

THE USE OF CLAY AS A MEDIUM IN

CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE (1980-2003)

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The Use of Clay as a Medium in Contemporary Sculpture 1980-2003.

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the Masters Degree in Technology: Fine Art in the department of Fine
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I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted
for any degree or examination at any other institution.

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Approved for final submission



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the use of clay as a medium in contemporary sculpture made between 1980 and 2003. This research focuses specifically on discussing the artists' (both sculptors and ceramists) different approaches and attitudes to working with clay, from construction, manipulation, firing and glazing techniques through to their personal aesthetics and ideas. This dissertation examines how and why the contemporary sculptor trained in Fine Art is increasingly using clay as a medium in which to work. In addition, the candidate discusses the work of ceramic artists that have moved away from the constraints of earlier, more traditional, functional ceramics and have sought to push the boundaries of clay usage in terms of size, scale, mass and concept.

Chapter One presents a broad historical overview of the use of clay in sculpture. This overview illustrates the depth and breadth of the use of clay in the making of sculpture, spanning the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth Century, in order to highlight the significant shift in the use of clay in contemporary sculpture.

Chapter Two introduces and discusses a number of contemporary sculptors who work in clay in different ways. Section One examines artists using clay and other materials in the creation of installations. These include Antony Gormley and Andy Goldsworthy. Section Two discusses those artists working with clay in large-scale, including Jun Kaneko and Wilma Cruise. The architectural and environmental use of clay materials is discussed in Section Three; this includes artists John Roloff, who works with the kiln as sculpture and Joyce Kohl, who works with adobe assemblages and steel.

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PREFACE

This dissertation uses the following conventions:

- Titles of artworks, exhibitions and series are given in *italics*.
- Titles of books, journals and internet sources are underlined
- References are given using the Harvard method.
- Quotes are given using double quotation marks (“...”).
- Quotes of five lines or longer are indented and single spaced.

The Use of Clay as a Medium in Contemporary Sculpture 1980-2003.

Introduction

The candidate intends to research the use of clay in sculpture by selected contemporary artists (1980–2003). This research will focus specifically on discussing the artists' (both sculptors and ceramists) different approaches and attitudes to working with clay, from construction, manipulation, firing and glazing techniques through to their personal aesthetics and ideas. Within the Fine Art tradition, the use of clay in sculpture has generally been limited to preparatory work, maquettes and the initial modelling before being cast into bronze. This has changed; clay is no longer only part of a process to making art but is now part of the finished work. This dissertation will examine how and why the contemporary sculptor trained in Fine Art is increasingly using clay as a medium in which to work. In addition, the candidate will discuss the work of ceramic artists that have moved away from the constraints of earlier, more traditional, functional ceramics (pottery) and have sought to push the boundaries of clay usage in terms of size, scale, mass and concept.

The candidate has chosen to discuss the clay work of Antony Gormley (b. 1950) and Andy Goldsworthy (b. 1956) because both artists use clay in the form of installation. Jun Kaneko (b. 1942) and Wilma Cruise (b. 1945) were selected because both sculptors work with clay in a large-scale. John Roloff (b. 1947) and Joyce Kohl (b. 1949) were chosen since both work with clay and clay materials in an architectural way. The sculptors were selected because the

candidate believes that they represent a diverse usage of clay in contemporary sculpture that challenged its traditional use.

The candidate believes that through the synthesis of the available information on the topic and a critical discussion of the issues surrounding the use of clay in sculpture, this dissertation will add to knowledge relating to the use of materials in contemporary art making. The candidate's interest in this research topic is based on her own use of clay as a sculptural material in her practical work.

Definitions

In discussing the use of clay as a medium for contemporary sculpture, it is important to begin by clarifying terminology. The candidate will define terms as they are intended within the context of this dissertation. The Collins Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques (1993: 371) broadly defines sculpture as the creation of three-dimensional forms by the use of carving, modelling or assembly. The Guide to Art (1996: 794) notes that, traditionally, the term 'sculpture' was unambiguous and several techniques were employed in the making of it:

carving, in which stone or wood was cut to form a work of art; modelling, in which clay was built up into a work of art and sometimes cast in metal or plaster; and assembly, in which a work of art was constructed out of two or more different elements. However, since the Second World War, and since the 1960s in particular, any non-two-dimensional art form is sometimes referred to as a sculpture, including environment art and some conceptual art.

The use of clay in sculpture discussed in this dissertation will largely fall into the latter, post 1960s category, in which traditional boundaries of categorisation were challenged and broken.

For example, Atkins (1997: 61) refers to 'ceramic sculpture' as "three-dimensional artworks made of clay and to the campaign that elevated clay from a crafts material to the stuff of sculpture." This definition will be used, within the context of this dissertation, in reference to the work made by ceramic artists specifically. The candidate will use the term 'clay sculpture' in referring to the work of selected contemporary artists under investigation.

For the purposes of this dissertation, clay sculpture is defined as non-functional, three-dimensional artworks made of clay. This definition will also include sculpture made of unfired (raw) clay, sculptural works made of ceramic matter, such as the combination of clay and/or glaze materials, and clay used as part of an installation. It does not, however, include utilitarian or functional ceramics. The term ceramic sculpture is generally applied to those ceramics which are not used as pots, or where form, invention, and decoration are the sole consideration (Fournier, 2000: 58).

The term ceramic refers to all non-metallic, inorganic material that lend themselves to permanent hardening by high temperatures (Peterson, 1999: 11). West (1996: 332) claims that ceramics is a 'general term for articles shaped out of pliable, earthy materials and hardened through heating' and that, it usually refers to pottery, porcelain, and tiles. Functional ceramics, commonly known as pottery, refers to ceramics in domestic and ornamental use, including earthenware, stoneware, and bone china (or soft-paste porcelain) (Murray, 1994: 417). Pottery is generally produced with a particular purpose in mind where the function of the object dictates the form.

Clay is a basic material that has been used in the making of sculpture for thousands of years. Chemically it is a hydrous aluminium silicate with a formula of $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (Peterson, 1999: 129). Clay deposits develop as the result of the disintegration of granite and igneous rock (Turner, 1996: 324). Physical and chemical actions of wind, rain, erosion, and gases cause the continuous decomposition of rock into clay (Peterson, 1999: 129). There are two main categories of clay suitable for the production of clay works; these are primary and secondary clays. Primary clay is found on the site of its formation and is therefore purer, whiter, but less weathered and plastic than are secondary clays (Fournier, 2000: 64). The purest form of primary clay found is kaolin or china clay (Turner, 1996: 324). Secondary clays have been moved by glacial and rock-folding action, by water, or by wind (Fournier, 2000: 65). This results in the reduction of particle size, increased plasticity and a darkening of colour (Turner, 1996:324).

Clay can be further categorised into clay bodies namely: earthenware, stoneware, hard- and soft-paste porcelains. Most earthenwares have traditionally been made of secondary clays which have had little or no purification after being mined. Earthenware is porous, relatively light in weight and fired between 800-1100°C (Turner, 1996: 325). Stoneware has a higher firing temperature (1200-1300°C) which facilitates vitrification and may have a dense, sometimes glassy appearance (Fournier, 2000: 317). Porcelain is considered to be the purest form of ceramic, notable for its white, translucent appearance and is characterised by its hardness and ringing sound when struck (Murray, 1994: 417). Hard-paste porcelain is thought to have been developed from stoneware by the Chinese in the 5th century AD (Turner, 1996: 325). It is essentially constituent of kaolin and silica with a little flux, fired to a vitrification

point in the region of 1350°C (Fournier, 2000: 250). Soft-paste porcelain or bone-china is made of 5% bone ash and china clay, and was first made in Europe in imitation of Chinese porcelain (Murray, 1994: 417). It is characteristically opaque, with a soft, sometimes milky appearance and fires at a temperature of below 1300°C (Turner, 1996: 326).

Clay has been used as a process in the making of sculpture for thousands of years, from prehistoric times to the present; it has been used to make ritual objects, toys, models, and used to represent the human and animal form. Clay is a very direct material to use in that it is easily pliable and can be formed with our most basic tools, our hands. Sculptors using clay are attracted to the malleability of the material; clay can take the impression of an idea more obediently than wood, bone, and stone (Sandars, 1985: 174). A sculptor who plans to cast a work uses either wet clay, or modelling clay, for the original model. Sculptor's clay is selected for its moisture-holding and plastic properties (Mayer, 1993: 371). The clay sculptor is constantly challenged by the natural resistance of clay at different stages of the working process, and the degree to which it imposes its own limitations, so that the final work may look very different from the image in the artist's mind (Sandars, 1985: 171). Sculptors working in clay have overcome some of these limitations of the medium by making use of technological advances and the incorporation of other materials with clay. Examples of such work will be dealt with more extensively in future chapters.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Use of Clay in Sculpture: An Historical Background

In Chapter One, the candidate will present a broad historical overview of the use of clay in sculpture from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth Century, in order to highlight the significant shift in the use of clay in contemporary sculpture.

This chapter will examine the significant changes in attitude towards clay as a material for making art in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. This will highlight some of the important sculptors working in clay who facilitated this shift. The chapter will also consider the advancements in technology which allowed artists to push the boundaries of scale, mass and surface in terms of clay work.

Sculpture precedes drawing and painting in the archaeological record (Honour and Fleming, 1995:7). Clay was one of the earliest materials used for the making of sculpture, along with bone, ivory, wood and stone. Clay modelling was one of the first arts of representation. The basic technique of working with clay is modelling using the hands, fingers and tools for shaping. Smaller figures were usually shaped using the fingers and palms and larger ones were constructed by using coils to build up the form (Sandars, 1985:170). These basic working techniques have not changed and are still employed in clay work today.

The Nineteenth Century

During the Nineteenth Century, ceramics production increased considerably due to the new techniques available to the industry (Munsterberg, 1998: 133). These techniques allowed for the mass-production of ceramic ware, which became more affordable to the average household. Yet artistically, there was little innovation in clay work as the styles and shapes of the ceramic traditional past were “imitated rather than creatively interpreted” and it seems that “technical bravura became more important than artistic excellence” (ibid). William Morris (1834-1896), an English designer and craftsman, was an important figure in the rebellion against machine-made, stylistically derivative wares (ibid). Morris advocated the return to craftsmanship and an understanding of materials “as the only way to revive the spirit and quality of old craft traditions.” His ideas were articulated by the Art and Craft Movement, which exerted an important influence in ceramic work in Europe and the United States. As a result of this movement, ceramic artists concentrated on the pure form of the vessel and the decorated surface. The sculptural use of clay in the Nineteenth Century was generally reserved for the sculptor (ibid).

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) is considered the most influential and important sculptor of the Nineteenth Century (Icctrade.com, 2002). He spent some years before 1870 working in the studio of Carrier-Belleuse where he gained an excellent knowledge of the techniques of modelling terra-cotta (Le Normand-Romain, 2002). Rodin’s sculptural style was rooted in realism, but it was also imbued with a profound sense of the romantic (Infoplease.com: Rodin, Auguste, 2002). Even though Rodin’s major works were executed in marble and bronze, “the

initial stages of creating a form involved drawings and clay sketches” (Icctrade.com, 2002). These sketches were manipulated until a pose and scale for the fully modelled work in clay had been chosen (ibid). For Rodin the terms "nature" and "movement" were important criterion for the making of sculpture (ibid). He would always work from a model in the studio, modelled in clay, and “only when the clay figure possessed the required movement - in terms of both implied motion and animate surface” would he make a mould. Rodin made hundreds of moulds from his clay models, he then made plaster or clay casts from these moulds. These he would modify into a number of variations and were used for making improvements to the work and for experimenting (ibid).

In order to earn a living during his early years as a sculptor, Rodin produced a number of decorative portrait busts (Le Normand-Romain, 2002). *Young Girl with Floral Hat* (1865) (Fig. 1.1) is an impressive example of excellent modelling in terra-cotta. Rodin had a special ability for imbuing original characteristics to each of the works cast from the same mould. This he achieved by reworking and altering details of the clay cast before it was fired (ibid). Michelangelo’s work clearly influenced Rodin’s terra-cotta seated figures *The Titans* (1876) (Fig. 1.2) (Lampert, 1986: 195). In these works Rodin’s talent for handling clay can be seen in his freshness of execution. Tiny lumps of clay are used effectively to represent muscles on the figures with minimal alteration to the surface (ibid).

One of Rodin’s major commissions was the *Monument to Balzac*, which he received in 1891 (Xrefer.com: Rodin, Auguste, 2002). He made many studies for the sculpture, including the head, which he modelled separately in clay (Lampert, 1986: 128). His modelling of the head



Fig. 1.1 Auguste Rodin, *Young Girl with Floral Hat*, 1865
48.9 x 35.6 x 26.9 cm, Terracotta with plaster and paint



Fig. 1.2 Auguste Rodin, *The Titans*, 1876
Terra-cotta



Fig. 1.3 Auguste Rodin, *Head of Balzac*, 1903
Life-size, Glazed stoneware

is rough and 'unfinished' and the "anatomical forms are exaggerated or simplified in the cause of intensity of expression" (Xrefer.com: Rodin, Auguste, 2002). In 1903, in collaboration with ceramist Paul Jeanneney, Rodin had several casts made of the *Head of Balzac* (Fig. 1.3) (Lampert, 1986: 220). These were produced in glazed stoneware with colours ranging from brown to green (ibid).

Twentieth Century Clay Sculpture: New Movements in Clay Work

The Twentieth Century was a very innovative and creative period in the history of clay work (Munsterberg, 1998: 155). At the beginning of the century, the writings of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement were still influential to ceramic artists in their approach to clay. They believed in the value of craftsmanship over the machine productions of the ceramic industry. Their approach included a "Romantic bias toward the signature of the individual" (ibid). But the most important and influential artist-potter theorist of the time was Bernard Leach (1887-1979). Leach's argument was that the ceramic artist should be wholly responsible for the process of ceramic production, that their approach should be a truth to material and that strong, simple shapes should be used (like those employed by the great masters of Sung China, Yi Dynasty Korea, and Japanese tea ware) (ibid).

Leach spent over ten years in Japan where he was taught the Japanese approach to ceramics and it was there that he met Shoji Hamada, one of the great modern Japanese potters. He returned to England in 1920 and, with the help of Hamada, he opened a studio pottery at St.

Ives, Cornwall. The pottery produced Japanese-style stoneware decorated with freely brushed designs as well as English slipware pottery (*Fig. 1.4*) (ibid).

Leach and Hamada had a great influence in Europe and Japan, where they gave lectures and demonstrations (Peterson, 2000: 9). After the Second World War, they took their aesthetic ideas to the United States (ibid). In 1950, during one of these visits to Mills College, Leach demonstrated how wheel-thrown work could be more expressive (Lynn, 1988: 197). This was achieved by slightly altering the wheel-thrown shape; the potter as a result avoided imposing mechanical precision on an organic form. This was an oriental approach to clay, which Leach had adopted from his time in Japan (ibid). Both Leach and Hamada taught a particular work ethic (Peterson, 2000: 9). Although their approach differed from one another, they both taught a “philosophy of devotion to the duty of oneself” based on the Japanese approach (ibid). They provided the artist-potter with “an old-fashioned sense of integrity, and the idea that art is life and life is art”. They were influential in facilitating the artistic connections between East and West (ibid)

After the Second World War, European painters’ interest in clay was an important development for the history of ceramics (Munsterberg, 1998: 162). They were inspired by the vigour of folk and studio pottery and began to use clay as an art material (Peterson, 1999: 256). These artists made a great contribution towards the recognition of clay as a serious art medium. They included Picasso, Miró, Braque, Giacometti, Chagall, Léger, Rouault, Matisse, and many others. Some of these artists used clay merely as a sketch material, while others, notably Pablo Picasso and Miró, elevated clay to museum status (ibid).



Fig. 1.4 Bernard Leach, *Pot*, 1950
22 cm high, Stoneware with engobe and sgraffito design



Fig. 1.5 Pablo Picasso, *Head of a Woman (Alice Derain)*, 1905
Ceramic, Private Collection

Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) worked in a variety of different mediums throughout his lifetime. These included painting, sculpture, drawing and ceramics. Due to his enormous versatility, technical virtuosity and incredible originality, he is generally regarded as one of the foremost figures in Twentieth Century art. Picasso became interested in working with clay in 1906, when he was exposed to the ceramics of Paul Gauguin in Paris (Kangas, 1998). Picasso saw the potential of a “minor” material like clay and how it could be used in an intuitively expressive and highly aesthetic way (ibid).

Picasso's first ceramic sculptures, *Head of a woman (Alice Derain)* (1905) (Fig. 1.5) and *Woman Combing Hair* (1906) are examples of works that were eventually cast in bronze, but still exist in their original clay form (McCully, 1998: 32). Picasso frequently modelled his subjects initially in clay before casting into bronze, therefore his understanding and love of clay were well established by 1946 (Kangas, 1998).

In 1946, at the invitation of the owners Georges and Suzanne Ramié, Picasso began working at the Madoura pottery in the village of Vallauris, Southern France (McCully, 1998:26). He was intrigued by the history of the village, which had been a major ceramics centre in Roman times (ibid). Picasso's ideas for ceramic forms were worked out in numerous drawings (McCully, 1998: 33-34). These were composed of a number of thrown forms, which were transformed into purely sculptural shapes (ibid). The highly skilled staff at the pottery made the individually thrown clay elements (Kangas, 1998). Picasso would then combine, rework and alter the forms to suit his needs, often pushing the limitations of the material to achieve his goal (ibid).

Picasso's zoomorphic sculptures came about through a series of drawings that he did in September of 1947 (McCully, 1998: 35-36). These pieces were constructed by stacking thrown and rolled clay sections with a sculptural approach (*Fig. 1.6 and Fig. 1.7*). The zoomorphic pieces were very significant in Picasso's way of working, in that he "first 'saw' the form in his mind, with all the given elements, before his hands touched the clay" (*ibid*). He used this same conceptual process in his ready-made *Bull's Head* (1942), by appropriating found objects to create the final form. In the clay work, the initial process was the same, "but there was an additional stage: not only were ceramic forms treated as found objects, but their sculptural transformation, which involved the addition of modelled elements as well as the ceramic process of decoration and firing, was also carried out to some degree in the artist's imagination before their realisation" (*ibid*).

Another of Picasso's series is a group of sculptures in the form of woman (McCully, 1998:53). These figures have been associated with *tanagras*, small Hellenistic terra-cotta figurines. Picasso approached these works with spontaneity of expression. He worked on the freshly thrown form (which had been thrown by one of the staff) directly on the potter's banding wheel. He would press rolls of clay into the form to model arms and manipulate the form in order to create the figure's sensual curves (*Fig. 1.8*). Picasso's *tanagras* were usually decorated, like their predecessors, with coloured slips and oxides and were sometimes incised with details (*ibid*).

Picasso was fascinated by all aspects of the ceramic process, but was particularly intrigued by the potential of the decorated surface (McCully, 1998: 34). Through creative techniques of



Fig. 1.6 Pablo Picasso, *Condor*, 1947
Ceramic with brown slip



Fig. 1.7 Pablo Picasso, *Bird/Oiseau*, 1947-48
38 cm high, White earthenware with slip, wax-resist, partly glazed
Private Collection

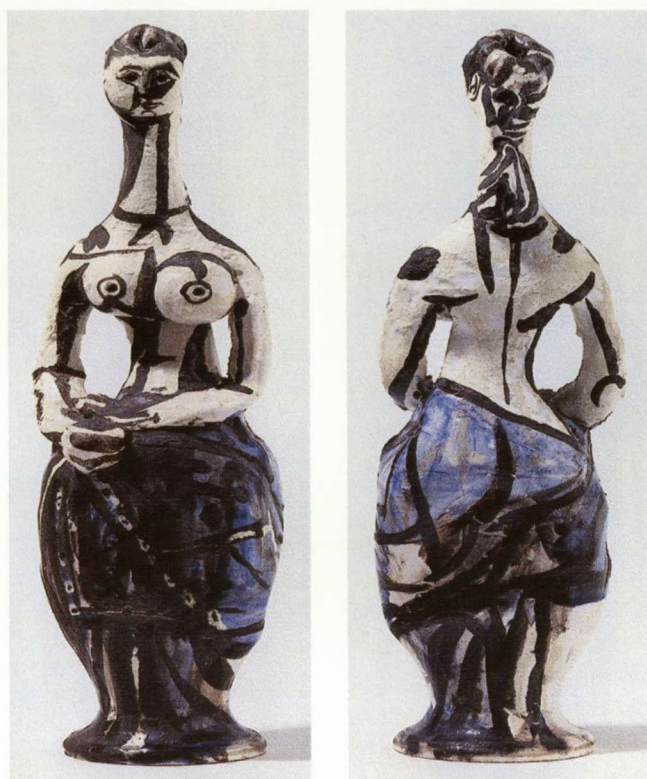


Fig. 1.8 Pablo Picasso, *Tanagra with Folded Hands*, 1950
29 cm high, White earthenware with oxides and slips, partly glazed



Fig. 1.9 Joan Miró, *Woman*, 1945
33 cm x 25 cm x 24 cm, Earthenware

using various oxides, glazes, coloured slips and enamels, he would often reinvent them by mixing them in an unorthodox manner. The unpredictable nature of the firing process and the resultant transformation of the colours and surfaces of the objects enthralled Picasso, although he was initially disappointed with the results. When he had acquired the necessary technical knowledge of the process, the changes in the kiln – both controlled and uncontrollable – became part of the creative process (ibid).

Picasso took up ceramics as an art form at the age of sixty-six, this was part of a burst of creativity and experimentation that followed the end of the war (Munsterberg, 1998: 155). Picasso, over a period of some twenty years, modelled, shaped, designed, decorated and carved over 3500 fired clay objects (McCully, 1998: 12). What really marked Picasso's contribution to ceramic sculpture was his ability to manipulate clay in such a spontaneous and intuitive manner (Levin, 1988: 196).

Although Joan Miró (1893-1983) is perhaps best known as a painter, later in life he explored many different forms of expression – lithography, sculpture, drawing and ceramics. The unpredictable nature of fire fascinated Miró and it was this aspect that drew him to experiment with ceramics as an art form (Fundació Joan Miró: Sculpture Room, 2000).

In 1944, Miró began working with ceramist Josep Llorens Artigas in his studio in Gallifa (near Barcelona) (ibid). Their working arrangement was a true collaboration, since Miró insisted that the works produced were signed by both artists (Kaledon, 2003). Miró did not just paint on clay; he worked on the forms and assisted Artigas with the firing (ibid). Miró

exhibited incredible versatility and ingenuity when working with clay, often breaking away from conventional expectations of the medium. For example, he would view a 'failed' work – one that had cracked or slumped in the making or firing processes – as an opportunity to make something new out of an otherwise discarded piece (ibid). In this way, he allowed the element of chance inherent to the material become a part of the creative process. In an interview with Yvon Taillandier, in 1959, Miró remarked:

The brightness of ceramics appeals to me: it seems to produce sparks. And then there is the struggle with the elements – clay and fire. As I have said, I am a fighter. You have to know how to control fire when you do ceramics. And it's unpredictable! That too is very seductive. Even when you use the same formula, the same kiln temperature, you do not get the same result. Unpredictability causes a shock, and that appeals to me now." (Peterson, 2000: 27)

In his ceramic work, Miró explored the same symbolic language and use of colour that he used in his paintings, while the additional aspect of three-dimensionality made them even more dynamic. His figurative clay sculptures were inspired by Catalan prehistoric and medieval art, and folk art (*Fig. 1.9*) (ibid). Miró's assembled clay forms were a synthesis of shapes from different sources (Levin, 1988: 196). He experimented with interesting ways of creating texture on the surface of the forms, often using objects found near Artigas' Catalan farmhouse (ibid).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Miró's ceramic and sculpture work allowed him to move into a larger-scale (Danto, 2003). This fulfilled his desire to produce monumental works for public places and thus enabled him to communicate with a larger audience (ibid). In 1955, he was commissioned to produce two large-scale ceramic murals for the UNESCO building in Paris. The murals, entitled *Wall of the Sun* and *Wall of the Moon* (*Fig. 1.10*), are covered in vivid



Fig. 1.10 Joan Miró, *Wall of the Moon*, 1957-58
215 x 750 cm, Ceramic mural, UNESCO Building, Paris

designs and were installed in 1958 (ibid). He received the Guggenheim International Award for this project (Fundació Joan Miró: Works, 2000). In 1960, Miró worked with Artigas on a ceramic mural for the Harkness Commons in Harvard University. It was made to replace the painted mural Miró had done in 1950, the original is now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York (ibid). Miró was fascinated by the challenge of relating large-scale tile murals to the architecture around them (Munsterberg, 1998: 162). A particularly beautiful mural, *Alicia* (1965-67) (Fig. 1.11) was commissioned as a memorial to Harry F. Guggenheim's wife and is now in the Guggenheim Museum in New York (ibid). This is an example of Miró's whimsical use of line but the colours he used in ceramics were more sombre than his paintings.

Both Miró and Picasso transferred the ideas and concepts that they were concerned with in their paintings and realised them in clay (Levin, 1988: 196). Levin (1988: 197) remarks: "through their unorthodox use of clay that allowed for humour, chance, and spontaneity, this group of artists rejected boundary lines and traditional rules inhibiting expression in clay".

In post-war America, ceramic art was characterized by an extraordinary vitality (Munsterberg, 1998: 169). Since there was no war fought on American soil and no political disruption, the aftermath brought about a surge of creativity and innovativeness in both style and technique (Peterson, 2000:11). Peter Voulkos (b. 1924) was one of these important ceramic artists who pioneered new ideas in clay work and improvements in equipment (ibid). Voulkos, a painter turned ceramist, started out making beautifully crafted traditional pottery (Munsterberg, 1998: 169). In 1952, Voulkos met Bernard Leach during one of Leach's lectures at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana (Lynn, 1990: 24). Both artists shared a mutual belief in the



Fig. 1.11 Joan Miró, *Alicia*, 1965-67
2.55 x 6 m, Ceramic mural, Guggenheim Museum, New York

Japanese respect for the clay vessel, yet their particular interests within Japanese clay philosophy differed. Lynn proposed that “for Leach the primary lessons of that tradition were the ideal of the noble artisan/potter and a sense of cultural continuity, while for Voulkos the Japanese tradition taught the value of the moment, the process of working clay, and the random effects of the kiln” (ibid). These differences in their approaches summed up the distinction between the established and the new (ibid).

In 1953 Voulkos travelled to New York where he met Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning (Lynn, 1990: 24). It was there that he encountered, first hand, the new process art - abstract expressionism. This new art form based on spontaneous individual expression was opposed to the representational concerns of the artists of the 1930s and 1940s. Critic Harold Rosenberg dubbed it “action painting”. Voulkos related to this new artistic expression because of its “valuing of the process of creating art as much as the art itself”. Voulkos believed that if recording the process of art making was all important then clay was for him the most suitable material to achieve that goal (ibid).

With this new concept in mind, Voulkos was invited, in 1954, to found a ceramics department at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles (Munsterberg, 1998: 169). Although Voulkos was “thoroughly grounded in the aesthetic and technical realities of making functional pots” he was ready to create his own ceramic statement (Lynn 1990: 24). Technical advancements in equipment were a crucial step in facilitating this change (Peterson, 2000: 11). These advancements allowed for larger kilns to be built as well as the development of electric gear-reduction-drive potter’s wheels that were powerful enough to take several hundred pounds of

clay (ibid). It was during this time that Voulkos abandoned functional pottery and began creating large abstract clay sculptures (*Fig. 1.12*) (Munsterberg, 1998: 169). Voulkos' use of large-scale forms, distinguished him from his contemporaries, since most potters at the time were still accustomed to making small hand-size vessels (Lebow, 1996: 35).

Voulkos harnessed his extraordinary energy and enthusiasm for clay and gathered a group of equally dedicated young ceramic art students (Lynn, 1990: 26). These students eventually became some of the most innovative California ceramists of the coming decades, and included Michael Frimkess, John Mason, Paul Soldner and Ken Price (ibid). Lynn (1990: 26) explains in her book Clay Today, how Voulkos' energy translated into this creative phenomenon.

The Otis group worked clay with an intensity and passion that was captured in their pots. They made both functional and non-functional vessels, wall pieces, and sculptures. Traditions that focused on elegant vessels or simple pieces were ignored; the process, the experience of the potter working clay, was all. Voulkos admonished his students that they must first know themselves and then allow that knowledge to express itself directly on the material. Working hard to explore the expressive potential of clay, the hours were long and intense. Kiln firings occurred at all hours, and work was valued just because it was produced, not for its ability to withstand firing. Craft was ignored; the action captured in clay was all important. The brown pot was transformed into the expressive process pot.

Voulkos' approach was non-traditional; he would hand-mix clay and make up glazes using random ingredients (Peterson, 2000: 11). He did not concern himself with testing the clays and glazes, leaving the resulting effect up to chance. This was a painter's approach to the medium, similar to Picasso's way of working with ceramics (ibid). Voulkos' monumental thrown and altered forms were often created by cannibalising piles of thrown pots that were reworked into more aggressive sculptural works (Lebow, 1996: 35). He would daub glazes,



Fig. 1.12 Peter Voulkos, *5000 Feet*, 1958
104 cm high, Stoneware



Fig. 1.13 Peter Voulkos, *Rondena*, 1958
167 cm high, Stoneware with cobalt, iron and white slips, and epoxy paint

slips and engobes onto the bulging, cutout surfaces that he wanted to disguise or help define the underlying form (*Fig. 1.13*) (*ibid*).

Voulikos is said to have commented: “when you come right down to it, I have a very selfish attitude – I don’t make pots for people but to satisfy myself”. In his article, The Art of Peter Voulikos (1996: 35), Lebow claims that this declaration was “a call for a new kind of ceramics from a new kind of craftsman, one whose single-minded pursuit of self-fulfilment transformed the sedate, pragmatic and predictable process of handcraft into a continuous act of curiosity, revelation and play” (*ibid*).

One of Voulikos’ students, John Mason (b.1927), was at first similarly influenced by Abstract Expressionism (Levin, 1988: 203-204). His early large jars decorated with strong black lines were inspired by the paintings of Franz Kline. Mason later became less concerned with exterior decoration and was more interested in form. He began altering wheel-thrown vessels by shaping the walls and distorting them into complex forms with the addition of hand-modelled elements. He was less devoted to the wheel than Voulikos, and Mason began investigating clay’s inherent plasticity. He did this by making large slab-built constructions combined with wheel-thrown forms (*ibid*).

In the mid 1960s, John Mason moved towards producing more geometric shapes (Levin, 1988: 219). His *Cross Form* (1964) and the circular *Dark Monolith with Opening* (1965) (*Fig. 1.14*), both had small openings to reduce their massiveness and have been smoothed by the artist’s hand. In later works, even these personal traces disappeared in the harshly geometric



Fig. 1.14 John Mason, *Dark Monolith with Opening*, 1965
165 x 157 x 60 cm, Stoneware



Fig. 1.15 John Mason, *Red X*, 1966
148 x 151 x 43 cm, Stoneware with low-fired glaze

sculptures; these forms are monochromatic, covered with a single luminous or dark glaze. Examples of these works, *Red X* (Fig. 1.15), *Cross*, *Oval Form*, and *Cube Form*, are all almost five feet in height. These works reflect Mason's rejection of gesture and spontaneity, which were hallmarks of Abstract Expressionism's emotionalism. Mason's harsh, symmetrical forms, slightly softened by their brilliant, silky glazes, were seen to have their roots in Cubism as they proposed a geometric repetition (ibid). Levin (1988: 219) also points out that Mason's forms have "much in common with the Minimalist sculpture of Tony Smith and John McCracken in which meaning is derived from the presence of the work".

The mid 1960s produced another group of artists whose use of clay was just as significant, yet whose work dealt with an entirely different subject matter from previous clay art (Levin, 1988: 227). Robert Arneson (1930-1992), one of Voukos' later students, was one of these artists whose clay work addressed the issues of social concern and popular culture (Lynn, 1990: 27). Arneson used clay as a tool, as a method of making his statement (Levin, 1988: 227). He rejected "the time-honoured ceramic preoccupation with the craft of working clay" (Lynn, 1990: 27). His funk art pieces were casually made and he paid little attention to "surface niceties" (ibid).

In 1963, Arneson began teaching at the University of California at Davis (Levin, 1988: 227). It was there that his choice of everyday objects as subject for clay began dominating his work. Arneson's background in cartooning which he had studied in college seems to have informed his slightly askew vision of the banal objects which he produced in clay. His images of toilets, bathroom scales and sinks seemed like "menacing, devouring, anthropomorphic machines",

which have been compared to Marcel Duchamp's ready-made *The Fountain* (1917). Yet Arneson's difference was that he "depicted his objects with surrealistic overtones and Miró-like symbols" (ibid).

His *Funk John* (1963) and *John Figure* (1965) (Fig. 1.16) were a rejection of Abstract Expressionism and used irony and the shock value of "carefully chosen and aggressively handled objects" (Weithorn, 2003). The latter piece is in the form of a crudely-shaped toilet, "covered with copralalia and fabricated ceramic excrement". Arneson's main insult was directed at the traditional establishment of potters and "their standards of good taste" (ibid).

In the 1960s, Arneson's satirical and ironic works retained the gestural quality of his pre-Pop Art vessels and sculpture (Levin, 1988: 228). His style continued to be expressionistic, which contrasted to the cool, detached approach of other Pop Artists like Andy Warhol. In 1965 Arneson used the ultimate Pop Art icon, the pop bottle, and played with commercial slogans as in his *Things Go Better with Coke* by the addition of a Seven-Up bottle to the six-pack. Another of his bottle works is the surreal *Diet Coke*, which is portrayed as six skinny bottles, imbuing inanimate objects with human traits. Levin (1988: 228), in her book American Ceramics, states that "Arneson's pop bottle was both a symbol of American culture and a three-dimensional pun linking the visual image to the verbal in his titles or words on the object itself" (Fig. 1.17). Arneson did a series of self-portrait busts, one of these, *Whistling in the Dark* (1978) (Fig. 1.18) is an example of the artist's caricature-like style.

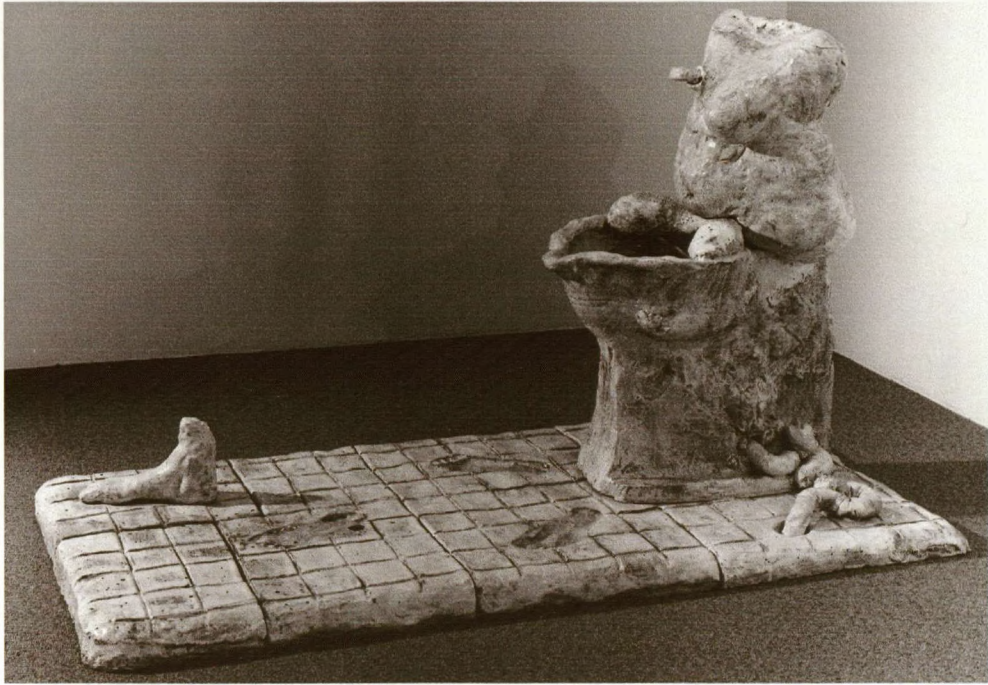


Fig. 1.16 Robert Arneson, *John Figure*, 1965
94 x 68 cm, Earthenware



Fig. 1.17 Robert Arneson, *6 Pack*, 1965
25.4 x 30.5 x 45.7 cm, Stoneware



Fig. 1.18 Robert Arneson, *Whistling in the Dark*, 1978
90 x 50.8 x 50.8 cm, Terra-cotta and glazed earthenware

These ceramic sculptors, who defied traditional clay's limitations, wished to enter the challenging art world, "with its unlimited artistic scope and demanding marketplace" (Lynn, 1990: 13). Lynn claims "this struggle is the *leitmotiv* of clay's development in American and [European] ceramics of the second half of the Twentieth Century" (ibid). An important factor in this battle was the reluctance of the established art world in accepting clay as a serious art medium, capable of expressing content. The challenge was further intensified by a second factor, the opposing view held by potters themselves as to clay's potential as an art material. For those within the European, English, and Far Eastern traditions, "... the clay vessel culture needed no expansion. Its history and formal restraints were judged sufficient" (ibid).

After the Second World War, the clay work of European artists like Picasso and Miró helped raise ceramics to the status of a legitimate art medium and its acceptance into the art establishment (Peterson, 1999: 256). During the 1950s a new perspective surfaced on American soil, its creative power was asserted in the form of Abstract Expressionism (Lynn, 1990: 13). It was under this movement's impetus, in which function was deemed unimportant, that clay was free to explore its sculptural aspirations (ibid).

These changes in attitudes towards clay as an art material paved the way for contemporary sculptors to explore the full potential of this versatile medium. At the end of the Twentieth Century and the beginning of the new millennium the range of clay usage is phenomenally diverse (Peterson, 1999: 258). These varying forms will be more extensively discussed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO:

Introduction

The range and diversity of clay work produced over the last twenty years has been phenomenal. Clay has been explored in all its forms, from its roots in tradition to the experimental use of its material qualities. One of its newest forms is its use in large site-specific installation pieces (Peterson, 1999:258). These installations are “often created as temporary displays in which a rapid process of weathering or transformation by other elements is part of the visual experience” (ibid). For the artists making such works, the idea and visible process are often more important than the actual clay object. Another trend in clay work is the use of the narrative. This is more traditionally object-orientated work but, at the same time, uses clay and ceramic techniques “to create fantastic, playful, surreal, or anguished statements about modern society” (ibid).

For artists working in clay, process is still an obstacle in the use of the medium. Working and manipulating clay so that it stands up through the drying and firing processes, is truly difficult, and is even more challenging when an increase in scale is thrown into the equation (ibid). Clay undergoes a number of changes throughout the working process. These changes are not only physical, in terms of texture, malleability, wetness and weight, but are visual as well. The colour of the clay changes as it is drying. It is completely transformed during the bisque firing and again when glaze, slips or metal oxides are applied to the surface and then fired. It is because of all these aspects that make clay, when compared to other visual media, “the most difficult art material in which to realize concepts” (Peterson, 1999:258). Clay artists struggle with their material to make a statement and sometimes that struggle is visible. Yet, there have been great

accomplishments made by many clay artists in overcoming the obstacles to scale, colour, control of form, decoration, and fire (ibid).

This chapter will introduce and discuss a number of contemporary sculptors who work in clay in different ways. Section One will include a group of artists using clay and other materials in the creation of installations. These include Antony Gormley (b. 1950) and Andy Goldsworthy (b. 1956). Section Two will discuss those artists working with clay in large-scale, including Jun Kaneko (b. 1942) and Wilma Cruise (b. 1945). The architectural and environmental use of clay materials will be discussed in Section Three; this will include artists such as John Roloff (b. 1947), who works with the kiln as sculpture and Joyce Kohl (b. 1949), who works with adobe assemblages and steel. Some of the works by these sculptors that will be discussed crossover into more than one category; that is, they are both large-scale and a part of an installation, or are concerned with the environment and are presented in the form of an installation.

SECTION ONE: Installation

The term installation art is difficult to define. Installation art resists definition “because of the impermanence of its exhibitions, and because it has picked up influences everywhere, from Futurism to Dada, from Assemblage to Minimalism (The Art and Culture Network, 1999-2003). In his article in The Guardian (24 November 2001), Stuart Jeffries broadly defines installations as “multi-media, multi-dimensional and multi-form works which are created temporarily for a particular space or site either outdoors or indoors, in a museum or gallery.” In the book Installation Art, installation is described as “a kind of artmaking which rejects concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationship between a number of elements or of the interaction between things and their context” (Hock, 1994). The context refers to the surrounding space and people viewing the work. The place itself is often altered so that “all its potential or repressed meanings are activated” (ibid).

Jeffries (2001) further claims that most installations do not share a set of essential characteristics. Some installations demand audience participation and interaction, some are site-specific and some are so conceptual that it requires the viewer to actively engage with the work in order to understand it. Installations have existed in many forms since Marcel Duchamp challenged assumptions about art by displaying a urinal in a New York gallery in 1917. Duchamp’s gesture resonated throughout Twentieth Century art, “discrediting notions of taste, skill and craftsmanship, and suggest[ed] that everyone could be an artist” (ibid).

In his article entitled, In Defence of Installation Art, Johnny ML (2002) pointed out that installation “happened out of a rebellion at the latter end of the avant-garde movement”.

He claims that:

Installation art was primarily an attempt to give a new meaning to the old materials. Pitched against the socio-political realities of the sixties and seventies, the artists (of the west) wanted to break the white cube limitations of a gallery. They literally broke the frames of the paintings and liberated them from the age-old clutches of conventional making and viewing of art... They brought down the sculptures from the pedestals so that the museum quality and thereby the authoritarian quality of the art object was violated (ibid).

Installation art became a vehicle for communicating concepts that could otherwise have been articulated only through words. It developed during the same period as new theories and practices like feminism and post-structuralism were themselves being established (ibid). Installation art has been one of the dominant art forms of the late Twentieth Century and continues to claim this position in the twenty-first century (Ely, 2003). Advances in electronic and digital technologies have allowed installation artists to extend their range of accessible media in which to realise their concepts (ibid).

Despite the fact that installation art generally presents itself in the context of the gallery, it is not considered typical gallery art since, usually, it has little commercial value (The Art and Culture Network, 1999-2003). Installation art is essentially “displayed and subsequently dismantled, leaving documentation as its only trace” (ibid). Bonita Ely (2003) points out that as a result, “artists have responded to the commodification of art by removing it from the centre of commerce, the gallery, and rendering it unsaleable”. The artists selected for discussion present their work as installations, yet their work maintains a strong sculptural presence.

Antony Gormley (b. 1950)

Antony Gormley is one of a generation of celebrated young British artists that came to prominence during the 1980s. He was born in 1950 in London, where he still lives and works. He studied archaeology and art history at Trinity College, Cambridge from 1968 to 1971 (University of Sunderland: 2000). He received the prestigious Turner Prize in 1994. In his early twenties, Gormley travelled extensively, which included a three year stay in India (Gormley, et al. 1993: 62). It was here that he worked intensively with the *vipassana* meditation teacher Goenka (ibid). In his essay on Gormley, Thomas McEvilley describes *vipassana* as “a type of meditation that emphasises what is called ‘bare attention’, through a direct, non-mediated attention to bodily states, perceptions and feelings that progressively counteracts the acculturated impulse to contain them in conceptual categories”. Returning to England in the late 1970s, he decided to study Fine Art and his focus would be on the body (ibid).

Gormley is best known for his figurative sculptures in lead, made from moulds done of his own body (Hart: 1991). These ‘body cases’ deal with what Gormley refers to as the ‘deep space’ of the interior of the body (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 32-34). Gormley acknowledges the influence of his *vipassana* training in the making of his sculpture particularly in its emphasis on the development of ‘awareness’ of the body. His working method is structured and methodical. His ideas are preconceived to a point, and subsequently realised in the process of making. Gormley’s lead sculptures convey a sense of weight and solidity; “his sculptures seem as much the precise registrations of a fixed sense of self as impressions of a constantly mutable body” (ibid).

Anthony Gormley's working method has been essential to the meaning, possibilities and limits of his sculptures (Saunders and Rochette, 1986: 169). Most of his lead sculptures were created using the same basic procedure; plaster soaked gauze was carefully wrapped around Gormley's posed body (*ibid*). Once set, the thin plaster shell was then cut off the body in sections and reinforced with fibreglass on the exterior (Castle, 1984: 195). Once the fibreglass cured, the outside of each section was finally covered with a thin sheet of lead. These sections were then assembled to form the slightly larger than life-size body case (*ibid*). Some of the lead seams were welded together and are less obvious on the greyness of the lead form (Saunders and Rochette, 1986: 169). Others seams were soldered with tin, these formed a clear grid which encloses the figure in a structural order (*ibid*).

According to Saunders and Rochette (1986: 196), Gormley's lead figures "are always naked, devoid of any social, cultural or historical reference, and they are, without exception, arrested in a basic state or single action: lying, standing, crouching, walking, looking". These poses tend to make the works appear distant or self-absorbed (*ibid*). This is further emphasized by the fact that Gormley erases details in the process of working the lead over the plaster and fibre-glass; toes and fingers become joined and facial features become smoothed and generalised (Gormley, et al. 1993: 70).

Gormley has given many reasons for his use of lead (Hutchinson, et al., 2000: 53). For him, lead is "ordinary, malleable, dense, undecaying and permanent" (*ibid*). Its surface has a mercurial property that allows light to be subtly reflected as well as absorbing it. Lead also has protective qualities, "it is impenetrable visually and radioactively... But it is also heavy, poisonous, and chemically irreducible – qualities that are of relevance in its role in

alchemical practice. Another association ... is its identification, in alchemy and the Jewish kabbala, with primordial matter" (ibid).

In an early work, *Land, Sea and Air I* (1977-79) (Fig. 2.1), the small and restrained forms, which anticipate *Field*, convey a sense of global urgency and desperation (Gormley, et al. 1993: 62-64). This work comprises three reticent and innocuous objects "made by wrapping lead sheets around an egg-shaped stone and filling the resulting hollow vessels with, respectively, the stone itself, water and air". McEvelley (ibid) claims that these egg-like packages, which allude to birth and growth, "are protected caches of precious elements threatened by ecological and nuclear reduction." These forms appear inert since they are insulated by the lead covering, yet they have the potential to be something else, "a hope for the future" (ibid). *Land, Sea and Air I* examines the unsteady relationship between culture and nature, where nature hopefully survives the threat of civilisation (Gormley, et al. 1993: 66).

Three Bodies (1981) is also composed of three lead-wrapped forms, only these are considerably larger (ibid). These forms seem to be sculptural representations of a shark, a pumpkin, and a boulder, which are categorized within the natural order of animal, vegetable and mineral. However, these lead-enclosed forms are filled with soil; as McEvelley (ibid) describes them: "their inner natures are revealed as identical, or as identically founded upon the nourishing matrix of the earth". The 'earth' can be interpreted as a kind of prime matter that took on the outward appearance of these forms but also kept its inner identity as "the loam of potentiality", the same source from which, later, *Field* would emerge. The unseen substance within the different forms suggests that a principle of unity (their sameness) which underlies these objects is stronger than the



Fig. 2.1 Antony Gormley, *Land, Sea and Air*, 1977-79
20 x 31 x 34 cm (each unit)
Lead, stone, water and air



Fig. 2.3 Antony Gormley, *Out of this World*, 1983-84
110 x 130 x 90 cm
Lead, terra-cotta, plaster and fibreglass

forms' outward diversity (ibid). McEvilley further suggests: "in these early works, nature is seen as a substratum on which culture depends and feeds. Out of prime matter, by a process of nourishment and growth, the life-forms develop. Into prime matter they will return" (Gormley, et al. 1993: 66).

In the mid-1980s, Gormley became interested in the "idea of a mind-generated rebirth" which led to his incorporation of a second essential material in his work: terra-cotta (Gormley et al., 1993: 78). His exploration of the ideas of expansion and transformation were most successfully realised in the works made of clay (Hutchinson, et al. 2000:91). Terra-cotta has since progressively taken over from the inorganic lead (Gormley et al., 1993: 78). An important aspect of his choice of terra-cotta is its connotations with "prime matter or primeval mud", and its association with the creation myth, out of which the creating deity fashioned the first beings (ibid). Gormley also associates clay with a sense of freedom, not being bound by an imposed form but allowing the clay forms to occur naturally (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 91 and 130). In an interview with Declan McGonagle, in 1993, Gormley explains his use of the material.

In about 1984 I realized that clay was an important material. There was a time just after I moved into a new studio when it was just full of clay and I was trying to find a way of making that wasn't imposing an image on the material but allowing a one-to-one relationship between my body and the body of the clay. The forms arose naturally from the space between my hands; clay was another way of dealing with the flesh (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 130).

Gormley has, in a number of works, repeatedly used the motif of the emergence of a smaller figure or object from a larger one (usually a lead figure) (ibid). This second element serves to counter the lead figures' tendency towards generality by employing an unexpected interaction with the world (Saunders and Rochette, 1986: 169). In *The*

Beginning, the Middle, the End (1983-84) (Fig. 2.2), a smaller terra-cotta figure sits atop the lead figure, a metallic pool seeps out of its feet. *Out of This World* (1983-84) (Fig. 2.3) is composed of a similar terra-cotta figure which is perched on a dismembered lead head. In *Idea* (1985) (Fig. 2.4), a small clay egg-like form is balanced on the head of a walking man (Saunders and Rochette, 1986: 169). Another comparable work is *Matter* (1985) (Fig. 2.5), in which a bulbous terra-cotta form appears to be developing from the groin of a reclining figure (Hutchinson, 2000: 55). The small emerging clay figure/form of each of the above mentioned works, appear to be “a mental excrescence or dream creation of the larger lead figure” (Gormley, et al., 1993: 78). McEvelley suggests that the smaller form could be interpreted as “the dream of the future about to emerge from the fact of the present. Again, it is consciousness emerging from matter after the long ordeal of its alchemical purification” (ibid).

Man Asleep (1985) (Fig. 2.6) sees the first appearance of the terra-cotta homunculi¹, an idea which Gormley expands further in later works. This work has several dozen of these terra-cotta figurines walking past the head of a sleeping lead figure (Gormley, et al. 1993: 80). For Sandy Nairne (Nairne, et al., 1987: 108), *Man Asleep* is about the state of dreaming, which, she says, is commonly thought of as “a subconscious process parallel to creativity and the imagination, a place for the expression of fantasy and desire, of ambition and frustration.” Nairne suggests that the ‘dream’ of the sculpture could also represent “a mass of people, a consciousness of unity, or a moment of collective determination.” The clay figures seem both single-minded and worn out; they can be seen as both individuals as well as a crowd (ibid). Gormley has also made the association of this work to “Adam’s

¹ Homunculus: n. pl. Homunculi. A little man; a dwarf; a manikin. (Sterne)



Fig. 2.2 Antony Gormley, *The Beginning, the Middle, the End*, 1983-84

235 x 300 x 75 cm

Terra-cotta, lead, fibreglass, plaster and air



Fig. 2.4 Antony Gormley, *Idea*, 1985
200 x 64 x 62 cm
Lead, fibreglass, plaster, air and terra-cotta



Fig. 2.5 Antony Gormley, *Matter*, 1985
54 x 56 x 208 cm
Lead, plaster, fibreglass, terra-cotta and air



Fig. 2.6 Antony Gormley, *Man Asleep*, 1985
72 x 50 x 150 cm, 20-22 cm (terracotta figures) x 11 m
Lead, terra-cotta, fibre-glass, plaster and air

sleep from which Eve was produced and, through her, the stream of the humanity of the future" (Gormley, et al. 1993: 80).

For Gormley, because clay retains the mark of the artist's hands, it is "the manual result of mental processes both conscious and unconscious" (Nairne, et al., 1987: 108). Clay has an immediacy about it and is a responsiveness to the touch, in contrast to the mechanical, beaten surfaces of the lead figure which seem to deny the artist's hand. Yet Gormley has been more involved in the making of the lead figures, since he used his whole body not only his hands (ibid).

Man Asleep is the main precursor to Gormley's impressive *Field*, from which the lead figure is completely absent; the terra-cotta figurines "produced somehow as forms of its consciousness," have taken over (Gormley, et al. 1993: 80). Gormley made several versions of *Field* from 1989 to 1994. In these versions the number of terra-cotta figures increased considerably from one hundred and fifty in *Field I* (1989) (Fig. 2.7) to forty-two thousand in the later versions (ibid).

In *Field II*, more commonly known as *Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (1989) (Fig. 2.8), Gormley made one thousand one hundred figurines from clay extracted from a pan in the vast central Australian desert (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 82). This was made in conjunction with *A Room for the Great Australian Desert* (1989), which consisted of a concrete box – "a container proportioned in such a way that it could accommodate the figure of a man crouching on the ground with his knees close to his chest" (ibid). This box, placed on the same pan from which the clay was drawn, had four openings at specific

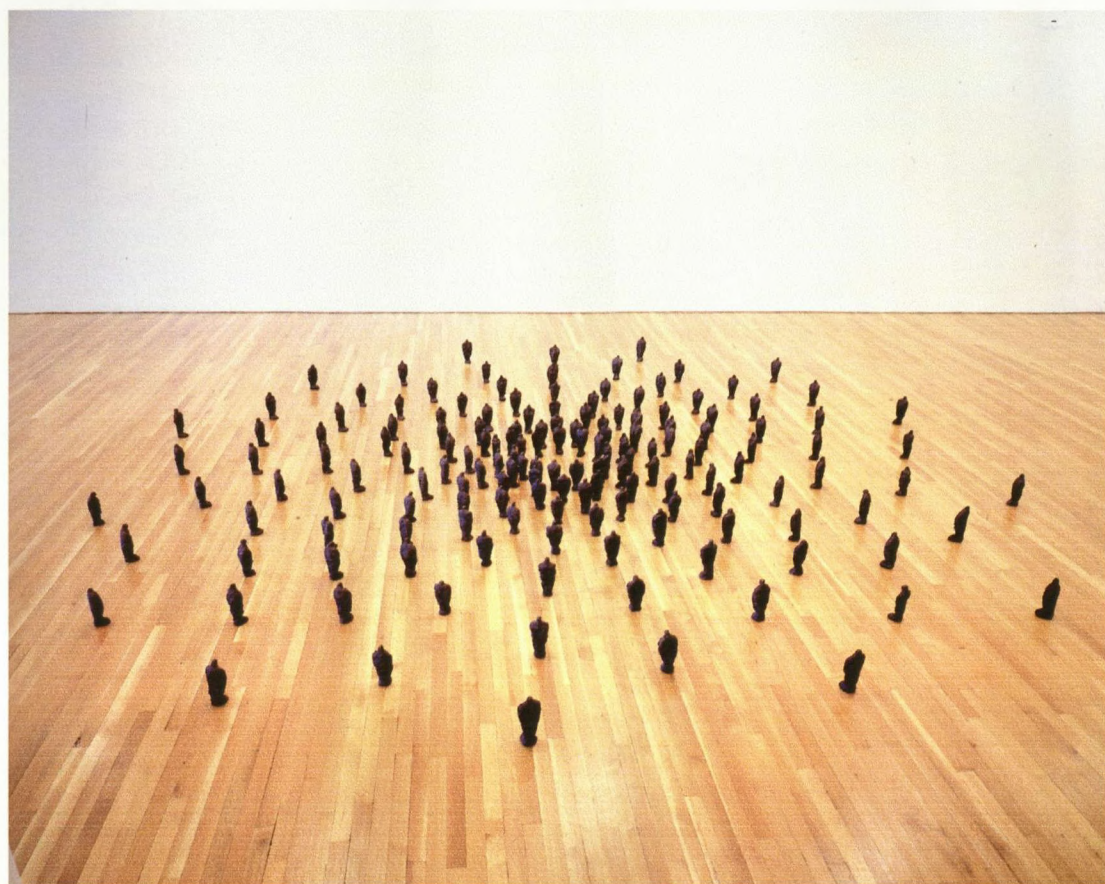


Fig. 2.7 Antony Gormley, *Field I*, 1989
Installation at Salvatore Ala Gallery
156 individual 20 cm high figures facing inward, 6 m diameter, Terra-cotta

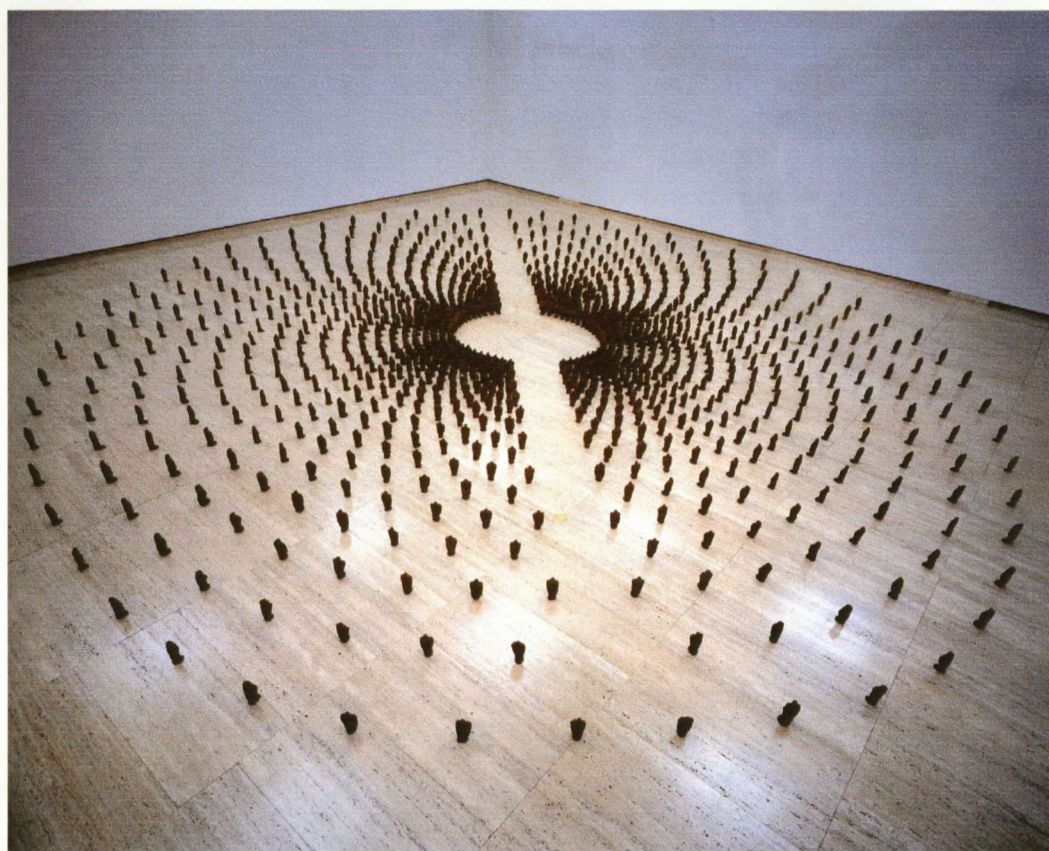


Fig. 2.8 Antony Gormley, *Field II*, 1989,
Installation at Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
1008 individual 22 cm high figures facing inward
12 x 14 m, Terra-cotta

points – ears, mouth and penis. These openings represented Gormley's longing to maintain contact with the outside world (ibid).

In *Field II*, each figure was individually modelled and unique. They were arranged in two hemispheres around a central passageway that divided the floor space diagonally. The clay figures were spaced closely together near the centre of the room and “radiated out like the lines of force of a magnetic field” (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 82). Hutchinson explains: “the viewer, inevitably attracted to the central space, was then positioned in the middle of a field of energy, surrounded by figures with upraised eyes’ (ibid). The viewer, at the same time, experienced a sense of feeling vastly bigger than the fragile figurines, with their upward gaze as if in supplication. When contemplated together, these two works “reflect a new spirit of openness, humility and a willingness to accept the responsibility of being human in a material world” (ibid).

For Gormley, the *Field* series embodies what he refers to as a ‘return to desire’ (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 91). Hutchinson (ibid) observes that if the lead body cases are interpreted as “images of withdrawal from the chaos of the outer world into a state of still awareness or contemplation”, then *Field* can be seen to be their opposite. Gormley has stated: “I wanted to ... start with confrontation with the ground, and in that ground to plant possibility. I also wanted to make something that challenged my idea of form – of the refinement of form and how that happens” (Grande, 1993: 101). Gormley describes the process of the evolution of the *Field* figures:

The forms arose naturally from the space between my hands; clay was another way of dealing with the flesh. Out of this the very first ideas of the *Field* work came. I must have made several hundred before they had eyes and then I realized that eyes were life! Somehow that was a return to desire. With *Field*, joy in material contact is there: it is about touch and touch expressed for its own sake. Touch not just of my hands but of many people's hands. Gone was the feeling that in order to be

serious there had to be extreme distance between the personal engendering of the work and its public showing (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 130).

The idea behind the later versions of *Field* was simply to bring together a group of people to work with earth and to create a collective body (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 94). Gormley went to Mexico “hoping to find people who would work with clay in a natural way” (ibid). In December 1990, he enlisted the help of the Texca family, brick makers by trade, from the Parish of San Matias, Cholula (Gormley, et al. 1993: 19). In this particular area of Mexico, there are many families of brick makers working outside and in open-walled buildings called *gallerias*. There were about sixty men, women and children, ages six to over sixty, who worked on this project, most of them members of the extended family. While this group of people were accustomed to working in large numbers of units (as in the production of bricks) (ibid), this project was less about a standardised, mechanical labour and more about a tactile, intuitive process of making (Grande, 1993: 101). It also demanded a different response to the material. In an interview with Ernst Gombrich, the artist explains:

For me the extraordinary thing about the genesis of form of the individual figures in *Field* is that it isn't about visual appearances at all. What I've encouraged people to do is to treat the clay almost as an extension of their own bodies. And this takes some time. This repeated act of taking a ball of clay, and using the space between the hands as a kind of matrix, as a kind of mould out of which the form arises (Hutchinson, et al. 2000: 8).

Gradually, each person evolved his or her own way of working and their own simplified variation of the chosen form (Grande, 1993: 101). Gormley set specific parameters which the figures had to conform to, yet these were, at the same time, unrestrictive (Gormley, et al. 1993: 19). The pieces had to be hand-sized and easy to hold, the eyes had to be deep-set

and close together, and the proportions of the head to the body had to be relatively accurate (there was a tendency to make the heads too large) (ibid).

In his essay from the book Field, Gormley described how the Texca family members developed confidence from their early tentative beginnings to achieving a natural familiarity with the form and material (ibid). At the beginning of the project, some found it hard to accept that differences were tolerable since a brick is evaluated by its conformity to a standard (Gormley, et al. 1993: 22). Gormley (ibid) wrote: "What we were doing was each finding our own way of making a hand-sized equivalent for the individual body as fast as possible at the same time we were creating this image of the collective body."

The clay used in making the pieces was a rich terra-cotta that was dug from the valley floor a few miles to the southwest of San Matías (Gormley, et al. 1993:19). The process (*Fig. 2.9*) involved kneading a lump of clay that felt comfortable and approximately hand-sized, swiftly moulding the body between both palms, pulling the end to form the head and pushing the eyes in with a sharp point. The figures were, firstly dried on their backs to firm up before being stood up onto their feet, ensuring that the heads looked upward and then allowing them to dry out completely. Once dry the pieces were oil-fired in three large brick kilns. They were packed between layers of bricks and tiles inside the kilns. The firing lasted twenty-four hours and took a couple of days to cool down before the work could be unpacked. Their position in the kiln affected the colour of the individual pieces: the ones closer to the flame were darker, those on top and sides were lighter, and most were a rich orange-red (ibid). The total number of pieces was forty-two thousand and it took three weeks to complete the project.



Fig. 2.9 Forming a figure for *Field*, December 1990
St Mathias, Cholulo, Mexico

In the book Field, Gormley wrote:

A lot of my work is completed by others; part of its potential comes “through” people – particularly in this work. Of course, there was a vast range of response – for some collaborators, the whole thing was a game; the work became a kind of pool which contained boredom but for others like Santiago and Tomás was a source of inspiration. What started as labour turned quickly into a kind of self-generating energy in which people could celebrate their differences (Gormley, et al. 1993:22).

Field is widely considered to be Gormley’s most important work to date (Ball, 1994). Its different versions have been exhibited extensively throughout North America, Britain and Europe. The installation of *Field* held at the Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York in 1991, was made specifically for this space (Netzer, 1991: 44). The gallery also has a side exit allowing the figures to be viewed in profile (ibid). Robert Taplin describes his first encounter with *Field* (Fig. 2.10):

One advanced down the gallery’s long corridor toward... [the] installation with a rising sense of bewilderment and awe. There, filling every corner of the large main room and almost spilling into the hallway, were row upon orderly row of shin-high mud men, a carpet of small handmade terra-cotta figures, all facing forward (Taplin, 1991: 147).

Each of the thirty-five thousand figures, ranging in colour from a soft orange to a rich, burnt reddish-brown, were unique and “bore the imprint of the human touch” (Netzer, 1991: 44). The figures were between 7.5 cm to 30 cm in height. Netzer commented that if it was not for their vast numbers, these small figures that the viewer towered over would not have had the same overwhelming impact. She pointed out that the installation drew one’s “attention to the contrast between the hand-size, handmade organic horde and the enormous, white austere commercial gallery space” (ibid).



Fig. 2.10 Antony Gormley, *Field* (view from corridor), 1991, Installation at Salvatore Ala, New York, 35 000 individual 10-30 cm high figures facing forward, Terra-cotta

For Barry Schwabsky (1991: 66) *Field* brought to mind the tomb of the first emperor of China, in Xian, where seven thousand life-size, terra-cotta warriors were found, each apparently modelled on an individual soldier (*Fig. 2.11*). He observed that in *Field* what was so dizzying and overwhelming was not just sheer quantity as such, but “a quantity of similar but not identical things” (Schwabsky, 1991: 66). He described the artist’s collaboration as calling upon the Texca family “to begin from zero as sculptors ... [and] in so doing, he was creating a sort of experiment in the science of forms, compressing within the span of a month the first long stage in the gradual process of transformation” (*ibid*). He commented that this work is not just sculptural but “metasculptural,” that Gormley found “a primal sense of sculpture not through reduction but through multiplication” (*ibid*). Gormley’s installation challenged many of the Western world’s “sacred assumptions about art – the perpetual refinement of form, the notion that completion realises intention, and the idea that uniqueness equals value” (Grande, 1993:101).

Gormley’s earlier work generalised the individual, but in *Field* he has done the opposite; he managed to individualise the mass. Every figure has its own character, “its own pathos, its own dignity” (*Fig. 2.12*) (*ibid*). When confronted with *Field*, Taplin (1991:147) explained that the individuals “blurred into an undifferentiated mass as they stood en masse, waiting quietly”. The figures near the front had a distinctive personality, with hunched shoulders and barely articulated bodies, each represent “people not yet born” (Grande, 1993:101). The ones further back become an expanse of subtle fluctuations in colour which created a sense of a vacillating, flowing, living field (Taplin, 1991:147). McEvelley (1993: 84) likened them to late Neolithic and early Bronze Age clay figurines from Mesopotamia, Indus Valley and elsewhere. They have the same “infantile innocence and vulnerability in their rudimentary, barely formed bodies” (*ibid*). Schwabsky (1991:



Fig. 2.11 Antony Gormley, *Field*, 1991,
Installation at Salvatore Ala, New York
35 000 individual 10-30 cm high figures facing forward, Terra-cotta

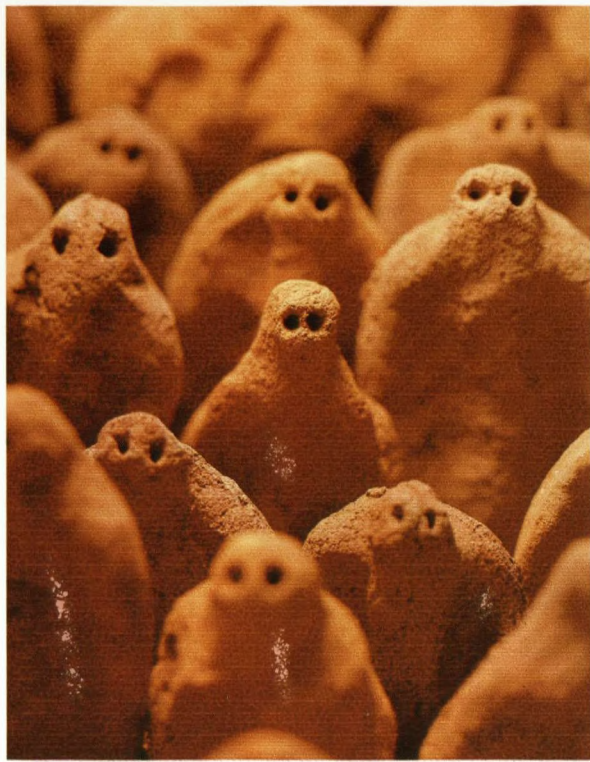


Fig. 2.12 Antony Gormley, *Field* (detail)



Fig. 2.13 Antony Gormley, *Field* (detail)

66) remarks: “these thousands of pairs of eyes look up, not forward: regarding us, and not without reprehension. This is why the encounter does not evoke the illusion of a god-like, omniscient experience ... but instead allows us the reality of a flawed, human experience” (Fig. 2.13).

There has been a great deal of debate surrounding the production of *Field*. Some have accused Gormley of exploitation. He has also been criticized for playing the part of the “artistic colonialist,” yet assistants have always played an important role in the making of his work (Netzer, 1991: 45). Others see it as a similar process to artists like Alexander Calder’s and Donald Judd’s method of manufacture, or Jeff Koons, who has his multiples made in artisan’s factories. Gormley has himself said that part of the proceeds from the sale of *Field* will go to the Texca family (ibid). When making the work, Gormley understood that there would be criticism about the collaboration in the production of *Field*.

Gormley wrote:

There are so many contradictions. I realize that I was following in the footsteps of my father, who went to the warm parts of the globe to set up factories to make thousands of pills (penicillin mainly). I realized that I would be accused of exploitation. But I also saw that both things were part of the work, or part of the work that art had to do. I needed to work with others and with the earth, to do something direct with fire and clay, and to do it like some kind of party, a celebration (Gormley, et al. 1993: 21).

Antony Gormley’s personal and artistic aspiration, which is “the transformation of the individual and communal body”, has achieved its absolute expression in these amorphous bodies, made by a collective (Hutchinson, 2000: 94). He has claimed that, for him, *Field* encapsulates two ideals: “the spirit of the ancestors; the primal population made of the earth, where mud takes on the attributes of the sentience and the evocation of the unborn - those who are yet to come” (ibid). It is this theatrical aspect to *Field* that makes it so

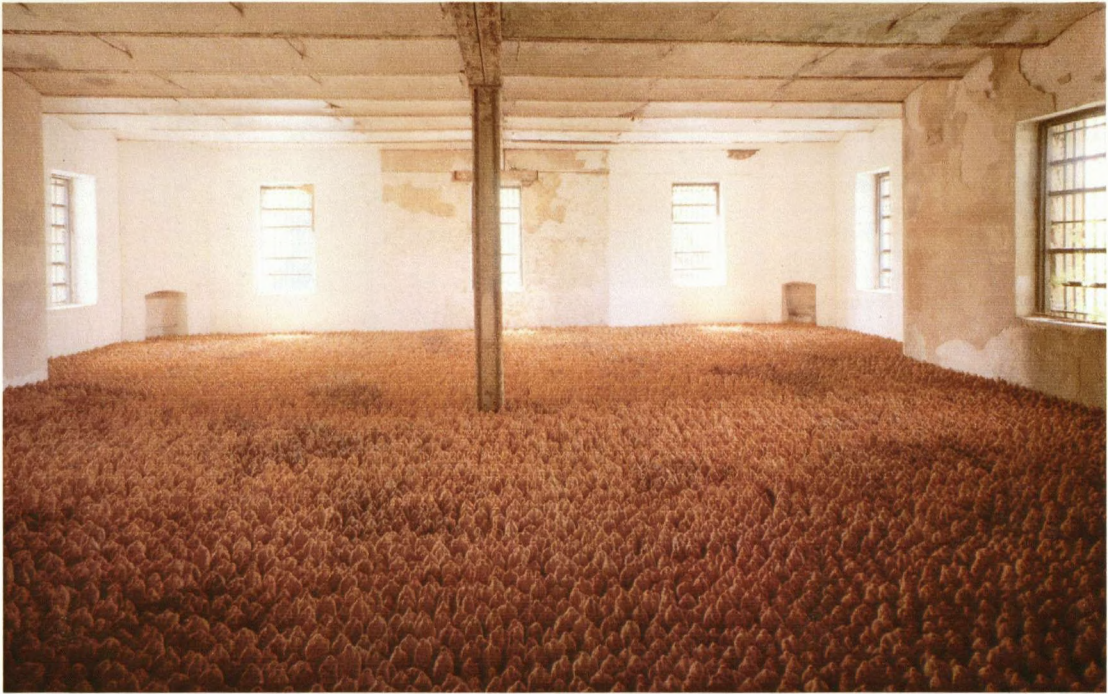


Fig. 2.14 Antony Gormley, *Field*, 1991
Installation at the Old City Jail, Charleston, South Carolina
Variable size, 8-26 cm each
Terra-cotta, approximately 35 000 figures

engaging (Ball, 1994), a landscape of gazes, “which look to us to find their place” (Hutchinson, 2000: 94). *Field* allows the viewer access to a “big picture” and draws one into a more personal engagement with the work (*Fig. 2.14*) (Ball, 1994).

Andy Goldsworthy (b. 1956)

Andy Goldsworthy, born in Cheshire, England in 1956, is an internationally renowned artist (SITE Santa Fe, 2000) and one of the most engaging sculptors to emerge from Britain in the last few decades (Bourdon, 1993: 121). Goldsworthy is known for his extraordinary handiwork with natural materials (*ibid*) and has worked everywhere from gallery spaces in London, New York and San Francisco to the Australian desert, the mountains of Japan and the North Pole (SITE Santa Fe, 2000). His work has been shown in numerous galleries and museums throughout the world, often in the form of colour photographs which document his works in the landscape and, less often, in the form of installation, where nature is literally brought into the gallery space. Goldsworthy is based in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, where he lives and works. This area is still one of his preferred landscapes in which to produce his work (*ibid*).

Goldsworthy, working in the landscape, sculpts natural materials such as leaves, twigs, bark, rocks, icicles, snow and clay into abstract and sometimes startlingly elaborate configurations (Bourdon, 1993: 121). The works in the landscape are site-specific and ephemeral. Often these pieces last only long enough for Goldsworthy to document them in colour photographs (*ibid*).

Goldsworthy began working on farms at the age of thirteen. It was during this time that he had his first experience working outside and his intimate relationship with nature began (Lee, 1995: 8). The artist explains: "... the stacking of bales, the cutting of hedges, the ploughing of fields... the marks that you leave behind... More than that, the experience of being outside and making things was very, very rich and that affected me very deeply" (ibid).

While at Preston Polytechnic in Lancashire, at the age of nineteen, Morecambe Bay became the unlikely setting for his furrow into making art (Lee, 1995: 8). The artist explains his introduction to making art in the landscape:

One day I went to the beach and made a piece of work. There we all were in art college fighting over corners and being territorial – and I just sort of went out. Working on the beach, with the daily rhythms of the beach, was a greater teacher... I actually learnt because I was making something, and this represented a very simple but profound change in my art (ibid).

Since then, Goldsworthy has chosen to work outside and currently spends at least six months of the year travelling to different sites in many diverse countries making the type of art that is distinctly his own (Lee, 1995: 8-9). Goldsworthy has said that he tries, whenever possible, to make at least one or two artworks a day while on his outings (Public Art Fund, 2003). For him, the ephemeral work he does is a form of experimentation (SITE Santa Fe, 2000). He says that when he goes on his excursions into nature, he rarely has any clear ideas of what he wants to make. He explains: "So I tend not to use tools, because I don't know what I'm going to make, and I do love using my hands. But I've been working like this for 20 years, so every day I've gone out I've learned a little more about the materials, the places they come from" (ibid).

Early on, his predominantly ephemeral work was mainly about a particular place at a particular time (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 1). Since then, he has increasingly broadened his focus to encompass references to the history of a place or landscape. He also acknowledges that when making a work, he believes that “its completion marks the start of its life, the beginning of a journey” (ibid). “When I began working ... at Morecambe Bay, I was interested only in the making and moment of individual works. The more I worked, the more aware I became of the powerful sense of time embedded in a place” (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 7). He realised that the moment of his being there and working a material was “bound up with what had gone on before” (ibid).

Goldsworthy has always been interested in seeing work change and decay, yet this was usually as a spectator. In the 1990s, he became increasingly involved in not simply waiting for the decaying process to occur, but in making change an integral part of a work's purpose. With change, Goldsworthy has said that the work “becomes stronger and more complete as it falls apart and disappears. I need to make works that anticipate, but do not attempt to predict or control the future. In order to understand time, I must work with the past, present and future” (ibid).

Goldsworthy used this natural process of change in installation works such as *Snowballs in Summer* (Fig. 2.15) (shown at the Old Museum of Transport, Glasgow, July 1989) (Macritchie, 1995: 93). The snowballs had been made the previous winter in Perthshire and kept in cold storage until they were shown. The artist wrote at the time that “the snowballs will speak louder having been made in the mountains yet melting in the city... [The] storage, transport, delivery and unloading become part of the making [of the piece]” (ibid).



Fig. 2.15 Andy Goldsworthy, *Snowballs in Summer*, July 1989
Shown at the Old Museum of Transport, Glasgow
Variable size, Snow and organic material

Goldsworthy's fascination with the natural process of change led to his choice of clay as a material; this choice was due to clay's inherent properties of transformation. In 1992, the *California Project* at the Haines Gallery, San Francisco (4 June – 9 July) featured an installation of clay-covered rocks which dried and cracked over several days (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 194). The consistently dry weather in California helped the natural drying and cracking processes of the clay. A previous attempt at this idea in 1980 had been unsuccessful (ibid). The clay was packed and smoothed onto the rocks in its wet, malleable state. As the clay dried, it shrank as the moisture was drawn out, it cracked against the unyielding hard surface of the rocks and eventually fell off the form in sections. The resulting effect appeared as if the rocks were shedding their skin. Goldsworthy repeated this idea in Japan at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts in 1993 (Fig. 2.16) and again, at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo in 1994 (Macritchie, 1995: 93).

In an installation at the San Jose Museum of Art, entitled *Breath of Earth* (April 1995), Goldsworthy incorporated a number of different works that exhibited "the visible effects of weather, time and the proximity of texture, colour, shape and space as they occur in a particular site" (Hull Webster, 1995: 26). Included in this installation was a central colonnade of clay holes that led up to a concave spiralling clay hole, set into the far wall of the gallery (Fig. 2.17) (ibid). During the duration of the exhibition, the clay holes progressively cracked and broke apart as they dried and were in the process of disintegrating completely. The intriguing procession of clay holes drew the viewer along the length of the gallery to the focal point, the clay hole in the wall. Around this, a complex linear design meandered on the wall's surface. The hole motif is a recurring



Fig. 2.16 Andy Goldsworthy, *Mashiko clay-covered/river stones* (before and after), October 1993, Installation at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Japan, Unfired clay-covered stones

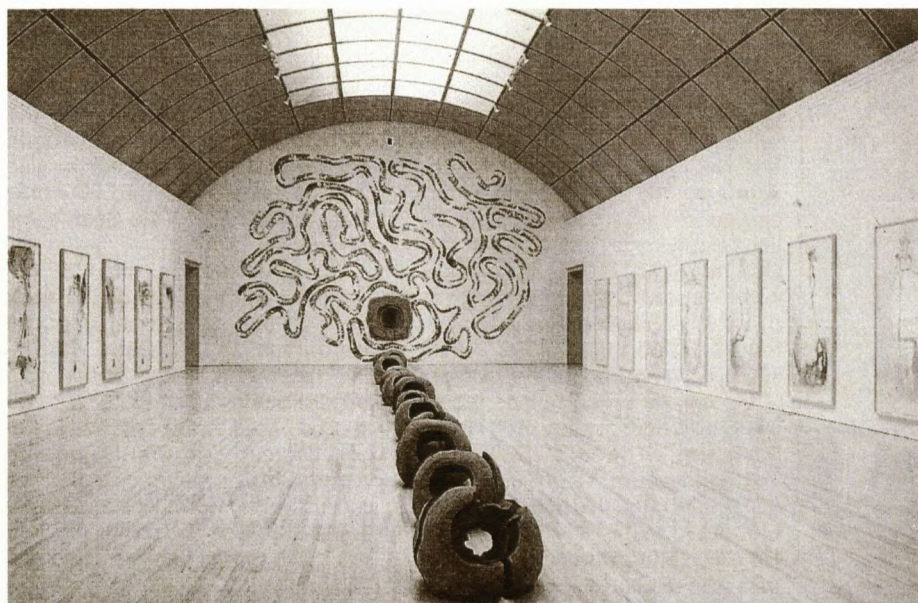


Fig. 2.17 Andy Goldsworthy, *Breath of Earth*, April 1995
Installation at the San Jose Museum of Art
Unfired clay holes and multiple elements



Fig. 2.18 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Hole*, May 1997
Permanently installed at The Getty Research Institute,
Los Angeles, California
Unfired Clay



Fig. 2.19 Andy Goldsworthy, *Hard Earth*, 8 October – 27 November 1992,
Installation at the Turske Hue Williams Gallery, London
Unfired white Dorset clay



Fig. 2.20 Andy Goldsworthy, *Cracked Clay Floor*, March 1996,
Permanently installed at Museum of Modern Art, Glasgow
Unfired clay

image in Goldsworthy's work which he interprets as a vortex looking back in time (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 23).

In 1997 Goldsworthy was commissioned, by the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities in Los Angeles, to make a piece for their permanent collection (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 194). Aware of the irony of making a work for an organization devoted to art conservation, Goldsworthy installed an indoor spiralling clay hole (*Fig. 2.18*) that cracked unpredictably over the following months. This piece was naturally lit by a skylight and positioned in such a way that the sun would shine directly on it once a year at midsummer. This work was completed in May 1997 but was, unfortunately, destroyed when a water pipe burst in the gallery space in 1999 (*ibid*).

In the book Time, Goldsworthy explains his choice of working in the form of installation and working in buildings.

My work with buildings is an attempt to understand and draw out their nature. Installations that engage with the building architecturally have been the most successful in trying to achieve this intention. There is a difference between a work that hangs as a rectangle on a wall and one that covers the wall completely - one is a picture, the other is the wall. At best, these works should feel as if they have risen to a building's surface as a memory of its origin, a connection between the building and its material source (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 8).

In 1991, the installation *Hard Earth* (8 October – 27 November) at the Turske Hue Williams Gallery in London, was Goldsworthy's first cracked clay work on the floor (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 194). White Dorset clay (*Fig. 2.19*) was packed onto the gallery floor and smoothed out with a plasterer's float. Initially the clay appeared the same as the walls and ceiling but "gradually the nature of the clay revealed itself as it cracked, as if it was coming out of the building itself". Goldsworthy's second clay floor

(*Fig. 2.20*) was installed in March 1996 at the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art as a permanent installation (*ibid*).

Later in 1996, Goldsworthy took the same idea but this time covered a wall in clay at Haines Gallery, San Francisco, California (*fig. 2.21*) (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 8). Goldsworthy made this wall with a spirit of experimentation. The artist explains: "I knew that the clay would crack, but didn't know whether it would stay attached. To my surprise it remains fixed to this day, despite the occasional earthquake" (*ibid*). He realized that with more careful preparation of the wall surface and with the application of the clay that he could take the idea further (*ibid*).

Goldsworthy observed that his clay walls and floors did not crack evenly. He explained that when making his first clay floor, he used wooden battens to maintain a consistent depth. This resulted, however, in the join where one section was added, which was initially invisible when the clay was smoothed over it, to later crack in a straight line as it dried. The same thing happened with joins on the floor which affected the drying out and cracking. The different techniques of the people involved in the making of the pieces also caused variations in the cracking (*ibid*).

In 1998 Goldsworthy was asked to produce a series of site-specific works for the new Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, most of which were to be shown in the Early People section of the museum (*Fig. 2.22*). Richard Ingleby (1998: 153) commented that Goldsworthy seemed to be an unlikely artist to be found making permanent works for a museum setting since he is best known for his sculptures in open air. Ingleby claims: "Yet he seems perfectly at home here, working indoors with more durable materials;

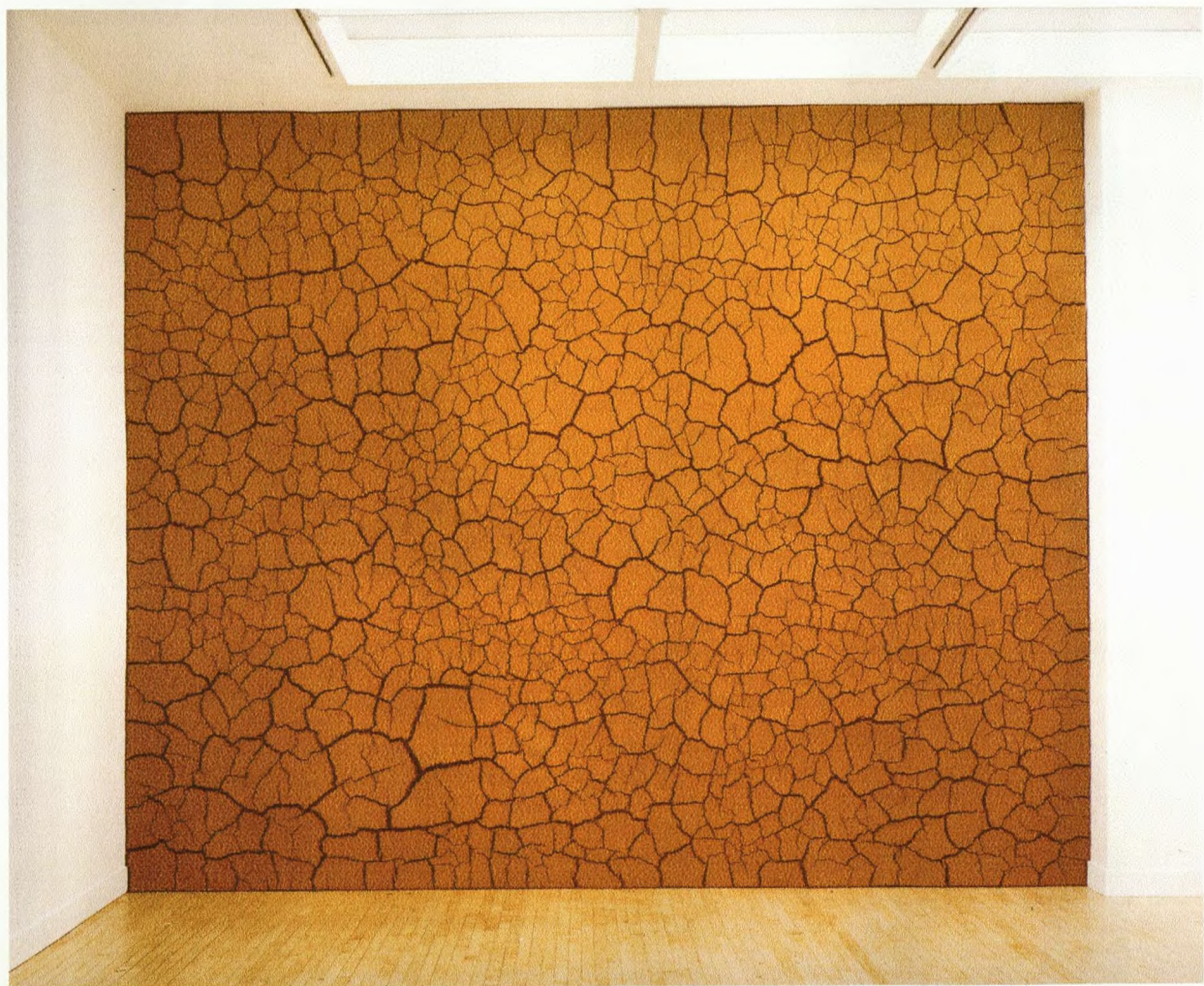


Fig. 2.21 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall*, November 1996,
Installation at Haines Gallery, San Francisco, California
Unfired cracked clay



Fig. 2.22 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall*, May 1998
Permanently installed at the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
Unfired cracked clay

constructing walls of slate and clay as backdrops to the 'Early People' collection – drawing the eye and the mind into a basic, elemental world of raw materials that are the same for us today as they were for our ancestors 10 000 years ago" (ibid). Other works, elsewhere in the museum, included a collection of charred wood gathered from the museum's building site and the bones of a whale, that had once been stored in a hundred neatly labeled boxes, were rearranged by Goldsworthy into a ball two feet across. Ingleby claims that whatever Goldsworthy's chosen material, "his gift is always an ability to alter and reshape it in a surprising way".

For Goldsworthy, his intention for the museum was that his work would introduce a dialogue between the ancient and the contemporary (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 8). He decided to make a clay wall with a meandering river form, which is another one of his distinctive motifs and would also relate to the dug-out canoes placed in front of the wall. The river form was achieved by making two different levels in the wall. The deeper level where the clay was packed created the river form and around the river, a shallower area of clay was laid onto the wall. The result was a smoothed out clay wall which one could not tell where the deeper part was until the wall began to dry out. As the two levels of clay began to dry at a different rate, since the one was thicker than the other, the join between the different depths of the clay began to reveal itself as two, continuous, parallel cracks, drawing a sinuous meander across the wall (ibid).

In the book Time, Goldsworthy remarks:

I am rarely either a carver or modeller. They are not processes that I am comfortable with... It has taken many years for me to be able to work with clay. I experienced the same difficulty with clay that I had with paper, and, to some extent, indoor spaces generally. I need the resistance of weather, place and material. I become somewhat lost faced with the emptiness of a room, a blank sheet of paper or the easy malleability of clay.

Time is the tool with which I have been able to work clay and paper. A snowball melting on paper and a cracking clay wall give the resistance and unpredictability that I need. These works are made in the same spirit as the throws. My energy is put into the throw, but I cannot control the outcome (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 22).

In July 1998, Goldsworthy met with French choreographer Regine Chopinot to discuss the possibility of a collaborative work (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 82). Initially, Regine wanted to produce a film about Goldsworthy's work on the river in Scaur Glen to which she would choreograph a dance. Goldsworthy suggested that, instead, he would make a clay wall and using time-lapse photography would record the wall as it dried and cracked over a period of about two weeks. The artist requested that the wall would need to be constructed indoors under controlled light conditions. Construction of the wall started a year later in Digne-les-Bains, Haute Provence, France at the museum in the Reserve (*Fig. 2.23*). Drawing on his experience of the clay walls in San Francisco (1996) and Edinburgh (1998), Goldsworthy decided to rework the river form to a larger scale for the wall at Digne. He felt that the origin of the clay was important, that it should come either from Digne or from his home area in Scotland. His decision to use clay from home was because of the difference in colour of this particular clay between its wet and dry states. The artist explains: "as the clay dries, the deeper area of clay remains damp and dark, as the surrounding area becomes pale and dry, and the river form slowly reveals itself" (*Fig. 2.24*) (*ibid*).

Goldsworthy observed that although the filming of the wall was a simple idea, the actual realization of the project was more complex than initially anticipated (Goldsworthy and Friedman, 2000: 84). He explains: "the resulting film has many irregularities and characteristics that I had not expected. Shooting the same but slightly changing image for



Fig. 2.23 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall*, June 1999
Permanently installed at Musée Département de Digne,
Digne-les-Baines, Haute Provence, France
Unfired clay – early stage



Fig. 2.24 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall*, June 1999
Permanently installed at Musée Département de Digne,
Digne-les-Baines, Haute Provence, France
Unfired clay – dried

ten days, then reducing the footage to an hour and ten minutes accentuates any changes in light levels and film colour” (ibid). Goldsworthy found the flicker and movement of the image through the projector more disturbing than he had thought it would be. He had originally intended that the film would also be shown without the dance. However, the artist found that “viewed by itself, the physical nature of the film and its projection makes the medium more present than I would like it to be. It needs the movement of the dancers to counteract the movement of the image” (ibid).

Andy Goldsworthy has used natural materials to produce one of the most coherent and original bodies of work in British art. His ambition is to use and unveil nature's inherent energy which he achieves by his skillful manipulation of found materials and by testing the possibilities of those naturally occurring materials. As Sue Clifford and Angela King wrote in the catalogue for Goldsworthy's 1991 retrospective, “Always testing and searching, so much of what [Goldsworthy] achieves demands a renewal of our excitement in the discovery of things, of their characteristics and colours, their potential” (McRitchie, 1995: 125). His work reminds us that the first materials available to humankind were those of the earth (Bourdon, 1993: 121).

SECTION TWO: Large-scale Clay Sculpture

In producing large-scale ceramic work, a number of factors have to be considered (Robison, 1997: 114). Considerations such as, the size of kiln needed, fabrication over an extended period of time, designing for a specific site, assembling, weatherproofing and installation, have to be thought about when producing ceramics large-scale (ibid). The term large-scale ceramics could be applied to a number of different types of work made in clay including oversized vessels or functional ware (Robison, 1997: 7). But, for the purposes of this study, the large-scale works that will be discussed includes clay sculpture that is of considerable size and weight. Also important is the degree of difficulty involved in the making of the work, the scale of the artist's concept and the ambition represented by the work (ibid). The Collins English Dictionary (1992: 274) defines large-scale as "wide-ranging, extensive or large in scope". Large, as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary is being "of considerable magnitude and includes as large as or larger than life" (Robison, 1997: 7).

Achieving monumentality in clay work is challenging and the ceramist working in large-scale is usually primarily concerned with the technical ability to sustain height (Levin, 1988: 319). Clay, to a much greater degree than other materials such as wood, metal, or stone, is subject to the forces of gravity (ibid). That is, in its wet state it cannot hold up its own weight and will slump if left unsupported.

In the 1950s pioneers working in large-scale Peter Voukos and John Mason, devised interior and exterior structures that supported their large sculptures and wall panels during the making of the pieces. Technical advances in kiln construction meant that larger kilns

were built that could accommodate larger work. An increase in size of the work was also due to the important influence of Abstract Expressionism and its confrontational size (ibid). Voulkos and Mason, among others, made ceramic work large enough to be noticed (Robison, 1997: 7-9). Their work commanded attention through a physical presence that could not be ignored.

The sculptors that will be discussed in this section that make large-scale clay work, include Jun Kaneko (b.1942) and Wilma Cruise (1945). Large-scale clay sculpture reaches out to meet the viewer, on his or her own terms of scale. These works create an interaction or dialogue with the viewer which is far more difficult to achieve in smaller scale. A work that one has to walk around to view is more difficult to ignore (ibid).

Jim Robison mentions some of the challenges involved in making ceramics sculpture in large-scale:

It does require a certain amount of optimism and willingness to take risks. It requires a certain commitment and energy to be applied over an extended period of time. It also requires the ability to bounce back from frustrations and the occasional disaster... All the traditional ceramic making methods are applicable to work done on a large-scale – it only requires an ability to think big and a bit of ingenuity (ibid).

Jun Kaneko (b. 1942)

Jun Kaneko was born in Nagoya, Japan, in 1942, during World War II (Peterson, 2001: 14). After studying painting in Japan from 1961-1963, he moved to the United States to further his studies. When he first arrived in Los Angeles, Kaneko could not speak English (Peterson, 2001: 20-21). He was introduced to Fred and Mary Marer by a family friend and stayed with the Marers for a while. The Marers lived in a three bedroom apartment that housed their rapidly growing and impressive ceramic art collection. This became a source of great interest to the young Kaneko. The collection included works by Peter Voukos, John Mason, Paul Soldner, Ken Price and other ground-breaking ceramic artists of the time. Kaneko explained how his initial fascination with ceramics began when the Marers went away to Europe and left him to house-sit their flat and collection for three months. He said: "When you grow up with a traditional ceramics understanding, to see something like these things just really made me curious about it... Once I saw all of this, it was impossible not to be interested in ceramics" (ibid). This led to his wanting to try clay for himself.

On his return from Europe, Marer took Kaneko to meet the various ceramic artists whose work he had been admiring (Peterson, 2001: 28). Marer took Kaneko to Scripps College to meet Paul Soldner, who was one of Voukos' first students. Soldner introduced Kaneko to clay in the Scripps studio, where he started making a few vessel forms and did a raku firing (ibid). Some years after this primary encounter with clay, Kaneko recalls: "When I started ceramics, it felt good to touch the clay, but there was this great distance between myself and the clay. Often, when I have had a chance to see an object made by a great master-craftsperson, I have felt that the maker and the material were so close they almost

become one" (ibid). Initially, when he began working in clay, Kaneko felt that being a painter he struggled to see form beyond the two-dimensional and tended to make two sided forms and usually had a favourite side (Kaneko: 1984: 51).

In 1964, Kaneko enrolled in the ceramics program at Chouinard Art Institute (Peterson, 2001: 28). He started out producing slab-built, vessel-like forms as well as a number of single slabs. Later, he progressed to making pieces that were a combination of the vessel and slab-forms. These were over a meter high with very small openings, yet they still had the feel of a vessel (ibid). Kaneko recalls his struggle with working in three-dimensions:

Quickly I moved away from vessels. I don't know why. I'm pretty sure at the time that I was looking at a lot of Voulkos, Mason, Price, Takemoto, these guys' work. What I liked most about their work was the look of the sculpturally oriented pieces. I guess that's why I started to do more abstract forms... I made two-sided pieces for about three years and I started to think about it. I always found a favourite side... That wasn't too good for me, so I started to really think more about the whole piece, like 360 degrees around the piece. It took me six or seven years though to get to that point (Peterson, 2001: 30).

In 1966, Voulkos offered Kaneko a space in the studio at the University of California, Berkeley, where he (Voulkos) was a professor at the time. Kaneko also became a studio assistant, firing three kilns a day, making hundreds of kilograms a day and mixing glazes for the studio, while working on his own ceramics at night. Kaneko was a fast learner and stayed for six months (ibid).

During a three-month residency at the Archie Bray Foundation in 1967, Kaneko worked on the first of his large three-legged sculptures that became his signature pieces of his early years (Peterson, 2001: 32). After the residency, Kaneko rented his own studio in Temple City in southern California. In his new studio, Kaneko constructed his own unusually large gas updraft kiln. He experimented with different clay bodies and glazes,

and worked on his own ideas for forms. Yet Kaneko felt he was not ready to work completely independently and needed people around him. He wanted to apply to graduate school but lacked the required credits because he had not completed an undergraduate degree (Peterson, 2001: 36-37). Fred Marer convinced him to apply anyway and suggested Scripps College in Claremont, as they were a college that might bend the rules and help him. Kaneko submitted a portfolio of photographs of his works to the reviewing committee at Scripps College.

Meanwhile, Kaneko carried on working in his studio and developed a clay body that would support his large work, the many-legged pieces he had experimented with at the Archie Bray Foundation. He continued to experiment with firing his gas kiln and with glazes. During this period he exhibited his work at several national ceramics competitions. In 1968, Kaneko had a two-man exhibition with Peter Voukos at David Stuart's Gallery in Los Angeles. On the strength of this show, Kaneko was finally accepted into the MFA program at Scripps College in 1969 (ibid).

He spent part of his time as a graduate student working in his studio in Temple City and the rest of the time at Scripps (Peterson, 2001: 40-41). Kaneko has said that during his graduate program his ideas were progressing faster than his ability. He explained that he did not have a complete understanding of the materials; for instance he had not fully grasped the fact that ceramics can break, until he had a kiln accident. A major load of his Master's work was destroyed when a faulty kiln shelf broke under the weight of the work. In a cascade-effect, a number of other shelves and sculptures beneath it broke. The work had to be remade, dried and fired at the last minute (*Fig. 2.25*) (ibid).



Fig. 2.25 Jun Kaneko, *Untitled (Sanbon Ashi Series)*, 1971
4.9 m x 6.4 m x 90 cm
Glazed ceramic and steel

In 1971, after graduate school, Kaneko visited Japan for an extended ten-month learning cycle (Peterson, 2001: 52-53). Although he had grown up in Japan, Kaneko felt he did not know much about historical and contemporary Japanese ceramics. Kaneko was invited by the American Cultural Centre to lecture in Nagoya, Kyoto and Fukuoka as part of an exchange program on education between America and Japan. While there, Kaneko had an exhibition, delivered lectures on ceramic art, and organised a two-week clay workshop for the general public (*ibid*). Seven hundred people attended the workshop over a period of two weeks. It was held at a rented sewer-pipe factory in Tokoname, near Nagoya. Seventy tons of clay was used, most of it was fired in the factory kiln. The event was filmed and documented by the television and print media (*ibid*).

After returning from Japan in 1972, Kaneko was offered a teaching position at the University of New Hampshire (1972-73) (Peterson, 2001: 54). From there he went on to teach at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence (1973-75). Kaneko considers his time at the Rhode Island School to be one of great expansion for him and marked a turning point for his creative ideas. The culmination of his stay here was a major exhibition in the Woods Gerry Gallery, Providence, Rhode Island, in March 1975 (*Fig. 2.26*) (*ibid*).

Kaneko's work in the 1960s had predominantly consisted of variations based on the three-legged forms of his early work (*ibid*). Between 1971 and 1974, his work took a new direction (Kaneko, 1984: 51-58). While he had previously been concerned with producing large works, these works took such a long time to construct, dry and fire that he felt he needed to make smaller works. The artist comments: "They needed to be more spontaneous. I thought to myself maybe if I made very simple, small shapes, it would allow me more flexibility... One of my favourite works was a just a hunk of clay, a potato

piece. Right after I fired it. I liked it so much I made sixty more of them" (*Fig. 2.27*) (ibid). These smaller-scale works allowed him more spontaneity and flexibility with ideas.

Peterson (2001: 54) observes that it was while in Rhode Island that his involvement with stripes and line matured, "there he began an intellectual inquisitiveness about space between lines, space between forms, spaces among other patterns". Kaneko recalls:

I also began to think more about the space between and around things. That became an important physical and abstract aspect of my work. Before I had made form-oriented pieces and wasn't particularly aware of the surrounding space. Now space has an equal meaning with the form. How the sculpture resists or goes with gravity, how that gesture affects the environment, the air around the form, the space, is an issue for me (Peterson, 2001: 54).

Kaneko also realised that with small objects he could arrange any number of them in various ways, organizing them in different configurations (Peterson, 2001: 56). The lines, spaces, spirals, dots, and other marks he was using, formed patterns as well. Even though Kaneko had been using variations of these symbols for years, he says he did not realise he was making patterns until someone asked him where they were coming from. He began to intellectualise the idea of pattern. Peterson (ibid) writes: "He took photographs of individual marks and their arrangements occurring in nature, and played with the connections. He realised that design, in form or surface painting, is characterized by order. The ordering of the marks continues to fascinate Kaneko."

In 1975, Kaneko decided to move back to Japan. He felt he needed to go back because he had not worked as a professional artist there (Kaneko, 1984: 51-58). He wanted to build a large studio and a house, with a very limited budget. He bought a piece of land near a remote mountain village. Construction of the house and studio took about three and a half

years and were built using cheap materials, including telephone poles and railroad ties. He had about 300 volunteers helping him during the construction (ibid).

In 1979, he returned to the States to take up residency at the Clayworks Studio Workshop, New York City (Peterson, 2001: 64). Clayworks was a short-lived innovative program set up to promote collaboration between clay artists and non-clay artists. Kaneko gave several lectures in New York City – at the Pratt Art Institute, Hunter College, and the Museum of Contemporary Craft – and visited the New York State College at Alfred University.

One of the important lectures Kaneko gave during his residency at Clayworks was at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfields, Michigan. Cranbrook is one of the most highly regarded art schools in the United States (Peterson, 2001: 68). Kaneko was asked to join the teaching staff at Cranbrook and head the ceramics department. He initially refused the position because the studio was small, with small-scale equipment. But he agreed to visit the department to observe activities and evaluate what would be necessary to make the studio into a feasible place for him to teach. Peterson (ibid) wrote: “Kaneko evolved an efficient and innovative teaching situation that most students who worked with him during those years valued and appreciated. It was a rare opportunity to structure a whole department and program from the outset.” Kaneko selected his first group of graduates by interviewing each one in person. He advised the students that developing the new ceramics studio and building kilns for large-scale works would be an invaluable learning experience, but that it would take up a good portion of their time (ibid).

In 1982, while still teaching at Cranbrook, Kaneko began a part-time residency at a brickyard in Omaha (Peterson, 2001:73). The project, which was called “Artists in

Industry”, was sponsored by the Bemis Centre for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska. Kaneko was intrigued by the opportunity to work in a brickyard and by the possibilities of using the large beehive kilns (Peterson, 2001: 83). Kaneko requested the use of one beehive kiln for approximately a year. The massive beehive kilns gave him an idea of making several large-scale sculptures. Kaneko proposed to bring three assistants with him and offered to pay for the gas for firing the big kiln (ibid).

Kaneko’s plan was to work out some ideas on a massive scale, the first of his extremely ambitious projects in large-scale (Schonlau, 1984: 49-50). He is one of the few contemporary sculptors to achieve this scale in clay. He planned to build the monumental works inside the beehive kiln, where they would also be dried and fired. Kaneko’s use of the kiln was approved and he spent the early months of 1983 working out ideas for this project (ibid). The idea for these large-scale pieces came from his previous series of solid clay chunks, what he called his “potato” pieces (Peterson, 2001: 83). The proposed works for the Omaha project were obviously larger in scale and careful planning had to be done before construction could begin. Kaneko referred to these rounded forms as *dangos*, which in Japanese means dumpling. He was interested to see how the scale, which was greatly enlarged from the original potato forms, would affect the emotional impact of the forms (ibid). Kaneko (1988: 52-53), in his essay entitled “On Being an Artist,” meditates on the concept of scale:

Oftentimes I am asked why I make such large-scale work. My thoughts on scale are closely tied with form and environment. If everything in this world were the same size, we would not need to talk about scale, or ever develop an idea for the feeling of scale. This demonstrates that the idea of scale only exists and develops in a state of comparison... Maybe feelings of scale are based on our own body size compared to the surrounding environment... In making any object, we cannot escape problems of scale. Whether I’m making a large or small object, in the end I hope it will make sense to have that particular scale and form together, and that it will give off enough visual energy to shake the air around it. I believe each form

has one right scale. Sometimes I feel it worked; sometimes I feel I missed it. It is impossible to explain why.

Kaneko spent a few months testing clay bodies and glazes for the *Dango* series (Schonlau, 1984: 49-50). A great deal of construction research was done to work out technical solutions for building, drying, firing and moving the sculptures. Kaneko proposed to build four oval, dome-shaped *dangos* each measuring approximately 2.1 metres long, 1.5 metres wide and 1.8 metres high, each weighing an estimated 5 ½ tons. Another four slab-shaped works were proposed to be built at the same time, each measured 2.1 m by 1.5 m and were 25 cm thick (*Fig. 2.28*) (ibid).

A number of technical issues had to be considered, as in the placement of the pieces inside the kiln (ibid). Brick pedestals were constructed to elevate the forms to a height of 76cm off the floor; this was to allow air to circulate for a more even firing. The forms were positioned at equal distances from the ten burner ports that protruded into the kiln chamber. Also considered in the positioning were the two doorways and the chimney flue in the centre of the kiln floor. During the making of the forms, scaffolding was erected around the brick pedestal supports, to accommodate for the increase in height as the building progressed (ibid).

The *dangos* were constructed using thick slabs for the outside shape as well as internal slabs which provided extra support to the form (*Fig. 2.29*) (Peterson, 2001:84). Kaneko built several *dangos* at a time, while each row dried sufficiently to be durable enough to support the next layer, but not so dry that the clay cannot be manipulated to seal the joint where the slabs meet (Klein Art Works, 2003). Construction of the forms took about six weeks and the drying took around three and a half months (Peterson, 2001:84). Drying



Fig. 2.28 Jun Kaneko, *Omaha Project: Dangos and Slab*, 1984
Dango: 180 x 210 x 150 cm, Slab: 20 x 180 x 120 cm
Glazed ceramic



Fig. 2.29 Jun Kaneko, *Omaha Project: Fabrication of Dango*, 1983

was assisted by an inventive ventilation and circulation system Kaneko developed for the beehive kiln, which drew in outside air while driving the moist air released from the drying process outside. Peterson (*ibid*) points out that “drying is one of the most, if not the most, crucial parts of the ceramic process, especially when huge claywork is involved.” Kaneko used smaller burners than the kiln’s regular ones, to regulate a less intense heat, and continued the drying by raising the temperature as high as 66°C. At the time, Kaneko was travelling between Cranbrook and Omaha while the pieces were being dried (*ibid*).

When the pieces were dry, glazing started with Kaneko first working out the designs on the forms in India ink (Schonlau, 1984: 50). The forms were painted with coloured clay-based engobes with a clear glaze over (Peterson, 2001: 84). The glazing process took two weeks (*ibid*).

The beehive kiln was fired slowly for thirty five days up to cone 5 (1204°C) by assistant, Jody Baral (Schonlau, 1984: 50). Baral fired the kiln according to Kaneko’s strict written schedule and daily telephone conversations with the artist. Peterson (2001: 84) explains next stage of the firing.

Kaneko flew back to conduct the highly technical and problematic “striking” process, at the end of the firing on the cooling side, wherein the kiln would be charged with a smoky reduction atmosphere creating a lack of oxygen at a crucial point. Three days after the peak temperature had been achieved, when the kiln was cool enough, it was “struck” for half an hour, changing the black line surrounding the patterns to a copper-red coloured line, as in the ancient Persian luster technique.

It took kiln took about two weeks to cool down and another two weeks to unload the pieces (*Fig. 2.30*) (Schonlau, 1984: 50). Of the eight sculptures, two were deemed unsuccessful by the artist and were destroyed in the kiln. The others were unloaded by



Fig. 2.30 Jun Kaneko, Omaha Project: Fired Dangos, 1984
Dangos (each): 180 x 210 x 150 cm, Glazed ceramic



Fig. 2.31 Jun Kaneko, Omaha Project: Dangos on Truck, 1984
Glazed ceramic

wincing the forms on a steel sled (it was winter at the time) the artist had designed and placed on hardwood pallets. They were then loaded onto flatbed trucks using a forklift (*Fig. 2.31*) and taken to storage before being exhibited around the United States (*ibid*). For Kaneko, this project had been an experiment; he was surprised that three-quarters of the work had been successfully fired (Peterson, 2001: 86).

Kaneko (1984: 53), in his essay entitled "Decision Making", describes his creative process:

Where before I had thought mostly about making an interesting structure, now my thought process is focused on something happening in between: what I do to the materials, or how I put forms together. Making art is the chain reaction of intuitive sparks and decision making within myself. Intuitive energy comes from understanding of [one]self, and spontaneous reaction to the visual and nonvisual moment.

Kaneko has participated in many different projects, commissions and residencies throughout his career. Many of which have helped to expand on his technical ability to produce large-scale clay work in, such as his *Parallel Sound* (1981) installation (*Fig. 2.32*) (Peterson, 2001: 91). This work was produced at the Otsuka Ceramics factory, Japan from a non-shrink experimental clay body specially developed at the factory. The stacks consisted of a number of slabs. Each slab measured 10cm x 5cm x 3.7m, which is extremely long and thin for fired clay. The installation consisted of three diamond shaped, monochromatic stacks of slabs glazed on three sides, in primary colours (*Fig. 2.33*). This arrangement of the forms created interesting optical patterns. Clay had never been used in such a way before; many viewers thought the slabs were made of wood. The artist has said that he finds it interesting that glazed clay can project the visual impression of another material (*ibid*).

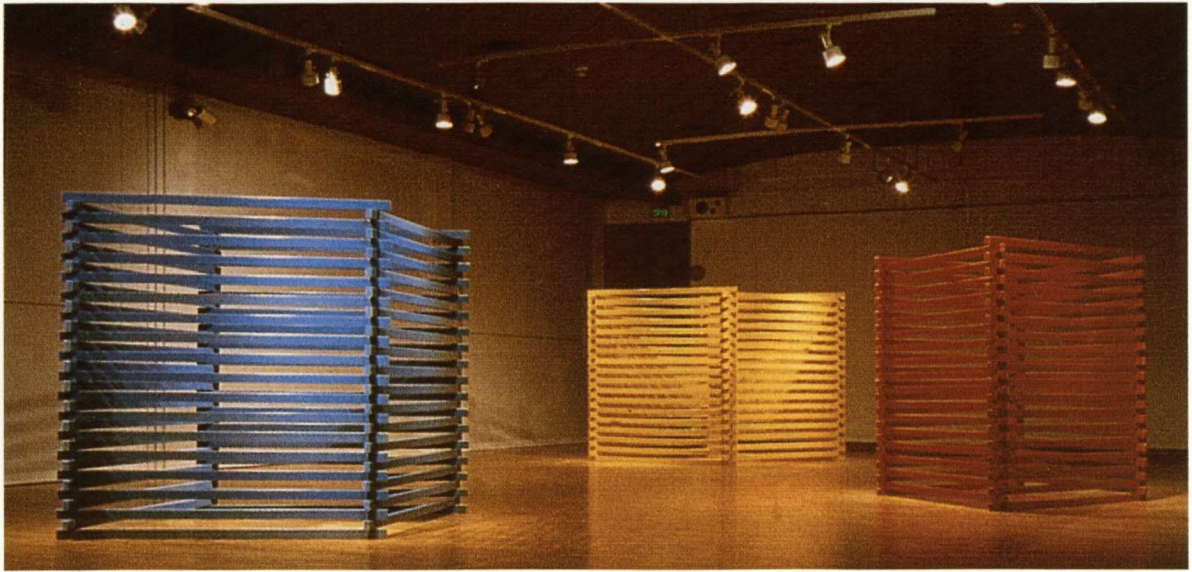


Fig. 2.32 Jun Kaneko, *Parallel Sound*, 1981
Installation at Gallery Takagi, Nagoya, Japan

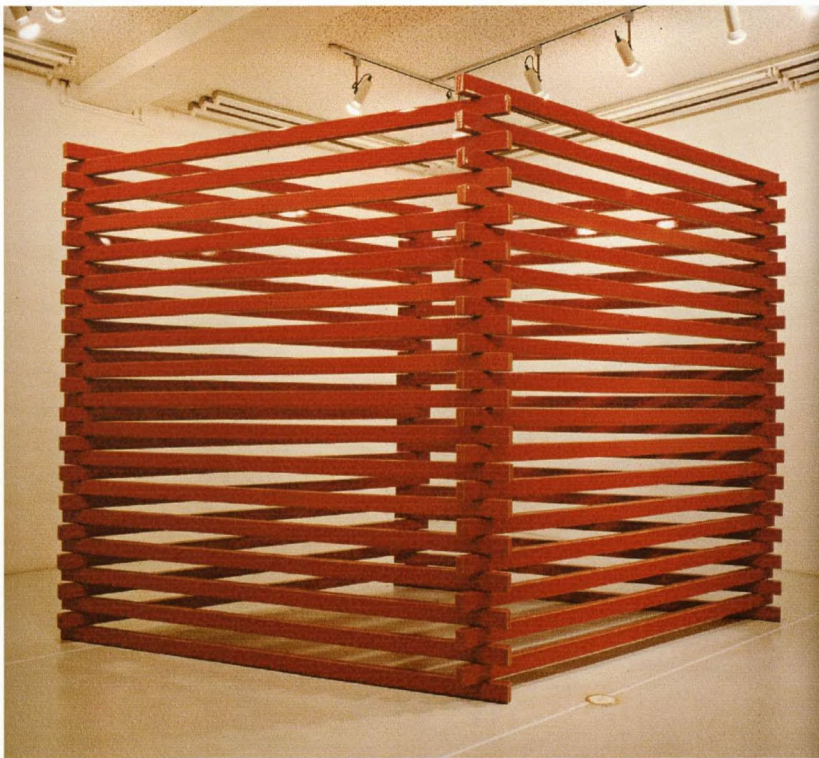


Fig. 2.33 Jun Kaneko, *Parallel Sound* (detail)
210 x 180 x 370 cm, Glazed non-shrink clay

In 1987, Kaneko did a three-month residency at the Arabia Factory in Helsinki, Finland (Peterson, 2001: 102). During this period, Kaneko made a series of large platters (58 x 69cm) which were a familiar format for the artist. He also constructed a few large *dangos* and made large tiles by hand, which he found made interesting effects when arranged together to form fascinating compositions. The final work, entitled *Arabia Wall* (1987), was to be the first of many wall panels that Kaneko would produce, and the start of a series of important public work projects (*Fig. 2. 34*) (ibid).

In 1992, Kaneko was invited to do a residency at Mission Clay Products in Fremont, California, a sewer-pipe factory (Peterson, 2001: 130). Initially, Kaneko declined the offer but was tempted once he heard about the factory's 30-foot (9.1m) diameter and 4.6m high beehive kilns. Peterson (ibid) explains that Kaneko's "curiosity about scale was concerned with how things change from small to large, with the emotional aspect of the physically large, and with the recurring problems of fabrication in an ever-yielding, wet, and plastic material." For Kaneko, the thought of these huge kilns being available for his use ignited his interest in tackling another mammoth project (ibid). Kaneko submitted a proposal which included the use of two of the huge kilns at Fremont for a period of two years. He proposed to build six 3.5m high *dangos* inside one of the 9.1m wide kilns. He would also construct twelve 2.4m tall *dangos* and six 1.5m tall *dangos* in the factory's facilities and then move them into the available kilns for firing. This time he would fire the sculptures twice, firstly, for the bisque and then again for the glaze firing (ibid).

In May 1992 all the materials and equipment, including a clay mixer, 40 tons of dry claybody, special forklifts and scaffolding was transported from Kaneko's studio in Omaha to California. To date, this is perhaps the largest clay project undertaken by a

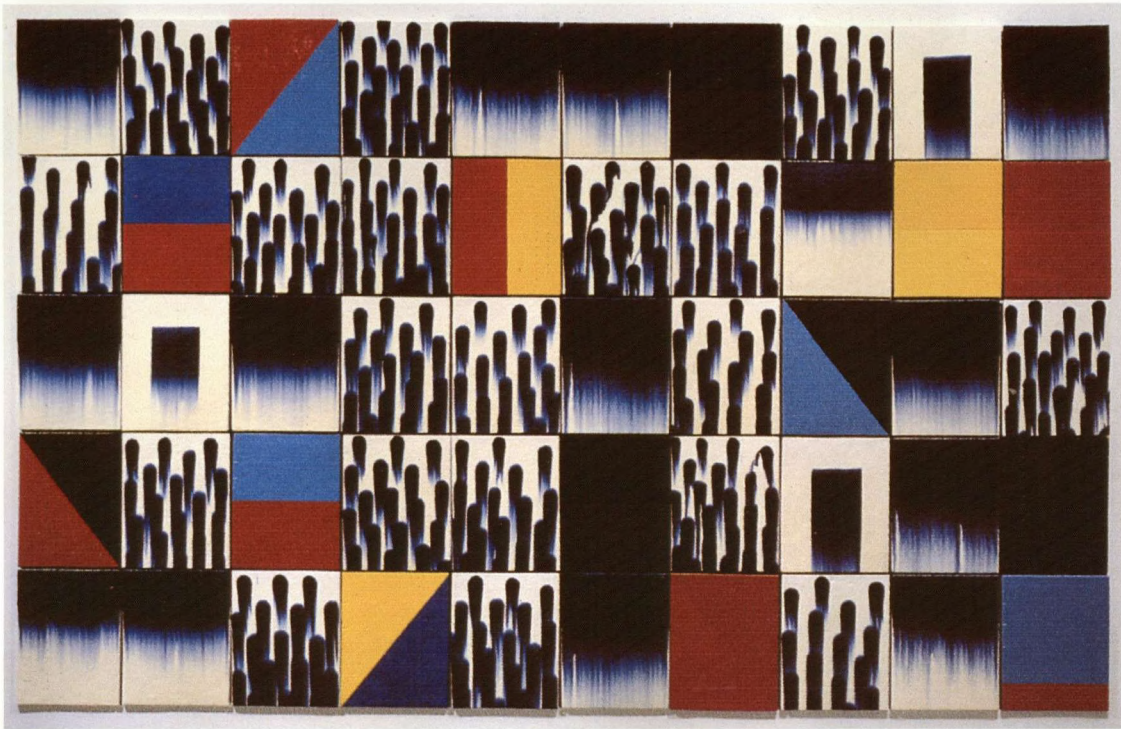


Fig. 2.34 Jun Kaneko, *Dutch Wall: Image of Tulip*, 1996
2.2 x 6.5 m, White earthenware with low-fired glazes

single artist. Kaneko, along with his three assistants, worked on the construction of the forms from May to mid-August. The forms were built using flat slabs of clay that had been pounded out into sections 3 to 6cm thick and 76cm high (*Fig. 2.35*). These were cross-hatch luted together. The form was carefully manipulated as the building progressed and the curvature was defined and smoothed (*ibid*).

Unfortunately, just as the largest *dangos* were about to be completed, a crack was noticed inside each of the bases (Peterson, 2001: 131-132). These six huge *dangos* had taken nearly two months to build. Kaneko tried for days to repair the cracks but reasoned that they might appear again during the drying and firing stages. He decided to destroy all six huge *dangos* and begin again. Reconstruction of the 3.5m *dangos* took five weeks on the second attempt (*Fig. 2.36*). This time Kaneko attached a belt, made of foam and bungee cords, to the base of each sculpture. This would apply a small but constant amount of pressure to the drying piece. This strategy worked and the entire drying time took eighteen months. Bisque firing started on 22 March, 1994 and lasted seven weeks (*ibid*).

The glazing of the pieces with engobes and glazes took a couple of months to complete (*Fig. 2.37*) (Peterson 2001: 134-135). The glaze firing was carefully monitored by a computer program and the "striking" method was used. The burner ports were closed to achieve the reduction atmosphere in the kiln necessary for Kaneko's signature copper red line which occurs when the engobe and glaze overlap. The kilns were opened on 10 September, 1994. All twenty-five *dangos* had fired successfully (*Fig. 2.38*) (*ibid*).

In 1993, Kaneko travelled to the Netherlands to give a lecture at the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in 's-Hertogenbosch (Peterson, 2001: 116,118). While there, he



Fig. 2.35 Jun Kaneko, Fremont Project: Slab construction of 3.3 m Dango, 1992-94



Fig. 2.36 Jun Kaneko, Fremont Project: 3.3 m Dangos inside the 9 m diameter kiln, 1992-94



Fig. 2.37 Jun Kaneko, Fremont Project: Kaneko painting a taped pattern with engobe on a bisqued Dango, 1992-94

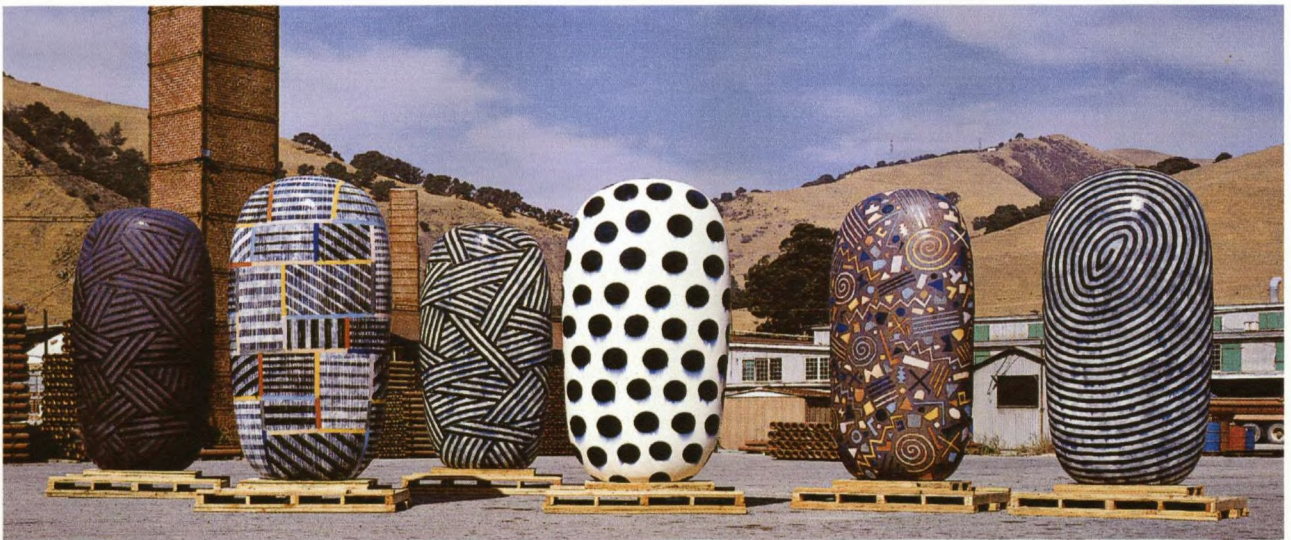


Fig. 2.38 Jun Kaneko, Fremont Project: Dangos completed, 1992-94
Each approx. 3.35 m x 132 cm x 76 cm, Glazed ceramic

met Christhilde Klein, the curator of the Frans Halsmuseum. She convinced Kaneko to participate in one of the EKWC's programs and she would organise an exhibition of the completed works. The EKWC was set up for low-fire work, which Kaneko was unfamiliar with. In 1995, Kaneko went to Holland to begin fabrication of the work. Peterson (2001: 118) points out: "Low-fire temperatures produce the brightest of all ceramic colours – pure reds, oranges, yellows, blues, and greens. The earthenware body was also very different and the kilns in 's-Hertogenbosch were fired in complete oxidation."

Kaneko started by making hundreds of tiles for testing the glaze material and firing reactions, as he did at Arabia in Finland (*ibid*). Once the testing of the clay-body and glazes were resolved, he began constructing tiles for several wall panels, as well as a number of 2.1m tall variations of the *dango* form. In addition to these, Kaneko also began fabricating two of his extraordinary large *Heads*, which took three months to build. This was an immensely productive time for Kaneko; he also made some small sculptures, oval shapes and wall slabs (*Fig. 2.39*). For Kaneko, the introduction of new materials and glazes prompted a new body of work that was dramatically fresh in its tactile and visual sense (Peterson, 2001: 119). Kaneko spent a total of five months at EKWC in the Netherlands (Bonansinga, 1999: 12). Since then Kaneko incorporated some new interesting forms that he had not tried before in his work (*Fig. 2.40*) (*ibid*).

Another of Kaneko's fascinating series is his monumental *Heads*, which he began making in 1993 (Peterson, 2001: 208). For many years, Kaneko has had a fascination with the human figure as, paradoxically, an abstract shape. He is particular intrigued by the viewer's response to a monumental head and that the representation of the human head is



Fig. 2.39 Jun Kaneko, *South*, 1996
111 x 72.5 x 6.5 cm, glazed ceramic



Fig. 2.40 Jun Kaneko, *Untitled*, 1996
170 x 160 x 36 cm, Glazed triangular Dango with signature 'striking' effect

something that everyone can relate to. This he feels narrows the distance between the observer and object. Kaneko remarks:

I started making heads as a pair, because it gives me the opportunity to create a different visual power and problems. The space between the two in the pair is the important element. It could be 4 inches or 5 inches or a foot, but the adjustment of spaces is part of the piece. This doesn't happen in a single head, you just worry about the space around one (ibid).

Kaneko has mentioned that his ceramic head remind him of Buddhist heads (*Fig. 2.41*) (Peterson, 2001: 208) Kaneko has made several pairs of these heads over the last ten years or so, many of them with varying abstraction of the facial features. Kathleen Whitney (1997: 65) describes a pair of these heads, entitled *Silence* (1994), as cartoon-like in their generalized simplicity. She adds: "They are modelled in the most generic way possible; a nostrilled bump for a nose, two budlike lips, an approximation of a forehead, eyes, and cheekbones" (ibid).

The heads are each mounted on a low plywood platform, about 70 cm high, and placed directly opposite each other so that a dialogue is set up between the two dismembered heads, each measuring about 1.6m high (Whitney, 1997: 65). Whitney observes: "They resemble... Buddha heads; so blank, sexless, and generic that they act as a screen for the projection of any ethnicity, emotion, circumstance. Despite their grand scale, their humbleness and odd featurelessness deny them any theatricality" (ibid).

Kaneko's work is difficult to define because it hovers between genres; he has roots in both the "craft" practice of ceramics as well as in the sculpture tradition (Whitney, 1998: 65-66). His use of colour and pattern are visually compelling and decorative, yet his use of

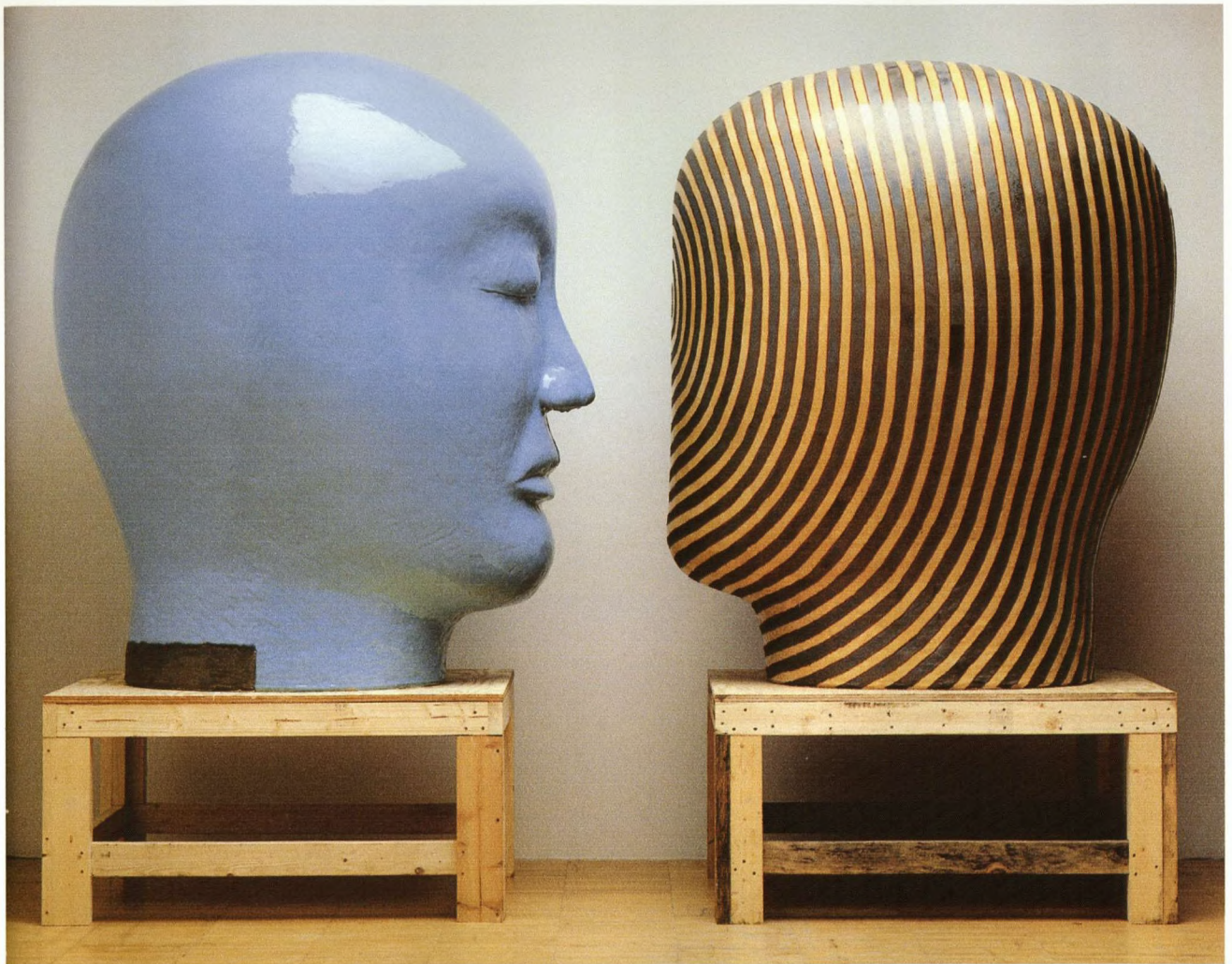


Fig. 2.41 Jun Kaneko, *Untitled (Heads)*, 1995
234 x 274 x 135 cm, Glazed ceramic on wood

scale and severe formality carries the work squarely into contemporary art practice.

Whitney states:

The work requires this balancing of contradictions: the odd contrasts between perfection of reflective surfaces, neutral forms, and the physicality of the glazes; the demands created by working in clay at a large-scale and the uncontrollable and often accidental effects of long firings... Kaneko's conceptual foundation is a violation of order, disruption of systems through the accidental actions of material process rather than the agency of thought and directed action" (ibid).

Kaneko's primary concern in his monumental ceramic sculpture is a concept he calls "spiritual scale" (William Traver Gallery, 2000). According to Kaneko: "Everything we look at comes from our intuition and feeling which (in turn) comes from our human body. Consciously or subconsciously, scale emerges from a sense of the scale of our own bodies. That's where it starts for me" (ibid). Another concern for Kaneko is "to be able to shrink the distance between the material and myself to zero... When I finally become one with the material, I may have an interesting level of creative freedom in my hands" (Ullrich, 1995: 37). Kaneko lives and works in a renovated warehouse located in the historic Old Market District in Omaha, Nebraska (Peterson, 2001: 87).

Xavier Toubes (Kaneko and Toubes, 1996: 7) describes Kaneko as a "driven maker," that from the beginning he found that in the making process he is constantly discovering new ways. Toubes remarks that Kaneko "creates an arena where he negotiates the distance between object and maker to logically challenge it and establish an incessant pursuit for him: the search for a visual order, its possibilities and its abundance" (ibid).

Wilma Cruise (b. 1945)

Wilma Cruise was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1945 (Art in South Africa: Extended CV, 2003). In 1969 she completed a BA degree at the University of the Witwatersrand and later studied ceramics at Technikon Witwatersrand from 1981 to 1984. She went on to study Fine Arts and completed her degree through UNISA in 1989 and later obtained her Master's degree in Fine Arts in 1998. Cruise has written many articles on art and ceramics and has published a book (ibid). This book, entitled Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa, with pictures taken by Doreen Hemp, covers a wide range of the use of fired clay and the diversity of artistic expression which took place during the early 1990s in South Africa (Cruise and Hemp, 1991: 8). Wilma Cruise is a sculptor who works predominantly in clay, but has also worked in various other mediums, including paper-mache, bronze and multi-media (Art in South Africa: Extended CV, 2003). She has curated various exhibitions, participated in international biennale and has had eleven solo exhibitions (ibid).

Cruise's work deals with the body as subject; this enabled her to comment in a direct way on the human experience (Arnold, 1996: 109-110). Cruise, who does not consider herself a "didactic feminist artist", views "the human experience as political, cultural, personal and female" (ibid). She deals with "the question of identity beyond the publicly conferred image ... Her art functions in the psychic space between inner and outer worlds. She uses the body, the site of experience, as the vehicle for the exploration of meaning. The body provides the metaphorical link between unconscious realities and the conscious known world" (Art in South Africa: Extended CV, 2003).

Cruise is primarily known for her life-size clay figures which she fires to stoneware. Her early works are a reflection of Cruise's bleak perception of life at the time (Cruise and Hemp, 1991: 100). This view was reinforced by "Cruise's childhood, which provided no certainties in the form of a comforting religion" as did her early encounters with existentialist writing (ibid). These works, a series of near life-size figurative sculptures made between 1988 and 1990, captured this dark vision in clay. The figures are placed in staged environments which are constructed from steel, plaster, wood and paint. The props used are "intended to enhance the sense of desolation"; they "serve[d] to empty out the spaces surrounding the works rather than fill them" (ibid) This can be seen in *Wedding Night* (Fig. 2.42).

In the late 1980s, particularly in the context of South African ceramics, Cruise's process of working with clay was extremely unorthodox. Arnold remarks that Cruise had engaged with the controversial art-craft debate in South Africa at the time, "arguing the cause of clay as a sculptural medium and challenging ceramists by exhibiting clay sculptures, quite legitimately, on ceramic shows" (Arnold, 1996: 110). But Cruise's sculptures were not small figurines, table pieces, or decorative. Arnold states that as life-size bodies, Cruise's work was "emphatically located within the tradition of sculpture, not pottery (ibid).

In 1992 at the annual exhibition of the Potter's Association held at the Pretoria Art Museum, Cruise's submission, *Without Judgement* (1991-92), created a controversy when it was awarded the premier prize. Arnold explains that Cruise's work, and the other prize winning sculptures, "were perceived as hijacking what was meant to be an exhibition focusing on the essentially functional nature of well-crafted ceramics" (ibid). Cruise flouted convention by creating a large-scale sculpture comprising three male busts which



Fig. 2.42 Wilma Cruise, *Wedding Night*, 1988-90
120 x 190 x 180 cm, Stoneware, wood, metal, plaster and blanket

were placed at eye level on bricks. In these works Cruise manipulated the clay crudely, vigorously pierced the clay with nails and used paint instead of glaze on the surface. Arnold points out: "Seen in the context of an exhibition of bowls, plates and dishes, finely finished and demonstrating knowledge of form and glazes, Cruise's aggressive work was controversial... What it seemed to do was assert the superiority of 'art' over 'craft', and to mock the skills essential for the creation of utilitarian objects" (ibid).

Given that Cruise's sculptures question the conventions of ceramic tradition; she looks to fine artists such as Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, George Segal, Francis Bacon and Ed Kienholz as models for her work. According to Cruise, her works reject ceramic tradition precisely because of its association with craft. The expansion of her work to a life-size scale was "an attempt to show that clay too has the potential to be a 'high art' medium" (ibid). Cruise's treatment of her medium can be perceived as similar to Rodin's impetuous modelling, "his tactile handling of clay and direct transmission of emotion through fingers and substance" (Arnold, 1996: 111). Cruise's use of fragments and the separate components that make up her figures are also comparable to Rodin's body parts and torsos. Parallels can also be drawn between Cruise's approach to clay and Picasso's expressively manipulated sculptural forms (ibid). In terms of historical ceramic tradition, Cruise' work can be seen to make reference to the Chinese terra-cotta army whose individual figures were also constructed in sections and then put together after firing.

Although her sculpture is non-traditional in terms of material and process, she does acknowledge certain sculptural conventions (Arnold, 1996: 111). Space is an important concern in her work. Marion Arnold remarks that Cruise frequently uses "the space of her site as an intrinsic component to create ambience. As installations, her sculptures are

subject to the visual resonance produced by the containment, expanse and space flow of the site” (ibid), as in, *L’Homme Révolté* (1990) (Fig. 2.43 and 2.44).

Cruise constructs her figures in sections which are fired separately and assembled afterwards (Arnold, 1996: 110). Found objects and other materials such as metal are often added to the figure. These other materials usually create a contrast in surface texture with the matt clay. She worked aggressively with her medium, often inserting nails into the clay and leaving the surface with rough, crude marks (Fig. 2.45) (ibid).

Although Cruise’s work is influenced, both formally and iconographical, by male Western artists, her sculpture makes a powerful statement of the female experience. Arnold notes that Cruise’s “sculpted body is the vehicle for her emotional responses to situations” (ibid). All of Cruise’s major works began as a need to express base emotions like anger or fear and “her self-contained figures function as affecting presences” (ibid). Cruise’s visual language is located within “classic sculptural expressionism” as Arnold puts it. This can be seen in her impulsive, gestural use of clay and her purposeful inclusion of the marks of her process. Her forms are often both distorted and rhythmical, with heavily scored, jagged surfaces (Fig. 2.46) (ibid).

An early work, *There is no father* (1990) (Fig. 2.47) is a seated female figure that seems to be constrained by the body (Arnold, 1996: 112). The figure has an elongated serpentine neck and is leaning forward on a metal bench. She appears to have her arms bound behind her. But the arms have been cut off at the shoulders. The proportions of the body are unbalanced and distorted; this is conveyed by the small breasts and large legs, while the torso and legs are joined by a layer of black rubber and wire. The surface is scored with

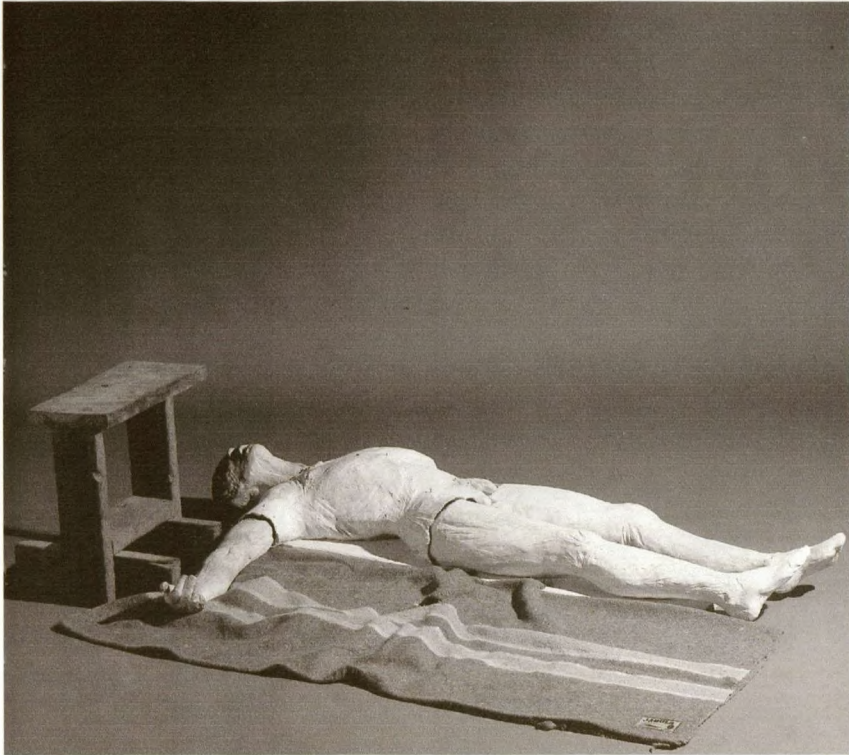


Fig. 2.43 Wilma Cruise, *L'Homme Révolté*, 1990
44 x 185 x 116 cm, Stoneware, plaster, wood and blanket

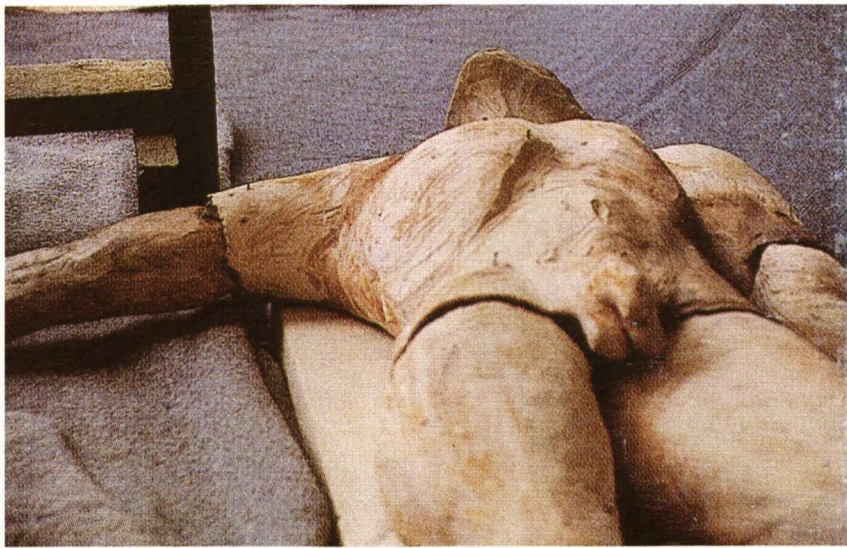


Fig. 2.44 Wilma Cruise, *L'Homme Révolté* (detail), 1990
44 x 185 x 116 cm, Stoneware, plaster, wood and blanket

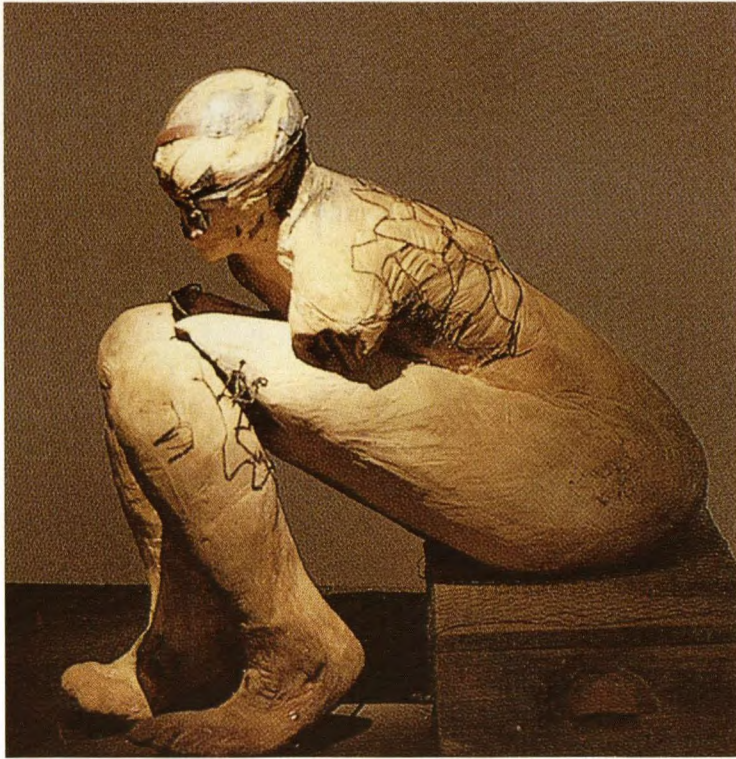


Fig. 2.45 Wilma Cruise, *Crouching Woman*, 1988-90
50 cm high, Stoneware, wood and fired metal



Fig. 2.46 Wilma Cruise, *There is no father* (details), 1990
142 x 120 x 180 cm, Stoneware, metal and wood

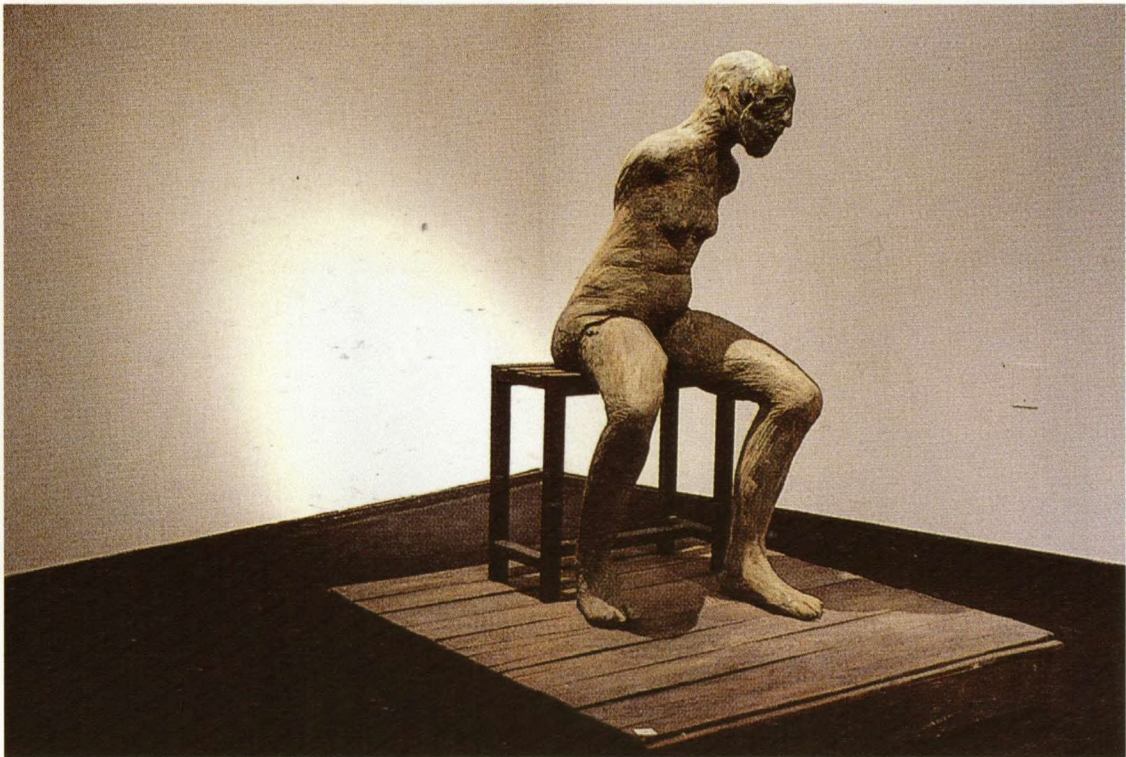


Fig. 2.47 Wilma Cruise, *There is no father*, 1990
142 x 120 x 180 cm, Stoneware, metal and wood

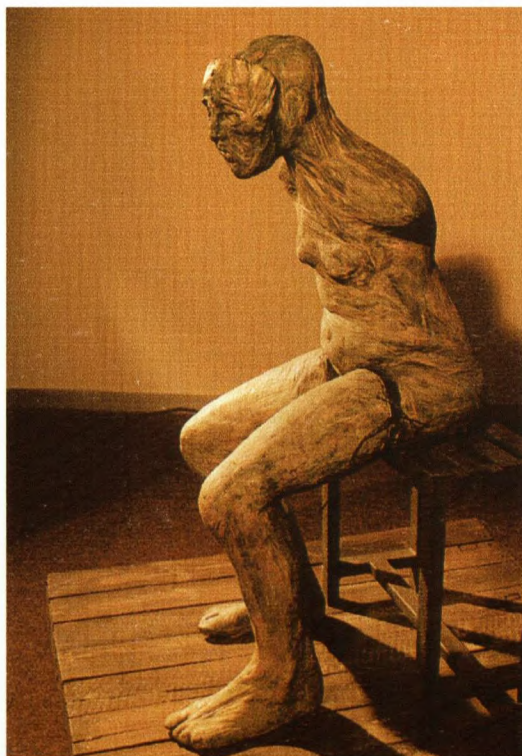


Fig. 2.48 Wilma Cruise, *There is no father* (alternate view), 1990
142 x 120 x 180 cm, Stoneware, metal and wood

deep scratches and green paint is applied over areas. This treatment of the flesh indicates an inner tension (*Fig. 2.48*) (*ibid*).

Arnold (*ibid*) comments that this figure is literally about a woman who has gone to pieces.

She explains:

The metaphor of disintegration, and the relationships between part and whole, culminate in the head. It wears a mask, attached by a metal nail through the forehead. The mask is not a face; it is a layer of pain, a series of signs about feeling... The figure's fractures, distortions, awkward forms and lack of proportional harmony convey the sense of bodily incoherence experienced during deep emotional distress.

The title of the work emphasizes the sense of self-awareness and loss. It also ambiguously alludes to "the absence of man as partner or father and as God" (*ibid*).

The cycle of works, entitled *Nicholas: October 2, 1990*, shown at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg in April 1993, revolves around the event of the murder of her nephew, Nicholas Cruise (*Art in South Africa: Nicholas, 1993*). Nicholas Cruise worked for a computer company in Durban, which was managed by group of concerned young South Africans. Some of these young men had been involved in the End Conscription Campaign. The company also did work for the ANC on a contractual basis. However, it still remains unclear as to why three members of the Orde Boerevolk sent a bomb hidden in a computer to this company. Nicholas Cruise triggered the bomb as he opened the computer and was killed. Ironically, Nicholas had worked for the company for less than two months. He was not a political activist, just a victim of a senseless violent attack (*ibid*).

This cycle of works, made in response to these events, is what Cruise calls "an act of mourning" (*ibid*). The artist states: "It is also an attempt to redress the balance; to refute the negation of Nicholas" (*ibid*). Arnold remarks that although Cruise did not try to

represent a particular, violent South African event, “she used her grief and anger to concretise ideas on mindless brutality signified by the intimidatory power of male bodies” (Arnold, 1996: 113). One of these works, *Three Shades (The bully boys I, II and III)* (1992-93), started out as twelve male figures and evolved into the three shades idea (*Fig. 2.49*). The three figures are large, heavy and armless. Their eyeless, featureless faces have become blurred into anonymity and their dark, weighty presence is ominous. Their brutality is accentuated by the use of nails which pierce the flesh and a metal codpiece is placed over their genitals (*Fig. 2.50*). Arnold suggests that the work is a statement about the male body as a weapon, “a point further emphasised by the protection afforded the sex organs” (*ibid.*).

In her artist’s statement, Cruise explains the work when she says:

“The cycle has to do with power, threat, death and the absence of God/god. These ideas encompass all the bizarre inexplicable killings that have littered the South African landscape in the past years. Thus the works while they have to do with Nicholas are also beyond Nicholas. The works are neither portraits nor illustrations. They are a shout against the silence” (*Art in South Africa: Nicholas, 1993*).

Many of Cruise’s works deal with existential questions, as Arnold writes, “that formulate the paradoxical space theorised by denying the existence of God but acknowledging existence as the opposite of negation” (Arnold, 1996: 113). Because of her questioning the “nature of being”, Cruise has produced many self-portraits over the years (*ibid.*). Her *Self-portrait* (1993) is not a realistic interpretation of her appearance (*Fig. 2.51 and 2.52*). Arnold explains that this work is about the female condition and its bodily origins as well as a personal attempt at locating the source of personal creativity. This female figure’s arms enclose the body in a gesture of protection as well as embracing the vulnerable self. Formally the figure resembles Rodin’s *Eve* (1881), which was originally modelled for the



Fig. 2.49 Wilma Cruise, *Three Shades (The bully boys I, II and III)*, 1992-93
Life-size, Stoneware and cast metal on concrete bases



Fig. 2.50 Wilma Cruise, *Three Shades (The bully boys I, II and III)* (detail), 1992-93
Life-size, Stoneware and cast metal on concrete base



Fig. 2.51 Wilma Cruise, *Self-portrait* (front view), 1993
Life-size, Stoneware and concrete base

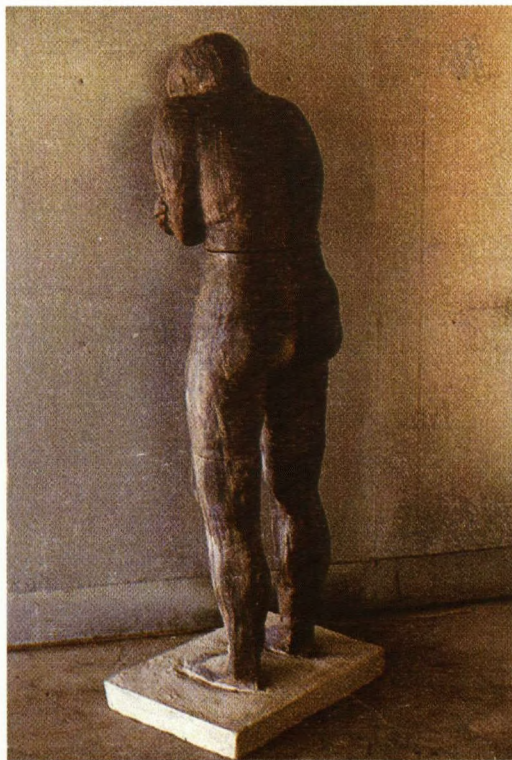


Fig. 2.52 Wilma Cruise, *Self-portrait* (back view), 1993
Life-size, Stoneware and concrete base

Gates of Hell doors (Arnold, 1996: 172). Cruise's *Self-portrait* has her head bowed which renders the figure inaccessible and her face, the locus of identity, is obscured (Arnold, 1996: 113). The figure's feet are embedded in a concrete block and the body's surface is blackened. These aspects serve to portray emotional strain. Arnold suggests that like *There is no father*, Cruise's *Self-portrait* is "not an exploration of the erotic body but rather an expression of exposure and the enigma of self-exposure" (ibid).

Cruise's continuing self-portrait investigations have allowed her to articulate ideas on gender identity which she feels is located in the body. Cruise often accompanies her clay sculptures with written notes and drawings (ibid). In her 1996 exhibition at the First Gallery in Johannesburg, entitled *John's Wife: Artist as Subject; Subject as Object*, Cruise made use of a number of drawings, prints and several volumes of books to accompany the clay sculptures (Art in South Africa: John's Wife, 1996). The seven artist's books contained illustrated poetry. Her drawings included numerous scribbled notes, thoughts and observations and each of the sculptures bore a hand-written message noting the genesis of that work (ibid).

Cruise states that this exhibition was a personal document informed by a spirit of autobiography. She adds: "The paradox of being both perceiving subject and perceived object is explored. This irony is inherent in the sub title *artist as subject; subject as object*" (ibid). Arnold points out that as subject, Cruise can control her subject matter and her own representational processes that she can exert "artistic authority rather than social power over *self-portraits and nude women*" (Arnold, 1996: 114). Cruise comments that the reference to "wife" suggests the act of observing oneself from a distance (Art in South Africa: John's Wife, 1996). Cruise is conscious of being middle-aged and belonging to a

generation of South African women whose identities were defined within the conservative patriarchy of the Apartheid era. These women “now have to recognise conflicts between self-awareness and social expectations” (Arnold, 1996: 114).

Karel Nel, in a review of *John's Wife*, describes the exhibition as a “powerful, complex and deeply resonant statement” (Nel, 1996: 7). He adds that Cruise’s “unflinching honesty... is uncompromising in its attempt to address who she is, her sexuality as a woman, how she has changed and how her identity is affected by being a wife” (ibid). Cruise recorded the responses to these questions as musings in her poetry and drawings; private thoughts which have now become public. In the context of this exhibition the viewer ambiguously plays the role of the voyeur. The role is ambiguous because the voyeur is often included in the drawings themselves. Nel comments that the role of the voyeur seems to allude to “Cruise’s ability to experience life directly yet at the same time, distance herself to view it as an observer” (ibid).

The poems and drawings explore sexuality and are explicit in their depiction (Nel, 1996: 8). The sexual act in the work is portrayed as banal in its ordinariness. Cruise’s work is not seductive. Nel observes: “The exhibition is underscored by a brusqueness in the directness of the interpretation of her world and a lack of sensuousness in the engagement of her media” (ibid). This brusqueness can be seen in the life-size figures, on which the clay was roughly trowelled to articulate the surface. The three nude figures, which form the focal point of the exhibition, are self-portraits: *John's Wife (Blue)*, *John's Wife (Yellow)* and *John's Wife (White)* (1995-96) (Fig. 2.53). The sculptures relate directly to psychological states which are depicted through body gesture, colour and their positioning in the gallery space (ibid).



Fig. 2.53 Wilma Cruise, *John's Wife (Blue, Yellow and White)*, 1995-96
3/4 life-size, Fired clay, pigment and found objects



Fig. 2.54 Wilma Cruise, *John's Wife (Yellow)* (detail), 1995-96
3/4 life-size, Fired clay, pigment and found objects

In *John's Wife (Blue)* the figure is positioned in what Cruise calls the "submissive monkey pose" (ibid). This image of sexual offering which directly confronts the viewer is handled in such a way as to be challenging, yet inoffensive. In *John's Wife (Yellow)* (Fig. 2.54), the headless and armless figure slouches in a chair against the wall, the soft flesh of her belly accentuated in this position. Her lower legs are carelessly attached by bits of wire. The figure is portrayed as ageing and withering and the yellow ochre pigment at her feet hints at the desolate East Rand mine dumps of Cruise's youth. *John's Wife (White)* (Fig. 2.55) sits dejectedly in a chair with head slumped forward. The figure sits with her arms at her sides, palms turned upward in resignation and feet propped up on cement bricks (Fig. 2.56) (ibid).

Diary-like confessions, musings and sketches cover the gallery walls, thus giving the viewers direct access to the artist's mind. Nel observes of the exhibition:

The seemingly mute ceramic bodies become deeply resonant in the web of words and images. Their presence is further enhanced by the starkly metal bound books housing the gentle and cynical poetry in an interplay of text and image. It is within this hidden world of poetry that one is able to recoup the complex metaphors deeply buried in the clay embodiments of presence (ibid).

Cruise's June 2000 exhibition at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg, entitled *RapRack* (an anagram of Car Park), is a collection of works arranged outside in the gallery's grounds (Dunlop, 2000). The exhibition consists of a number of roughly modelled figures in fired clay and bronze, and several terra-cotta heads arranged on a scaffolding construction (ibid). These larger than life-size figures are fractured and distorted (Fig. 2.57) (Art in South Africa: Rap Rack, 2000). Their ungainly forms convey a sense of bodily incoherence. The figures are massive; they are armless, and sexual (Fig. 2.58). In



Fig. 2.55 Wilma Cruise, *John's Wife (White)* (detail), 1995-96
3/4 life-size, Fired clay, pigment and found objects



Fig. 2.56 Wilma Cruise, *John's Wife (White)* (side view), 1995-96
3/4 life-size, Fired clay, pigment and found objects



Fig. 2.57 Wilma Cruise, *Rap Rack: Sacroiliac Dementia*, 1999
Life-size, Fired clay



Fig. 2.58 Wilma Cruise, *Rap Rack: Homo Erectus*, 1999 - 2000
193 cm high, Ceramic on base

her artist's statement on the work, Cruise refers to Antony Gormley's statement about the body and space. Gormley said that "at the other side of appearance is a space far greater than the space against which, traditionally, the body is figured" (ibid). Cruise suggests that these works allude to experiences "at the other side of appearance – quivers of meaning just out of reach of consciousness" (ibid). She described them as shadow figures, as "beings poised, unknown and knowing, in-the-world and yet separate from it" (ibid). The artist claims: "The works are a reflection of realities that in a general sense fall outside structures created by language. Their emotional verities are felt rather than conceptually apprehended. The sculptures invade the viewer's space with an insistent presence" (ibid). In a review of the exhibition, Dunlop describes Cruise's monolithic figures as "paradoxically, dumb as well as eloquent. Eerily, they communicate their message of scarcely contained psychic chaos" (Dunlop, 2000).

The exhibition also includes a series of twenty-four terra-cotta heads (ibid). These heads are all female and have been formed without mouths. The heads have been roughly hewn with barely formed features such as eyes and noses. Crude scratch marks indicate hair, gouged-out recesses represent eyes and the imprints of fingers have been left on the clay surface (*Fig. 2.59*). Cruise remarks: "there is an iconic generality and gentleness about them that shifts the reading away from [a] didactic feminist statement" (ibid). Cruise's handling of the clay in these works can be seen as comparable to the intuitive manipulation of the clay in the making of Anthony Gormley's *Field*. These heads historically refer to other clay head sculptures produced in Africa such as, the Lydenberg, *Nok* and *Ife* heads.



Fig. 2.59 Wilma Cruise, *Rap Rack: 24 Terracotta Heads*, 2000
Approx. 22 cm high, Fired clay



Fig. 2.60 Wilma Cruise, *Claybody 1 and 2*, 2002-3
Life-size, Fired clay

Cruise's most recent exhibition *Earthworks/Claybodies* was held at the Pretoria Art Museum, 16 March – 26 May 2003 (Schmahmann, 2003). This exhibition consists of a group of five bodies made in clay, represented in postures suggestive of extreme vulnerability. The figures in *Claybody 1* and *Claybody 2* (Fig. 2.60) are depicted as hunched and armless, they "appear to be shivering and are, not only physically but also psychologically, turned in on themselves" (ibid). In the catalogue of the exhibition, Schmahmann writes that the figures are scored with jagged marks that "defy an understanding of skin as a definitive boundary for the body: what appear to be slashes or wounds to skin and flesh create a sense that these figures are ruptured" (ibid). The title of these works *Claybodies*, itself suggests that the body could be in a state of susceptibility, that the flesh is "violable and permeable" (ibid).

Cruise's aggressive work is controversial, testing boundaries of taste, attitude and categorisation (Arnold, 1996: 110-11). Her work has drawn attention to the meanings entrenched in the term 'ceramic' and the limitations of its categorisation. Arnold claims: "Her sculpture also highlights the ideological implications of 'art' and 'craft', and raises the problematic histories of the terms in Europe and Africa. Her work contributes to the discourse about value judgements, imbalances of power between art and artefact, and the role of gender in cultural practices" (ibid).

Cruise explains her position of being an artist and a woman when she says:

I'm an artist who expresses the experience of being female – that experience is personal, subjective and based in the body and through the body. My experience of the body has been conditioned by the male gaze. Age places a schism between gaze and reality – that gaze and my knowledge of decay – this is what it is about – the experience of getting old (Arnold, 1996: 114).

SECTION THREE: Clay in Architectural/Environmental Sculpture

Clay has a long history of being used architecturally in buildings for religious, domestic and other purposes. Clay products have a high structural strength when properly compounded with other materials and fired to a correct temperature (Peterson, 2000: 60). Thus fired clay is not affected by weather, will not disintegrate in water or fire and will last for centuries. Clay has long been used to make floor and wall tiles and other household embellishments, as well as being used on the exterior of buildings (ibid).

In desert regions in Africa, North America and South-west Asia adobe clay has been used for centuries in constructing buildings for domestic or religious use (ibid). This adobe clay, which is baked to hardness in the sun, is extremely durable and versatile, and only dissolves after a number of heavy rains. This is why these adobe dwellings are usually constructed in regions with low rainfall (ibid). Adobe means sun-dried earth bricks, thought to be derived from the Egyptian word *atob* (Peterson, 2003: 155) Adobe is a natural clay soil which has historically been stabilized with pinon pitch, the juice of mesquite pods, the liquor of the locust bean, straw and other kinds of plant material (ibid).

During the 1960s, many divisions arose within art making, and the environment emerged as a dominant theme in a wide variety of artistic forms (Levin, 1988: 275). This environmental theme was communicated in various ways, for example, some artists sought so depict the “sensuous expression of the earth’s terrain and the forces of nature” (ibid). While some artists, as Levin stated, chose to explore a “relationship with [the] landscape as a site for ritual monuments interacting with the environment” (ibid). Others dealt with the concept of dwellings in a number of different expressions from romantic to

sociological, and were inspired by primitive structures to the contemporary urban house. Following this momentum, the experimentation of John Mason's expressive, monumental walls of the 1960s encouraged ceramic sculptors to also work architecturally. Levin noted that Mason's use of clay strips, coils and textured slabs "questioned the traditional meshing of clay and architecture in the form of monumental tiled walls, floors, and bas-relief decorations" (ibid). By the 1970s, ceramic sculptors found that mere decorative embellishment in architecture was an inadequate response to the demands of diversity. Levin remarked: "A more formidable challenge—that of orchestrating mass, space, plane, and image—appealed to the ceramists seeking a broader, more sculptural interpretation of clay's relationship to architecture" (ibid).

This section will discuss the work of two artists whose work is not easily classified within the usual categories of clay work. Their use of clay materials is unconventional since they do not use clay in its traditional sense, but use variants of clay and ceramic materials. John Roloff (b. 1947) constructs outdoor kilns using a steel armature which he wraps in ceramic fibre blankets and then fires (Levin, 1988: 283). Within these kilns, he uses the materials of sculpture and ceramic in an extraordinary way. Joyce Kohl (b. 1949) creates assemblage sculptures using found steel parts, usually remnants from farming and industry (Koeth, 2000). The reassembled structures are combined with a stabilized adobe (ibid).

John Roloff (b. 1947)

The proximity to water has been a constant in John Roloff's life. He was born in 1947 and spent his childhood near Portland, on the rugged Oregon coast (Levin, 1986: 59). This time spent near the coast sparked Roloff's life-long fascination with the sea (Lewallen, 1986). Later this fascination manifested itself in his ambition to study marine geology (the study of the ocean floor). While studying at the University of California, Davis, Roloff realized that it was not the science that particularly fascinated him; it was "the imagery of the sea and the processes of life, death, evolution and transformation that occur at its depths" (Lewallen, 1996). Roloff added art to his geology major and was exposed to the freewheeling and intellectual atmosphere of the art department at Davis at the time (Lewallen, 1986).

While there, he studied with funk artists William Wyley and Robert Arneson, who taught ceramics there in the late 1960s (Lewallen, 1996). Wyley and Arneson encouraged "an open, exploratory and idiosyncratic attitude about art and its practice" (ibid). Lewallyn points out that during this time Roloff made "critical associations between art and science, he recognised that certain sculptural processes and materials were replicating geologic processes such as sedimentation, erosion, evaporation and volcanic action" (ibid). In particular, he realised that there was a close relationship between ceramic and geologic materials and processes and that through the ceramic medium he could explore his fascination of geology (Lewallen, 1986). Lewallyn states: "The materials used in ceramic glazing, such a feldspar, dolomite and kaolin, were the same materials, in a refined state, Roloff had learned about in geology classes and seen during extensive travels through the wilderness areas of the western United States" (ibid).

After two years of undergraduate art studies, Roloff went to graduate school at the California State University in Humboldt (Levin, 1986: 59). As a teaching assistant with his own studio and the tranquil setting of the area, Roloff became more keenly aware of his natural surroundings and began to focus on the subjects of water and ships (ibid). By the time he completed his studies, the ship had become a central theme in his work (Lewallen, 1986). Lewallen explains that for Roloff the most potent and relevant associations of the ship to his work is its connection to the "exhilaration and dangers of exploration into uncharted realms" (ibid). Roloff found that in the ceramic process of making forms and firing, he could re-enact a series of processes that occurred naturally in the environment. For example, the intense heat inside a kiln could be comparable to conditions at the earth's core. The process of transformation of the clay object into a state of permanence, and the process of firing and its outcome which carries with it a degree of unpredictability, interested Roloff immensely. Roloff chose to exploit rather than control this degree of unpredictability in the ceramic process (ibid).

While teaching at San Francisco Art Institute, Roloff developed his first series, entitled *Elements of Voyage* (1974), which involved his ship forms and an unconventional process (Levin, 1986: 59-60). Roloff explains: "I took all the soluble materials in the glaze room, boiled them in a large vat and let them evaporate on the surface of the form" (ibid). Roloff was searching for a dialogue with the materials with his intuitive approach to chemicals. He adds: "I was more interested in transforming form through an association with some geological process. After all, I was using the same substances you can find on the side of a mountain" (ibid).

Between 1974 and 1978, while teaching at the University of Kentucky, Roloff noted that the hills surrounding the university made him feel "almost claustrophobic" (Levin, 1986: 60). He felt a psychological need for the expansiveness of western American geography; this longing is expressed in the *Exile Series* (1970-1975). This is large series of small tableau works of white porcelain ships which reference the work of 19th Century American landscape painters, such as Albert Bierstadt who painted romantic images of the western wilderness. These ships, some caught in reeds or beached, are objects out of their natural environment as well as images of loneliness and abandonment (*Fig. 2.61*). These works also recall the boating trips on the American river of Roloff's youth (*ibid*).

While at Kentucky, Roloff found the appearance and texture of conventional glazes unsatisfying when compared to natural surfaces such as earth stratification or the effects of wind or water erosion (*ibid*). As a result he experimented with indigenous organic material, like corn husks, pine needles or straw which he dipped in clay slip and fired. These left imprints in the clay, the textured effect intrigued him as it reminded him of the process of fossilization. Levin explains: "The idea that he could imitate nature led him to experiment with a compound containing sodium silicate and silica as a non-shrinking coating over a clay form [which was] expected to shrink normally" (*ibid*). Roloff was ecstatic with the result which was a buckled, corroded exterior that resembled ripples of water. He said that this was "impossible to achieve by handbuilding, and a way to exploit properties and materials for their visual effects that goes beyond coating the surface with glaze" (*ibid*).

Roloff's *Night Ship/The Frozen Sea* series, dating from the early 1980s, was the culmination of this experimentation with organic and glaze materials (Lewallen, 1986).

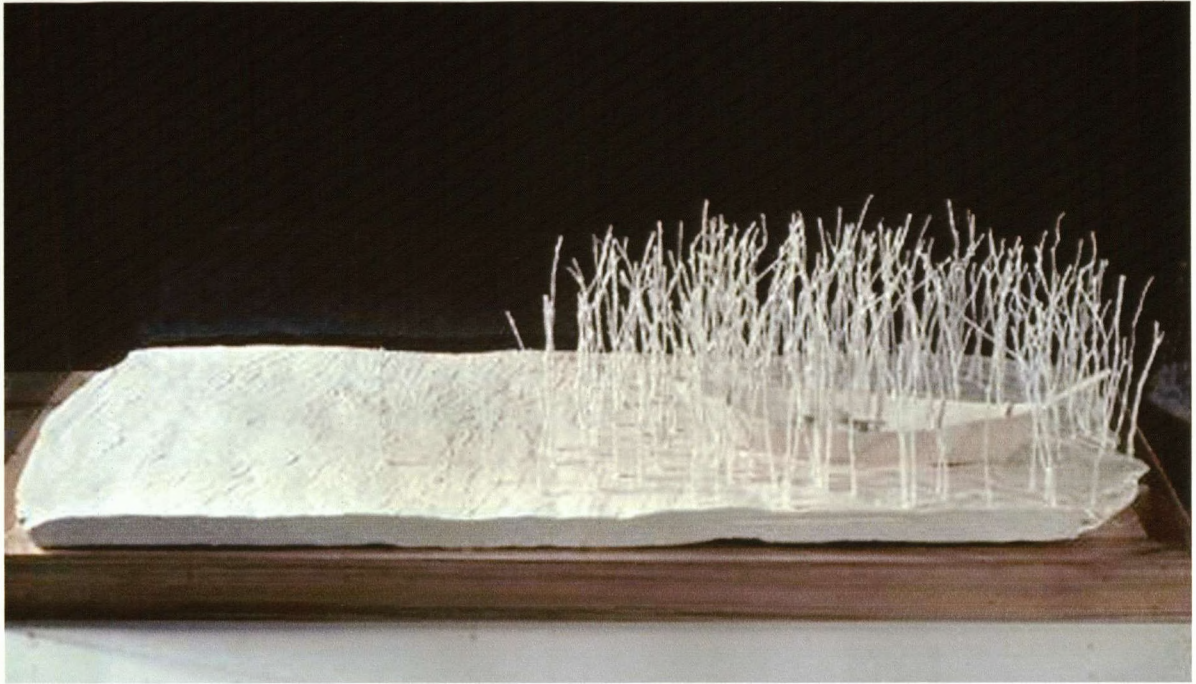


Fig. 2.61 John Roloff, *Exile Series No. 1*, 1975
91 x 30.5 cm, Porcelain bisque, wood, paint and vitrine

These evocative sculptures, numbering twelve in total, have the same basic structure of a 50 inch (1.27m) hull cast from a single mould. The clay forms are coated with fused silica which appears like snow or ice. Lewallen describes the ships as dark and ghostly, and they “suggest both the terror inherent in being adrift on frozen seas and images of once-submerged ships on whose surfaces trees, branches and other organic detritus have accumulated” (ibid). Roloff views these works as landscapes, “the black hulls floating beneath the surface of the land and the ornate superstructures as islands or reefs floating across the land” (ibid).

In *Night Ship/Haystack* (Fig. 2.62), Roloff makes reference to the landscape paintings of 19th Century American artist Martin Heade (ibid). Many of Heade’s paintings depict haystacks along a winding river. Roloff’s sculptural clay version represents the haystack sitting precariously on a slender sand bar as if the field had been flooded and the haystack has been carried off by a wrecked hull. Lewallen points out that, “As in all of the works in the series, this travelling landscape appears to have been transported from a warmer climate to a nocturnal, arctic state of spiritual despair” (ibid). Roloff used his technique of dipping hundreds of pine needles in clay slip to create the haystack. In the firing the organic material is turned to ash, leaving behind a clay shell. In *NightShip/Dark Current* (Fig. 2.63), Roloff used a similar method by dipping twigs and leaves in clay slip. This created the structure, form and texture of the ship. Lewallen observes that *Night Ship/Dark Current* “includes among its branches a small, overturned rowboat that emphasizes a sense of vulnerability and desolation” (ibid).

The *Exile Series*, for Roloff, was the beginning of one of two sculptural directions he followed in the 1980s and early 1990s (Levin, 1986: 60). These early works combined



Fig. 2.62 John Roloff, *Night Ship/Haystack/The Frozen Sea*, 1986
1.3 m long, Ceramic and fused silica



Fig. 2.63 John Roloff, *Night Ship/Dark Current /The Frozen Sea*, 1986
1.3 m long, Ceramic and fused silica

narrative content related to the ship as a symbol of exploration into the unknown, and have in later years merged with the form to represent an abstract image (ibid). The second direction that Roloff pursued in his work is his series of large, outdoor installations that he produced between 1980 and 1992 (Lewallen, 1993). This was an extraordinary series of works in which Roloff took "sculpture materials and processes that involved fire, fusion and an interdisciplinary synthesis out of the studio and into the landscape on a scale never before attempted" (Lewallen, 1996). In Roloff's early ship, object-oriented sculptures he dealt with historic time, but his environmental installations dealt with geologic time as well as raised questions about nature in art and man's intervention into nature (Lewallen, 1986).

Having moved back to northern California to teach at San Francisco Art Institute, Roloff realized how eastern geography had changed his perspective (Levin, 1986: 60). The artist explains: "I had become much more sensitive to the expanse of landscape, to an awareness of seeking the horizon line" (ibid). He felt the need to move beyond the object and into the landscape. During his time in Kentucky, Roloff had met Dennis Oppenheim, who was a visiting artist at the university (Lewallen, 1996). The two artists had long and fruitful discussions about their art. Oppenheim had produced a number of works in 1969, entitled *Branded Mountain* and *Directed Seeding - Cancelled Crop*, in which, through burning and crop harvesting respectively, he stamped an image into the landscape. This idea of imposing an image into the landscape intrigued Roloff (ibid). This led to Roloff taking his explorations of the geological processes he had been using to create his miniature landscapes through into his large-scale environmental works (Lewallen, 1986). Roloff also felt a particular affinity to the work and writings of Earth Works artist, Robert Smithson, with whom he shared a common ground in geology (Lewallen, 1996). Lewallen

comments: "The study of geology informed Smithson's thinking about art and offered an avenue by which he could extend it into the real world. Smithson found beauty and fascination in the post-industrial, entropic landscape," (ibid) while Roloff explored associations between sculptural and geologic processes and translated those principles into large-scale, outdoor site works.

For these large-scale kilns, Roloff developed a procedure of building a structure of welded steel to which he then attached ceramic fibre blanket (Levin, 1986: 62). During the firings of the kilns held outdoors at night, propane burners are inserted into the kilns which slowly raised the temperature until the form became illuminated by the intense heat. The blanket served to both insulate the heat as well as let light through. These firings took several hours, Roloff deposited glaze and ceramic materials inside the kiln which became transformed during the firing. After firing these structures remain whole and reusable. The glazed and fired formations that are left behind after the kiln structure is removed were fused into the earth and remain the only tangible evidence of the firing (ibid). The entire process was documented and witnessed by many people, what Roloff referred to as an "event" (Lewallen, 1996).

Lewallen states that Roloff often referred to geology in selecting the forms for his landscape/furnace works. Many of the earliest sites for these "land kilns", as Roloff calls them, were chosen after extensive research was done into the geologic history of the landscape where the pieces were to be built (ibid). Each kiln was different, either relating to or contrasting with its site (Levin, 1986: 62). Some ideas for the kilns were developed in the field during a workshop situation, while others were based on Roloff's detailed notes from past transformations, elevations and site research (ibid).

For Roloff, an important and seminal aspect of the land kiln projects was “a partially restrained unleashing of natural force, where a visual, conceptual and emotional dialogue is initiated between the artist/observer and that force” (Roloff, 2001). In a essay written in 1983, Roloff explained the firing of a kiln/furnace project:

The kilns are designed from a knowledge of principals about heat flow, from conceptual ideas, and from an intuitive point of view. The kiln's operation and results are only partially predictable and are allowed 'a mind of their own.' When successful, a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, a metaphor is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theatre (ibid).

One of Roloff's primary concerns in these works was in “developing a poetic relationship between the kiln, its contents and the firing. These are interlocked and inseparable elements of the process” (Levin, 1986: 62). In *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* (1980) (Fig. 2.64), Roloff utilized the centre or “throat” of the flower form as the downward entrance to the flue system, thereby integrating the design of the project with the technical requirements (ibid). The orchid form was inspired by paintings by Martin Heade that depicted the lush flora of South America, and made reference to the “primal systems of life and death in the jungle” (Lewallen, 1996). For this kiln, Roloff constructed 7.5 metre long bottomless ceramic fibre kiln in the shape of a mountain. He lined the earth underneath the kiln structure with glaze materials which were formed as an enormous five-petalled orchid. Following the firing and the dismantling of the steel-armatured kiln (Fig. 2.65), the flower image that remained scorched into the earth resembled hardened lava-type rock (Fig. 2.66) (ibid).

In an earlier work *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* (1980) (Fig. 2.67) investigating ice age mythology and science, Roloff juxtaposed natural imagery with a geologic process. This



Fig. 2.64 John Roloff, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* (pre-firing), 1980
18.2 m long, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, propane, sand, soda ash

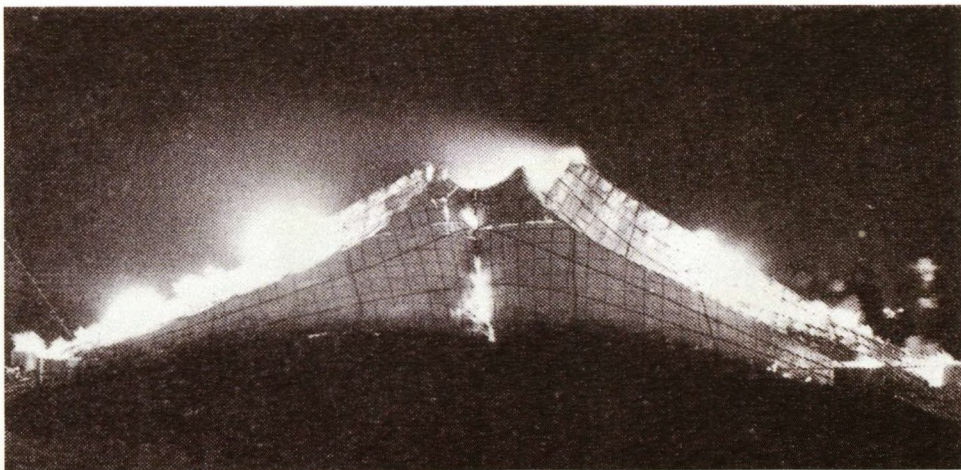


Fig. 2.65 John Roloff, Night firing of *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, 1980
18.2 m long, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, propane, sand, soda ash



Fig. 2.66 John Roloff, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* (after firing), 1980
18.2 m long, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, propane, sand, soda ash



Fig. 2.67 John Roloff, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* (pre-firing) 1980
6.1 m diameter, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, propane, earth, borax



Fig. 2.68 John Roloff, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* (after firing) 1980
6.1 m diameter, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, propane, earth, borax

kiln, represented in the shape of a six pointed star, was a seminal work for Roloff because it alerted him to the emotional and spiritual aspects of his kiln-firing events, which to him were always to some degree unpredictable, and in that sense irrational (Lewallen, 1996). Roloff has referred to the experience of the fire's activation of *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* as "a conjuring," where the representation of the starfish seemed to come "alive" in a sense by the filling and animation of the structure by fire. The ghostly traces of this kiln left behind in the earth have since entered into an entropic phase and will eventually deteriorate and disappear over time (*Fig. 2.68*) (ibid).

Between 1980 and 1982 Roloff made a series of three kilns in the shape of a wave (Roloff, 2002). The first two kilns were fired and photographed at night. Large photographs of their activities were exhibited along with *Wave Kiln No. 3* (1982) (*Fig. 2.69*) which was installed at The San Francisco Art Institute in 1982 (ibid). In *Wave Kiln No. 1* (1981) (*Fig. 2.70*) the transitory image of an ocean wave was symbolically re-enacted during the activation by fire, this process further emphasised the impermanence of its form in nature (Levin, 1988: 283). The glaze materials placed on the ground beneath the kiln were transformed by the action of firing and left a mark on the earth bearing the shape of the kiln (ibid). *Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)* (1984) was an extension of the wave theme and incorporates an earlier theme of the ship (*Fig. 2.71*) (Roloff, 1972-2002). This kiln was 9.8 metres in length and shaped like a submarine. It had a distinctive feature; during the firing the outlet in the curl of the wave spurted a breath of flame two metres into the air which animated the form (*Fig. 2.72*). The remnant of this kiln was a shape of fused glass in the ground, thus the title *Ice Ship (of Glass)* (ibid).

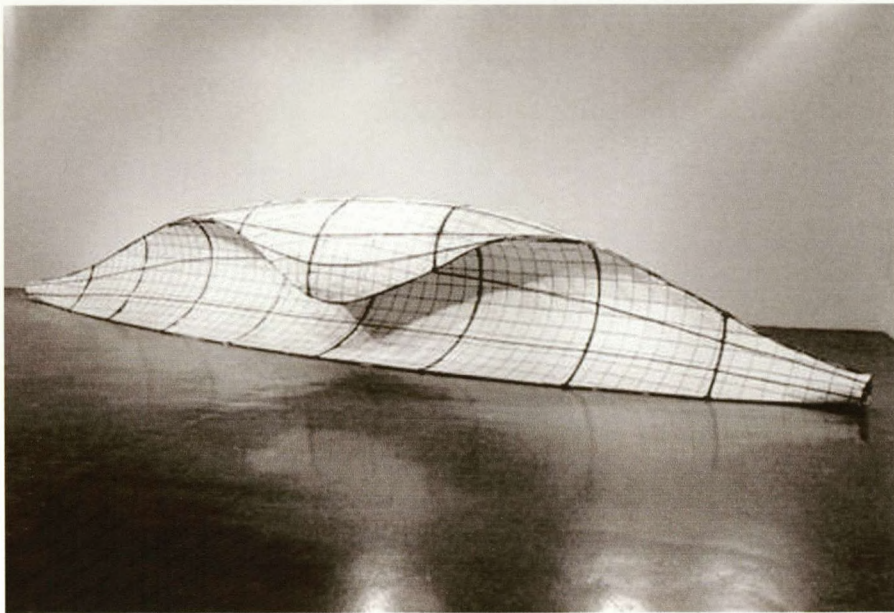


Fig. 2.69 John Roloff, *Wave Kiln No. 3* (1982),
Installed at the San Francisco Art Institute
12.2 m long, steel and ceramic fibre blanket

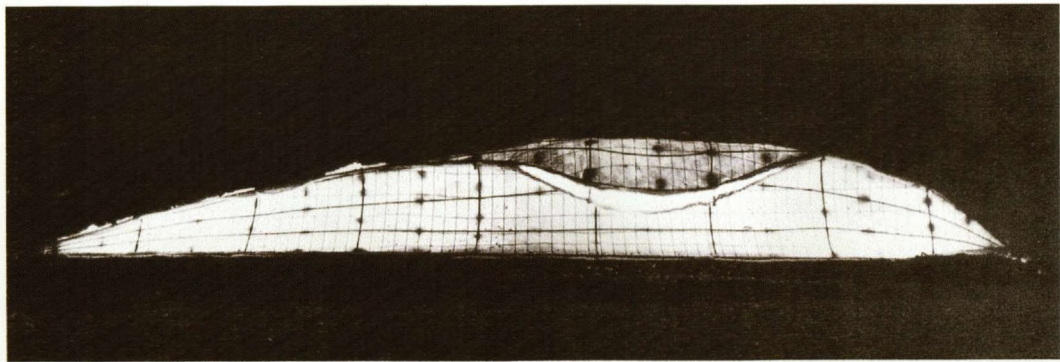


Fig. 2.70 John Roloff, Night firing of *Wave Kiln No. 1*, 1981
Approx. 4.5 m long, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket and propane



Fig. 2.71 John Roloff, *Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)* (pre-firing), 1984
9.8 m long, Steel, glass, ceramic fibre blanket
Detroit, Michigan



Fig. 2.72 John Roloff, *Firing of Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)*, 1984
9.8 m long, Steel, glass, ceramic fibre blanket, propane

Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship (1984) (Fig. 2.73), was the first furnace work that directly involved a botanical element (Lewallen, 1996). The *Lava Ship* element, inside the kiln, was made of clay textured with impressed pine cones and branches and fired on site (Fig. 2.74) (Roloff, 1972 -2002). The result was a lava-like rock formation in the shape of a ship. The *Trellis Ship* element and landscaping was added after the firing (ibid). This element incorporated the “slow crawl of flowering vines over the latticework of one of it two ships” (Fig. 2.75) (Boettger, 1985:114-15). The two ships intersect each other forming an X shape whose elliptical shafts, up to almost twelve meters long, Roloff alludes to in the work’s title to overturned hulls (ibid). Boettger describes the work:

The X formed by the two ellipses, in contrasting but natural materials - the roughly clumped and furrowed deep brown or black clay intersecting with the vines supported by the steel trellises – presents a striking textural juxtaposition, suggesting a coalesced free-flow of ‘lava’ opposing a mechanically defined structure, albeit one now being irregularly covered by growth and returning to a more primal state (ibid).

This addition of the botanical element subjected the work to further, if more gentle transformation (Roloff, 1972 -2002). This work was an important precursor to later projects investigating the botanic origin of fossil fuels, as in *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field* and *Humboldt Ship*, both of 1989 (ibid).

These above mentioned works along with *Untitled (Earth Orchid)* (1988) are part of a series of environmental kiln/furnace works, called *51 Million BTU's* (British Thermal Unit, is a scientific term for the measurement of energy) (Roloff, 1972-2002). *51 Million BTU's* is the total calculated energy expended in the firing of these projects. Roloff explains: “This series in itself makes an initial exploration through form, image and process of the solar/botanical/geologic origin of fossil fuels and the transformative energy released by their ignition” (ibid). For example, *Untitled (Earth Orchid)* (Fig. 2.76)



Fig. 2.73 John Roloff, *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship* (pre-firing), 1984
10.9 x 12.2 m, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, clay and organic matter

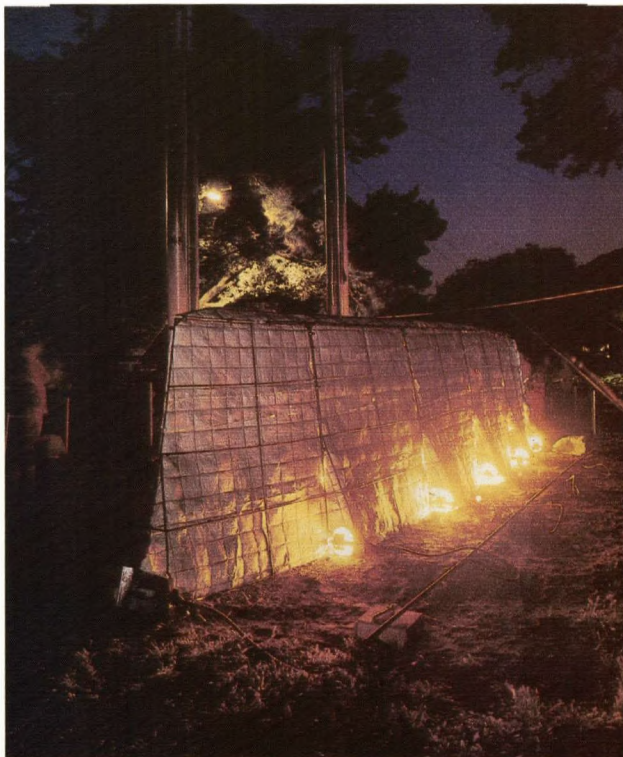


Fig. 2.74 John Roloff, *Firing of Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984
10.9 x 12.2 m, Steel, ceramic fibre blanket, clay, organic matter and propane



Fig. 2.75 John Roloff, *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship* (final, fused state), 1984
10.9 x 12.2 m, Steel, Clematis vines, landscaping, fused earth



Fig. 2.76 John Roloff, *Untitled (Earth Orchid)* (pre-firing), 1988
Approx. 9.8 m long, Steel, altered refractory cement

explores the “botanical form by the ignition of natural gas into radiant energy within the central core of a furnace shaped to resemble the cross-section of an abstract orchid” (ibid).

In *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, an extension of the earlier glass *Oculus* works of 1988, this project is represented by two orbs, derived from the bathysphere³ (Crohn, 1992). The *Oculus* element also alludes to the transcendentalist philosophy of R. W. Emerson and his reference to the vision of a transparent eyeball in the essay *Nature* (Roloff, 1972-2002). Roloff elaborates that the element refers to “a narrative concerning two ‘bathyspheres’ each in a symbolic quest for its origin. It is activated and altered by a series of propane burners during an evening event/performance” (ibid). Crohn points out that “Roloff’s events and artifacts are made whole and connected to mortal concerns in the act of witnessing – hence the bathysphere/eyeball associations” (Crohn, 1992). During the firing of *Virgin Bathysphere* (Fig. 2.77), as Roloff calls it, the translucent sphere emitted a flame from its opening, reminiscent of a burning oil stack. *Ancient Bathysphere* (Fig. 2.78), which was constructed of unfired bricks and steel, resulted in a blackened carbon form.

In another work from the same series, *Humboldt Ship* (1989) (Fig. 2.79), Lewallen pointed out that the flues of the ship, reminded one of Jurassic trees which reference the fuel used in the firing of the kiln (Lewallen, 1996). These flues were meant to evoke, as Roloff explained: “the original nature of the material in plant form in an ancient forest before it fell into the swamp and became transformed into fuel” (ibid). The kiln suggested a sinking ship; this represented the “descent and geologic deposition of sedimentary materials like pre-metamorphic silts, a source of rock of the refractory concrete” which was used in the construction of the sculpture (ibid). In these later kiln works, like *Humboldt Ship*, Roloff

³ Bathysphere *n.* strong steel deep-sea diving sphere, lowered by cable (Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1992)



Fig. 2.77 John Roloff, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field: Virgin Bathysphere*, 1989
9 m (pole) x 1.8 m. diameter, Steel, high temperature insulation, lava, propane



Fig. 2.78 John Roloff, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field: Ancient Bathysphere*, 1989
1.8 m diameter. Unfired brick, steel, propane



Fig. 2.79 John Roloff, *Humboldt Ship*, 1989
4.6 m high, Steel, refractory cement, high temperature insulation, propane

built the structure of the kiln with steel-reinforced refractory cement and therefore, these works “have a more permanent after-life because of their greater structural and material - partially lava-like – integrity” (ibid).

In his essay, entitled Rotting Flame, Roloff (1999) explains the process of transformation involved in these environmental projects: “Fire was an agent of change in the geologic sense, used to alter earth materials within a site-developed furnace structure; here geologic time was compressed into human time by speeding up the normally glacial rate of geologic transformations”.

Lewallen (1996) sums up:

For all the research, scientific and engineering know how Roloff brings to their construction and activation, he conceives of these works intuitively and poetically. Consequently, their effect on the viewer is more visceral and evocative than intellectual. In each successive piece, Roloff asked different questions and created new challenges. Roloff now views the kiln series as complete, but does not cut-off the possibility of its evolving”.

For Crohn (1992), Roloff’s work proposed a psychological resonance, that:

Instead of dully resigning his imagination to the assumption that understanding of natural phenomena depletes the world of magic; Roloff stages demonstrations in which the inverse is shown to be true, leaving behind events and objects whose associative qualities span or leap, magically suspended, between the need to know and the need to believe.

These projects were never Roloff’s sole preoccupation; he has since made many other site installations and more recently a series of wall and leaning objects that combine photography and organic processes (ibid). Roloff’s work has always resisted definition in terms of a particular medium or style (Morgan, 1998). He has been called a sculptor and an environmental artist, but he goes beyond these definitions. Morgan comments that

Roloff “functions on a conceptual level, meaning that he foregrounds the ideas that he is seeking to clarify through his art. By foregrounding the ideas, the medium or media becomes secondary to the extent that he uses what is necessary in order to express the idea” (ibid).

Roloff’s unconventional use of ceramic materials in constructing his land kilns is one of the reasons that make his work so distinctive. His large kiln structures that facilitate the transformation of materials including, fuel cement, silicates and carbonates, by fire to leave an imprint in the environment is unprecedented. Roloff uses ceramic materials on a base level and not just for the effects that are rendered after firing. The results of the kiln firings are “artefacts analogous to those made by naturally occurring events, specifically in that they are transformed on a molecular level by a force (inconceivably hot fire) that is literally fundamental to existence as we know it” (Crohn, 1992)

Joyce Kohl (b. 1949)

Joyce Kohl was born in 1949 in Oakland, California. She was, for the most part, raised in California, but spent part of her childhood in the south (Kohl: Fulbright Gallery, 2000). In 1975 she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Studio Art from Empire State College in Saratoga, New York (Kohl: Albuquerque Museum, 2000). She went on to obtain her Master's of Art degree in Ceramics and Sculpture from California State University, Fullerton, in 1977. She is currently a Professor of Fine Arts at California State University in Bakersfield, where she has taught ceramics and sculpture since 1987. Kohl has lived in Southern California for the last thirty years and is presently living with her family in the mountains of Pasadena (Kohl: Fulbright Gallery, 2000).

Kohl was raised by environmentally conscience parents (Koeth, 2000). Her family holidays were spent camping and hiking and she grew up with an appreciation of nature. Her work is thus strongly informed by a reverence for nature and a concern for the environment (ibid).

As a student, her emphasis was on the tactile quality of sculpture and ceramics. In her post-graduate work, she primarily utilised adobe as a construction material of her large-scale sculptures. In the mid 1980s, Kohl began using concrete and steel along with adobe in fabricating her work. She particularly used "angle iron, because the pieces seemed to be craving a skeleton", to construct the framework of her pieces to which she would then add adobe, supported on wire mesh (ibid).

Adobe is a natural clay soil mixture used as a building material in desert regions and other areas around the world (Peterson, 2003: 155). It can also be used to make ovens, fireplaces and the like, and it is a relatively inexpensive and energy efficient building material. Adobe clay soil is traditionally mixed with sand and straw. Usually it is dried to hardness by the heat of the sun but it can also be fired. In Mexico, for example, adobe is burn-fired with mesquite, which gives it a more permanent hardness and wonderful fluctuations in colour. Sun-dried adobe eventually disintegrates, particularly in heavy rainfall. Today, commercial ingredients are added to the adobe earth to harden and stabilize it. These ingredients include cement, polymers, epoxies, enzymes, and emulsified asphalt. The resultant fortified adobe has minimal shrinkage and can be built on or added to when it is dry (ibid).

Adobe can be used with many different types of materials: it can be used with or over wire mesh or other structures for support (ibid). Paper pulp can be added for workability, or any type of straight clay can be added for more plasticity and fibre can be embedded for extra strength. There are many different techniques that can be employed in working adobe; for instance, it can be hand-built, press-moulded, or trowelled onto a support, although it is not recommended for functional pieces. Adobe bodies can be single-fired and glazed (ibid).

In 1987, Kohl accepted a teaching post at California State University in Bakersfield (Koeth, 2000). There she discovered the scrap-yards and salvage operations in the San Jouquin Valley that provided Kohl with a source of material for her sculptures. The objects found, from farming and industry, were discarded steel implements which she reassembled to form the structures of her sculptures. She worked with the materials she

found in an assemblage manner, often adding an adobe and concrete mixture to the structures. Kohl's approach to her medium and, particularly, her use of adobe and industrial materials connects her to the realm of Process Art (ibid). Process Artists in America and Europe of the mid 1960s redefined sculpture by deeming any material appropriate for making art (Lewallen, 1996). This occurred, in part, as a reaction against "the preciousness of sculpture in bronze or marble" (Levin, 1988: 281). These artists frequently made use of industrial materials, such as ready-made bricks, lead plates and steel parts (ibid). Historically, there is a long tradition of the usage of found objects in assemblages; Picasso's *Bull's Head* (1942) is an example of appropriating everyday objects and transforming them into sculpture.

Kohl's early work was "concerned with tension created by contrasting massive forms with illusions of movement and of interior forms. These illusions involve a play between three dimensional forms and the surface, on which two-dimensional techniques are drawn and painted." (Kohl: Albuquerque Museum, 2000). Her work made reference to architectural structures which were accentuated by the use of building materials. Kohl explains that she was primarily interested in working on a scale that the viewer could relate to on a physical level. With the painted surface, the sculpture became more geometric and at the same time related more to people, to their structures and machines, while still retaining a connection to the earth (ibid). This is illustrated by Kohl's 1988 outdoor installation, entitled *Irish Bog Fetish* (Fig. 2.80), which she made while at the International Sculpture Conference held in Dublin, Ireland. This installation, which took place in a field, included hay rolls, peat and coloured adobe painted on the ground. The adobe paintings depicted diagrammatical representations of houses.



Fig. 2.80 Joyce Kohl, *Irish Bog Fetish*, 1988
15.4 x 15.4 m, Adobe, hay and pigment

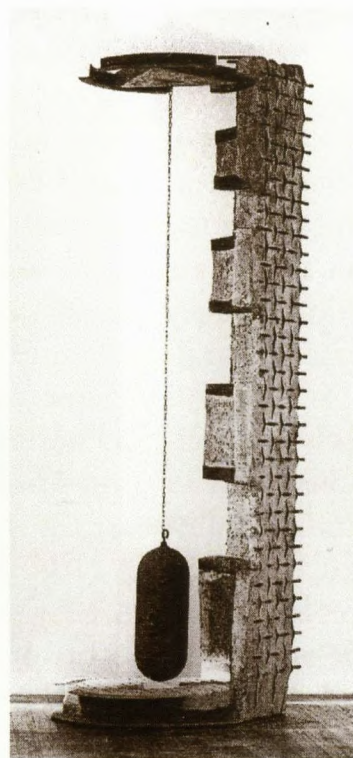


Fig. 2.81 Joyce Kohl, *Time Bomb*, 1993
1.75 m high, Unfired adobe with steel objects

Much of Kohl's work deals with aspects of time (Kohl, 2003). While some of her sculptures include abstract depictions of timekeepers, others depict artefacts of more ambiguous functions (ibid). In *Time Bomb* (1993) (*Fig. 2.81*), which was part of a group exhibition called *Clay Currents* held at the Southwestern College in Chula Vista, California, the concept of time was a prevailing concern in the work (Parr, 1994: 30). This work was constructed using found steel objects that make up the frame-work. Unfired adobe packed into the single outer steel grid, added an illusion of weight and bulk to the form. Kohl views adobe as a metaphor for earth in her work. Parr points out that the adobe seemed to soften the steel structure's "machine-like appearance with both a visual and tactile reference to earth" (ibid). Suspended from the top of the structure, hung by a chain, was what seemed to be a heavy metal pendulum-like form (or bomb), which was only inches from the base. Another aspect of this work is what Kohl describes as "the juxtaposition of ancient and contemporary" (ibid). Kohl added: "I am alluding to architecture and artefacts, both primitive and contemporary, often ambiguous as to usage" (ibid). Her intention was for the work to remain open-ended, for the "viewers to bring their own interpretations and consequently to reflect on the artefacts we leave behind for future generations to ponder or trip over" (ibid).

In 1997, Kohl was invited to Durban, South Africa as a visiting artist. She taught for a short period at Natal Technikon where she gave ceramics and sculpture workshops. She also spent time at the Bat Community Arts Centre where she made a public art sculpture that relates to recycling (*Fig. 2.82*) (Kohl: Fulbright Gallery, 2000). She has travelled extensively throughout the world, particularly in Central and South America, as well as Australia, Zimbabwe and recently, Thailand. Kohl remarks: "My time living and working in third world countries has influenced my art work, priorities and values" (ibid).



Fig. 2.82 Joyce Kohl, *KwaZulu Natal Totem*, 1997
Permanent Installation, Bat Centre, Durban, South Africa
1.8 m x 61 cm x 61 cm, Cubes of crushed metal and earth



Fig. 2.83 *Community AIDS Wall Panel*, 1990-91,
Permanently installed at the National Gallery of Harare, Zimbabwe
Glazed ceramic tiles

In 2000, Kohl spent six months in Zimbabwe as a Fulbright scholar as part of her African Regional Research grant (Kohl: Fulbright Scholar Program, 2000). While there, she was involved in investigating the possibility of opening a Fine Arts Department at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. She also collaborated with local artists on a public art project that dealt with the AIDS pandemic. This project consisted of a Z-shaped wall and a bench that were inlaid with ceramic tiles. The tiles on the wall were painted by 19 artists from Ros Byrne's Pottery Factory in Ruwa which depicted the artists' impressions of how AIDS has affected the communities of Zimbabwe (*Fig. 2.83*). The bench was covered with tiles done by children from Harare orphanages which depicted drawings and poetry relating to AIDS (*ibid*).

Kohl employs spontaneity in the creation of her art (Koeth, 2000). She says she does not make drawings in preparation for her work and she tries not to over plan. The artist explains her working process: "I play directly with the materials, I let the work evolve without preconceived ideas. I try to keep the creative process open-ended as long as possible" (*ibid*). In *Split Personality* (1996) (*Fig. 2.84*), this playfulness is evident in the monumental form. This large rocker-like structure reminds one of playground equipment; the steps formed by the packed adobe are inviting to climb. Yet the deep fissure dividing the two step sides of the work is unsettling. The piece is also architectural, the step feature and the treatment of the adobe resembles rough plaster work. The surface quality of this work has an interesting tactile quality, particularly the contrast of the rusted metal with the earthy adobe (*Fig. 2.85*).

Many of Kohl's work of the mid to late 1990s have an interactive element (Kohl: Sculpture.org). These sculptures are designed to encourage interaction between the viewer

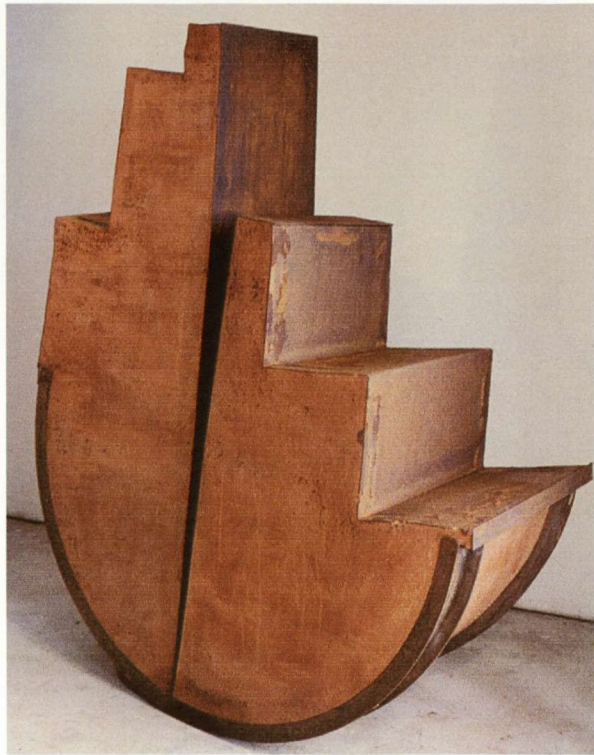


Fig. 2.84 Joyce Kohl, *Split Personality* (side view), 1996
1.8 x 1.5 x 1.2 m, Steel and stabilized adobe



Fig. 2.85 Joyce Kohl, *Split Personality* (back view), 1996
1.8 x 1.5 x 1.2 m, Steel and stabilized adobe

and the sculpture. They require the viewer to trigger the often erratic motion of the sculpture (ibid). For example, *Rocking Wall* (1995) (Fig. 2.86) is one such kinetic piece which, as the title suggests, is set in a rocking motion. The piece has a spiral-shaped framework with the openings packed with stabilized adobe. In this work the natural rusting of the metal armature and the earthiness of the adobe compliment each other. *Market Fluctuations* (2000) (Fig. 2.87) is another interactive piece, in which the viewer "begins the movement of a steel ball rolling noisily and erratically to and fro across a pair of massive metal rockers (Elcamino Gallery, 2002). This piece has a triangular shaped frame with remnants of turquoise green paint which is intersected by a metal cog-like circle. Kohl has set adobe in the two segments created by the meeting of the shapes. The influence of Kohl's many travels is evident in this piece and others, in her reference to primitive architecture and ageless/timeless forms (ibid).

Along with her sculptures and public art work, Kohl has also made several wall works. Most of these are also constructed utilizing cast off machine parts from farming and industry, and many also incorporate the element of repetition (Koeth, 2000). This is achieved by using perforated steel, or patterned ironwork grids. Kohl then meticulously fills each opening with her adobe/concrete mixture. The result is an interesting latticework of texture, as in *Architectural Details* (1999) (Fig. 2.88), *Cast-off* (1998) (Fig. 2.89) and *Perpendicular* (2000) (Fig. 2.90 and 2.91), where the metallic tones of the steel cut-outs create fascinating negative shapes filled with the contrasting red earth of adobe.

Kohl's most recent works, were exhibited in Thailand in January 2004 as part of a project called International Thailand-USA Art Exchange, employ the motif of feet to illustrate the connection between actions and consequences (Fig. 2.92) (Suttisiltum, 2004). Kohl points

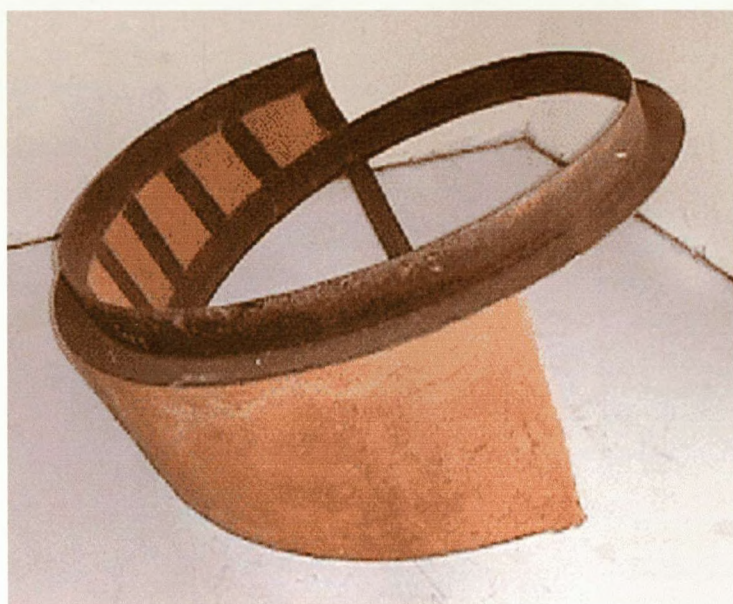


Fig. 2.86 Joyce Kohl, *Rocking Wall*, 1995
60 cm x 1.2 m x 1.2 m, Interactive, Steel and stabilized adobe



Fig. 2.87 Joyce Kohl, *Market Fluctuations*, 2000
71 cm x 1.5 m x 1.5 m, Interactive, Steel and stabilized adobe



Fig. 2.88 Joyce Kohl, *Architectural Details* (detail), 1999
91 cm x 1.3 m x 1.5 m, Steel and stabilized adobe



Fig. 2.89 Joyce Kohl, *Cast-off* (1998)
91 cm x 1.5 m x 1.5 m, Steel and stabilized adobe

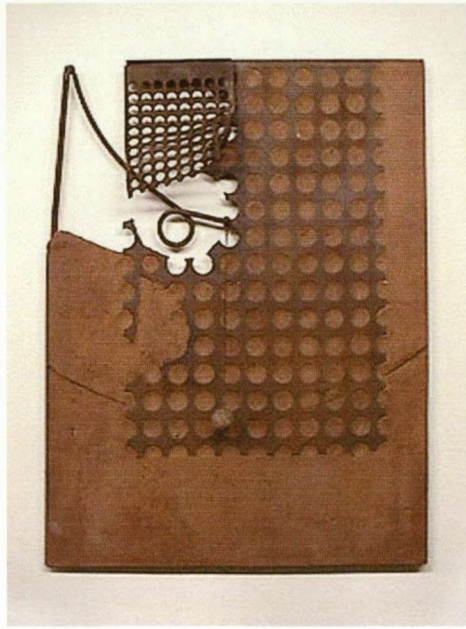


Fig. 2.90 Joyce Kohl, *Perpendicular*, 2000
1.1m x 91 cm x 1.8 m, Steel and stabilized Adobe



Fig.2.91 Joyce Kohl, *Perpendicular* (detail), 2000
1.1m x 91 cm x 1.8 m, Steel and stabilized Adobe



Fig. 2.92 Joyce Kohl, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, 2003,
1.2 m x 1.2 m x 91 cm, Found objects and stabilized adobe

out that these works are “about my country and how I feel we should treat other countries with respect”. As in many of Kohl’s work, these pieces act as a metaphor for the unknown repercussions of our actions.

In her artist’s statement, Kohl (2003) discusses the aspect of time in her work:

Events of the last couple of years, including the events of 9/11, the War on Iraq, and my experiences in Africa dealing with AIDS have challenged my assumptions about time. From poking fun at the treadmill of contemporary life, to the finality the death penalty imposes, to public art dealing with historic artefacts, all of my artwork deals with aspects of time.

Kohl acknowledges that she intends her work to affect the viewer, “in having the viewer consider the larger picture; to reflect on our impact on the environment, its impact on us and our place in time” (ibid). Simultaneously silent and eloquent, Joyce Kohl’s sculptures made from adobe and recycled steel, speak volumes about the foibles of our disposable societies (Elcamino Gallery, 2002).

Kohl’s use of adobe as a material instead of conventional clay breaks with expectations of what clay work can achieve. In using adobe Kohl directly references the earth since the surfaces of her are left unglazed and unaltered from the adobe’s natural state. Her work breaks with ceramic tradition because she incorporates of non-clay materials, like steel and cement, in her pieces.

CONCLUSION

This research project set out to investigate the use of clay as a material in contemporary sculpture. An historical overview of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century clay sculpture provided a context to the critical evaluation of contemporary clay sculpture and illustrated the point that many artists working in clay were influenced by historical precedents. In addition, the historical overview helped the candidate understand the debates surrounding the use of clay as a material in sculptural production, and how historically a bias existed against clay as a high art material. The change in attitude towards the use of clay as a sculptural material occurred in the 1960s, thus enabling clay to be regarded as a legitimate material in the production of fine art.

The candidate chose to discuss the clay work of a number of sculptors because she felt that each artist uses clay as a material in a unique way. However, connections exist between these artists' work. Antony Gormley, Andy Goldsworthy, Jun Kaneko, Wilma Cruise, John Roloff and Joyce Kohl have all produced work in the form of installation. Joyce Kohl's use of adobe is similar to Goldsworthy's application of clay in his construction of clay walls and floors. Kaneko's experiments with glazes can be compared to Roloff's use of glaze materials, but in a more controlled manner. Both of these artists make use of large-scale kilns and advanced technology to fire their works. Cruise and Gormley both create work dealing directly with the body and Kaneko and Kohl both employ abstract forms in their work. Goldsworthy, Roloff and Kohl deal with environmental issues in their work. All these artists make work on a large-scale, in terms of size, weight, and concept.

In the dissertation the candidate emphasized how, and why, each artist broke with the ceramic tradition of clay usage in their own way. Gormley uses clay as 'prime matter', letting the natural imprint and dimensions of the hands dictate the resultant form. Goldsworthy trowels the clay directly onto floors and walls and allows for natural drying processes, shrinkage and cracking to determine the final form and appearance the work. Kaneko pushes the boundaries of the term large-scale by making ceramic sculptures that were both technically and physically monumental. Kaneko achieves this by employing the use of large-scale industrial kilns and computer technology for firing these monumental forms. Wilma Cruise uses the body as subject in her sculptures and works with clay on a visceral level, allowing the gritty and expressive qualities of the material to come through. Roloff defies classification by constructing massive land kilns that transform ceramic materials and leave an imprint on the environment. His work is as much about the process of construction and firing as it is about the result. Joyce Kohl uses the materials that are conventionally reserved for building; adobe, cement and steel, and creates sculptures out of materials that were traditionally undervalued in art making. Kohl achieves a unique balance between material and texture in her work. The candidate believes that each of these artists use clay in a non-traditional way and have, therefore, unlocked possibilities for clay as a medium in producing sculpture.

The researching and writing of this dissertation provided the candidate with invaluable knowledge concerning the use of clay as a sculptural medium. This has also influenced and helped to clarify the use of clay in her practical work. The candidate has, since beginning this project, experimented more in clay and widened her technical knowledge of the medium. The artists studied broadened the candidate's insight into the possibilities of clay as a creative material, and gave her more confidence in working on a larger-scale.

Due to the constraints of this dissertation, the research was limited to a study of six artists. The candidate believes that the investigation has revealed that many artists use clay in diverse ways. This suggests possibilities for future research especially in the use of innovative techniques in producing clay sculpture, particularly by South African artists.

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