 1100-1200 degrees Celsius)

**High-fire earthenware**
Stoneware and porcelain
(fired to 1220-1300 degrees Celsius)

Artists using hand-building techniques in the exhibition include Bridget Bodenham, Helen Earl, Tania Rollond, Natalie Rosin and Kenji Uranishi. Hand-building can include pinch pottery, coil building, and slab building.

**How to build a coil pot**

1. Make the coil
   Form a coil (or long rope) by rolling clay with your hands on a bench. Apply very gentle pressure as you roll your full palm across the coil. Move from the fingertips to the heel of your hand. As it lengthens, move your hands from the centre towards the ends.

2. Cut the base
   Cut a small circular base for your coil pot

3. Join the base and coil
   When you’ve made your first coil, roughen the base with a toothbrush dipped in water or vinegar to help it join to the base.

4. Join the coils
   Roughen or score the top of each coil before joining on the next one. Add four or five coils. Join them on the inside using your fingers to smooth, working from bottom to top. Provide support with your hand on the outside of the pot.

5. Build your layers
   Add coils one layer at a time to keep the form even. The lower part of the shape is refined when the pot is leather hard, and strong enough to be turned upside down.

6. Finish it off
   When the coils have all been joined, the surface can be finished off by using a paddle. This tool will smooth the pot out and refine the shape. When smoothing the surface, keep a supporting hand inside the pot. The key to making a great pot is patience. You may not get something perfect on the first try, but practice and dedication will help you in the long run.
The fundamentals of coil building:

1. It is a highly skilled technique but is a good way to begin learning.
2. Some clays are better for coil building than others. Clay bodies with more grog work best.
3. Keep the thickness consistent across walls and base.
4. Drying time is important. If the clay is too soft, it can sag under pressure or weight. If it is too dry, it will crack and break.
5. Coil building can produce an extremely strong, dense and resilient form.

Enquire

What are the advantages and disadvantages of coil building? If you made a coil pot what were some of the problems that you encountered?

The origins of coiling clay are ancient and some of the most beautiful examples are the Jomon pots produced in Japan between 7000-300BC. Find out about Jomon pots and the meaning of the word Jomon.

Experience

Draw a selection of hand-built vessels from the exhibition. What type of clay and firing process have they used?

Extend

Make a coil pot that is based on Bridget Bodenham or Helen Earl’s vessels. Document your processes to explain the techniques of coil building.
The Artists: Colin Hopkins

Porcelain/ Light Shells

Colin typically produces large scale ceramic pendants employing up to 10kg of clay for each piece, however, as the result of a temporary wrist injury, he was limited to a maximum of 1.5kg balls of porcelain to create the pieces in this lighting installation. Each form is wheel thrown as finely as possible and then altered in its wet state with no turning or trimming carried out after the initial creation.

This collection of glowing vessels reflects Colin’s background as an improvising jazz pianist where spontaneity is celebrated and the freshness of each ‘performance’ is captured. By freely altering these simple, cylindrical forms, an additional layer of movement has been introduced that hints at other forces that might come to bear on the surface of an otherwise symmetrical object. The resulting ‘ripples’ create the illusion that these high red, vitrified objects might still be free to dance in the wind, like freshly washed sheets on a clothes line...

Colin describes his work as being “somewhere between pottery and modernist industrial design”. His background as an architect underlies his interest in lighting and how it affects space, whilst being a jazz musician influences the rhythm of his creative process.

The Artists:
Ilona Topolcsanyi

White Plates

Pottery has offered Ilona the chance to infuse a desire for functionality with her passion for creative expression. The task of creating a ‘dinner plate’ may at first seem a relatively straightforward task, and yet Ilona has discovered that great complexity can evolve from this deceptively simple starting point for many of her restaurant commissions.

As she explores the specifics of how each chef would like the plate to converse with their food, an infinite array of variables come into play that influence the form, texture, surface and subtle profile of each developed range. For Ilona, the food is the picture, the plate is the frame. With each new commission consideration is given to what makes a menu unique and how she can celebrate and enhance this through ceramics and optimise both the function and beauty of finished pieces.

Ilona has developed her creative practice by collaborating with chefs around Australia. As the demand for bespoke tableware has increased alongside demand for culinary distinction, Ilona has turned her creative considerations to how tableware frames and holds food.

The Artists: Helen Earl

Casuarina Objects
Helen Earl’s work invites use but offers no real function. She aims to provoke thought and consideration between everyday existence of our daily lives and the natural world in which we live.

This series of vessel objects, utensils and tools is inspired by walking amongst and collecting seed bearing cones and branches of the Casuarina and Allocasuarina trees. Experiencing the sight and sounds of movement in the trees when the wind blows suggests whispered stories of interdependence between people and natural spaces. The carpet of needles around the base of the trees creates a safe haven from snakes, the sweeping branches evoke brushstrokes and the Casuarina wood was a worthy timber for building a new colony.

In these works, Helen explores both her personal experience and cultural connections as well as the science pertaining to the tree species. Her intention is to take the viewer deep into the tannin stained waters of inland river estuaries and wind swept coastal landscapes that the Casuarina and Allocasuarina genus inhabits to reveal stories of shared human histories.

In her practice Helen Earl explores natural materials and/or the found object in conjunction with clay forms and components as a means of exploring connections between the domestic space and the surrounding natural environment.

Artist Statement

The intention of my art making practice is to explore narratives of connection between the domestic space and natural environments. By interweaving cultural history and the natural world, I hope to engage the viewer in reflecting upon the complexities of human interaction with the Australian landscape.

In conjunction with clay, I use found objects and/or aspects of their materiality to express my subjective experience of a natural place. The incorporation of these found natural objects in my ceramic works acts as a direct conduit for apprehending and appreciating the natural world and investigating the stories of connectivity between natural and cultural worlds.

This series of vessel objects, utensils and tools emerged from my collecting of seed bearing ‘cones’ of various tree species of Casuarina. Experiencing the sights and sounds of movement in the trees, when the wind blows through their branches, evoked both the sweeping mark making of brushstrokes and underlying stories of our land. One story is the tannin staining in coastal ponds after a storm which lead to the development of a tea coloured glaze palette.

In these works, I explore both my subjective experience and the cultural stories pertaining to this tree species. My intention is to take the viewer deep into the murky tannin stained waters and wind swept coastal landscapes that the Casuarina genus inhabits to expose stories of shared human histories.

Enquire
Find out more about locations where the Casuarina grows. What areas do they grow in? What is the landscape like?

Experience
How do the forms of Earl’s vessels reflect the qualities of the landscape?

Extend
Make a pot or tile and decorate it with a design based on a landscape familiar to you.
The Artists: Kenji Uranishi

So Near, Yet So Far

Kenji’s work explores ideas of nature and the built environment, place and belonging, and their interplay. A Brisbane resident for more than a decade, Kenji continues to find the Australian natural environment surprising, wild and unfamiliar—from the blackened bush, to sub-tropical rainforests. He is also captivated by the patterns he sees in architecture, nature and everyday life, the engagement between them, and how they change over time. These are the ideas from which he draws to reimagine shapes in porcelain.

This installation features slab-built and slip-cast porcelain objects — the latter representing a more recent development in Kenji’s practice. He enjoys exploring how both styles work in combination to respond to the ideas and inspiration he finds around him.

Since moving to Australia from Nara, Japan in 2004, Kenji has exhibited widely, including a recent solo exhibition in 2016 at Museum of Brisbane.

Aesthetic influences: Kenji Uranishi

Japanese-born ceramic artist Kenji Uranishi works predominantly with porcelain, after an early career of using stoneware clays. Kenji employs both slip casting and the slab technique to create installation and domestic objects with a distinctly modern edge, always paying homage to Japanese artistry of the past. Kenji’s work builds upon Edo period ceramics with its milky and translucent surfaces to create organic, domestic and architectural forms. Much like this period of Japanese art history, Kenji takes inspiration from his origins but accents his pieces with foreign ideas and aesthetics.

As the artist explains,

*Japanese life, social interactions, housing and even food are influenced by a long and rich history... Australia’s connection with Japan is very recent...this provides an environment for more objective study of my own country and culture, as well as an element of freedom from historical and cultural constraints. I’m also interested in how these experiences will encourage some self-discovery and provide me with a new perspective on my relationship with Japanese culture.*

Enquire
Further investigate techniques and ideas used in Japanese ceramics

Experience
Describe the qualities of Uranishi’s pieces in the exhibition. Compare them with the other works.

Extend
Find an object that has special meaning to your family. Explain the significance of the object. Does it relate to a special event or memory? Does the piece reflect your ancestry or cultural background?
Ceramic Shelters

Natalie’s works explore, blur and seek to understand the relationship between these two disciplines. The pieces in this collection are guided by Natalie’s practice of thinking with the hand and sketching with clay. The philosophy that all ideas are borrowed, nothing is original or new but rather invisible, is key to her practice.

Architectural intelligence, awareness and spatial fluency are intrinsic, subconscious traits appreciated by all. Unlike the traditional model making materials of balsa wood and cardboard, Natalie experiments with clay to explore design possibilities creating an element of surprise in her work as clay can sag, shrink and warp unexpectedly.

Natalie is a graduate architect and ceramicist practicing in Sydney, NSW.

The Artists:
Tania Rollond

Intrigued by the possibility of one (or several) things becoming another, and images or objects on the border of legibility and abstraction, Tania makes visual puzzles. Her drawings collapse elements from the physical, remembered, and imagined worlds into one another – hints of a roofline or a table can be partly teased out, but remain ambiguous. These are drawings about perception, in which her aim is to capture or even create a feeling of uncertainty, a situation that is irresolvable.

In this series, it is the end of autumn, at dusk. It is the moment of Octavio Paz’s poem ‘Between Going and Staying’ where “all is visible and all elusive”. The eye drifts, the mind sifts, and memories become objects.

Drawing and painting are fundamental aspects of Tania’s art practice that intersect poetically and rhythmically with her sculptural ceramic forms. Sometimes they are recognisable but more often only vaguely familiar.

Intrigued by the possibility of one (or several) things becoming another, and images or objects on the border between legibility and abstraction, Tania Rollond makes visual puzzles. Her drawings collapse elements from the physical, remembered, and imagined worlds into one another – hints of a roofline or a table can be partly teased out, but remain ambiguous. These are drawings about perception, in which her aim is to capture or even create a feeling of uncertainty, a situation which is irresolvable.

*My work combines a strong interest in drawing, or mark making, with ceramics. A particular quality of line is probably my signature – a rather fragile, delicate line, which often contrasts with very simple, minimal forms.*

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**Enquire**

Do Rollond’s vessels have a practical function? What purpose do they have?

**Experience**

Draw some of the textural patterns on Rollond’s vessels. How did she create these surfaces? How successful is Rolland’s integration of surface, form and colour?

**Extend**

Rollond’s work is influenced by Scandinavian design, Japanese ceramics, Aboriginal art and artists Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Richard Tuttle, Philip Guston, Agnes Martin and Jurgen Partenheimer. Research one of these influences and describe the elements you can see that are similar to Rollond’s work.
Fluctuation

Functional, sculptural and beautifully crafted, Ulrica’s work is refined and minimal. Her focused attention to detail in the design and crafting is obvious when you lift a lid, hold a cup and notice the fine detail in the surface textures or the variations of colour. There are echoes of the natural world; the swirls of sedimentary rocks created by the blending of clays and subtle glazes.

As Ulrica’s practice develops, she continues to discover new aspects of her materials and methods of making. Her work is focused on the characteristics brought out through the processes of the craft, and the diverse and intriguing qualities of the materials that emerge in the firing.

In this group of pots, Ulrica has worked with two types of vessels: lidded canisters and bottles. Using shifts in shape and glazed surfaces, she hints at the world of possibilities that emerge when working with clay. The groupings of pieces explore rhythm, oscillating between positive and negative space, form, surface and details.

Clay consists of fine-grained particles that are relatively weak and porous. Part of the firing process includes heating the clay until the particles partially melt and flow together; creating a strong, single mass. Through firing the pores are reduced in size, causing the material to shrink slightly. The fired clay is very hard and strong, although usually somewhat brittle.

Kilns are insulated chambers or ovens required for the firing of clay at high temperatures. Kilns can be as simple as a metal drum filled with wood chips to large expensive electric or gas kilns with timers and temperature gauges.

Some potters, notably from African countries such as Nigeria, place their pots in a shallow firing pit on a bed of dried cattle dung and then cover the pots with dried grass.

The Anagama kiln is an ancient Japanese kiln that uses wood in a long, sloping, single chamber tunnel to fire the pots. At one end are the fire and the pots and at the other end is a flue. This type of kiln requires a constant supply of wood and someone to continually stoke the fire.

Find out more about Kenji Uranishi’s slip casting work by visiting his website. 

What firing methods does Helen Earl use in her works exhibited in the exhibition?

Various types of kilns are used in different parts of the world.
Research a number of firing methods and kilns from Africa, Japan and North America.
Further research

SOURCES AND LINKS

Clay Intersections webpage:
https://australiadesigncentre.com/clay-intersections/

Clay Intersections Mud Map:

Hyperclay:

CERAMICS RESOURCES

A-Z of Ceramics:
https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/a-z-of-ceramics

Jeff Mincham – coil building process demonstrated
http://youtu.be/xr7GcekvJek

Lesa Farrant – discussion about inspiration and demonstration of slip cast process
http://youtu.be/OlNoBgZw9aM

TAFE Ceramics course information:

The Spruce Pottery basics
www.thespruce.com/pottery-basics-4127420

JAPANESE CERAMICS

Japanese Pottery:
https://www.britannica.com/art/Japanese-pottery

Wabi-Sabi:
http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/blueprintforliving/wabi-sabi/7360750