Evoking the Sacred:
The Artist as Shaman

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The objects of [American] Indians are expressive and most decorative because they are alive, living in our experience of them. When the Indian potter collects clay, she asks the consent of the river-bed and sings its praises for having made something as beautiful clay. When she fires her pottery, to this day, she still offers songs to the fire so it will not discolor [sic] or burst her wares. And finally, when she paints her pottery, she imprints it with the images that give it life and power-because for an Indian, pottery is something significant, not just a utility but a 'being' for which there is as much of a natural order as there is for persons or foxes or trees.[1]

Jamake Highwater

[1] Jamake Highwater, *The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America*. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1981), 77-8.

Abstract

This thesis examines, via a feminist theoretical framework, the systems in existence that permit the ongoing exploitation of the environment; and the appropriateness of ceramics as a medium to reinvigorate dormant insights. I argue that the organic nuances expressed through clay; the earthy, phenomenological and historic ritual connotations of clay; and the tactile textured surfaces and undulating form, allows ceramics to conjure responses within the viewer that reinvigorates a sense of embedment in the Earth. It is anticipated that when configured to reflect universally recognised symbols within the environment, the resulting installation triggers latent responses within the viewer thus reinvoking recognition of the inherent sacredness of the landscape.

The arrival of the twenty-first century bears witness to a great many 'illnesses' within our communities, and in this context it may be appropriate to apply the metaphor of 'Artist as Shaman' to the role of the artist within contemporary society. It is intended that the body of work produced to accompany this exegesis, when installed in the natural environment, will trigger inherent recognitions of the viewer's connection to the Earth and their sense of belonging within nature.

The research informing this method of presentation includes an investigation into innate recognitions humans appear to possess regarding certain symbols and textures, which motivate the forms, surfaces and installation of my work; and an exploration of Fibonacci, fractals and the collective unconscious, supported by research in scientific disciplines such as the New Physics, Evolutionary Psychology and Evolutionary Aesthetics.

Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of this thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

Signed:	Signed:
Dated:	Dated:
Dawn Whitehand	Dr Loris Button
Candidate	Principal Supervisor

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Introduction

> The first strand of the argument begins with representation.
> It is notable that prehistoric and non-western art very often
> depicts place less in terms of outward appearance than as
> impression, feel, significance or meaning.
> These are places experienced from the inside.
>
> Julian Thomas[2]

Overview

Throughout history the human race has been pre-occupied with issues of fertility of soil and people, life, birth and death.[3] There has also been an innate need to seek explanations for cosmic mysteries beyond language and human comprehension, resulting in a visual symbolic language independent of time and place. Often this symbolic language exhibits similar pictorial and symbolic representations due to modes of behaviour common to all humankind.[4] Historically this symbolic language had been verbalised via myth within ancient and pre-industrial cultures, which functioned as the science, history, religion, philosophy and literature of a society.[5] Such mythmaking enabled peoples to respect the world beyond the human ego, and believe in a world diffused with spiritual qualities, therefore suggesting that, although matter and spirit are different, they are elements of the same totality.[6]

Today, as technology develops at an ever-increasing speed, and the mythic staples that once held societies together vanish, people appear to feel more isolated and disconnected from the natural world. The rituals associated with myths which provided societies with meaning and spiritual connection have eroded, [7] being replaced by monotheistic faiths that worship one male authority,[8]

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[2] Julian Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 21.
[3] Miranda Bruce-Mitford, *The Illustrated Book of Signs and Symbols* (Surry Hills, NSW: RD Press, 1996), 7.
[4] Walter Torbrugge, *Prehistoric European Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1968), 128.
[5] J.F. Bierlein, *Parallel Myths* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1994), 314.
[6] David. T. Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin Pty. Ltd., 1997), 188.
[7] Ibid., 173.
[8] Western monotheisms: Christianity, Judaism, Islam.

and a mono-orthodoxy[9] that worships secular, material societal structures, thereby heightening these feelings of separation and alienation.

It follows that a reconnection to the natural world is necessary for humans because we are social beings, needing a primal and collective connection to the Earth, thus enabling an understanding of our ontological 'place' within the cosmos. David Tacey maintains that any living culture always has a religious element because culture has to wrestle with the big questions which are consistently theological.[10] While earlier societies answered these questions using myth and ritual, the casting of suspicion by empirical reasoning toward these practices throughout recent history by successive governments, science and by religions which supported monotheism, has contributed to an inability to believe in and communicate via these channels. Instead the contemporary post-modern Western world is one of mass culture and homogenisation; it is secular and material, with an emphasis on competitive individualisation. Yet this fixation on individualism has not, according to Jacques Barzun, liberated people from religion, but rather has left them to "feel alone and naked in the search for a new cosmic umbrella."[11] Anthony Stevens, as quoted by David Suzuki in *The Sacred Balance*, supports this view saying "[t]he need for community and its rituals is an ancient need. It has been built into the human psyche over thousands of generations and hundreds of thousands of years. If it is frustrated we feel 'alienated' and fall prey to psychiatric and psychosomatic ills."[12]

Western post-modern mass culture refers to Western Europe and its transplant societies, encompassing countries that differ in language, political systems and economies but have common elements of social life. According to Sammy Smooha they are rich, democratic, post-industrial, secular and bourgeois in outlook and lifestyle. Whilst some of these features are found individually in other countries, such as India (democratic), Japan (industrialised) and Kuwait (fiscally wealthy), they do not display all of these characteristics. Whereas these particular

[9] Consumerism, government, capitalism, multi-national companies, and so forth.
[10] David Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality* (Harper Collins Publihers Pty. Ltd., 2000), 40.
[11] Jarques Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1974), 86.
[12] Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*, 172.

aspects of Western societies have given them powerful economic advantages, they are clearly plagued by negative concomitants such as stressful workplace environments, inappropriate overuse of alcohol and drugs, and various other related social ills. Such issues have contributed to a decline in a 'sense' of community and a loss of 'warm' relations between their peoples.[13]

The capitalist and industrial ethic that has come to drive Western society has been defined as a product of patriarchy: the need to have authority and control over our environment.[14] However, these patriarchal tenets have not only created isolation between peoples within societies, they have also contributed to the alienation of individuals from their natural environment. David Tacey suggests "[s]ecular materialism and egotistical desires govern our relations with the land, we have no cosmology to link us spiritually with the world, and our official religious tradition is concerned more with heaven than with earth."[15] Indeed, Lynn White, in his essay *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, claims the crux of modern society's problem is religious because the evolution of science and technology is tinctured with an "orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature."[16]

The societal symptoms produced by a patriarchal outlook that promotes logic and empiricism at the expense of a holistic vision, I argue, contribute to the current upsurge of interest in the New Age[17] movement and alternative therapies within our communities. This increase in interest as a response to secularism suggests that rationality and scientific knowledge are no longer providing a viable *raison d'etre* for people in Western post-modern mass cultures, because "[w]e know that

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[13] Sammy Smooha, "Is Israel Western?," in *Comparing Modernities: Pluralism Vs Homogenity*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yithak Sternberg (2005), 414.
[14] Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," 24.
[15] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 163.
[16] Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 14.
[17] As a term 'New Age' encompasses the projection of the romantic impulse that rejects industrial capitalism, yet retains a spirituality independent of the church. See Mike King, "Art and the Postsecular," *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 4, no. 1 (2005): 10.

any kind of re-construction of reality based on logical reasoning and empirical evidence will ignore many aspects of reality that are just beyond words."[18]

Significance of the Research

While these premises provide the context for my research, they also validate the significance of such a study. Based on this brief discussion concerning 'Western post-modern society', I would suggest that the need for reinvoking the sacred in contemporary society is of significant concern. That such a venture be multicultural and provide interfaith usage is paramount because the need to generate inclusive rather than exclusive spaces within a monotheistic patriarchal society is important, especially in our increasingly globalised world. As Tacey stipulates "a group of randomly gathered ethnic communities does not constitute a culture unless some psychospiritual bonding has occurred beyond the material and financial connections."[19] That this research be conducted within the arena of art practice is beneficial because, as asserted by Barzun, "art has importance…because it can shape…minds and emotions…it affects the social fabric as well as individual lives…,"[20] and "even goes beyond and prepares the mind and heart for a new order."[21] Suzi Gablik affirms this, contrasting the isolationist, disengaged and pure aesthetics of modernism with an emerging social consciousness that challenges art's previous disconnection from society.[22] This social consciousness is certainly a strong element within the intent of my research. It is anticipated that conducting this investigation from within a feminist theoretical framework will also be valuable as new and alternative cultural insights will be revealed, contrasting those currently held within a patriarchal society.

In attempting to create a unified and cohesive space, it is also significant that I examine art, science and religion to propose perspectives related to this investigation. These disciplines have been historically looked upon by

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[18] Fre Ilgen, *Art? No Thing!* (Netherlands: PRO Foundation, 2004), 134.
[19] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 245.
[20] Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art*, 17.
[21] Ibid., 20.
[22] Suzi Gablik, *The Re-Enchantment of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1991), 4-5.

communities to shed light on the perennial mysteries of human existence; in earlier times they were unified and expressed through myth.[23]

The separation of these disciplines since the era of the Enlightenment[24] and the subsequent rise of rationality contributed to the development of the modern mind-set that has led to the environmental and spiritual dilemma being witnessed in contemporary times. Such observations have stimulated some social commentators, such as David Tacey and David Suzuki, to claim that a spiritual reconnection with the land, in which we once again view ourselves as part of the environment, will stimulate a reinvigorated attitude enabling a remedy for these dilemmas. Such a reconsideration will not occur, however, while we treat the environment as a commodity. While post-modern science and the 'New Physics' have recognised the interconnectedness of all things and acknowledge that a recognition of holistic unity is central to the world's re-integration, it is unable to influence wider circles of thought. However, science's search for the nascence of the universe is intrinsically tied to religion, and according to Tacey science needs art and religion to compel us to recognise and understand the implications of this new knowledge.[25] It is appropriate, therefore, that I am attempting, in a physical way, to reunite science, art and religion in order to regenerate and reinstate the sacred to its former societal position.

What then, is the 'sacred'? Just as Tacey and Suzuki envisage an evocation of the sacred through a reconnection with the land, so too does Vandana Shiva. Shiva defines the sacred as the "bond that connects the part to the whole"[26] and that this sacred bond is contained in the soil. The "soil is the sacred mother, the womb of life in nature and society."[27] It is the forced removal of peoples from this

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[23] Bierlein, *Parallel Myths*, 314.
[24] The Enlightenment, otherwise known as the Age of Reason, is characterized by the surfacing in eighteenth century France of progressive, tolerant concepts that led to the French Revolution, and remained prominent in Western European philosophy. Rising scientific knowledge led to the growth of empiricist, naturalist, and materialist doctrines, strongly opposing clericism: explanations for humanity's position within nature should not be sought in 'revelations' of the church, but through human experience and thought. See Antony Flew and Stephen Priest, eds., *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Pan Books, 2002), 119.
[25] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 169.
[26] Vandana Shiva, "Homeless in the 'Global Village'," in *Ecofeminism*, ed. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (Nth Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1993), 99.
[27] Ibid., 98.

soil, both in the past and present, for the purpose of economic development that, Vandana argues, causes the "transformation of organic communities into groups of uprooted and alienated individuals searching for abstract identities," because "'[d]evelopment' has meant the ecological and cultural rupture of bonds with nature."[28] Such development results in a desacralisation of the soil (Earth) due to changes in the meaning of a particular space. Spaces viewed as sacred by some, when ear-marked for development, are transformed into a mere site, a location in Cartesian[29] space. This attitude has also infected the art-world, and certainly rings true when considering Michael Heizer's comment, "I don't care about landscape. I'm a sculptor. Real estate is dirt, and dirt is material."[30] Vandana maintains, therefore, that any renewal of society involves protecting the soil's (Earth's) integrity; treating the soil (Earth) as sacred.[31]

It is, therefore, appropriate that I use clay to investigate this reunion. Historically ceramics as a medium has been tied largely to utility and function. Industrialisation and mass production, however, means that in the twenty-first century the ceramic artist need not be inexorably bound by these historical notions whilst investigating the innate conceptual and sculptural qualities of fired clay. Indeed, behind the tradition of clay as a medium of utility and expression, a much older tradition exists; one that reaches back to ritual and religious uses by tribal societies; and the very concept of clay being of the Earth, makes the medium of fundamental significance in recalling the sacred.

This direct connection of clay to the Earth strengthens the rationale for my artworks being installed physically in, and within, the soil to reinvoke the sacred. Lucy Lippard, in her essay *The Garbage Girls*, says the most important question for ecological artists is how to generate hope through their artworks. She claims that recent exhibitions about nature have been pessimistic, both in their content and titles. While *Against Nature, The Demoralized Landscape, The Unmaking of Nature* and *Unnatural Causes* have all acknowledged looming catastrophe,

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[28] Ibid., 99.
[29] Based on the dualistic philosophy of Rene Descartes, who viewed nature as being divided into two separate and independent realms: that of mind and that of matter. See Fritjof Capra, "Buddhist Physics," (Bristol Lectures, Schumacher UK, 1979).
[30] Gablik, *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, 140.
[31] Shiva, "Homeless in the 'Global Village'," 103.

Lippard regrets their inability to offer positive solutions for viewers.[32] It is my hope that my research will fill this gap, and offer a space that allows the viewer to rediscover the sacred within nature and their inherent connectedness to it, promoting a positive change toward our treatment of the environment as a commodity.

Statement of Research Question

It is against this theoretical backdrop that I pose my research question:

How might a ceramic artist, from a feminist perspective, reinvoke the sacred within the landscape, and contribute to the emergence of a new consciousness aimed at reuniting humanity's secular and spiritual existence?

To investigate this question, I suggest that the female visual artist, through sensitivities unique to her perspective, is pivotal in providing a tangible connection between the sacred and the profane elements of a culture. This will be accomplished by constructing a visual language composed of symbols and organic forms related to innately recognised patterns that transcend specific monotheist and institutionalised religions.

This visual 'language' will be presented through the method of installation, where the artist produces "an uncommon perceptual phenomenon for the viewer who will complete the piece by their presence within it."[33] This participatory role suggests that installation can create an environment enabling a reinvigoration of the innate connections the viewer has toward their natural surroundings because "[s]uccessful art will provide the viewer with an ontological experience… Installation art has come to serve this purpose." [34]

Aim of the Research

This research project aims to explore a reinvoking of the sacred within the landscape via a three dimensional body of artworks installed in a natural space,

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[32] Lucy R Lippard, "The Garbage Girls." In *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art,* (New York: The New Press, 1995),165.
[33] Stephanie Bowman, "Generations: Kay Hwang's Installations," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 47 (2002): 50.
[34] Ibid.: 53.

thereby facilitating a reconnection to the Earth by the viewer. In order to develop the underlying theories and effectively achieve this aim, an examination into the causes and consequences of humanity's disconnection from the Earth has been undertaken. This has revealed an apparent innate need that individuals have to be woven into the fabric of the cosmos. Further investigation has suggested the existence of an 'innate pattern recognition' within humanity, that helps make possible the interconnectedness to organic matter upon Earth and within the universe.

At the core of this project is the notion that contemporary ceramics can be a fundamental vector in the reunification of ritual, aesthetics and inner contemplation, thus stimulating a recognition of our embedded place within the natural world. The objective is to evoke and reify forgotten notions of the sacred by utilising the phenomenological properties of clay. These properties include surface development, the concept of innate pattern recognition, and the placement of the resultant sculptures within a natural space, so that the finished installation expresses all of the abovementioned underpinning concepts. In taking this role, it is asserted that the female artist is in a unique societal position to comment on, and contribute to, new cultural understandings within a secular and patriarchal society, thereby fulfilling what Suzi Gablik calls 'reconstructive postmodernism', because reconstruction offers solutions to societal concerns.[35] Just as the shaman employed imagery and visions to heal and rebalance communities, so too can visual art capture and explain concepts on a universal level that language often cannot, therefore the metaphor of 'artist as shaman' is a poignant vehicle for communicating ineffable and complex social theories.

Setting the Context discusses the underlying theories of this thesis, including a more comprehensive overview of the patriarchal constructs already mentioned; why the loss of myth and ritual has caused a sense of disconnectedness from nature and the cosmos; the rise of monotheism within patriarchy and how this reinforced a separation from the Earth; why there is an urgent need for the regeneration of the sacred in twenty-first century society; and a detailed analysis

[35] Gablik, *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, 25.

of the scientific theories underpinning the configurations used to form the installations.

The Literature Review provides an overview of artists who have utilised similar materials, techniques and theories as those I employ in my art practice, and a summary of the evolution of art movements within the landscape. This analysis isolates the specific significance of my research, thus revealing the new knowledge and cultural insights being uncovered.

The Methodology chapter examines the methodologies that underpin the studio practice, explaining the rationale behind my methods: the specific use of clay as a material; the shape and form of the individual art pieces; the use of particular glaze and surface finishes; aspects of firing methods; why the use of particular configurations; and the rationale prompting the use of installation within the natural environment to present the body of work.

Finally the Conclusion reports the results of this research, restating the aims, and how the thesis answers the research question by producing new cultural insights that create new understandings of existing knowledge. As knowledge is always evolving I conclude by suggesting new avenues for future research, further heralding the insights produced by this thesis.

Setting the Context

> In the last analysis, the psychological roots of the crisis humanity is facing on a global scale seem to lie in the loss of the spiritual perspective. Since a harmonious experience of life requires, among other things, fulfillment [sic] of transcendental needs, a culture that has denied spirituality and has lost access to the transpersonal dimensions of existence is doomed to failure in all other avenues of its activities.
>
> Stanislav Grof[36]

Towards a Regeneration of the Sacred

Within the academic world, the word 'spiritual' is often treated with suspicion and viewed as somewhat problematic. This is due in part to its association with the 'supernatural', which over time has been articulated and promoted as dangerous by patriarchal monotheistic religions in an attempt to wipe out myth-making cultures, paganism and goddess religions.[37] Established instead were male-centric religions that demand obedience to a higher male authority, and encourage rationalism and modernity, which according to Tacey "both lead inevitably to desacralisation."[38] When combined with the exploitative consequences of capitalist consumerism, these tenets have led to the many social and ecological threats our world faces today, because, as Jung believed, "humans have strong symbolic and religious urges… which, when repressed or ignored create… havoc."[39]

However, when exploring themes of resacralising the planet, and reinvoking connections to the Earth, the use of the word 'spiritual' seems to be almost unavoidable, especially when much of the literature relating to the subject, such as the writings of David Suzuki, Michael Tucker, David Tacey, Dawn Perlmutter, Debra Koppman and Mike King all use the word frequently in their academic discussion of the subject. Ecofeminist philosophy, for example, maintains an

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[36] From the essay *Spirituality, Addiction and Western Science* cited by Gablik in *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, 57-8.
[37] See King, "Art and the Postsecular," 10-11. for a more detailed explanation.
[38] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 68.
[39] Ibid., 84.

emphasis on spirituality[40] is the key to the preservation of the Earth, because a "rediscovery of the sacredness of life,"[41] will lead to people perceiving all life forms as sacred and worthy of respect. This notion of rediscovery is a concept explored by Lucy Lippard in her book *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, where she observes that:

> People living between earth and sky, with few human-made distractions, had to be far closer to natural forces and phenomena than people living on our crowded planet now. They were undoubtedly aware of their environment in ways lost to us. Obviously we do not relate to nature in the same way, but the reestablishment (sic) of a coherent relationship between nature and culture is a critical element in any progressive view of the future.[42]

Tucker, in his book *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, also emphasises the spiritual, viewing the presence of the shamanic spirit in modern art as testimony of our "thirst for *being.*"[43] Though not speaking specifically of art, David Tacey in his book *Re-enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, also maintains that "spirituality is not beyond our grasp, in fact, it is the normal way of being."[44] Does this suggest that the need for the spiritual is actually an ontological one? Is our 'ontological crisis' so severe, as suggested by Bill Devall in his book *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends*, "that we cannot wait for the perfect intellectual theory to provide…answers. *We need earth bonding experiences.*"[45] If so, surely the word 'spiritual' is meaningful and necessary when discussing the ontological need humans have for a connection to the Earth, which appears to have been lost, and which I am attempting to reinstate through my research and resultant environmental installation.

The holistic outlook humanity felt in the past towards the Earth, and a sense of interconnectedness with it, has fallen victim to capitalism and the consequential

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[40] Spirituality, within the context of this thesis, is not defined as the product of organised god-head religions, but as resulting from modern earth-based, pagan or goddess styles of worship.
[41] Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, "Introduction," in *Ecofeminism*, ed. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1993), 17.
[42] Lucy R Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 12.
[43] Michael Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture* (San Francisco: Aquarian/Harper, 1992), 264.
[44] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 18.
[45] Bill Devall, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends. Practicing Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1988) 57. [emphasis added]

emphasis on consumerism and individualism. Self-interest organisations, wealthy multinational companies and economic powerhouses all keep the consumer cycle revolving, exhausting both human and global resources worldwide. As individuals, we are told we need to consume 'things' and these things will make us 'happy'. But transience of fashion, which companies foster to maintain sales, means it is not long before our things no longer make us happy. So we purchase more things, newer things, bigger things, thereby continuing the cycle. Thomas Friedman, in his recently published book, *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, discusses the economic and political power plays that have led to the ecological non-sustainable practices of the growth of the United States.[46] According to Tacey, these major players, governments and multinationals, within consumer societies also debunk any spiritual movement, because such a quest "punctures the bubble of the ego and leads us to the larger circles of our human and transhuman identity [which] is extremely subversive of the status quo."[47] Dominant commercial interests must keep the "myth of the alienated self alive,"[48] or they must package any spiritual mission as a saleable commodity, as is seen with many products of the New Age movement and alternative therapies.

The resultant obsession with possessions, however, removes us from our natural environment, promoting disconnection and a sense of isolation within our society. Tacey avers a key element of spirituality as 'interconnectedness', because spirituality replaces the "isolation of the individual ego with the unitary awareness of the larger or cosmic self."[49] Tacey argues that this yearning for reunification has grown in society because the contemporary experience of alienation has become so overwhelming that it has activated a desire for belonging and interconnectedness as an emotional counter-response.[50] Such a response is to

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[46] Thomas Friedman appeared on the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Lateline* on 26th March, 2009 discussing his new book, and its implications for the future. See Friedman, T. *Hot, Flat and Crowded: why we need a green revolution--and how it can renew America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008)
[47] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 185.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 20.
[50] Ibid.

be expected if, as Mircea Eliade points out "the 'sacred' is an element in the *structure* of consciousness, *not* a stage in the history of consciousness."[51]

Historic Perspectives

Science

It may be proposed that Western Enlightenment produced a new trinity: monotheistic religion, industrialisation and scientific progress – all three being dictated by an underlying principle of patriarchy. In analysing the causes of our current environmental crisis, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva define what they call "the capitalist patriarchal world system,"[52] while Julian Thomas claims "capitalism and patriarchy are deeply bound up with each other, and even that capitalism dictates the form which patriarchy takes at present."[53]

During the Western Enlightenment, the language of history, politics and science became the dominant realities upon which existence was defined. Rising scientific knowledge led to the growth of empiricist, naturalist, and materialist doctrines. These doctrines insisted that: explanations for humanity's position within nature should be based upon scientific observation and thought; that our senses could not be trusted; and that humans are misled by the appearance of the material world.[54] Concurrently, religion reinforced this idea, preaching that the Earth was a corrupt place and that sensual feeling was evil, leading to eternal damnation.[55] Such attitudes developed a reductionist approach to science, religion and capitalism, prompting ideologies that allowed nature to become an object to be studied, measured and controlled. Margo Adair and Sharon Howell argue that these objectives are fundamental to the continuation of patriarchy; we must be taught to mistrust our experience, in order to trust experts, technicians and authority.[56] Combined, these attitudes inevitably contributed to the loss of myth which, as discussed earlier, provided structure and meaning within

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[51] Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), preface. [emphasis added]
[52] Mies and Shiva, "Introduction," *Ecofeminism*, 2.
[53] Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," 24.
[54] Susan Griffin, "Spilt Culture," in *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989), 9.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Margo Adair and Sharon Howell, "The Subjective Side of Power," in *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989), 220.

everyday life leading to the modern sense of alienation described by many social commentators. As pointed out by Dolores LaChapelle in her essay *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex*, anthropologist Carleton Coon contends that it has only been ten thousand years since human society became agricultural, and this is not enough time for genetic change. We have, therefore, the same physiological and psychological structures dictating our behavioural patterns today.[57] Humans, therefore, have the same innate needs as our ancestors. This erosion within humanity of an understanding of our natural position within the world, and a disregard of the sacred qualities within nature, has developed a mindset that has allowed the subsequent commodification of the environment.

These consequences have been facilitated by ‘consensus reality’, a term that has arisen in transpersonal psychology circles to describe the “agreed perceptual basis on which language and cultural norms are constructed.”[58] As scientific knowledge developed during the Enlightenment the consensus reality within the West came to be based chiefly on the Newtonian-Cartesian[59] model of the universe. This model maintains that atoms making up matter are considered solid and indestructible, and are subject to gravity and the laws of cause and effect. Further, matter is static and the universe is objectively real, regardless of the process of observation.[60] These theories solidified a methodology in scientific practice that was logical, mechanical and reductionist; attitudes that accentuated the divide between spiritual and material. This stance dominated the way in which scientific research was conducted until the development of Quantum Theory in the mid-twentieth century. The research of physicists such as David Bohm and Fritjof Capra led to discoveries, which will be discussed later in this chapter, suggesting that the universe was not fixed, but instead governed by probabilities, rather than certainties; and that the components of the universe, including humans, exist in continuous dynamic interconnected relationships. Since these findings, the Ecology movement has developed, spawning specific offshoots,

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[57] Dolores LaChapelle, "Sacred Land, Sacred Sex," in *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989), 157.
[58] Nevill Drury, *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2004), 170.
[59] Ideas based on the theories of Isaac Newton and René Descartes.
[60] Drury, *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self*, 171.

such as Deep Ecology[61] and Ecofeminism, which places humans not in the centre of the universe, but embedded within it and interdependent upon it. These theories have stimulated much debate, thus leading to a reappraisal of the nature of reality, consciousness and spirituality in many academic circles, and are further elaborated upon below.

Spirituality

According to Michael King an investigation into the origins of secularism is necessary to pinpoint the 'blind spots' of modernity, and he claims the key issue is the absolutism of the Western religious traditions.[62] King suggests the problem lies with the identification of religion or spirituality with God, a natural consequence of monotheism's violent eradication of its predecessors, paganism and shamanism.[63] Such violent persecution created the impression of the profound error inherent within these earth-based religions. Yet the word 'pagan' has an etymological meaning 'of the countryside', implying therefore that there existed no more than a prejudice toward rural forms of spirituality, such as paganism and shamanism.[64] The often violent expunging of these earth-based spiritualities also illustrates the intolerance of a male god-head religion to any perceived matriarchal practices contained within these religions. Tacey points out that "patriarchal religious traditions have launched persistent and relentless attacks upon the earthly spiritualities, projecting upon these spiritualities the patriarchal fear of the feminine and of feminine sexuality."[65] Julia Kristeva extends this argument to the contemporary canon, claiming that monotheistic cohesion is sustained via a fundamental separation of the sexes, and that this separation is a prerequisite to upholding and isolating, what she calls, the "One Law"[66]; that is the patriarchal status quo.

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[61] A term coined by Arne Naess representing an understanding of reality contrasting 'shallow environmentalism', or the band-aid solution of technological fixes for short-term goals. Deep Ecology recognises humanity's embedment in nature and respect for all life forms.
[62] King, "Art and the Postsecular," 10.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.: 11.
[65] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 171.
[66] Julia Kristeva, "About Chinese Women," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 141.

According to Tucker, Mircea Eliade suggests there is an element at the core of the Judaean-Christian worldview that has caused the neglect and abuse of the 'chain of being', which Tucker sees as "a disfiguring feature of recent Western culture."[67] It is the severance from this chain of being that many social commentators, such as David Suzuki, claim causes the disconnection Western peoples feel toward their natural environment. However, not only has Western society had to contend with an established dominant religious framework, it has also had to deal with the upsurge of an industrial and materialistic worldview.

Capitalism

The seeds of industrialisation and capitalism were sown long before the Industrial Revolution. They lay in the collapse of feudalism, and the resulting commodification of land and peasants to work that land. Concurrent with this were the increasingly rational methods of living and time-keeping within medieval monasteries so that the eventual Protestant projection of spirituality was increasingly distant and male-centric, unable to offer much resistance to the desacralising ideology of industrialisation. [68] Today this industrial growth has developed into a capitalist ideology that pervades every aspect of Western culture. The repercussions upon our environment of urbanisation, waste disposal, pollution and the affluence of consumerism mean that our own survival hangs in the balance. The offshoots of capitalism – consumerism, materialism, mass culture – have removed us so far from our connection to the Earth that we have allowed it to be abused by a handful of large, wealthy self interest groups in return for a constant stream of material possessions that keep us disconnected from nature and indifferent to the ecological crises. A reversal of this mind-set would mean that we would no longer allow such groups to continue their exploitation of both the Earth and her people. While there is a counter argument to be mounted in this context by companies such as Gunns Pty Ltd who claim to employ scientists that investigate their company's environmental impact thereby fulfilling their corporate responsibilities, these scientists are usually employed to research a specific agenda which immediately implies bias. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the validity of such research, as the

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[67] Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, 17.
[68] Ibid.

major concern being examined within these pages is how to effect a remembering of humanity's connection to the environment.

As mentioned earlier Tacey, Suzuki and Shiva believe a spiritual reconnection with the land is needed to resolve many of the issues faced by contemporary society. Jean Houston, in her essay *The Mind and Soul of the Shaman*, points out that while religions begin as spiritual experiences they become politicised and bureaucratised; shamanism, however, remains prepolitical.[69] The artist-as-shaman metaphor used as a vehicle to draw attention to these issues is, therefore, appropriate, and is intended to provide a healing role and help restore an awareness of our environment.

Shamanic Perspectives

Shamanism originated as the religious expression of nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, and today is still practiced in those tribal societies that continue to live in a traditional manner. As Drury states, however, most modern societies are industrialised and technologically advanced; we are not nomadic and we buy our food in supermarkets.[70] It may, therefore be inappropriate to interpret our modern existence via any literal shamanic view, though it may be useful to consider the holistic belief system of shamanism and draw on the shamanic metaphor in relation to artists and their role in society. Performance and ritual artist Mary Beth Edelson takes the view, that although 'shamanism' suggests indigenous cultures and raises questions of shamanic authenticity, this is not necessarily the issue. Rather that as a metaphor it allows direct access to our 'essential self', allowing healing and transformation, both within and without.[71]

At its very essence, shamanism venerates nature,[72] and in our modern era of global climate change such a belief system emphasises living within the natural world; not on the outskirts, as a spectator or consumer. Indeed Mike King claims

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[69] Jean Houston, "The Mind and Soul of the Shaman," in *Shamanism: An Expanded View of Reality*, ed. Shirley Nicholson (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), vii.
[70] Nevill Drury, *Shamanism* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1996), 90.
[71] Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, 357.
[72] Drury, *Shamanism*, 91.

the “shamanic world-view” is thought by some to be “central to the re-engagement with Nature necessary for our very survival.”[73]

The word shaman originates from the Evenks (Tungus), an eastern Siberian people. Among the Evenks the shaman (man or woman) holds a central position within the society’s ritual and religious life.[74] The shaman’s role is motivated by communal, social reasons, not personal ones; he or she is interested in the community and its well-being.[75] During times of crisis within the society, such as famine, war or illness the shaman acts as a healer, drawing on holistic knowledge to give advice and direction to the community. In this sense the role of art and the shaman share parallels, as pointed out by Debra Koppman when she speaks of Aztec art and its function in the “protection of human souls from inevitable destruction.”[76]

Shamanic traditional medicine and healing involves realigning the ‘sick’ self with nature because alienation from the universal, animating forces of nature brings disease and distortion.[77] It is a shamanic belief that a person falls ill due to negative ideas or beliefs caused by a malevolent spirit, and that the Shaman’s healing role is to find a way to change this idea.[78] By transposing this concept onto society so that the ill person is affected by the malevolent spirits which are the patriarchal, capitalist and monotheistic tenets discussed, I believe the shamanic metaphor becomes powerfully pertinent as a means of changing people’s ideas.

Just as the symbols and motifs employed by artists are often considered universal, so too is shamanic knowledge consistent and universal across

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[73] King, "Art and the Postsecular," 12.
[74] Alan Barnard and Jonathon Spencer, *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 505.
[75] Joan Halifax, *Shaman, the Wounded Healer* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1982), 7.
[76] Debra Koppman, "Multiple Visions: Revisioning Aesthetics in a Pluralist America," in *Reclaiming the Spiritual in Art: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Dawn Perlmutter and Debra Koppman (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 92.
[77] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 168.
[78] Serge King, "The Way of the Adventurer," in *Shamanism: An Expanded View of Reality*, ed. Shirley Nicholson (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), 197.

cultures.[79] There is a long history of the artist as seer and prophet, and although this idea has been eroded through the secular implications of modernity, Joan Halifax views the role of the shaman as taking many forms in contemporary society, including that of the artist.[80] Nick Waterlow sees the artist as being "capable of linking the sacred and its representation for broader understanding,"[81] a function akin to that of the shaman in traditional tribal societies, and that "though the sacred no longer has the same fixed meanings and is indeed harder than ever to define, this search remains a necessary function of the creative spirit."[82]

Michael Tucker gives shamanic status to many early twentieth century modernist painters, saying they laid the foundation for the re-emergence of the spiritual in art.[83] Tucker suggests that in the latter part of the twentieth century this link developed further, forming a strong parallel between the role of the artist and that of the shaman. Since the 1960s many artists have drawn inspiration from shamanic practice. Performance artists, such as Mary Beth Edelson, Joseph Beuys and Jill Orr incorporated ritual acts into their works in order to refer to pre-modern societies and their values. Jane Magon points out that by underpinning their works with shamanic structures, these artists are able to utilise universal and cosmic symbols and concepts,[84] a technique I am employing in my installation. The shamanic metaphor, however, has not been widely applied within three dimensional art, or specifically ceramic art. It would seem that drawing such a metaphor within ceramic art practice would be relevant, given the "hellish heat of the glazing process [which] also gives rise to mystical and magical elements."[85] This alchemic use of the elements: earth, air, fire and water; the transformative nature of ceramic process; and the ritual undercurrent of the use of clay and ceramics throughout history, fortifies the link between the shaman and clay.

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[79] Halifax, *Shaman, the Wounded Healer*, 5.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Nick Waterlow, "Numinous Worlds," in *Spirit and Place: Art in Australia 1861-1996*, ed. Venetia Somerset (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997), 35.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, 113, 42.
[84] Jane Magon, "Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Art: Some Contexts and Issues in Interpretation," *Artlink* 18, no. 1 (1998): 39.
[85] Anne Valkonen, ed., *Interaction in Ceramics* (Helsinki: University of Industrial Arts, 1993), 13.

As a female ceramic artist I am interested in exploring both the application of shamanic underpinnings and the female perspective in developing a body of work that will rest gently upon the Earth and reinvigorate an ontological connectedness.

Feminist Perspectives

A large number of feminist scholars, such as Debra Koppman, Dawn Perlmutter and Gloria Feman Orenstein, have recently emphasised the need for a new consciousness to emerge in order to heal the ecological wounds of post-industrial consumer society. Such writings offer a critique of the patriarchal nature of the dominant religions: the archaic language, sexist imagery, dualistic narratives, supremacist theology and literal icons, and the reductionist mechanistic world view which has allowed a capitalist and consumer ideology to become the dominant view at the expense of population displacement, poverty and the environment. A deeper exploration of these writings will be undertaken in the Literature Review.

Society's attitude of control and domination over the landscape is solidly embedded in patriarchy. With the subsequent urbanisation and industrialisation which followed the Enlightenment, landscape painting grew in popularity because it represented the world as it used to be, before we strayed from the "myth of natural order."[86] However, it also reduced the landscape to an item to be consumed. Portrayed by an outsider, it was placed passively as an object inside a frame, while being manipulated and detached, denied any agency of its own.[87] Prior to this "the land was not a picture but a true force which physically embodied the powers that ruled the world."[88] The collapse of feudalism, as discussed earlier, led to a political framework where land became a commodity, able to be bought and sold, without the prohibitions of tenure, and a "new politics of vision"[89] emerged. Thus the portrayal of landscape through the lenses of

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[86] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1999), 151.
[87] Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," 22.
[88] Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 51.
[89] Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," 22.

painting and land ownership claims emerge simultaneously with capitalism.[90] Though these events may be primary factors in society's prevailing outlook on the environment, Vincent Scully, quoted by Lippard in *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, also cites the inability of scholars to see landscape "in other than picturesque terms" as a major contributor to societal attitudes, as they are unable to engage in a dialogue of its spiritual underpinnings.[91] Even today our portrayal of landscape by the use of maps, aerial photographs and satellite images suggests a close alliance with the modern technologies of surveillance and control.

As has been argued, these ideologies generally carry patriarchal undertones, and many feminist scholars claim that just as the female figure is subject to the male gaze, so too is the landscape. Susan Ford claims we tend to look at the landscape via the male gaze; [92] it is consumed as a visual commodity, as an object, for pleasure, without engagement. This commodification of landscape, economically and politically, has contributed to humanity's disconnection from the Earth, and strengthened the ease with which society has been able to continue exploiting the planet.

David Tacey also sees patriarchy and the commodification of the landscape as contributors to our environmental crisis, and suggests an alternative approach to these issues via a new spirituality, that may involve an earth-based female sensitivity toward healing our spiritual connection to the cosmos. He states an "earthly spirituality that enlivens the natural world and that creates passional bonds between ourselves and the physical realities of place has always been conceived as a matriarchal spirituality,"[93] maintaining that "outdated cultural forms and decayed structures" of the major religions, means a feminine counter-approach to a renewal of the sacred is paramount. [94]

[90] Ibid.
[91] Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 51.
[92] Thomas, "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape," 25.
[93] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 171.
[94] Ibid., 221.

This suggests that a new consciousness enabling a halt to environmental exploitation and reconnection to the Earth should be a goddess/feminist type, and that the earth-based nature of feminist spirituality is aligned closely with the nature of shamanism. Michael Tucker, in *Dreaming with Eyes Open*, espouses the need for a "radical reappraisal of the role of art, of its shamanic capacity to shape – to heal – consciousness."[95] Tucker cites the work of Monica Sjöö, Barbara Mor and Meret Oppenheim as female artists who successfully explore shamanic themes within their imagery.

Drury speaks of a feeling of 'aliveness' the shaman feels toward the universe, with no distinction between animate or inanimate, all is interconnected, sharing an underlying universal life force.[96] This holistic vision with which Drury credits the shaman shares parallels with the ideas of the New Physics that emerged in the mid to late twentieth century. While based in scientific thinking, many of these theories displayed philosophical aspects. Drury notes that thinkers such as David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake and Gregory Bateson suggest that at a "core level everything in the known universe seems to be interconnected, that totally separate and individual identity is ultimately an illusion, and that what we know as 'individual' consciousness contains in essence all the potentials of universal consciousness."[97] The systems theory that emerged from this thinking reinforces the embedded nature of humanity's existence, and as stipulated by Bateson, the separation of the "I" is the "epistemological fallacy of Occidental civilization."[98] In fact David Bohm wrote that true individuality is impossible because "[a]nything which is not in the whole is not individuality but egocentrism"[99] therefore, as Suzi Gablik surmises, the ego is the major obstacle to perceiving the 'wholeness' referred to by Bohm. Could this alternative scientific research have been yet another spiritual movement reacting against the desacralised state of our planet?

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[95] Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, 2.
[96] Drury, *Shamanism*, 90.
[97] Drury, *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self*, 177.
[98] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to and Ecology of Mind.* (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 319.
[99] Gablik, *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, 67.

Scientific Perspectives

American born Quantum Physicist David Bohm (1917-1992)[100] believed that at the most basic level structures exist that "merge and flow together in one unbroken whole."[101] Bohm was dissatisfied with theories that "only discussed what could be observed and measured."[102] He aspired to develop a theory of reality that was inclusive and whole. In 1980 he published his seminal work *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, proposing that there exists an invisible underlying structure to which everything – space, time and matter – in the micro and macro of nature is connected. All objects in existence have unfolded from this implicate order to become explicate in the everyday, whilst still being enfolded as part of the underlying and imperceptible implicate structure. [103] This enfolding captures finer and finer aspects of the implicate order, and "could go on indefinitely."[104] In simpler terms the implicate order is made of the particles of matter that make the 'things' of the explicate order; and though our Cartesian culture has trained us to only perceive the explicate order, they all remain part of the unbroken wholeness.[105]

As discussed earlier, science, prior to the development of New Physics theories, had been unable to recognise this connectedness, due to the reductionist methods of the Cartesian view in isolating units, observing in isolation, and measuring in isolation, which actually prevent scientists from seeing that all things exist and are interconnected within the unbroken wholeness.[106]

Transpersonal physicist Dr. Fritjof Capra in his book *The Tao of Physics* also acknowledges the profound revelations of Quantum Physics upon our understanding of the universe and previous conceptions of strict laws of nature, suggesting:

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[100] Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (Victoria, Australia: Rider and Company/Hutchinson Group (Australia) Pty. Ltd., 1979), 323.
[101] David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, Routledge, 1983), 174.
[102] Andreas C Papadakis, ed., *Art Meets Science and Spirituality* (London: Academy Editions, 1990), 28.
[103] Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 174.
[104] Papadakis, ed., *Art Meets Science and Spirituality*, 29.
[105] Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate Order, 185.
[106] Ibid.: xiv-xv

> A careful analysis of the process of observation in atomic physics has shown that the subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections…Quantum theory thus reveals the basic oneness of the universe. It shows we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, Nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks' but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole.[107]

As these new scientific theories evolved, Quantum Physics[108] allowed scientists to mathematically describe the world with a precision and detail previously unknown. This allowed humanity to rediscover their place within the universe, so that, paradoxically, the greater this understanding of the physical world has become, the more profoundly inadequate our previous conceptions of knowledge appear. Concepts such as Chaos Theory, [109] and Complexity Theory,[110] suggest that when a group of evolving autonomous particles interact "the resulting global system displays emergent collective properties, evolution and critical behaviour that have universal characteristics."[111] This surprising development seems to apply to complex molecules, cells, living organisms, animal groups, human societies, industrial firms, competing technologies and any organised system.[112] As systems become more complex, instead of degenerating into chaos, as was expected on the basis of prior conceptions of the universe, this process of synchronisation forms coherent patterns. This suggests that whilst life systems might be in a state of continual flux, they form patterns of interconnectedness that change and evolve.[113]

British biologist and biochemist Dr Rupert Sheldrake proposed the theory of Morphic Resonance, which in essence, is a holistic model for natural form and

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[107] Capra, F. *The Tao of Physics* (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala1975), 56-57.
[108] The study of the fundamental structure of all matter. See Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*, 232.
[109] A science explaining the global nature of systems, by acknowledging non-linear dynamic systems and the universal behaviour of complexity. See James Gleick, *Chaos* (London: Abacus, 1993), 4-5.
[110] Originated in particle physics, and now used in any system where thousands of units form a larger collective, including social, cultural or political spheres to predict outcomes. This is possible because as systems evolve patterns emerge and repeat and layer. See Paul Greenhalgh, "Complexity," in *The Persistence of Craft : The Applied Arts Today*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 196-98.
[111] Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau, "Modeling Complexity for Interactive Art Works on the Internet," in *Art and Complexity*, ed. J Casti and A Karlqvist (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science B.V, 2003), 86.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Chris Drury, *Silent Spaces* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2004), 133.

development. The hypothesis explains the way patterns and forms are repeated in Nature, though he does not explain from where they came.[114] Like Bohm, Sheldrake also maintains that the reductionist methods used by modern scientists only allows them to observe parts and not the whole, and that these scientists "forget that they are dealing at a fundamental level with a profound mystery that finally transcends science itself."[115]

The coining of the term 'Metapatterns' by Gregory Bateson in *Mind and Nature* and Tyler Volk's recent re-exploration of this term in *Metapatterns: Across Space, Time, and Mind* reinforce Bohm's claim of ever repeating and layered patterns that interconnect all elements within our universe. According to Bateson a metapattern is a "*pattern which connects*…It is a pattern of patterns."[116] These theories also suggest the traditional Euclidian geometry previously employed by positivist science to explain processes in a measurable linear fashion to be no longer adequate for complex phenomena. Instead the existence of non-linear dynamic systems that generate natural patterns and sequences that are not random have become more readily accepted.

Fractals[117] and the Fibonacci sequence[118] are two pattern based theories that suggest interconnectedness and wholeness within the natural world, and which appear to have a universal place in human consciousness. These patterns seem to have been naturally selected based on their efficient shape enabling greater

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[114] Sheldrake, R. Morphic Resonance In *Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science* Ed, Grof, S. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 166.
[115] Drury, *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self*, 170.
[116] Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 11. [emphasis in original]
[117] A geometric pattern that is repeated on an ever decreasing rate, producing irregular shapes and patterns that can not be repeated by conventional linear geometry. In a fractal every detail is a reflection of the whole unit. See Elina Brandt-Hansen, "Fractals Wrapped in Clay," *Ceramics Monthly* Jan (2005). Coined by Benoit Mandelbrot the term is derived from the Latin 'fractus' meaning broken, fragmented or irregular. He also found similarities between some fractal sets and natural geometric patterns, hence the term 'natural fractals' referring to natural phenomena. See J R Maddocks, "Fractal," in *Gale Encyclopedia of Science*, ed. K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner (Deroit: Gale, 2004), 1689.
[118] A series of numbers where each succeeding number is the sum of the previous two. The most common series is 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89… this sequence is manifest in many natural phenomena. The sequence was invented by Italian Leonardo Pisano Bigollo (1180-1250) as the outcome of a mathematical problem concerning rabbit breeding. See Patrick Moore, "Fibonacci Sequence," in *Gale Encyclopedia of Science*, ed. K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner (Detroit: Gale, 2004), 1604-05.

surface area, and humanity has evolved concurrently with these patterns. When discussing fractals Richard Taylor admits it is no surprise that "humanity possesses an affinity with these fractals and an implicit recognition of their qualities. Indeed it is possible to speculate that people possess some sort of 'fractal encoding'"[119]

Fibonacci recognised the mathematical formula for a type of spiral that appears biologically in nature, such as the growth of a snail shell or the uncurling of a fern frond. The spiral, as expressed through the Fibonacci sequence, appears in formations of nature from seashells, pinecones and pineapples, through to spiral galaxies; natural objects that have surrounded humanity throughout history and continue today.

The concept of 'innate pattern recognition', proposed by Evolutionary Psychologists[120] and Darwinian Aestheticists[121], fields of enquiry that have come to the fore in recent decades, serve to strengthen the suggestion of universal consciousness implied by the New Physics.

Denis Dutton[122] is a recent exponent of Darwinian or Evolutionary Aesthetics, a discipline which studies "understanding the deepest nature of our apprehension of beauty."[123] Dutton suggests the "existence of a universal aesthetic psychology"[124] implying that artistic virtuosity and appreciation "is not a social construct."[125] Instead, over successive generations, displays of dexterity would

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[119] Richard Taylor, "Fractal Expressionism - Where Art Meets Science," in *Art and Complexity*, ed. J Casti and A Karlqvist (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science B.V, 2003), 142.
[120] Evolutionary Psychology seeks to understand the psychological and cultural life of humans within the context of their genetic inheritance: all species have evolved to increase their fitness for survival and reproduction. Evolutionary Psychology extends the findings of Darwinian theory to the workings of the human psyche. Some findings directly contradict twentieth century art theorists who view aesthetics as a value culture teaches us. See *Aesthetics and Evolutionary Psychology,* ([cited 16 January, 2005]); available from *www.denisdutton.com/aesthetics_&_evolutionary_psychology.htm*
[121] Darwin suggested that humanity recognises beauty inherently but could not satisfactorily explain this phenomenon. Twentieth century research has explored the possibility of human cognition responding to physical structures in the environment, that over time we have evolved to recognize within human psyche. See *Evolutionary Aesthetics.* Karl Grammer and Eckart Voland.
[122] Denis Dutton teaches the Philosophy of Art at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand.
[123] Denis Dutton, "Hardwired to Seek Beauty," *The Australian*, 13 January 2006, 13.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.

have been admired and encouraged. Mate choice would have been influenced by this factor, so that such talents would survive in subsequent generations.[126] In conjunction with this impulse Evolutionary Psychologists suggest that humans also appear to hold a preference for certain elements within a landscape. Those who understood the need for shelter, food gathering, water, safety and hunting would have survived better, and this level of intelligence would be passed on,[127] along with an encoded memory to recognise these elements. This 'encoding' implies that our likes and dislikes are not necessarily wholly explained by culture, and may explain our 'intuitions' and 'innate' responses.

Recent research in Neurobiology supports this premise with a phenomenon called Functional Specialisation. This is an evolutionary adaptation of the visual cortex enabling the brain to focus attention on essential features of objects and surfaces that are of importance within the environment.[128]

While discussing multiculturalism, Tacey states the need for a "psychospiritual bonding", but asks "[b]eyond economic considerations what is there to bind us all together? What myths and symbols do we share…?"[129] I contend that the interconnected concepts suggested by the New Physics; the universal implications of metapatterns and other pattern theories; and the innate pattern recognition Evolutionary Psychologists claim humans are encoded with, provides the answer to Tacey's question. Moreover, they validate my use of clay as a medium; fractals, spirals and circles within configurations; and the elemental nuances of stone as fundamentals that form and inform the creation of a universal space, communicating with the viewer via a subconscious recognition that will facilitate a reinvoking of the sacred and subsequent reconnection to the Earth and cosmos.

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[126] Ibid.
[127] John W Santrock, *Psychology 7*, Seventh ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill Companies Inc., 2003), 14.
[128] Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1999), 81.
[129] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 245.

Literature Review

> In this kind of search artists are making the heretofore invisible, manifest again. This visionary technique of rendering the invisible and the real visible once more and ultimately abolishing the separation between the spiritual and the material plane reestablishes (sic) the human and the natural as the legitimate realm of the divine.
>
> Gloria Feman Orenstein[130]

Feminism and Art

If, as Gloria Feman Orenstein suggests in her essay *The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women*, the male magician sought to purify matter by changing it to spirit via the philosopher's stone, then the aim of alchemy for women artists is to "restore the spirit already inherent in the natural world."[131] As I am investigating the subject of this thesis through a feminist theoretical framework I will be concentrating on female artists throughout this literature review. I suggest that this approach is appropriate for two reasons.

First, as elucidated by Orenstein, Gerda Lerner concludes in her book *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to 1870*, that as "women were denied knowledge of their history…each woman had to argue as though no woman before her had ever thought or written" because they had been "deprived of the empowerment, strength, and knowledge women of the past could have offered them."[132] With this idea in mind, the women's movement could be said to have started one hundred and fifty years ago or six hundred years ago, depending on with whom you start. However, because of the "absence of collective memory"[133] the women's movement has not lasted beyond one

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[130] Gloria Feman Orenstein, "The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women," in *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*, ed. Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, and Joanna Frueh (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 73.
[131] Ibid., 72.
[132] Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 115.
[133] Mary D Garrard, "Feminist Politics: Networks and Organizations," in *The Power of Feminist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1994), 101.

generation.[134] Within this context, exploring the artwork of female artists raises and maintains awareness of the contribution women have made to the diversification of artistic practice and alternative readings of art.

Second, focussing on female artists emphasises the body of interpretative knowledge surrounding women's art, illustrating how a female perspective can offer new ways of seeing and interpreting the world, thereby contributing new and alternative cultural and social understandings. This is possible because feminist art is not a stylistic category, nor art produced by women, but is "rooted in the analyses and commitments of contemporary feminism[,] and that contributes to a critique of the political, economic and ideological power relations of contemporary society."[135]

Parameters and Delimitations

The intent of my installation is to reinvoke recognition of the sacred within the landscape and subsequently reinvigorate an acknowledgment of the interdependence that humans have with the Earth. As mentioned, I have approached this research via a feminist stance, and therefore the artists reviewed in this chapter are mainly female and reflect a similar intent.

Due to these parameters, therefore, it is beyond the scope of this exegesis to discuss in depth artists such as Robert Smithson, Robert Morris and James Turrell when discussing Land Art. Though they may have been instrumental to the origins of this genre, many of these works were monumental and focused on the sky and stars, while I am focusing on stimulating an intimate connection with the Earth and how this may be influenced by a female sensitivity. Similarly I have not reviewed artists such as Richard Long, Alan Sonfist and Chris Drury. Although their work often employs strategically selected symbols and natural materials that are arranged horizontally within the landscape, much of the work is distant in location and therefore removed from direct engagement with the viewer.

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Lisa Tickner, "Feminism and Art," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996), 877.

While discussing ceramic artists I focus on women as their works resonate most closely with mine, so that, for example, while artists such as Edmund de Waal have explored ceramic installation extensively, it is often vessel based and centred around established themes of ceramic discourse.

Clay as Medium

Just as clay was employed as a sculptural and artistic medium in ancient societies, so too was its application expanded beyond the functional during the twentieth century. This is especially the case since the 1970s, which was a decade of tumultuous change worldwide- politically, socially and economically. Environmentalism, the Vietnam War, poverty and feminism all contributed to sweeping changes in public attitudes, however, according to Laura Cottingham, the Women's Liberation Movement had the most dramatic effect on the art-world because, unlike other political mobilisations, it generated an immediate visual arts movement.[136] As stated by Cottingham:

> Feminist Art Movement introduced radical anti-Modernist concepts such as the refusal of formalism, championing of content, embracement of autobiography, denial of the fine art/craft hierarchy, and, perhaps the most radical of all, the acknowledgment of female experience as a viable and necessary subject for art.[137]

Due to this alternative outlook, the feminist movement contributed significantly to the re-evaluation of craft materials and their legitimacy as vehicles of expression within the art-world, and women were at the forefront of exploiting clay's malleable properties for a broad expression of social issues. During this time men dominated the ceramics scene, but as Sandy Kirby notes in *Sight Lines: Women's Art and Feminist Perspectives in Australia*, many women were willing to experiment with non-functional forms and bright colours, thus breaking the nexus between clay and utility.[138] This action also elevated content as a valid layer of

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[136] Laura Cottingham, "The Masculine Imperative: High Modern, Postmodern," in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action*, ed. Joanna Frueh, Cassandra Langer, and Arlene Raven (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1994), 138.
[137] Ibid., 139.
[138] Sandy Kirby, *Sight Lines: Women's Art and Feminist Perspectives in Australia* (Tortola: Craftsman House, 1992), 93-4.

expression and artists such as Margaret Dodd and Lorraine Jenyns, according to Kirby, ushered in a new era for ceramic art in Australia.[139]

There were also women working with clay who utilised the quieter qualities of the medium, or what Garth Clark refers to within ceramic art practice as 'Organic Abstraction'.[140] Australian artists, Joan Campbell and Marea Gazzard employed clay as their sole or major medium to create abstract artworks and installations. In doing so, whether intentionally or not, they also worked in a manner contrary to the functional, craft-based compartmentalisation of clay that had prevailed during this period. Due to their unconventional handling of the medium, the works of Campbell and Gazzard developed an organic sensitivity, in both form and surface, bringing a new sense of the feminine to the male-dominated art scene of the time.

Marea Gazzard's attitude toward the organic structure of clay played a significant role in the development of her works during the last forty years of the twentieth century. Christine France states that it is the "actual earth substance of clay which led [Gazzard] to explore the archaeological, the ancient and the landscape as she sought to discover the intrinsic qualities of the material."[141] It is this awareness of the properties of clay that inspired the *Uluru* series, exhibited at Coventry Gallery, Sydney in 1979 (Fig 1). The series consists of three groups of forms that celebrate Aboriginal culture, and according to France, Gazzard "used the pliable qualities of clay to convey the dense solidarity of rock and its direct relationship to the ground."[142] The surfaces are textured and dry, and the colours appear weathered into the rocklike surface. The absence of traditional and elaborate glaze application has preserved the dynamic between the surface, form and volume of the work allowing an experience within the viewer which is prompted by the material used. It is this direct role of clay as a material that intensifies organic nuances in the form and the subsequent viewer experience, that I also wish to exploit within my research.

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[139] Ibid., 94.
[140] John Pagliaro, ed., *Shards: Garth Clark on Ceramic Art* (New York, N.Y.: Ceramic Arts Foundation, 2003), 107.
[141] Christine France, *Marea Gazzard: Form and Clay* (NSW: G & B Arts International Limited, 1994), 108.
[142] Ibid., 82.

Gazzard has also been a strong proponent for the dissolution of the distinction between art and craft, and recognition of the contribution of women within the art-world.[143] Her active role within this arena made her a clear candidate when in 1984 she was invited to submit a proposal for a work to be installed in the Executive Court of the new Parliament House in Canberra.[144] Entitled *Mingarri: The Little Olgas* (Fig 2), the resulting five hill-shaped forms define a place of calm. While monumental, they are not phallic, and refer to Australian Aboriginal culture rather than white male achievement. According to France such a reference to Aboriginality was unusual for that time, as it was for a woman to have received such an important commission, especially a 'potter' who had been central to the revitalisation of the crafts movement.[145] Although *Mingarri* is bronze, the parts were cast from clay forms modelled in Gazzard's studio, and have retained the quality of form and texture that Gazzard views as unique properties of clay.

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Fig. 1. Maria Gazzard. *Mingarri I-V* from the *Uluru* Series. 1979.

[143] Further details regarding Gazzard's advocacy of these issues are detailed in Christine France's *Marea Gazzard: Form and Clay*.
[144] Ibid., 92.
[145] Ibid., 15.

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Fig. 2. Maria Gazzard. *Mingarri: The Little Olgas.* 1988.

I wish to develop this organic sensitivity that is, I believe, unique to the feminine psyche, in re-establishing a reconnection to the Earth. I find it also appropriate, from a feminist standpoint, that I am using what has been traditionally categorised as a craft material. While Gazzard exploits the innate 'clay' properties of the medium, her work is largely object driven. My body of work, however, emphasises content rather than the size of each individual object, therefore my forms are not large in scale in order to communicate the underpinning concepts of my installation. The power of my forms lay in their sculptural and organic nuances. When grouped together and configured horizontally, they form symbols that communicate to the viewer on an innate and universal level, generating the intimate connection offered by smaller sculpture that harmonises with the surrounding environment. I feel this to be more appropriate given the issues I am attempting to address through my research.

These issues of scale, content and the female psyche are also present in the artwork of Gudrin Klix, who explores the modern dilemma of coexistence between

humanity and nature. Klix also exploits the innate properties of clay in order to amplify the meanings within her work and this, which, together with a smaller scale, helps to highlight the predicaments her works explore. Her early works, produced shortly after arriving in Australia in 1981, included slip cast rocks combined with other everyday objects. The resulting installations commented on humanity's eventual demise if the current disharmony with nature persists. *Burial Piece II* (1985) comprised derelict chairs being overtaken by natural rock forms, implying the impermanence of human structures and their subsequent lack of spiritual value.[146] Klix's more recent works continue to use a smaller scale and the organic properties of clay to explore ecological concerns. Karen Weiss, ceramic artist and commentator, attributes Klix's success to the depth of her discourse, drawing on "three great debates of our time; the environment, feminism and spirituality."[147] *Wanderers* (Fig 3) exhibited in 1999 at Object Gallery, Sydney featured red clay slip spread across the gallery floor. The slip was allowed to dry naturally, cracking and peeling, mirroring the Australian Outback. Small, fragile, empty, white clay boats were spread across the clay, their root-like legs disconnected, lost and wandering,[148] symbolising the loss of both physical and spiritual connection humanity has with the land. Whilst Klix's installations are generally sited within a gallery space, her choice of clay as the specific material to communicate the content of this installation is, I believe, critical to the expression of Klix's intent. I also aim to exploit, what I believe to be, the organic nuances of clay to communicate the underpinning notions of this research.

[146] Janet Mansfield, *A Collectors Guide to Modern Australian Ceramics* (Seaforth, NSW: Craftsman House, 1988), 98.
[147] Karen Weiss, "Gudrin Klix: Travels in an Earthen Boat," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 68 (2007).
[148] Ibid.

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Fig. 3. Gudrin Klix. *Wanderers.* Object Gallery, Sydney. 1999.

Virginia Jones completed her doctorate at Southern Cross University in Northern New South Wales. Her research is conducted from within an Ecofeminist Theoretical Framework and involves creating outdoor ephemeral works that entail photographic recording. Jones is interested in creating works that “respond to nature and focus on environmental issues”[149], in order to illustrate the cycles of nature and impermanence of life. *Blue Bowls* (Fig 4 and 5), an ephemeral work of unfired clay and non-toxic pigment installed in the grounds of Southern Cross University in 2004, consists of forms that allude to the vessel, thereby providing a recognisable link to engage the viewer. The pieces are small in scale, and do not intrude upon the landscape. Jones’ work emphasises sustainability and non-resource motivated lifestyles, and in doing this the work prompts the viewer to re-evaluate their attitudes and beliefs, and to reconsider their connection, or lack of, to the Earth.

Small in scale and sited in the environment, Jones does not seek to create an environment with her installations, nor do I believe them to be site specific. Rather, they are groupings of forms to be viewed in an outdoor environment. We differ, in that I seek to change the meaning and perception of the space in which

[149] Virginia Jones, "Eco Art," *The Journal of Australian Ceramics* 44, no. 3 (2005): 65.

my installation is sited, thereby offering the viewer a transformative experience. It is these often overlooked aspects within ceramic installation that I intend to capture and convey within my research.

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Fig. 4. Virginia Jones. *Blue Bowls*. Southern Cross University. 2004.

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Fig. 5. Virginia Jones. *Blue Bowls* after six days.

Anna Choi, a Chinese artist who has resided in Australia for fifteen years, explores her connection to the Chinese and Australian landscape through her installation *Red Earth Yellow Earth* (Fig 6), exhibited in 2004.[150] Choi's choice of clay to explore this theme is pertinent as the colours and textures reflect the colour and contour of both the Australian and Chinese environments. Both countries are "made from the soil and they represent our land, our life, and our soul."[151] Choi's words demonstrate her need to be connected to nature, to belong. Unlike Jones, Choi does not allude to the vessel form as a visual technique in her work, instead rolling out hundreds of small slab pieces of clay and assembling them into landscape forms. Like myself, Choi's configurations are small in scale, however, she generally chooses to install her works in a gallery space. Though time-consuming and tedious, she views making these individual components ritualistic, soothing and meditative; a way of reconnecting. This calming and repetitive procedure also reflects the historical and physical ritual associations of clay and ceramics, again highlighting its appropriateness for the exploration of my thesis.

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Fig. 6. Anna Choi. *Red Earth Yellow Earth*. 2004.

[150] Anna Choi, "Red Earth Yellow Earth," *The Journal of Australian Ceramics* 43, no. 3 (2004): 34.
[151] Ibid.

Corresponding to my own intentions, the artists discussed above deliberately utilise the textured and tactile properties of clay to stimulate an organic intent that promotes a recalling of the viewer's innate need to rekindle their relationship to the environment. I believe the intention of the works is communicated through the calculated use of clay and ceramic as opposed to other possible choices of medium. These artists, however, have not created environments purposely designed to provide the viewer a specific experience of place, as I have set out to do through this research.

The impact of the large wheel-thrown organic forms of American artist Toshiko Takaezu are also strengthened by her intentional use of clay. Unlike myself, many of her works are large scale, and sited in gallery spaces. Her works, however, still achieve an organic resonance that differentiates them from many other ceramic gallery works. It has been stated that Takaezu was the first potter to successfully enclose a pot form, and in doing so she "removed her work and ceramics as a whole, from the realm of craft and functionality, to that of fine art."[152] It is this method that allows Takaezu to produce soft and voluptuous forms, while maintaining the cosmic vigour of wheel production, a concept inherent in the centrifugal movement of the potter's wheel (Fig 7).[153]

In reviewing her 1998 retrospective at the American Craft Museum in New York City, critic Tony Dubis Merino noted that her forms "resonated with an organic individuality" and "establish a kind of primal calm."[154] Takaezu is also aware of the ability of her forms to resonate organically with the environment and redefine a space. In an exhibition held at the Hunterdon Museum of Art in 1998, she arranged her large forms over three floors in order to create an environment "you could walk through."[155] She did this purposefully, and although the works were not specifically created for this site, the location was important to Takaezu because "from the window you saw the river and when you went downstairs you saw the waterfall. Somehow it was all connected. It was complete, in a way, like a

[152] { #373} Author not cited.
[153] Further discussion of this concept is on page 70 of the Methodology chapter.
[154] Tony Dubis Merino, "Form and Energy: The Work of Toshiko Takaezu," *Ceramics Monthly* 46, no. 3 (1998): 37.
[155] Toshiko Takaezu, "Remarks on Her Exhibition "at Home"," *Studio Potter* 27, no. 2 (1999): 52.

circle, it was complete."[156] The arrangement of the forms by Takaezu was calculated to amplify the peace she felt in the environment, and during the exhibition when people wanted to touch the works she encouraged them to do so.[157] Though not applying the term 'installation' to the arrangement of her work in this exhibition, Takaezu was creating a holistic environment enabling the audience to enter into and experience the space, something that many ceramicists are now consciously attempting to implement in their art practice.

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Fig. 7. Toshiko Takaezu. *The Three Graces*. 2001.

[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

Ceramic Installation

In contemporary art practice, installation is a method whereby artists frequently employ a mixed media approach, often using found objects, urban relics and artefacts that have definite cultural associations, to redefine a space, creating an environment "into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as 'theatrical', 'immersive' or 'experiential.'"[158] Two common factors that emerge from this approach are site specificity and viewer participation, both of which seem to remain an underdeveloped element within ceramic installation.

The method of installation is a relatively new technique within ceramic practice, and perhaps for this reason much of the installation being produced continues to be bound by established ceramic discourse, which is largely material based; addresses the themes of function, vessel forms, figurative sculpture and architectural decoration;[159] and continues to exist within the definition of gallery spaces.

Glenn R. Brown suggests that the use of multiplicity and vessel references integrated into a controlled space to form an installation, exemplifies the "uneasy, contrived connection between ceramics and art"[160] caused by the historical craft connotations of ceramics. The self conscious introduction of the "utilitarian multiple vessel to the context of the installation implies a tentative effort to bridge the boundary between ceramics and contemporary art."[161] Contemporary ceramic installation, therefore, exhibits "an ambiguous situation along the boundary between ceramics and contemporary art."[162] There does not appear to be a framework of deconstruction, however, so that such installations are apt to "emphasise those meanings ingrained by tradition",[163] that is, utility. Due to these developments, Brown feels that contemporary ceramic installation runs the risk of appearing "naïve or opportunistic" seeming to "mimic art practices without

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[158] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 6.
[159] Ruth Chambers, "Ceramic Installation: Towards a Self-Definition," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 65 (2006): 81.
[160] Glen R. Brown, "Multiplicity, Ambivalence and Ceramic Installation Art," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 54 (2003): 7.
[161] Ibid.: 8.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.

acknowledging the conceptual basis of those practices."[164] Brown compares this divergence between the desire for inclusion and fear of identity loss within ceramic practice to any group that perceives itself as marginalised by a more powerful and prestigious group, so that to submit completely to the practices of the contemporary art-world would be equal to expressing disdain for the very traditions and practices that have given ceramics its sense of identity in the first place.[165]

Within this analysis Brown is emphasising the modern connotations of ceramics for domestic and utilitarian application, which as argued earlier, is an association which in recent times might be traced to the ideologies of a mass consumerist society. Prior to the production of vessels, however, the ritual and religious application of clay and fired ceramic by tribal societies stretches back for thousands of years.[166] Indeed, after domestic implements were introduced to ancient societies, the demand for ritual objects, such as statues of deities, incense burners and funerary vessels, still outweighed domestic demand.[167] It is these often overlooked historical connotations of clay and ceramic that I am interested in exploiting within my ceramic installation, and as such hope to stimulate a new developmental approach for the future of ceramic installation that does not rely entirely on established ceramic discourse.

Emma Shaw, in her article *Ceramics and Installation*, while acknowledging the newness of this method within ceramic practice, claims installation has become a 'blanket term' to indicate works that are large, do not fit on plinths, employ multiplicity or are site specific.[168] She further states that the term installation is becoming over-used, almost as a badge of honour proving 'contemporaneity' and art-world 'knowingness', and that anything can become installation and no one seems to be making sculpture anymore.[169] Shaw recognises site specificity and

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[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Robert Charleston, ed., *World Ceramics* (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1968), 12.
[167] Ibid., 327.
[168] Emma Shaw, "Ceramics and Installation," *Ceramic Review* January/February, no. 229 (2008): 35.
[169] Ibid.

direct audience engagement as key factors that are currently lacking in ceramic installation, and in doing so asks the pertinent question "when does sculpture become installation, and how do we define installation?" [170]

Claire Bishop, in her book *Installation Art: A Critical History*, identifies installation when "the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity. Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality."[171] She then goes on to analysis the history of installation based on the specific viewer experience and response the artist constructs via their installation. Bishop also notes that the term installation has become expanded to include the arrangement of a group of objects in a given space, including the conventional display of paintings on a wall, so that "the distinction between an installation of works of art and 'installation art' proper has become increasingly blurred."[172]

It is this pure definition of installation offered by Bishop, and also discussed by Shaw, that I intend to portray via my environmental installation. The physical site of the installation is as much a part of the overall artwork, as is the viewer themselves, because all three elements are needed in order to complete the installation. It is this hermeneutic element of installation that appears to be largely untapped within contemporary ceramic practice.

Kerry Harker's *Bud* (Fig 8) illustrates the broad application of the term 'installation' considered by Bishop and Shaw, and uses multiplicity, as discussed by Brown, as an installation technique.[173] Multiplicity is a technique that fits well within ceramic production practices as it conceptualises repetitive throwing, moulding and slipcasting. It begs the question, however, whether the resultant work is an installation? Physically, *Bud* consists of a grouping of mass produced bud vases which are arranged on shelving within the gallery. The work addresses issues within contemporary ceramic discourse, such as the vessel, function and domesticity, however it is not site specific. It is able to be easily transplanted to

[170] Ibid.
[171] Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, 6.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Shaw, "Ceramics and Installation.," 37.

another gallery or wall space, and does not create an environment that the viewer may enter into and engage with; they remain spectators.

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Fig. 8. Kerry Harker. *Bud.*

Liz Stops' *Flow*, exhibited at the Lismore Regional Art Gallery in 2003 (Fig 9), addresses environmental issues, specifically water usage. While Stops employs the benchmark methods of multiplicity and the vessel form, she does not address the standard themes within current ceramic discourse as described above, but rather addresses environmental issues. Traditionally, the vessel is a container for water, and the blue-green polished hues able to be achieved on a fine porcelain body captures the tonal variation of water. The differing heights of the vessels, their soft manipulation and their placement on a continuous 1300 centimetre shelf winding round the gallery wall, reflects the gentle movement of water. Most commentators who have written about *Flow* call the work an installation, [174] however, based on the definition stipulated above,I would argue that there are other ways of interpreting this work. Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, for example, offers a different reading of such ceramic groupings through her studio practice.

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[174] Marko Koludrovic, "Flow: An Installation by Liz Stops," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 59 (2005).

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Fig. 9. Liz Stops. *Flow*. 2003.

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott has, since the 1980s, been arranging her bowls, cups and beakers in clusters (Fig 10), and Hanssen Pigott refers to her works as grouping and trails.[175] I believe this label to be more appropriate to the works of Harker and Stops based on the parameters discussed above, as such works may not always alter the acuity of a space nor provide an overall viewer experience.

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Fig. 10. Gwyn Hanssen Pigott. Ceramic grouping.

[175] Michael Fitzgerald, "Huge Storms in Little Cups," *Time*, February 6, 2006.

Ann Ramsden's installation *Anastylosis Inventory* (Fig 11) exhibited at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Alberta, Canada in 2002, comprises rows of metal shelving containing broken and reconstructed commercial tableware and a fifteen metre mural documenting the shards before reconstruction.[176] This work addresses contemporary ceramic themes, such as museology and collecting, and although consuming more of the gallery space, its status as an installation or a collection of linked artworks making up a thematic exhibition remains questionable. Is the viewer subsumed within the environment or do they remain a spectator? It is these questions that my installation seeks to address by creating a holistic environment that becomes a viewer participatory experience rather than just a viewing.

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Fig. 11. Ann Ramsden. *Anastylosis Inventory*. Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Canada. 2002.

[176] Chambers, "Ceramic Installation: Towards a Self-Definition," 86.

The above discussion suggests that most of what is currently labelled ceramic installation seems preoccupied by traditional ceramic discourse and modes of display, which I argue, limits the scope for more expansive development within ceramic installation. *Cooled Matter*, an exhibition presented during the National Council in Education for the Ceramic Arts Conference in Columbus, Ohio, in March 1999, showed six artists whose works demonstrated a resistance to the historical constraints that denotes ceramic sculpture as a separate three dimensional medium within a broader sculptural discipline.[177]

Writing on this exhibition, Mitchell Merback explains that while the artists were not deliberately engaging in a critique of ceramic norms, as have the artists discussed above, their common goal of pursuing the sculptural and conceptual possibilities of clay meant the challenging of modernist orthodoxies pertaining to clay was implicit in the works.[178] Strategies used included the sculptural application of clay in combination with other media, including other organic materials, found objects, theatricality, bodily experience, an expanded approach to gallery space via installation and an ecological consciousness[179] (Fig 12).

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Fig. 12. Cooled Matter: Sadashi Inuzuka. *Dear Lake*. 1996.

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[177] Mitchell Merback, "Cooled Matter: Ceramic Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, no. 39 (2000): 7.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.: 13.

Many of the works explored the environment and the displacement of nature, themes that also occur in my work. The ritual and spiritual potential of the ceramic medium, however, was not explored. Though the exhibition illustrated a wider approach to display methods – works were not objects placed on plinths, but assembled dramatically on the floor and walls – and the conceptual goals of the artists may have been successful, the work was situated within the gallery context so that the audience 'viewed' the works as art pieces rather than physically engaging with the works by entering into them and experiencing them in a natural environment.

Though not environmental in content, Clare Twomey, an English ceramic artist, creates installations that, while sited in gallery environments, include not only the key elements of site specificity and audience participation, but also ephemerality, another common element within installation. As with other ceramic artists Twomey utilises the implicit qualities and cultural associations of clay, although in her work it is the historical and monetary value implicit in the medium that is being called into question.

Twomey's *Consciousness/Conscience* (Fig 13) produced for the 2003 Crafts Council exhibition *Approaching Content*, was an artwork designed specifically for that exhibition space, and was reliant on human interaction to validate the work's intention. In order to enter the gallery space visitors had to step on and crush the thousands of bone china floor tiles placed between art works within the gallery. Twomey wanted visitors to be aware of their environment and their actions within it.[180] Another installation, *Trophy* (Fig 14), was shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in September 2006, and again illustrated an awareness of the medium, site specificity, audience participation and ephemerality. That installation comprised small slip cast birds made from Wedgwood Blue Jasper, a material with implicit monetary value that would tempt visitors to steal a figurine. Twomey intended that this action would prompt the viewer to reassess objects, ownership and value; a moral dilemma that would be amplified by the formal gallery space. The interactive element of the installation was further extended by Twomey

[180] Clare Twomey, "On the Cusp," *Ceramic Review* January/February, no. 229 (2008): 46.

inviting viewers to communicate with her afterward as to the whereabouts of the figurines.[181]

Though the intention of Twonmey's installations differ to mine, her use of the gallery space as the specific site to amplify the underpinning message expressed in her installations is paramount. It is this principle that has dictated the choice of site for my installation within the natural environment, and illustrates the critical importance of site selection to the effectiveness of the finished installation.

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Fig. 13. Clare Twomey. *Consciousness/Conscience.* 2003.

[181] Ibid.: 48.

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Fig. 14. Clare Twomey. *Trophy*. Albert Museum, London. 2006.

As previously discussed, the majority of ceramicists beginning to incorporate installation into their practice do so within the gallery context. Traditionally ceramics has strong ties to gallery systems and museology; ceramics existing in museum and archaeological collections and displayed as historical objects. Ceramic installations, such as *Anastylosis Inventory* and *Trophy* however, challenge this precept, offering an alternative focus that is not commercial or object driven, but is instead content driven.[182] The conceptual underpinnings of these works are given focus and strength because of the site specificity, namely the gallery and the connotations of such a space, and the actions the altered environment prompts within the audience.

[182] Shaw, "Ceramics and Installation," 38.

Ceramics outside of the gallery context has been comprehensively reviewed by Janet Mansfield in her book *Ceramics in the Environment*, where a wide range of international ceramic artists are considered. The book demonstrates that within the external environment, ceramics is mainly used for architectural applications, such as walls and murals; large scale sculpture; corporate commissions; garden sculpture; and public art.[183] There are examples of firings *in situ*, such as Nina Hole's sculpture kilns (Fig 15) where the fired clay kiln is the finished sculpture,[184] and some examples of installations in gallery spaces.

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Fig. 15. Nina Hole. *House of the Rising Sun*. Gulgong. New South Wales. 1995.

Mansfield also discusses Claysculpt, an event she organised in 1995 at Gulgong, where she invited twenty-two internationally known artists to respond to, create

[183] Janet Mansfield, *Ceramics in the Environment* (London: A & C Black Ltd., 2005).
[184] Ibid., 21.

and install ceramic artworks in the natural environment.[185] Irit Musen, an Israeli sculptor, models female figures. Musen responded directly to the landscape when designing the sculpture she would create for Clayscuplt. Originally, she visualised three vertical forms cutting across the skyline, however, once at Gulgong she responded by creating a horizontal figure that was undulating and more organic, reflecting the soft curves of the environment.[186] While works such as Musen's were created as a direct response to the site and can, therefore, be defined as site specific, the works remain largely as individual entities upon the landscape, not integrated environments the viewer can enter into and experience, as specified in the above discussion. Although Mansfield discusses many outdoor and installation style works in her book none of the works fulfil my own requirements for installation, which are physical entry by the viewer and site specificity in the outdoors.Most installation based works in the environment employ other mediums and techniques, and have their historical roots in the Land Art movement of the 1970s, which may be analysed as a reaction, in part, to the severance of art from everyday life.

Spiritual Perspectives

As discussed in Setting the Context, the word 'spiritual' is problematic in not only the contemporary academic world, but in the world generally, because spirituality, according to Tacey, "leads us to the larger circles of our human and transhuman identity" and as such is "extremely subversive to the status quo" because it debunks the individual ego myth that is perpetuated by "commercial interests and the intellectual forces of modernity."[187]

Perlmutter explores the existence of this myth within the art-world, attributing it to the historic subordination of polytheistic cultures, and the relegation of their beliefs and practices as magical or superstitious. This action, she argues, contains a definite political agenda which has inadvertently initiated the subjugation of the spiritual in art in Western culture.[188] The stigmatism placed by

[185] Ibid., 9.
[186] Ibid., 18.
[187] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 185.
[188] Dawn Perlmutter, "The Subjugation of the Spiritual in Art," in *Reclaming the Spiritual in Art: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Dawn Perlmutter and Debra Koppman (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 8-9.

monotheism on objects and places held sacred by polytheistic cultures is reinforced in Western modern society through the deliberate desacralisation of religious objects from other cultures, achieved by their placement in anthropological museum collections, which then neutralises any sacred or spiritual quality.[189] Such an approach is necessary to maintain the dominant ideology, and has permeated the art-world because "[m]anifestations of the sacred in art… poses an ideological threat to the current political-religious structure."[190] This idea is mirrored in Simeon Kronenberg's essay in *The Sublime Imperative* catalogue where he claims artists wanting to explore spiritual themes in their art do so from within a dominant "materialist/fundamentalist ethos that argues for the dismantling of notions of the spiritual and sublime."[191] Historically art and the spiritual have strong links, from the ritual purposes of art in prehistoric times to use by the church to depict gods, saints, mythical figures, and heaven and hell, thus educating the masses and reinforcing the religious doctrine of the era; at this time art was a part of everyday life. During the Enlightenment, artists were liberated from the church and began to explore other subjects, yet maintained the portrayal of everyday life, via portraiture, landscape and still life. In 1914 Kandinsky published *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*,[192] where he encouraged a new approach to art which was not a realist portrayal of everyday life, but rather about line, colour and form, not description. Kandinsky argued that this method would reflect the artist's awareness of their own inner depths in relation to the universe.[193] Susan Shantz, however, interprets abstract art's non-specific content with a "nondiscursive, silent experience" that is linked to the spiritual identified as "beyond", "outside" and "above", so that it is numinous rather than phenomenal.[194] Koppman elaborates further, pointing out that by removing art from an intuitive and sensuous foundation to one that is cerebral, artists may have created an art that fits perfectly into the patriarchal religious

[189] Ibid., 9.
[190] Ibid., 7.
[191] Simeon Kronenberg, *The Sublime Imperative* (South Yarra, Vic.: Australian Centre for Contemporay Art, 1991), 2.
[192] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover ed. (New York: Dover Pub, 1977).
[193] Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1988), 1.
[194] Susan Shantz, "(Dis)Integration as Theory and Method in an Artmaking Practice," in *Reclaming the Spiritual in Art: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Dawn Perlmutter (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 62.

paradigm.[195] They have done this by abandoning the physical, tactile world for a conceptual one, which requires knowledge of intellectual theory, so that art becomes an abstract concept, parallelling a god that is also an abstract concept.[196]

This internalisation of art, I argue, fed into the growing emphasis on individualism during the modernist period, further diverting humanity's attention away from the environment, separating art from everyday life, and rendering art esoteric - divorced from the phenomenon of everyday experience, and the immediate environment. As Tacey points out, “a society with fine arts and crafts is not necessarily a society with culture, especially if the arts do not affect the everyday lives of ordinary people, remaining above or outside the normal range of experience.”[197] Barzun also argues that the survival of humanity requires a “reduction in the dose of abstraction, and a reconnection through art with the founts of human instinct”,[198] that is everyday sensual experience. The removal of these factors from a significant amount of art, however, combined with the industrial, religious and capitalist tenets discussed above, contributed to the separation and isolation that much of humanity feels toward their natural environment - after all, we cannot be individuals yet still be part of the cosmic whole. This is why art in the landscape is a particularly strong method for re-establishing a sense of connection and a recognition of the sacred within the landscape. It also validates the use of clay, for as Shantz points out “abstraction's preferred medium, paint, seems more ethereal than…a sculptor's clay, which is so clearly bound to matter.”[199]

Many social commentators have discussed notions of ‘re-enchantment’ as a means of rekindling a spiritual recognition toward the Earth. Tacey, in his book *Re-enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality* speaks extensively of this idea,

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[195] Debra Koppman, "Thou Art: The Continuity of Religious Ideology in Modern and Postmodern Theory and Practice," in *Reclaiming the Spiritual in Art: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Dawn Perlmutter and Debra Koppman (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 147.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 41.
[198] Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art*, 105.
[199] Shantz, "(Dis)Integration as Theory and Method in an Artmaking Practice," 62.

while Gablik, in her book *The Re-enchantment of Art* develops the concept specifically within an artistic arena. Gablik contends that just as Modernism was the art of the industrial age, so will 'reconstructive postmodernism' be the art of an ecological age, because reconstruction offers solutions to societal concerns.[200] She refers to critic Arthur Danto's stance that the end of art history is not the end of art, but rather, she believes, a renewed orientation toward non-patriarchal, non-Eurocentric ideals.[201] According to Gablik, the subsequent cultural recovery of the feminine principle is paramount in healing the "institutional oppressiveness of patriarchy"[202] because this "feeling function—the reawakening of our capacity to be compassionate—is crucial to finding our way out of the evolutionary mess we're in."[203] The above discussion of both Danto and Gablik's stances provides a scaffold for positing my research within a feminist framework.

Gablik believes that the ensuing decades will witness social and purposeful art that rejects the neutrality and autonomy of Modernism.[204] She further suggests that the creative openness available via postmodernism allows the artist to discard the image of the hero as its archetype, replacing it with the shaman,[205] so that a remythologising of consciousness through art can occur, thus re-enchanting culture.

Perlmutter also views postmodern art as a reaction against formalist aesthetics and the separation of the individual from their community, and that by questioning the meaning, purpose and function of art in society, postmodern artists are endeavouring to reintegrate art into everyday life.[206] They achieve this by reclaiming the sacred, reuniting the spiritual with the aesthetic, and integrating them into society in a manner similar to that which existed in pre-biblical, pre-patriarchal and pre-monotheistic eras.[207] These actions, Perlmutter asserts, have encouraged artists to create their own meanings in art, which has further led to

[200] Gablik, *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, 25.
[201] Ibid., 168.
[202] Ibid., 123.
[203] Ibid., 123.
[204] Ibid., 4.
[205] Ibid., 67.
[206] Perlmutter, "The Subjugation of the Spiritual in Art," 10.
[207] Ibid., 7.

the contemporary non-traditional art forms of performance, ritual, earthworks and environmental art.[208]

Land Art

As discussed earlier, the later part of the 1960s was a period of cultural upheaval: the Vietnam war; the Cold War; civil rights; potential nuclear war; and the emergence of an ecological consciousness - it was a decade of radical societal reassessment, and Land Art developed from within this milieu. As such it challenged and addressed societal norms in art, society and culture; features that ensure this methods continuing importance today. Compounding the immediate concerns of the time were the historical implications of the commodification of landscape, as reinforced through the window view of the world presented by landscape painting.[209] Artists wanted to remove sculpture from the confines of the gallery or the decorative parkland setting in order to establish a direct engagement with the environment. Such an engagement, was characterised by an instinctive and immediate interaction with nature and the landscape, ranging from destructive, reverent, ritualistic or ephemeral. This revival of what Beardsley calls an “anonymous tradition of earthworking” was intended to rebut conventional contemporary culture and its emphasis on consumerism and conformity.[210] Beardsley identified this trend as a continuation of “Romantic Primitivism”, a term adopted by Robert Goldwater in 1938 to describe the movement toward African and Oceanic sculpture that had begun at that time.[211] The fact that there exists a persistent gravitation toward tribal, earth and spiritual art during the past two centuries reinforces my premise that individuals continually strive to overcome the dissatisfaction felt when society emphasises consumption and material concerns, and they do this by appropriating different cultures and alternative belief systems. Lippard takes this a step further, claiming this attraction is not only the search for a simpler and more meaningful way of life, but also the yearning for a time when art had a more secure role within daily life.[212]

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[208] Ibid., 10.
[209] Simon Schama, "Garden of Stones," in *Passage* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2003), 60.
[210] John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 59.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 4.

Ben Tufnell, in his book *Land Art*, defines the genre as "not simply sculpture placed in the landscape but [one that] encompasses an attitude to site and experience that goes beyond the object, emphasising the landscape in which it is sited, often bringing it within the compass of the work and so rendering it an active component rather than merely a setting."[213] While avant garde artists of the 1940s and 50s had experimented with removing art from gallery spaces via happenings, interventions and performance,[214] Tufnell's further stipulation that the use of art to articulate an engagement with landscape and nature serving to "re-order our response to place, landscape or nature," [215] places Land Art as a particular precursor to installation. The importance of site significance and the redefinition of space emphasised by Land Art also strengthens the siting of my works within the environment in order to realise the reconnective intentions of the installation.

Many of the early earthworks utilised the open spaces of the American deserts, and reflected the American attitude toward landscape, which many critics saw as aggressive and colonialist, so that artists, such as Michael Heizer (Fig 16) and Robert Smithson, have been accused of being macho and arrogant.[216] In England, the response to Land Art was predominately understated and ephemeral. British peoples have an established history in England, including a history of sculpture in the environment, such as stone circles, and, therefore, are not compelled to prove ownership (as opposed to the colonialist actions of American artists). This together with the limited amount of land available to British artists, as opposed to the vast tracts of seemingly unoccupied land in America,[217] resulted in British artists, such as Richard Long (Fig 17) and Andy Goldsworthy (Fig 18), taking a more reverent and subdued stance.

[213] Ben Tufnell, *Land Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 16.
[214] For further information on early avant garde works such as The Gutai Group see Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1966).
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., 46.
[217] Schama, "Garden of Stones," 60.

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Fig. 16. *Michael Heizer*. Isolated Mass-Circumflex. Nevada. 1968.

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Fig. 17. Richard Long. *Sahara Line*. 1988.

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Fig. 18. Andy Goldsworthy. Mashiko clay-covered river stones.
Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Sine Arts, Japan. 1993.

Ecofeminism

While most of the artists working in these earthwork genres were male, and as such the works were generally read as archetypically masculine, a new seed began to germinate within Land Art, one that was more focused on the environment, and a high percentage of these artists were female.[218] During the 1970s, concepts concerning ecology and feminism began to merge, giving rise to ways of thinking and working that came to be known as Ecofeminism.[219] Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term Ecofeminism and articulated its ideology in her 1974 book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*,[220] translated as *Feminism or Death*. Ecofeminists place emphasis on civilizations' abuse of the natural world, which is facilitated by the emotional detachment enabled by viewing the subject as an inferior Other.[221] Ecofeminism embraces a holistic philosophy, viewing the world as an "interconnected network of living beings having a nonheirarchical [sic]

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[218] Tufnell, *Land Art*, 96.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Francoise d'Eaubonne. *Le Feminisme Ou La Mort* (Paris, France: Horay, 1974).
[221] Suzaan Boettger, "In the Missionary Position: Recent Feminist Ecological Art," in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action.*, ed. Joanna Frueh, Langer. L Cassandra, and Arlene Raven (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994), 254.

relationship”,[222] and in this regard mirrors many of the holistic theories that were beginning to emerge concurrently in science.

During the 1970s, physicists such as Fritjof Capra, vocalised a change of perception of the universe from a “mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks”[223] in which society struggles and competes for existence, to a holistic and integrated world. The influence of these new perceptions influenced the development of the Land Art genre and its impetus moved toward a more ecological and environmental focus.[224] Within this redirection, Tufnell identifies three categories: the first offers commentary and solutions to environmental problems, such as land-reclamation, and in this context art is a ‘healing’ resource; the second offers symbolic warnings and poetic meditations aspiring to restore lost connections to nature because it also assumes a healing role, and is more shamanistic in its approach; the third simply bears witness. All three approaches, however, express an ethical position toward land and nature.[225]

Many of the female artists working during the 1970s and 1980s within this framework explored ‘reclaiming the Goddess’ and fall into Tufnell’s second category. Artists such as Ana Mendieta (Fig 19), Mary Beth Edelson (Fig 20), Donna Henes, Betye Saar and Betsy Damon materialised their works through images, ritual, and performance sited within the environment, in an attempt to redress the gender distortion between humans and nature that had become a trait of patriarchy. Instead they placed emphasis on the interconnected and non-hierarchical relationship between nature and culture.[226] The legacy of these works lies within the contemporary ecology movement, growing environmental concerns and the continuing search for spiritual meaning in modern society,[227] implying that images and works created by women and sited in nature remain powerful tools of revelation in the twenty-first century.

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Capra, "Buddhist Physics," 2.
[224] Tufnell, *Land Art*, 94.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, "Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century.," in *The Power of Feminist Art.*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1994), 22.
[227] Ibid.

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Fig. 19. Ana Mendieta. Untitled from *Silhueta Series*. 1976

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Fig. 20. Mary Beth Edelson. *See for Youself*. Grapčeva Cave. 1977.

I believe my research also falls into Tufnell's second category, though I utilise the shaman metaphor as a vehicle of communication rather than the goddess. My work also emphasises a female approach and references to ritual, through the choice of material and configuration applications. Orentstein believes artworks created by women are powerful because, "[e]cofeminist artists of the new millennium point out to us how … we might see things differently when we collaborate with the regenerative cycles of nature, and are committed to developing and maintaining sustainable systems on Earth."[228] Tufnell reinforces the potency of work sited in the environment because, whether formal or conceptual, "it urges us to re-examine our relationship with the landscape and with nature. It is hard to think of any other recent form of art that engages with ideas of such contemporary relevance."[229]

Contemporary Environmental Artists

Many artists continued to employ the Goddess symbol within their artworks through to the 1990s, creating images that became positive symbols for healing the dualistic splits that had dominated patriarchy in the West: material/spiritual, human/non-human, mind/body, sacred/profane, nature/culture, and masculine/feminine.[230] Artists reclaimed this imagery of the past to examine pre-patriarchal values that respected the cycles of nature and the Earth's ecosystems. Artists of the new millennium, however, are more concerned about concentrating on what actually needs to be done to regenerate and heal the Earth with direct and hands-on methods, including land-sculpting, regeneration projects and water purification. [231]

Julie Collins is an artist who uses an array of materials, including small scale objects, and constructs her sculptures horizontally. Her work *Audience* (Fig 21), installed in 1997 at Herring Island, a sculpture park on the Yarra River in Victoria, consists of an arrangement of bluestone that welcomes visitors as they disembark from the punt. The literature labels *Audience* a sculpture, but I view it as an installation as it satisfies the criteria outlined above: site specificity and

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[228] Gloria Feman Orenstein, "The Greening of Gaia: Ecofeminist Artists Revisit the Garden," *Ethics and the Environment* 8, no. 1 (2003): 104.
[229] Tufnell, *Land Art*, 19.
[230] Orenstein, "The Greening of Gaia: Ecofeminist Artists Revisit the Garden," 104.
[231] Ibid.: 104-05.

audience engagement. Collins claims the site itself dictated the design of the installation as it "appeared as a found amphitheatre in itself"[232] and her intent was to construct a work that would arouse people's curiosity so that they would want to come to the island. As I employ the circle, so too does Collins "because the form brings people in and I like the idea of people being able to come in and be part of the sculpture."[233] The artwork is sensitive to the environment, using bluestone indigenous to the local area, and installed to harmonise with the natural curve of the land. The use of stone to construct *Audience* is also pertinent, and reflects my analogous reference of clay to stone as an ontological element, connecting people to the site. Being made of a natural material, *Audience* has changed over time, mirroring the changing environment, and the changing visitors to the island (Fig 22). It is this ephemeral quality that ensures *Audience's* success, and that I foresee occurring to my installation; the works not remaining a permanent unchanging scar on the environment, a symbol of humanity's dominion over nature, but rather an acknowledgment of an inevitable connection to the Earth, and the need for this connection to be reinvigorated.

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Fig. 21. Julie Collins. *Audience*. Herring Island. 1997

[232] Maudie Palmer and Bryony Marks, *Herring Island: Environmental Sculpture Park* (Melbourne: RMIT University, 1999), 14.
[233] Ibid.

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Fig. 22. Julie Collins. *Audience*. Herring Island. 2008.

Maya Lin was a twenty-one year old architecture undergraduate at Yale University when she won the commission for the 1982 *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial* in Washington D.C. (Fig 23). Her proposal was selected from 1,421 final entries by a blind jury, and answered the design brief of providing a place of reflection, free from political sentiment and located in a significant site.[234]

The memorial sits close to the Earth, spreading out horizontally, contrasting the verticality of the *Washington Monument* and the *Lincoln Memorial* that it is sited between. The memorial makes no political statements, but rather functions as a "visual scar on the American landscape."[235] The monument comprises two triangular configurations of seventy polished granite panels angling downward, so that to read the names the viewer is below the horizon – six feet under, at its deepest point.[236] The names of the 58,260 American military personnel who died in Vietnam are chronologically listed on the wall, which is a highly reflective surface that acts as an altar. This symbolic connection is successful as attested

[234] Judith E. Stein, "Collaboration," in *The Power of Feminist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1994), 242.
[235] Art:21, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (PBS, 2003 [cited 15th July 2008]); available from http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/lin/card1.html.
[236] Ibid.

by the thousands of offerings of photographs, letters and memorabilia that are left at the memorial every year.[237]

While constructed of the traditional material of monuments – stone – Lin's application is "supple, understated and earthy."[238] While writing about Lin's monument Stein speculates whether women conceive of and approach art in the environment differently than men. She further quotes art critic April Kingsley, who argues that women's art reflects a unique "intent and content" and that their works exemplify a "rapport with their site and their materials, rather than a victory over them."[239] This mirrors Lin's response when asked if a female sensibility exists within her own work:

> In a world of phallic memorials that rise upwards, it certainly does. I didn't set out to conquer the earth, or overpower it, the way Western man usually does. I don't think I've made a passive piece, but neither is it a memorial to the idea of war.[240]

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Fig. 23. Maya Lin. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC. 1982.

[237] Stein, "Collaboration," 243.
[238] Art:21, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* .
[239] Stein, "Collaboration," 243.
[240] Ibid.

Lynne Hull, an artist originally from Wyoming, also strives toward a feminine sensibility within her art practice which, she feels, gives her work greater strength. Interested in earth art, Hull felt it to be too "egotistical", and while developing her art practice expressed the desire to "make a positive gesture to the earth." In order to achieve this she asked, "[c]ouldn't there be a small-scale, nurturing, perhaps even "feminine" land art?" [241] The resultant 'hydroglyphs' (Fig 24) were glyphlike symbols carved into rocks and boulders in desert areas of Wyoming and Utah. Carved deeply, they act as water catchments from which desert creatures can drink.[242] These hydroglyphs do not impose on, dominate or harm the environment in any way, features I aim to incorporate into my installation. My work, however, does not deal with the plight of animals, but rather the plight of humans; a plight that, if healed, will naturally extend to a more nurturing attitude toward the environment and those dependent on it, including animals. The success of Hull's works inspired her to continue making art for animals within the landscape, in what has become a beneficial and holistic art practice.

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Fig. 24. Lynn Hull. *Scatter*. Moab. 1987.

Agnes Denes is an artist interested in science and at times employs mathematical formulas in the creation of her works. Between 1992 and 1996 Denes bought together 11,000 people to each plant a tree at a specific site in Finland and created the land regeneration artwork *Tree Mountain: A Living Time*

[241] Suzi Gablik, "The Ecological Imperative," *Art Journal* 51, no. 2 (1992): 51.
[242] Ibid.

Capsule (Fig 25).[243] Featuring a conical hill that spreads 1300 feet long, 880 feet wide and 114 feet high, the trees are planted in a pattern based on a combination of the Golden Section and the growth of pineapples,[244] or the Fibonacci sequence. Aesthetically this design allows the trees to follow the natural curve of the hill, yet the underlying concept of the work addresses a fundamental element that legitimises society's exploitation of the land: that of ownership, because *Tree Mountain* "can never be bought or sold."[245] Since the creation and continuation of *Tree Mountain* involves the participation of so many people, I believe this artwork continues to have the capacity to generate a sense of belonging and connectedness within the participants.

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Fig. 25. Agnes Denes. *Tree Mountain*.

The Gap

After reviewing the literature it seems apparent that installation within the environment is a powerful tool for triggering humanity's innate need to belong to the environment, and that, as Tufnell states, due to the continuing disintegration of the environment, the method is still pertinent in contemporary times. The literature also shows an established tradition of women working in this way, and bringing female sensibilities to the issue, strengthening the intent, and subsequent success, of these works.

[243] Thomas McEvilley, "Philosophy in the Land," *Art in America* 92, no. 10 (2004): 193.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Tufnell, *Land Art*, 104.

The literature also reveals that contemporary environmental artists are concentrating on what actually needs to be done to regenerate and heal the Earth with direct and hands-on methods. My research, however, is concerned with creating an intimate space so that the viewer may undergo an ontological experience, thus re-establishing their personal links with the Earth. As Gooding and Furlong state in their book *Song of the Earth*, "[n]ever has there been a time in all human history when the quality of our understanding of our condition in nature – the nature of our historical being in the world – has been more crucial to our survival as a species, and to the survival of all the species."[246]

Within the field of ceramics, the literature does reveal a gap when reviewing the implementation of installation in contemporary ceramic practice. As discussed, many of the works labelled as 'installation' appear to be the installation of thematic artworks within a gallery space, and while some artists are creating installations that incorporate consideration of the site and audience participation as active elements of the work, most of these works still exist within the gallery, whether their intent addresses consumerism and commodification or environmental themes. Of the ceramic works that are in the environment, many are architectural, large scale sculpture, corporate commissions, garden sculpture or public art, as revealed by Mansfield.

The shamanic metaphor has been adopted to some of the performance and ritual works enacted by female artists during the 1970s and 1980s, however, has not been generally implemented within ceramic practice. Given the alchemic nature of ceramics, and the intentions of reawakening and healing within my research, I believe this metaphor will strengthen the intent of the work, thereby facilitating the contribution this research has to offer to the existing body of knowledge in the field of contemporary ceramic practice.

Therefore, the utilisation of elements from art, science and religion and the adoption of a shamanic metaphor in the creation of a ceramic installation within the environment does, I contend, aid a regeneration of the connection between

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[246] Mel Gooding and William Furlong, *Song of the Earth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 14.

humanity and the Earth. References to the ritual, spiritual and historic associations of clay facilitates a reinvoking of the sacred, while constructing the installation via a female sensibility strengthens the union of these elements, enabling a gap to be filled within the intersecting fields of ceramics, installation and environmental art. By operating within this gap the visual manifestation of the research – the installation – will contribute to the existing discourse and thereby contribute to the existing field of knowledge.

Methodology

> The art of pottery, is of all the arts, the one that fuses together indestructible unity, earth and heaven, and matter and spirit.
> Herbert Read.[247]

Studio Methods

Why Clay?

As an elemental medium, clay is particularly pertinent to my thesis as it provides a direct link to the Earth, suggesting the primal connection we have with the universe. It is, therefore, a poignant metaphor, potentially able to trigger phenomenological[248] responses within the viewer and thereby initiate the ontological[249] possibilities of installation within my practice.

Essentially clay is mud and water, and symbolically, according to Cirlot:

> [m]ud signifies the union of the purely receptive principle (earth) with the power of transition and transformation (water). Mud is regarded as the typical medium for the emergence of matter of all kinds. Plasticity is therefore one of its essential characteristics, and it is related, by analogy, with biological processes and nascent states.[250]

Such a material is therefore, a potent medium to stimulate a reinvestigation and subsequent regrowth within humanity of their interconnectedness to nature and the Earth.

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[247] Herbert Read as quoted in Fujio translated by John Figgess Koyama, *The Heritage of Japanese Ceramics* (New York. Tokyo. Kyoto: Joint publication of Weatherhill and Tankosha, 1973), 5.

[248] Within the context of this thesis, phenomenology describes the natural experience that can occur when approaching the installation unencumbered by theoretical prejudices and presuppositions, thus revealing essential structures through pure consideration and reflection. It is intended that clay, organic shapes, innate symbols and the natural environment can facilitate such an experience. For more information on phenomenology and art see John Barnett Brough, "Phenomenology," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996), 594-96.

[249] Ontology refers to the human experience of 'being' the world. Within the context of this thesis an ontological reconnection to the natural world triggered by the installation enables the viewer to reassess and rediscover their relationship to the natural environment. See Jane Turner, "Ontology," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 497-99.

[250] J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Second ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971), 222.

Clay had been used for thousands of years for ritual and religious purposes before it was used to manufacture vessels,[251] and as previously stated, the introduction of domestic implements to ancient societies did not lessen the demand for ritual objects.[252] During these ancient times, societies made objects because of direct need, yet there was no distinction between the aesthetic and practical. Beauty was, for these artisans, a requirement for both form and function, and achieving an abstract excellence in functional objects seems to have been a deeply ingrained aim. It has been argued that this aesthetic imperative was the origin of art.[253]

Whilst it is our modern, mass consumerist society that has transformed our conception of clay into a largely utilitarian function, this ritual association renders clay an appropriate material to recall primal spirituality, a property needed to reconnect to nature. Ronald Kuchta, editor of *American Ceramics,* situates this ritual link in a contemporary context by viewing clay as "a fundamental material, perhaps best suited to the more fundamentalist atmosphere now prevalent around the world and as an antidote to our increasingly high-tech environment."[254] As argued earlier, the erosion of myth and ritual within society may be seen as a contributing factor to humanity's feeling of detachment from the Earth. Kuchta believes the ceramic artists making the most profound contribution to the medium are sculptors searching for meaning from the past, either by utilising the organic references of clay or by alluding to memorable icons or symbols. This is because "[c]lay is the most natural, realistic and poignant medium for presenting ideas or images of the earth itself" and such a pursuit within art is of great significance as we come to recognise the Earth's resources as being limited.[255] It is therefore appropriate that clay, with its implicit ritual undercurrent, be used to restimulate this connection.

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[251] Charleston, ed., *World Ceramics*, 12.
[252] Ibid., 327.
[253] Robert Nelson, "Hyper-Laughing - the Smile in Ceramics That Ceased to Be Brittle," *Ceramics: Art and Perception* 53 (2006).
[254] Ronald A Kuchta, "Major Themes in Contemporary Art," in *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 88.
[255] Ibid.

I believe that the ritual association of clay and the fact that clay is earthly matter, endows it with phenomenological properties which, when utilised via the method of installation, facilitates an ontological connection to the natural environment. Philip Rawson discusses extensively the phenomenological properties of clay, and its resultant 'echo' in *Ceramics* and a conference paper, entitled *Echoes: An Introduction*. [256] He argues that a form made from clay contains "both the reality of the materials and process, and the inner realities of man's [sic] sense of identity in relation to his [sic] own world of meaning."[257] Each clay sculpture creates a "focal point where strands of meaning related to life, use, and symbolic thought are knotted together, it reflects back into the mind of each owner or user an image of himself [sic] as existing in his [sic] world."[258] Through my choice of clay as the primary medium of my installation, I concur with Rawson that clay exhibits the potential to stir subconscious emotive responses. Further, by constructing a visual language composed of clay forms that are related to innately recognised patterns, textures and symbols, as alluded to by Kuchta, and creating an environment with this artwork, it may be possible to highlight the phenomenological and ontological properties of clay. The procedures I apply to realise these objectives include wheel throwing techniques and manipulation, which together achieve an organic, intuitive form; surface treatment, such as fractal-like glazes; configuration of multiple pieces into spirals and circles; and the technique of installation, which is used to create a holistic and interconnected environment.

The method of production

As discussed above, Rawson views clay as containing certain phenomenological properties; he also believes the wheel throwing process has a direct bearing on our reading of a form. A shape is attained by the "revolution of its contour line about the fixed axis" and this relationship is what gives the form its "specific expression" giving it a "rhythmic quality that enlists our sympathetic responses

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[256] For a further explanation of the phenomenological echoes of clay see Philip Rawson's paper presented at the Echoes: Historical References in Contemporary Ceramics, Kansas City, 1983. Philip Rawson, "Echoes: An Introduction" in *The Ceramic Millennium*, Garth Clark, ed. (Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2006).
[257] Philip Rawson, *Ceramics* (London: Oxford University press, 1971), 8.
[258] Ibid.

and exhibits the inner functioning of the fluid creative body."[259] When developed further, I believe Rawson to be symbolically alluding to the process of 'making on the wheel' being analogous with cosmic movement, and by association, cosmic creation; this is why the viewer is able to have a 'sympathetic response'. As discussed earlier, these qualities are present in the large forms of Toshiko Takaezu, and suggest an intuitive reason underpinning my preference for wheel throwing as the method of producing my art works.

Individual pieces are manipulated when soft leatherhard. Apart from one configuration, *Mandala*, I use a white, slightly grogged, raku clay (See Appendix 1 for detailed technical information). *Mandala*, though, was produced using Feeney's Buff Raku (BRT), a coarsely grogged clay (Appendix 1). I produced these pieces during the early phase of my research when I was deciding on the clay bodies and surfaces I wanted to develop. As the clay body displays its own surface qualities, a glaze was felt to be distracting, subtracting from the dynamic of the overall surface and sculptural form (Fig 26). While this characteristic certainly accommodated my intentions, the clay body was too problematic to throw over long periods, as it is very demanding on hands. In order to produce the forms I would centre and open the clay using rubber gloves, then remove the gloves to raise the walls of the piece. The difficulties encountered while throwing also meant that only smaller pieces could be produced. While retaining this BRT configuration for the final installation, it was necessary to employ the more user friendly clay, described above, for regular throwing.

[259] Philip Rawson, "Anthology and Metaphor in Ceramic Art" (paper presented at the Ceramics and Modernism Conference, New York City, 1981), in *The Ceramic Millennium*, Garth Clark, ed. (Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2006), 43.

Fig. 26. BRT Surface detail.

While most of my forms are smaller in scale, ranging from six to thirty five centimetres long or high, it was necessary to produce some larger pieces to form the central circle of the installation. Initially, two enclosed thrown halves were joined together. I threw two similar sized upside down bowls or ‘humps’ on the wheel by centring and opening the clay so that there was no clay left at the bottom to form a base. As I raised the walls of the form, rather than leaving an opening at the top I completely closed the form. After leaving the two pieces to dry to a soft leatherhard, I joined and blended the two pieces. This join, however, formed a weak spot when it came to manipulating the piece, and splitting occurred. Though the splitting could be repaired, the join was also vulnerable when fired in the kiln, thus leading me to explore throwing the form in one piece.

This entailed modifying the throwing technique I had previously employed. As mentioned, my clay had enough body to support a large form, however centring six to eight kilograms of clay requires a considerable amount of strength. I developed a technique of centring in two steps. Firstly, I successfully centred three to four kilograms of clay, and then placed another piece of similar sized clay, which I had manually formed into as symmetrical a ball as possible, on top of the already centred clay. I then centred the top ball of clay, gradually blending

both pieces of clay. I practiced throwing with this amount of clay for a short time, but could not attain the height I wanted, due to the thickness of the base and lower walls of the form. This thickness is needed as a foundation to support the height and weight of the form, and becomes, in effect, the formal base after turning. This excess clay, therefore, is not utilised to increase the scale of the form. As my forms are an organic shape I deliberately avoid creating a formal base, so that I was turning off a significant amount of clay that could be used to increase scale. I began to experiment with a process I call double-ended throwing (Appendix 1), and this method is now used to throw all my forms regardless of their size, as I find it a quicker and less labour intensive method of producing work. Cutting out the turning stage, which also means there is less clay to reclaim, leaves more time to develop and refine other aspects of my studio practice.

While throwing at a larger scale and pit firing influenced my choice of clay for this body of work, the manipulation process has also been a factor. As I stretch and twist the clay, parts of the form become quite thin. These thinner sections of clay dry more quickly than the thicker areas so that cracking occurs, and a stronger, more robust clay was required in order to eliminate this problem.

Manipulating the form is a critical step in realising the intentions of this project because that process heightens the overall organic nature of the finished forms. When commenting on Ruth Duckworth's early ceramic works, Tony Birk observed the asymmetrical element within the works which have the characteristics of an apple or pear growing in response to its natural environment, and within this natural perspective most living things are asymmetrical.[260] Toshiko Takaezu also captures an organic quality through subtle manipulation so that her works "are so completely natural looking that they seem almost to have been forged by the powers of nature, instead of the artist's hands."[261] It is this cosmic vigour that I wish to capture through manipulation. The crevices created by manipulation (Fig 27) are suggestive of natural cracks and crevices occurring in rocks, which many

[260] Mansfield, *Ceramics in the Environment*, 130.
[261] Merino, "Form and Energy: The Work of Toshiko Takaezu," 37.

cultures considered portals to the spirit world.[262] It also captures the concepts of Evolutionary Psychology discussed earlier, which postulate humanity's natural selection toward recognising organic elements within a landscape.[263] Hence, the throwing method developed to achieve organic shapes, when combined with manipulation, visually capture the ideas that underpin my claim of an innate human recognition of the forms that are presented in the works.

Fig. 27. Crevices created by manipulation.

Firing process

Ancient Greek philosophers believed the material universe to comprise of four elements: air, water, fire and earth. These elements also had their opposites: hot and cold, dry and wet. The balance between these elements and their opposites were believed to infuse all life, including humans, who were thought to be composed of competing elements in varying proportions.[264] Today the Universe, and the Earth, are of course, still composed of these elements, and all need to remain in balance for our continued survival; a balance threatened by the environmental problems that many social commentators feel we are facing today. According to David Suzuki "[h]umanity has never before faced such a threat: the collapse of the very elements that keep us alive."[265]

Clay, as a material, in its most basic form is composed of earth and water. The process by which it is transformed to form a hard vitreous substance in the kiln or

[262] Paul Devereux, *The Sacred Place: The Ancient Origins of Holy and Mystical Sites* (London: Cassell & Co, 2000), 67.
[263] Ilgen, *Art? No Thing!*, 350.
[264] Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*, 28.
[265] Ibid., 6.

pit requires fire and air. The amount of air will directly affect the end result of the fire on the earth and water mix. Therefore, the process involved in making and firing forms from clay alludes directly to the four elements of Ancient Greek philosophy and the notion of the delicate balance required to produce a successful harmonious result. It is my contention that this concept, together with the surface finishes achieved through the firing processes I employ, imbues the forms with an inherent sacred allusion, pulling our primal strings, so that to contemplate the nature and arrangement of such forms within a given space immediately reminds us of our place within the greater whole.

I employ both a modern kiln firing and a primitive pit firing process. The earthy qualities and feelings of timelessness associated with primitive pottery achieved through the pit and smoke firings are of critical importance to my conceptual intentions, and are calculated to imbue the works with a sense of the sacred. Forms are burnished when on the firm side of leatherhard. There are many different burnishing techniques; I use a smooth river stone, and if I want to achieve a higher sheen will apply baby oil or vegetable oil to the form once it is dry, and re-burnish. The pieces are then low bisque fired to 820°C. This has the triple effect of: retaining the sheen of the piece; providing a degree of shock resistance to any bursts of direct flame within the pit; and retaining an ‘open’ body to absorb the organic fuming within the pit. This ‘absorption’ of organic substances within the pit means the surface colouring becomes part of the piece, rather than sitting on the surface of the pot, as does a traditional glaze that melts in the kiln to form a coating of glass over the fired clay. It is my view that this organic fuming and absorption creates an holistic affect that contributes significantly to the innate response in the viewer to the overall works.

Once bisque fired, the forms are prepared for the pit firing (Appendices 1 and 3). Most of the ingredients used are readily available on my property, making my art practice more locally sustainable. It also means the majority of the materials used to form the finished installation are sourced ‘on site’. This is important because the underlying principle of this research is to reinvigorate a connection to the Earth; therefore making my methods more environmentally friendly is an important consideration. Gathering local ingredients and pit firing achieves a

smaller carbon footprint because low bisque firing and no glaze firing minimises electricity consumption, while no glazing reduces materials that have been mined from the ground, processed and transported thousands of kilometers.

While I may be able to reasonably predict the outcomes of the colouration on the forms, there is always an element of randomness to the pit firing process depending, for example, on the quality of seaweed, the type of wood used in the firing, how hot the pit becomes and how cold the ground remains.

When the work is removed from the pit, it is covered with a fine layer of ash, which is removed with a damp cloth. Works are not washed under running water, as the surface is still porous and any surface salts still on the form may become unstable, triggering a gradual corroding reaction. There are many methods that can be utilised to retain the integrity of the delicate low-fired surface. Beeswax and neutral shoe polish both achieve a subtle sheen, gently highlighting the soft colouration in keeping with the natural forms and soft appearance of the forms. This is what I have tended to use for works intended for indoor areas. However, this body of work was to go outside and needed a longer lasting protective sealant. American ceramicist, Paul Soldner, uses acrylic floor wax on his low fired salt sculptures to protect them from fading and enabling them to be washed if dusty.[266] Initially, this seemed the perfect solution. The product would protect the surface from fading and would prevent surface salts from becoming unstable in rainy conditions. However a visit from my supervisors to the site raised the issue of allowing the forms to become mouldy, reflecting the organic environment of the installation. This was an element that I appreciated in Joan Campbell's installation *Integrata* (Fig 28) in the Music Department garden at the University of Western Australia, where you can visualise the pieces, over time, becoming covered in lichen and dust, and blending into the landscape.[267] Within my work, however, the effect of the burnishing on the form would then be lost, and the link to the underpinning theory of surface reflection would be made redundant.

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[266] Paul Soldner, "Low Fire Salt Fuming," in *Barrel, Pit and Sagger Firing*, ed. Sumi von Dassow (Ohio: The American Ceramic Society, 2001), 148.
[267] John McPhee, "A Critical Assessment," in *Joan Campbell, Potter*, ed. Luceille Hanley (Freemantle: Arts Centre Press, 1984), 41.

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Fig. 28. Joan Campbell. *Integrata.*

Due to the burnishing of pit and smoke fired pieces prior to firing, a reflective surface is developed that accentuates the subtle hues achieved on the finished forms. Evolutionary Aesthetics claims that humanity evolved to recognise reflective surfaces in the landscape, enabling water detection; therefore we have an innate disposition to respond to such surfaces, which, in turn, influences aesthetic preferences. [268] Therefore, though burnishing pots served a purpose within ancient societies, namely to waterproof and strengthen functional vessels,[269] this discovery may have been a secondary result of the desire for a reflective surface. Capturing this concept within the artworks would be lost if I allowed the forms to merge into the environment. As the installation comprises pit fired pieces of different sizes and compositions, I decided to incorporate both aspects: some burnished and sealed to provide the reflective surface, and some left to blend more fully into the landscape.

[268] Richard G. Coss, "The Role of Evolved Perceptual Biases in Art and Design," in *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, ed. Karl Grammer and Eckart Voland (Berlin: Springer, 2003), 88.
[269] Polishing was completed with animal skin still impregnated with fat. The polishing compresses the clay particles therefore strengthening it, and the fat sealed the pieces against water to an acceptable degree.

Surface finish

Pierre Bayle says of traditional glazes "[m]inerals leave me cold. For that reason I never make glazes. Glass cuts, it is rigid. It lacks life. I never manage to be moved by it despite its beauty."[270] Such 'cold' and 'hard' characteristics rendered by traditional functional glazes deem them unsuitable for my intentions. Smooth, shiny glazes tend to recall the more decorative and utilitarian functions of ceramics' historical association, thus accentuating their inappropriateness for this investigation. Instead I aim to capture "the depth and subtlety of reference that ceramic textures and glaze colours and qualities can attain"[271] and thereby induce the 'echo' to which Rawson refers.

The surfaces I have achieved on the completed works are aimed at enhancing the organic experience initiated by the forms and configuration, hence the use of the pit and smoke firing technique discussed above. While endeavouring to implement initiatives so that my practice leaves a lighter footprint on the Earth, I use a minimum of glazes, and try to develop recipes that are earthenware or mid-fire in range, thereby consuming less electricity.

The glazes I have developed do not carry traditional connotations, because they are textured and tactile, aiming to prompt an interactive response in the viewer, thus contributing to the ideology of the installation method. These glazes, while prompting a visually tactile experience, also capture the fractal visually and conceptually.

Fractals are naturally occurring irregular, repeating patterns that appear throughout nature. Humanity has evolved surrounded by this "fractal scenery"[272] and as mentioned earlier, Taylor believes humanity has developed a type of 'fractal encoding'. While Taylor is referring to a more psychological recognition, such encoding is not surprising since it is part of our own physical evolution; the texture of human skin (Fig 29) and the structure of our lungs being two examples. These patterns also surround us in many other organic structures, such as spider

[270] Jane Perryman, *Smoke-Fired Pottery* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 1995), 6.
[271] Rawson, "Echoes: An Introduction", 216.
[272] Taylor, "Fractal Expressionism - Where Art Meets Science," 142.

webs, honeycomb and seedpods. The efficient use of surface and space due to fractal compositioning has caused these structures, and the fractal, to become naturally selected throughout evolutionary history. It has been suggested that "their ubiquity in the natural world *of which we are a part* is one reason we find them so comfortingly attractive." [273] It is this innate recognition and the 'comforting' quality they stimulate, that render fractals a powerful agent within my work.

Fig. 29. Human Skin.

There are three main glazes that I have developed to reflect the fractal visually in the artworks: a dry black (Fig 30), a dry white (Fig 31), and a cratered volcanic glaze (Fig 32). While all of these glazes originated from established recipes, I have modified them during the course of my research to visually embody my intentions (Appendix 1).

[273] John Barrow, *The Artful Universe* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1995), 62. [emphasis added]

Fig. 30. Dry black glaze detail.

Fig. 31. Dry white glaze detail.

Fig. 32. Volcanic glaze detail.

The colour responses and textured fractal surfaces I achieved during this experimentation, whist being visually appealing, also facilitates the phenomenological intent of the project. For example, as I wanted an organic surface, suggestive of moss on some art works, I experimented with low amounts of copper carbonate in the volcanic recipe. The single dip test showed small, evenly distributed craters, while the double dip displayed larger craters and a greener tone around the edges of the craters, which was visually appealing. This surface variation was achieved by applying an uneven glaze application to smaller test pieces, and these results were successfully repeated on larger artworks.

Two surprising, yet welcome results, also occurred in the firing of these larger volcanic pieces. Copper carbonate when fired in a reduction atmosphere gives pinkish to strong red colouration. The presence of silicone carbide in a glaze, while promoting a crater effect, can also cause a ‘false’ reduction within an electric kiln, resulting in some pink blushes on the forms. This blush was particularly prominent where the kiln elements touched the glaze surface. The other surprise emerged from the chrome oxide in the black forms. As they were both fired to the same temperature I fired both glazes together. Chrome oxide becomes highly volatile after approximately 1200°C, and can affect the colour of other glazes around it, resulting in some dramatic black flashes of colour on some parts of the volcanic pieces. This tonal variation (Fig 33) added another visual dimension to the glaze which I decided to purposefully promote in future firings.

Fig. 33. Volcanic glaze tonal variation.

Though these pieces had a soft green tone to them, after installing a group of them in a lush green environment they looked too blue, so I decided to experiment with some other colourants (Appendix 1). The red iron and yellow iron produced the most suitable results, and after re-testing on some smaller forms, I decided to glaze some larger forms in the red iron recipe. I also loaded some black pieces in this firing to gauge the effect of the chrome on the red iron. Again the black flashing was impressive (Fig 34). Once in the environment the iron oxide glaze, when combined with the green glazed pieces, eliminated the blue tinge that had previously been present.

Fig. 34. Chrome flashing in iron volcanic glaze.

As with the black and volcanic glazes, the white glaze displayed a more pronounced crackled quality effect when the glaze was applied more thickly. While the clean white surface of this glaze was appealing, and did conceptualise the fractal, I felt the lack of colour may be a little sterile in the environment. After experimenting with various oxides (Fig 35), I settled on a selection of natural hues, as the copper oxide produced a gaudy green when fired at 1100°C. (Appendix 1).

Fig. 35. White glaze with oxide experiments.

As mentioned earlier, none of my forms have a formal base, though I do flatten a side slightly so that individual pieces can sit on a plinth if desired. Due to the organic nature of my intentions, however, it is not aesthetically desirable to have an unglazed base. Usually a ceramic object will be unglazed on the base enabling a safe kiln firing,[274] with an even base or foot-ring to rest upon. Since my works are glazed all over I fire them on old electric kiln elements, which allows the work to fire safely, while also leaving interesting fossil-like markings (Fig 36) that fit well into my overall artistic objectives.

Fig. 36. Fossil-like markings on volcanic glaze.

[274] Glaze is actually a coating of glass. Any part of a ceramic object that will sit on the kiln shelf must not be glazed, otherwise when the glaze melts in the kiln the object will stick to the kiln shelf upon cooling.

Configuration

As previously discussed, when addressing a contemporary multicultural society the components used to construct an inclusive space should be universally recognised and understood. I have attempted to achieve this aim by utilising symbols and configurations that transcend specific monotheistic religions, referring instead to a deeper, more universal language.

Symbols offer more than an obvious and immediate meaning. Jung believed them to be inherited, psychic aspects of brain structure.[275] Thus symbols have a wider 'unconscious' aspect that cannot be fully defined or explained,[276] seeming to be innately recognised and universally interpreted. This provides the artist with the ideal vehicle to visualise symbols, as "[a]rt, like dreams, has the capacity to bring unconscious contents to consciousness. As these surface, art can help us find new physical images, so that we can collectively see, articulate, and integrate what has hitherto been denied or unimagined, and can thus experience the world and ourselves more intimately."[277]

Spirals, circles, squares and stones have been used throughout history, across cultures, and persist today in spiritual explorations and artistic endeavours. Spirals, circles and squares form the configurations within the installation, while the allusion to stone conjures the symbolic meaning stones have been given throughout cultures over time. The actual physicality of stone as an ontological element of construction within the installations is also pertinent.

The circle is a symbol for heaven,[278] and was recognised as a potent symbol and widely used in many primitive cultures[279] making it a powerful spiritual conduit. The circle is a symbol for eternity and unity in diverse cultures including Eastern Zen[280] philosophy and the Western concept of the wedding ring**.** As an inherently

[275] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, xxxv.
[276] C. G Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C. G Jung (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1964).
[277] Jane Brooker, "The Heart of Matter," *Art Journal* 51, no. 2 (1992): 11.
[278] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 203.
[279] Ibid., 46.
[280] Japanese founder of Zen was Eisai (1141-1215), who also created the tea ceremony. Zen outlines a technique for disciplining the mind to achieve *satori*, or sudden illumination. This

recognised symbol, the circle was “probably embedded…in human consciousness”[281] due to parallels with the sun, moon, planets and stars; hence the speculation of some natural historians that stone circles had astrological purposes, [282]and the subsequent continued use of sun dials in modern times. The native North American Sioux Indians did “everything…in a circle…because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.”[283] Many tribal cultures also understood concepts of interconnectedness and the need to be close to the cosmos. Such instances make the circle a poignant symbol to utilise when creating an installation, and is manifested within my installation through configuring multiple forms together within a natural space.

Enclosed within the square, the circle becomes a mandala.[284] Jung viewed the mandala as a holistic symbol for oneness and completion of self, and because mandalas appear in many cultures and religions, he saw it as an archetype of the collective unconscious.[285] The square symbolises the Earth[286] and combined with the circle strives to unite heaven and Earth, encouraging order, rendering the mandala a potent symbol to enable a reinvoking of the sacred within the natural environment. The mandala always alludes to the concept of the centre, not visually depicted, but suggested through concentricity,[287] thus providing a tool for contemplation and concentration, aiding the movement of the spirit.[288]

The spiral, as expressed through the Fibonacci sequence, appears in formations of nature from animal horns, seashells, pinecones and pineapples, through to

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experience brings with it enlightenment and knowledge. See Richard L Gregory, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 401.

[281] Tyler Volk, *Metapatterns: Across Space, Time and Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 155.

[282] Archaeoastronomers claim stones were placed and circles constructed in the landscape to align with particular astrological cycles. The position in relation to the skyline was also important, as were the shadows cast as they may have pointed to aspects within the topography. Some examples include New Grange, Stonehenge and the Stones of Stenness. See Devereux, *The Sacred Place: The Ancient Origins of Holy and Mystical Sites*, 136-40.

[283] John (Flaming Rainbow) Neihardt, *Black Elke Speaks. Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 198.

[284] Mandala is the Hindu term for circle. See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 199.

[285] Michael W Passer and Ronald E Smith, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*, Second ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill Companies Inc., 2004), 437.

[286] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 307.

[287] Ibid., 201.

[288] Ibid., 199.

spiral galaxies. This may be a result of nature's efficiency as this structure has evolved through natural selection to be the most efficient, enabling, for example, the maximum amount of seeds within a pinecone to be formed within the smallest space.[289] As humanity has evolved concurrently with Fibonacci spirals, we innately recognise the formation so that it has become a symbol reflected in myth universally and across cultures, becoming a "schematic image of the evolution of the universe."[290] The spiral, therefore, has become one of the "essential motifs of the symbolism of ornamental art all over the world."[291]

Stones carry spiritual significance across cultures and history because "they suggest immortality, because they have so patently *survived*."[292] Stone is a "symbol of being, of cohesion and harmonious reconciliation with self."[293] Its hardness and durability has always impressed humanity, resisting the laws of change, decay and death.[294] Stones symbolise "unity and strength" [295] and many cultures attributed magical powers to stones. Stone was, and still is, used extensively in Japanese Zen gardens because stones and rocks predate humanity's existence; they are the cosmos' first born.[296] Across cultures stones were considered to contain spiritual entities. North American Indians believed stones to be the offspring of Mother Earth, and therefore the abode of gods and the supernatural,[297] while Japanese animism believed stones to contain spirits.[298] Australian Aborigines believed certain 'sacred stones' contained the spirits of the dead.[299] As mentioned earlier, clay when fired and vitrified becomes analogous with stone: clay is of the Earth, it becomes stone-like and stone carries the 'memory' of the Earth. Therefore, in this regard, clay has the potential to become a poignant ontological signifier with which a disconnected society may identify.

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[289] Moore, "Fibonacci Sequence," 1606.
[290] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 305.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 15. [emphasis in original]
[293] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 313.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Johnny Hymas, *Japan: The Living Gardens* (Tokyo Japan: Shufunotomo Co., Ltd., 1997), 2.
[297] Peg Streep, *Spiritual Gardening: Creating Sacred Space Outdoors* (Makawao, HI: Inner Ocean, 2003), 46.
[298] Elizabeth Bibb, *In the Japanese Garden* (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996), 32.
[299] M.-L von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C. G Jung (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1964), 204.

Individual pieces created within the studio were developed with the intention to form certain configurations based on the symbols discussed. All the individual pieces that comprise one configuration were thrown, manipulated and fired at the same time, enabling a continuity of artistic and technical process. While creating *Memorial*, for example, individual pieces were manipulated and moulded together whilst still soft leatherhard (Fig 37). Each layer was also numbered so they would re-fit after firing when stacked together.

Fig. 37. *Memorial*. Manipulated and moulded while still soft leatherhard.

Scale and Multiplicity

Historically, most outdoor sculpture was commissioned and created within a patriarchal framework that believed sculpture in the environment had to be large; it had to be seen and have monolithic impact. This was largely due to the historical purpose of sculpture. In Australia, for example, most colonial outdoor sculpture featured prominent and successful men of the period, reinforcing authority and acceptable modes of behaviour. After the discovery of gold, which boosted the economy, sculpture became more widely commissioned. Generally the subjects remained prominent men within the colony, and they were larger

than life.[300] This precedent continued as sculpture developed within Australia. Sculpture was (and still is) an expensive pursuit, and was therefore generally commissioned by governments, businesses or churches.[301] Consequently most early sculptural projects were large scale and were carried out by men. Subsequently most outdoor sculpture dominated the landscape, showing, what some regard as, little sensitivity to the surrounds.

Within this patriarchal system, religion emphasises the connection to a heavenly reality rather than a connection to nature. This Western male-centric view of God is vertical, heaven bound, and Tacey believes if we are to halt the ongoing desacralisation of the planet we need to “draw again a series of sacred lines that connect us outwards to the world, and horizontally to the creation, and not focus on a single vertical line upwards to our personal God.”[302]

The scale and formation of my work reflects this idea. Just as Stop’s use of multiplicity in *Flow* was implemented to engage the viewer in a discourse beyond that of traditional ceramic themes, in her case the plight of water in the Australian landscape, so too do I use this method to draw the viewer’s attention toward the Earth, re-awakening a sense of their presence within it. Multiple small individual pieces are arranged to splay out horizontally within the environment (Fig 38). They do not dominate, but instead harmonise and draw the viewer’s attention toward the Earth. Multiplicity as a method also provides a visual expression to the scientific theory underpinning this thesis. As discussed, many premises of the New Physics contend that the universe is a holistic entity, made up, not of separate components, but of interconnected elements that rely upon and need each other to exist. Creating a configuration from multiple components to form a single sculpture captures this concept, both visually and conceptually.

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[300] Graeme Sturgeon, *The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788-1975* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1978), 9.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 102.

Fig. 38. Horizontal configuration.

After creating artworks based on universal symbols and elements, they were ready to be installed in a natural space. Through installation, I intended to link these individual artworks together, creating a space that would enable the viewer to enter and interact with the work, thus functioning as a catalyst for reconnection, and thereby encouraging an interactive heightened awareness of Bohm's 'unbroken wholeness'.

Installation

Works of art are not objects; they are 'relationships' between people and objects.[303] It could be suggested that if this 'relationship' is changed by placement in a gallery space, the connection may cease to exist and communicate as art. The work of art becomes an object that we are taught to respect as an important cultural relic. The philosophy behind my art means that it may not function in such an environment, as this space may not be conducive to the transformative potential of aesthetic experience. As Perlmutter points, out the museum or gallery space neutralises the spiritual quality of an object.[304]

I believe installation is a powerful method for reinvoking the sacred within the landscape. Koppman writes about a feminist redefinition of the sacred which

[303] Paul Greenhalgh, "Craft in a Changing World," in *The Persistence of Craft : The Applied Arts Today*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 13.
[304] Perlmutter, "The Subjugation of the Spiritual in Art," 9.

rejects the dichotomies that function to isolate humans from their experiences and life within the cosmos.[305] Installing works within the landscape embodies this redefinition and supplies a conduit to reconnect and re-experience our existence within the cosmos. Perlmutter views installations sited in the environment as creating “sacred spaces that are qualitatively different from profane space” because they “are reminiscent of temple, fertility, burial, and sacrificial sites.”[306] Roger Scruton, in his article *Cities for Living*, reaffirms this, arguing that the settlements antimodernist architect Léon Krier is most drawn to, are those that began from the creation of a sacred space and the building of a temple because without these structures ‘Big Brother’ is in charge.[307] Krier believes that architectural modernism is founded on profound errors about the nature of human society, and as a response to this designed Poundbury in England at the invitation of the Prince of Wales.[308] Barzun notes a similar trend amongst architects, who through reading sociological studies, found that residents of large cities undergo deprivation of a sense of community causing *anomie*: anxiety caused by social isolation.[309]

Recent research in the field of Evolutionary Aesthetics supports this contention, espousing that artificial contents in a site, such as poles, power cables, signs and vehicles actually lower the viewer’s aesthetic preference.[310] Humans appear to prefer natural elements in their environment, which explains the desire people display for incorporating gardens and indoor plants into their urban existence. Installation within a natural space is, therefore, the most appropriate method for investigating the subject of this thesis as it enables the creation of a space the viewer can physically enter, thereby “dissolving the distance between viewer and

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[305] Debra Koppman, "Feminist Revisions," in *Reclaiming the Spiritual in Art: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Dawn Perlmutter and Debra Koppman (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 54.
[306] Perlmutter, "The Subjugation of the Spiritual in Art," 15.
[307] Roger Scruton, *Cities for Living,* (City Journal, 2008 [cited 25th November 2008]); available from http://www.city-journal.org/2008/18_2_urb-leon_krier.html.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art*, 111.
[310] Bernhart Ruso, LeeAnn Renninger, and Klaus Atzwanger, "Human Habitat Preferences: A Generative Territory for Evolutionary Aesthetics Research," in *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, ed. Karl Grammer and Eckart Voland (Berlin: Springer, 2003), 284.

art object, provoking new perceptual experiences"[311] and in doing so initiate phenomenological rediscoveries.

Installation is also a useful hermeneutic tool allowing an exploration that produces new insights and knowledge. Duchamp, in 1957, said an artist is a "mediumistic being who does not really know what he [sic] is doing or why he [sic] is doing it. It is the spectator who through a kind of inner osmosis deciphers and interprets the work's inner qualifications and relates them to the external world: this completes the creative process."[312] Though not talking about 'installation' as a method, Duchamp is referring to the hermeneutic possibilities that facilitate a response within the viewer that allow for new cultural understandings and knowledge to develop. I do not, however, agree with Duchamp that artists do not really know what they are doing or why. In determining what elements are presented and how the audience will visually perceive them enables the artist to create new perspectives by "directing the mind", which can lead to new revelations.[313]

As I am attempting to trigger a subconscious phenomenological-cum-ontological reaction within the viewer, installation in a natural setting using clay as the primary material, evolved in my practice as the most suitable method for stimulating responses in the viewer that would lead to new insights, and therefore new knowledge about themselves and the world. Stephanie Ross supports this approach when she suggests that, "[b]y inhabiting, addressing, and altering a site, they [artists] call into question our relations to landscape, nature, and art."[314] This revelation of new awareness is facilitated by the metaphor of artist as shaman.

Artist as Shaman

Shamans heighten their unique awareness of the universe using many methods, including artistic practices, such as song, tale, carving and painting. This art, however, was not art for art's sake, but a tool for survival, giving "structure and

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[311] Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, 221.
[312] Bowman, "Generations: Kay Hwang's Installations," 50.
[313] Noel Carroll, "Defining Mass Art," in *Aesthetics: A Reader in the Philosophy of the Arts*, ed. David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 65.
[314] Stephanie Ross, "Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 178.

coherence to the unfathomable and intangible."[315] This purpose parallels the intention of my installation within the environment, strengthening the relevance of employing the shamanic metaphor. According to Perlmutter, artists who work in the environment "[f]rom a spiritual perspective…can be viewed as contemporary shamans, whose work involves sanctifying places and creating sacred grounds and mystical monuments."[316]

Tacey believes that reinstating sacredness is the key to environmental integrity. He views the environmental crises not solely as moral or economic issues, but as a "spiritual problem about how we experience ourselves in the world."[317] In other words he detects a severance of our ontological connection to the world, a rejuvenation of which I have attempted to achieve through my installation. While we continue to view our relationship with the planet as external and only physical, the environment will continue to suffer, and our removal and isolation from it will continue to grow. The shamanic metaphor becomes paramount as shamanism is fundamentally a holistic belief system, integrating all of nature, including humans. Shamans believe that certain parts of the land are charged with power and if you arrive at these areas in the right frame of mind that power may flow into the psyche opening previously untapped levels of perception, feeling and creativity.[318]

This is why I chose the site on my property for my installation: serenity, energy and natural beauty are only a few of the major components. Prior to making this decision I had been undecided about how to make all the individual pieces produced in the studio into a cohesive whole. As soon as I began placing works in the environment the overall concept immediately began to form an interconnected nucleus.

Initially works were set up along a pathway that had occurred naturally due to a fallen tree and the collection of leaf litter that had accrued around it, however, I

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[315] Halifax, *Shaman, the Wounded Healer*, 11.
[316] Perlmutter, "The Subjugation of the Spiritual in Art," 13.
[317] Tacey, *Re-Enchantment. The New Australian Spirituality*, 162.
[318] Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, 130.

found this unsatisfactory. Firstly I was not making enough use of the symbols which formed such a central focus of the research, such as the circle; and secondly I do not like the word 'journey', which, I feel, has become somewhat hackneyed and clichéd, due to its flippant overuse in everyday conversation. Therefore, it seemed inappropriate to apply this word to my installation.
After careful consideration, I decided upon a natural circle of trees sited further along the waterline. This location also offered the most secluded vantage point, blocking the view of a house on the other side of the creek bank. Just as a circle is drawn on the Earth around the vision-seeker in the Vision Quest,[319] I too sat reflecting within this circle over the next few days, until I began to visualise the form the installation would take. The installation would be a circle upon the Earth, so that just as the vision-seeker seeks knowledge, so too would the viewer, when entering the circle, find new knowledge about their relationship to the Earth. Upon relocating actual works to this area, this concept solidified and the installation began immediately to fall into place, including the 'portals' concept, which became the mechanism linking the individual configurations within the space, while guiding the viewer to focus on particular aspects within the environment.

The intuitive means by which the installation fell into place after months of agonising certainly rang true with the shamanic idea that certain parts of the land are energised, and if connected to it, can stimulate new perceptions and creative urges.

Site Methods

Creating the Central Circle

As mentioned earlier, installation enables the artist to create a space that the viewer must enter into in order to gain meaning. Though the viewer will bring to the installation their own experiences and beliefs, the artist does have the ability to influence the perceptions of the viewer. I have attempted this by defining the exact route to the circle with a pathway; dictating the direction by providing only one entrance and exit to the circle; and controlling the gaze of the viewer through portals.

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[319] John Redtail Freesoul, "The Native American Prayer Pipe," in *Shamanism: An Expanded View of Reality*, ed. Shirley Nicholson (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), 209.

The pathway is constructed using leaves, bark and small twigs gathered from the site, and meanders amongst the trees (Fig 39). I constructed this path in Autumn when the leaves were dry so that they crunched underfoot. I found this noise to be grounding, drawing my attention to the surroundings, so that by the time I arrived at the circle I was firmly ensconced in the environment, both physically and psychologically. This concept became my ideal, and I worried what would happen if it rained before the final exhibition. Once winter arrived and it rained my cause for worry was expunged, as I found that the silence, stillness and smell of the path focused as much attention on the environment as the crunch of the leaves.

Fig. 39. Leaf litter pathway. **Fig. 40. Cairns and totems along pathway.**

Placed along this path are small configurations, representing cairns and totemic forms (Fig 40), symbolic constructions that materialise cross-culturally throughout history. Cairns are mounds of stone that appear at many prehistoric sites covering burial chambers; marking places of religious significance; and denoting pathways. They are still built today in India, the Himalayas, and the Canadian tundra.[320] Other works scattered randomly along the installation pathway also

[320] Drury, *Silent Spaces*, 58.

serve to stimulate the viewer's awareness of the natural setting as they approach the circle.

There is only one entrance into the circle, and once in the inner circle the viewer's gaze is directed to specific points within the landscape via portals suspended between the branches of the tree circle. Originally I constructed one portal to determine the shape, construction method and suspension method most suitable for my intentions. Larger twigs were arranged in circular configurations on the ground and bound using fishing line. Whilst satisfied with the concept I wanted to experiment with different portal designs. In order to visualise various designs in the space I photographed the area and printed out the images in A4 size, and drew different versions of portals and various hanging methods (Fig 41). I kept arriving back to my original design as the most preferred as it reinforced the circle concept and the sacred associations I am attempting to evoke.

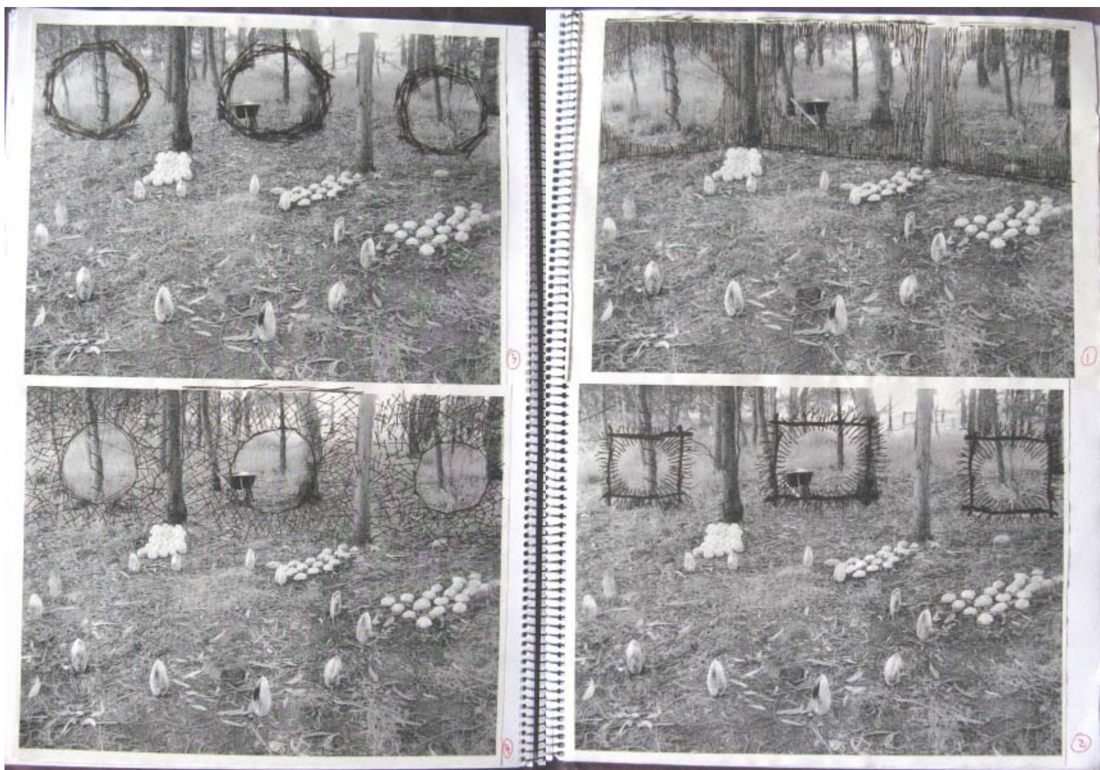

Fig. 41. Visualisation methods.

Once this design was decided upon I began experimenting with ways of binding the portals to maximise strength and durability. Initially I bound the twigs with a thick 45.5kg fishing line at eight even intervals around the circular form. This

seemed to hold the construction in place while suspended, however, over time the fishing line stretched, and the portal lost its form. I then tested nylon cable-lock ties, this time spacing them at twelve even intervals around the portal. This provided a much sturdier result. To camouflage the cable ties I secured wound strips of bark with natural jute around the ties, thereby retaining the organic appearance of the portals.

Suspending the portals between the trees was also challenging, both physically and aesthetically. While securing the portal to the trees using the fishing line was successful, it was not visually acceptable, and hampered the organic intent of the installation (Fig 42). I briefly considered a thicker jute to cover the fishing line, but was not satisfied with this idea either.

Fig. 42. Portal suspended by fishing line.

Simultaneous to these explorations, my partner was carrying out maintenance on our property, which included cutting down some trees that were unhealthy or were endangering other trees. As I sat watching this exercise one afternoon, with the portal question reverberating inside my psyche, it suddenly occurred to me to utilise the longer branches he was removing as a crossbar for the portals.

As mentioned earlier, the development of the installation flowed smoothly once the natural circle of trees was decided upon as the site, and this extended to the

height of the branches of the trees into which the upper crossbars were wedged. Visually, I wanted the upper crossbars to be the same height, and only one branch did not fit this plan, so I made a sling from fishing line to loop the crossbar through. The lower crossbar branches were either wedged between the trees or tied with fishing line covered in jute. The portals were then attached to the crossbars, twice each on the upper and lower, using cable ties covered in jute (Fig 43).

Fig. 43. Portal suspended between branches with cable ties covered with jute.

As mentioned the pathway leading to the central circle creates a crunching sound as the viewer walks toward the installation. The circle, however, is leaf litter free, so that once inside there is silence except for the natural sounds of birds, frogs, water and wind, creating a healing and spiritual ambience. The central circle is defined using small scale pit fired forms of varying sizes and designs, slightly dug into the ground. The space between this circle and the portals is filled by low lying volcanic glazed forms dug into the ground that simulate the naturally occurring volcanic rock that is found in the area. Some of these natural rocks were uncovered as I worked on the site, and I have retained them in the circle as they were found (Fig 44).

Fig. 44. Natural rocks retained amongst works on site.

The entire space being filled means the viewer must remain in the circle to view the artworks within the environment via the portals. The small scale of the installation elements and their horizontal configuration that radiate outwards reflect Tacey's claim, referred to earlier, that a series of lines connecting outwards to the world and horizontally to creation, is needed to resacralise the Earth. Submerging the forms within the Earth is intended to heighten this connection, strengthening the intent of the installation by reinvoking within the viewer a recognition of the inherent sacredness in the Earth.

Ring Creek, a waterway fed by an underground spring, provides a peaceful backdrop to the installation. Over the past two to three years, however, the water level has decreased, exposing an old bathtub and boat trailer. It would seem this debris has been in the creek for many years, and is firmly bogged in the muddy creek bed. Removal would require four wheel drive or utility vehicles and chains, which is beyond my means. I did want to hide these human elements in the landscape because, as discussed earlier, Evolutionary Aesthetics' research shows that artificial contents in a site lowers the viewer's aesthetic experience. There are many fallen branches, twigs and leaves at the site, so I donned waders and camouflaged the debris with these natural materials (Fig 45). There still exists an old corrugated water tank in the creek which is too problematic to remove or disguise, so it remains as a reminder of the lasting impact humans have on the environment.

Fig. 45. Trailer camouflaged with natural materials.

The natural circle of trees framing the installation allows for five portals, and therefore five configurations within the environment: *Tree Spiral*, *Mandala*, *Memorial*, *Water Mushrooms* and *Tree Huggers*.

The Five Configurations

Tree Spiral (Fig 46) evolved from a configuration I had constructed earlier in my research while experimenting with the visual expression of the Fibonacci sequence and spirals. Dene's *Tree Mountain* is also configured based on the patterns embodied in pineapples and sunflowers,[321] and like her, I believe "art and science have closely related ambitions."[322] Once the installation site was decided upon, the spiral curling up a tree became a natural development. I did not want to damage the tree through attaching the pieces directly however, so continued using the natural bamboo I had used during the earlier experimentation. Hammering the bamboo evenly around the tree proved troublesome at times due to the extensive root systems of the many trees in the area. This problem was overcome by arranging and re-arranging the bamboo

[321] McEvilley, "Philosophy in the Land," 193.
[322] Ibid.: 160.

until a satisfying appearance was achieved. When completed, *Tree Spiral* erupts from within the ground, curling upward around the tree. The spiral shape is employed as a universal symbol reflecting Fibonacci principles, and which, as argued earlier, appears to have an innate place within human consciousness.

Using multiplicity as a method to configure the spiral mirrors theories of the New Physics, such as Complexity Theory and Bohm's Implicate Order. These theories emphasise layering and interconnectedness, and maintain that many units make up the whole, and that the whole cannot exist if any unit is removed. Like *Tree Mountain*, *Tree Spiral* cannot exist without all of the individual pieces; they are enfolded and connected, providing a visual stimulus that reinforces the viewer's sense of belonging to a larger context. While the volcanic surface of the individual pieces is intended to heighten the organic properties of the installation, it also displays an ever-repeating surface pattern, thus capturing the fractal conceptually. It is anticipated this will heighten the viewer's experience because, as contended earlier, humans appear to share an affinity with fractal compositions within their environments.

Fig. 46. *Tree Spiral* in progress.

As mentioned earlier *Mandala* (Fig 47) is wheelthrown using clay that, when fired to stoneware temperature, develops a rich, tactile surface. I experimented with several methods of making a mandala, including digging a shallow square in the ground for the pieces to sit in and pouring a square of liquid slip which was allowed to dry and crack into a fractal-like manner. Like Julie Collins' *Audience*, I wanted the work to belong to and reflect the existing environment, so wanted to use materials from the site. I believe this strengthens the completed work, allowing the configuration to be gentle and quiet, which is appropriate considering that mandalas are tools of reflection and meditation. In its final form the square is held together by four natural branches lashed together with jute, and filled with dry leaves and twigs. The individual pieces are nestled within this bed to form a circle. The finished work sits horizontally on the Earth, harmonising with the environment, rather than dominating it, thereby successfully capturing the underpinning principles of belonging to the environment as espoused by this thesis.

Fig. 47. *Mandala.*

Memorial (Fig 48) is based on the cairns that, as discussed earlier, appear at many prehistoric sites covering burial chambers. While not completely horizontal, it is small in scale and the soft contours and organic tones enable it to harmonise with the environment. It is intended that both the title *Memorial* and the historic purpose of cairns, will prompt the viewer to recognise the need to reinvigorate their inherent connection to the Earth, before all that remains is a memory. Like *Tree Spiral*, the configuration and surface of *Memorial* conceptualises Complexity Theory, Bohm's Implicate Order and fractals. The repeating pattern of the forms and surface captures finer and finer aspects of the implicate order that "could go on indefinitely,"[323] a characteristic also exhibited by fractals. It is this visual conceptualisation that, I believe, enables *Memorial* to successfully trigger recognition and responses to specific patterns and textures in the environment.

Fig. 48. *Memorial.*

[323] Papadakis, ed., *Art Meets Science and Spirituality*, 29.

The installation site has views of Ring Creek, therefore, it seemed logical to create a water installation. *Water Mushrooms* (Fig 49) consists of twelve wheel thrown pieces manipulated to capture the Fibonacci sequence by alluding to the nautilus shell. The forms are mounted in the water on metal rods painted with black rust proof paint for both aesthetic and practical reasons. The black glaze is a similar colour to the muddy surface of the creek-bed, and the cracked glaze surface is how the creek bed would appear if the water were to disappear. I have lived on my property for approximately seven years, and, as previously stated, during the last two to three years I have observed a continuing drop in the water level, indicating that the underground water table is decreasing. Though the viewer may not be privy to this specific situation, Ring Creek is a microcosm of Australia's overall water crisis, and it is intended the textures and shapes serve to prompt emotive responses in the viewer so that they contemplate the state of the waterway and their interdependence on it while observing this work.

Fig. 49. ***Water Mushrooms.***

Trees have, cross-culturally and throughout history, been revered as sacred; a connection between the Earth and the heavens. Many ancient cultures throughout Europe included trees in their earth-based worship rituals, but this

custom declined with the rise of Christianity[324] which viewed such practices as pagan and, therefore evil. As previously argued, the development of Western society after the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution witnessed a severance of humanity's connection with the environment; for trees this meant viewing them as an economic resource. In the past two decades environmental initiatives within ecological circles have involved tree planting projects, the underpinning notion being the necessity of trees to maintain the quality of air that we breathe, and that therefore trees are embedded within, and intrinsic to, our survival. In this context trees are re-imbued with their previous sacred status. *Tree Huggers* (Fig 50) consists of wheel thrown pit fired forms featuring soft and organic hues captured on the surfaces that harmonise gently with the environment. The forms snuggle around the bases of three trees, creating a sacred circle around each tree. As the viewer's attention is drawn downward to where the Earth and trees are connected, it is hoped this visual stimulus triggers an emotive response, prompting in the viewer a realisation that the completeness of the Earth needs to be maintained, and a re-awareness of their place within it needs to be re-established.

Fig. 50. *Tree Huggers*.

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[324] Louise Fowler-Smith, "Hindu Tree Veneration as a Mode of Environmental Encounter," *Leonardo* 42, no. 1 (2009): 43.

The Artist as Shaman: The Movie

As the installation evolved and grew into a cohesive whole I decided to video the site to capture my intent of how to direct the viewer experience through the specific placement of the pathway, the portals and the other various elements. Though the viewer is free to experience the installation in any manner, I wanted to video my perspective of the viewer walking along the pathway, stopping to look at the small configurations on the way, entering the circle and viewing the artworks in the environment through the portals. Initially this was intended to show supervisors, family and friends the progress of the research. When I viewed the video on my computer I was impressed by, not only the visual impact, but also the background sounds. I had set out to highlight the sounds in the environment by constructing a crunchy pathway followed by a silent circle emphasising the natural ambience; and the video revealed that I had succeeded. I resolved to make a quality dvd of the experience via the viewer's perspective and include it with the results of my research.

As argued earlier in the Methodology chapter, the underlying concepts of this research may largely be neutralised if exhibited in a gallery context. In such a space the installation would lose its interconnection, becoming 'groupings' of thematic artworks. The lack of a natural environment would also result in meaning being lost, as the installation has been created to be site specific. A dvd could be exhibited within a gallery space, preferably in a smaller, intimate room, enabling the concepts and atmosphere of the installation to be translated to the gallery viewer. The installation is also semi-permanent, which will be discussed further in the Conclusion, so a dvd is a device by which viewers in the future may experience the artwork. Therefore, it became important that the dvd be shot from the perspective of the viewer walking through the installation.

Purely by chance I was referred to the Learning Environments and Web Services department at the University of Ballarat. My proposal was greeted with enthusiasm, as it was much more interesting than the usual 'head and shoulders' work in which the department was usually engaged.

The installation was recorded on a high definition hand held camera operated by a staff member,[325] and while the 'walk through' concept was the ideal, the camera was difficult to hold still at certain times. Resolving this issue meant inserting subtle cut-a-way shots of the individual artworks recorded while the camera was on a tripod. Though on the tripod, the camera was operated with a sweeping view of the works, so that it still appeared as the gaze of the viewer wandering in the environment. The cut-a-way shots were edited into the walk through subtly, so the overall aim of the dvd retained its integrity.

[325] Eammon Jones is the Streaming Media Administrator/Producer.

Conclusion

> It is perhaps the primary purpose of art to enhance our awareness of the true nature of things. The artist holds up to the world a lens through which is refracted a reality that is concealed from our everyday perception.
>
> Mel Gooding and William Furlong[326]

Discussion

As mentioned, during the early stages of this research, I had problems visualising the completed installation as an interconnected whole. Working in the studio producing individual components that would eventually comprise individual configurations within an individual installation was a difficult task. As discussed in the Literature Review, much ceramic installation to date appears as groupings of thematically linked works, and I did not want this precept to eventuate in my work, and utilising the circle as a tool of unification, I believe, has been imperative in preventing such an outcome. While the circle unifies the groups of works thematically, it goes further, uniting them as single work.

Although individual configurations may prompt the reinvigorating responses that I desire to trigger within the viewer, when standing in the central circle, enclosed by suspended circles through which the viewer perceives the environment, a realisation of the surrounding sacredness is revealed that would not be possible if looking at a lone artwork. The circle also realises the shamanic and subsequent healing potential of the installation. Whilst being enclosed in the circle in a sense 'isolates' the viewer from the environment, the shamanic implementation of the circle as a tool for meditation, revelation, and healing allows this space to become the venue for a re-awakening of the subconscious within the viewer. As discussed in Setting the Context, Shamans believe people fall ill due to negative ideas or beliefs. The Shaman's role, therefore, is to realign the sick self and thus reunite the person with nature. It is this Shamanic subconscious rebirth that is needed to trigger the innate responses I have argued exist within humanity, and that are required to respond to the surrounding patterns, shapes and textures.

[326] Gooding and Furlong, *Song of the Earth*, 6.

Much of the innate response discussion has been hypothesised within the framework of holistic scientific theory. As discussed, I found it difficult to imagine an integrated, cohesive space while working in the studio, however, once in the environment the installation began to embody the theories I had been examining. Just as the theories of the New Physics espouse an integrated universe comprised of interconnected parts that are reliant upon each other, so too do the individual components within the configurations, and the overall installation, make up the completed whole, and all need the other in order to exist.

I believe therefore, this harmonious interplay between the individual configurations does successfully capture the scientific concepts underpinning this thesis. As discussed, for example, Complexity Theory is applied to systems where multiple units form a larger collective, whether social, cultural or political; and Chaos Theory claims that evolving autonomous particles interact to form a global system displaying collective properties that have universal characteristics. Together, these theories produce a system that becomes more complex, but not chaotic, as a process of synchronisation, interaction and patterning occurs. It is because humanity is part of this larger collective, that is the Earth, which enables my installation to become a place that provides the opportunity for innate recognitions and responses to be triggered within the viewer.

Outcomes

Since beginning my doctoral research in 2005, environmental issues have assumed a prominent position as an economic and political topic. It may be argued these issues contributed to changes in government during the last Australian Federal election and the most recent United States of America presidential election. In the current world climate, environmental impact studies are now being taken more seriously, debates and public discussions are occurring, and solutions are being formulated. A major problem, however, still remains: these arguments and solutions are being developed within an economic framework dictated by industrial capitalism, and my argument has been and remains that change in attitudes to ecology cannot occur while humanity remains seduced by the consumerist tenets generated by a capitalist system. Such a

system will always view elements in the environment as a commodity. The outcomes of my research, both visual and textual, are therefore of even greater significance than when this project began.

Speaking on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's *Lateline, New York Times* columnist and author, Thomas Friedman, reiterated the consumer cycle that keeps the capitalist system operating, as discussed in Setting the Context. Friedman states:

> We built an America – more and more stores – to sell more and more stuff, to more and more Americans, which triggered more and more factories in China, powered by more and more T bills, that were recirculated back to America to build more and more stores, to sell more and more stuff.[327]

Friedman also used the term 'Mother Nature' during the interview, quoting Paul Gielding's term 'the great disruption' to describe the disastrous situation in which the world currently finds itself. Both the market and Mother Nature have simultaneously hit a wall; the wall being that humanity cannot expect to continue raising living standards as it has done over the past fifty years.[328]

Using this ecological language is pivotal in alerting people to the real threat posed by the (Western, and now Asian) world's current operating system, however, my thesis has argued that an authentic reawakening of humanity's ontological connection and dependence on the Earth is also of the utmost importance.

In the introduction to this exegesis I posed my research question, asking how a ceramic artist may achieve a reuniting of humanity's secular and spiritual existence. A recognition that the solution be based in the landscape was imperative in realising the desired outcomes. It is also significant that the research was conducted from within a ceramic art practice, because:

> The memory of ceramic objects is mankind's [sic] oldest and most widespread cultural memory. It is unlikely that any other objects in our material culture have served the entire human community for such a long time. Ceramic products have

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[327] Thomas Friedman. Interview by Leigh Sales. "Lateline." Australian Broadcasting Commission, 27th March, 2009.
[328] Ibid.

> fulfilled our most basic needs and contributed to the rituals of nobility and the church and to the avant garde aspirations of art.[329]

The cultural memory of the ceramic object coupled with the plastic properties of clay that allow it to be manipulated into almost any form, and that clay is a literal reference to the Earth, makes it a particularly appropriate medium as the major component to address the issues focussed on by this research project.

As revealed by an overview of the literature, both visual and academic, within art practice, a gap exists when reviewing the implementation of installation in contemporary ceramic practice. Many of the ceramic works labelled 'installation' may be interpreted as the installation of thematic artworks within a gallery space, and while a small number of artists are creating installations that incorporate consideration of the site and audience participation as active components, most of these works still exist within the gallery context. While Mansfield discusses ceramic works in the environment, most are architectural, large scale sculpture, corporate commissions, garden sculpture or public art.

The literature also reveals that much ceramic installation is governed by established themes of ceramic discourse; it tends to be linked groupings of thematic objects; and is not site specific. Jones, for example creates objects that are small in scale and sited in the environment, though she does not seek to create an environment with her installations, nor do I interpret them as site specific. Rather, they are groupings of forms to be 'viewed'; they are distant, hence cannot offer a numinous experience for the viewer. Similarly, as discussed, Stops' installation *Flow* is a grouping of ceramic objects 'arranged' on a continuous shelf within the gallery. Whilst Stops has changed the acuity of the space, and the work addresses the environment, the installation was not site specific, and an outdoor environment was not provided for the viewer to re-establish links with the natural world.

This research, in contrast, has created a ceramic installation that is site specific, in that, it was designed purposefully for its location; it is not based on the

[329] Anne Valkonen, ed., *Interaction in Ceramics* (Helsinki: University of Industrial Arts, 1993), 13.

traditional ceramic discourse as defined in the Literature Review; and, by the use of the circle and portals as a tool to link artworks, does not involve groupings of thematically connected artworks. Through scholarly research into the New Physics, Feminism and Shamanism, a new perspective has been introduced, one that when combined with studio exploration, has resulted in a place where the meaning has been changed and enhanced. The original circle of trees is no longer merely a nameless clump of trees surrounded by more trees, bordered by a waterway. The entire area has become an interconnected and complex environment that, by focusing the viewer's attention on their embedment within their surroundings and specific elements within the landscape, reveals the inherent sacredness within the landscape. This revelation, in turn, stimulates a reinvigoration of the viewer's ontological connection to the natural world, thus providing the opportunity for the viewer to experience a reunification of their spiritual and secular existence. The revelatory nature of these perspectives make possible new insights and understandings about the Earth and our position upon it; knowledge that is imperative to the changing of our attitudes toward the world if we are to halt current destructive ecological trends.

This combination of elements has also contributed to an expansion of the visual and practical application of clay, and theoretical knowledge within contemporary ceramic art practice, thus increasing the potential for scholarly art practice within the intersecting fields of ceramics, environmental art and the art-world.

This research was conducted using fired clay as the primary material, thus exploiting the organic nuances of clay, as discussed at length in the Methodology chapter. The choice of this material renders the installation neither permanent nor ephemeral. While the installation is site specific, it will not remain in its current state for time immemorial. Due to the natural effects of weather and passing time the installation will become more and more integrated into the environment, especially the pit fired forms as they retain a degree of porosity. Given the underpinning themes of interconnection expressed in this research, and that the installation reawakens in the viewer recognition of their embedment in the natural world, the ephemeral nature of unfired clay which eventually erodes and return to the Earth from whence it came, represents a natural progression and direction of

future exploration. While Jones, as discussed in the Literature Review, effectively utilises unfired clay to communicate the impermanence of life through her art practice, there is potential for future research to exploit the deteriorating properties of unfired clay. Such an ephemeral medium gradually disintegrating and returning to the ground over a period of time provides a powerful image. Unfired clay, thereby, becomes a potent visual metaphor illustrating that all things organic, including humans, are connected, and will eventually return to the Earth.

The studio methods employed to create the installation visually address the concerns examined in this exegesis, thereby offering a solution and opportunity for the viewer to reinvigorate their connection to the Earth. The organic ceramic objects embodying the four elements of the Earth itself, and the innate patterns and textures materialised in the configurations, shapes and glazes, have resulted in the creation of in a complex, yet interconnected environment. Together these features reflect the theories of the New Physics, and the fresh knowledge that has been generated by this science that underpins the holistic intentions of the installation. The positing of this creative exploration within a female approach to the land, and the shamanic ambience of the site amplifies the phenomenological-cum-ontological potential of the installation. The shamanic metaphor has been implemented by many artists in the past, including female practitioners. The potency of this metaphor when adopted to highlight aspects of sacredness and revelation, serves to strengthen the successful translation of the intent of this research, thereby allowing the aims of this thesis to be successfully realised. Through the creation of an inclusive space that reinvokes the sacred qualities inherent in the landscape, the viewer is provided with the opportunity to refocus their attention on the environment and realise their embedment within it.

Appendix 1

Technical Information

Grog: This clay contains grog that is fine and rounded enabling me to throw forms on the wheel without damaging my hands. Grog also opens the clay body, aiding thermal shock resistance for successful pit firings, while also providing a strong body for larger wheel thrown forms.

BRT (Buff Raku Trachyte): Fired to 1300°C, the speckled surface is due to the high content of dark burning trachyte dust within the grog.

Throwing: The standard method of throwing entails opening the clay and bringing up the sides to form the walls of the form. When the walls of the form have attained the correct uniform thinness, usually between one half to two centimetres depending on the size of the object, and the shape has been refined, the piece is usually removed from the wheel and allowed to dry to the leatherhard stage, when the form's base is then turned. During the throwing process, the base and lower walls are usually left a little thicker, allowing for support of the form as it increases in size, and to allow for turning and refining of the final shape.

Double-ended throwing: After centring, the clay is completely opened through to the wheelhead. The walls are raised, leaving the lower walls thick, and the top is completely enclosed so that there is no opening. After removing the form from the wheel the lower half is wrapped in plastic, so that it remains soft while the top half is allowed to go medium leatherhard. The timing here is crucial. If this top section is too soft it will collapse over the sides of the chuck; if too hard it would not be possible to manipulate the finished form. When ready the form is inverted into a chuck on the wheelhead, so that the lower half is now the top half, and it is still soft enough for throwing. The leatherhard state of what is now the lower half provides enough strength to throw the soft end of the form. This end is also thrown to be fully enclosed. The end result is an elongated egg-like shape. The end in the chuck is now sprayed lightly with water and covered lightly with plastic

so that the entire piece can attain an even soft leatherhard state in preparation for manipulation.

Pit firing colourations: Seaweed, salt soaked straw or string, gum leaves, copper wire, chicken wire, or a combination of these items are wrapped as tightly as possible around the form. Seaweed results in a variety of pink to orange blushes in subtle patterns around the form depending on the shape of the seaweed. Salted straw or string will leave pink to orange delicate lines on the form, while copper wire will leave stronger green to black lines. Gum leaves and chicken wire sometimes leave a relief pattern on the form where the fumes have moved around them.

Pit firing procedure: The pit is prepared by layering wood on the bottom and the sides, eliminating as many cold spots as possible. Layers of oyster shells, used for their mineral and salt content, together with pine cones and cow pats are added. These items generate a solid, lasting heat, especially the cow pats. While the pit is being readied, the prepared forms are warming in the sun. This aids against thermal shock once the pit is lit. The forms are then placed on the bed of organic material in the pit, and any spaces between the works are filled with more oyster shells and pine cones, allowing for even combustion. Copper sulphate, salt, iron oxide and epsom salts are sprinkled liberally over and around the forms. Other oxides may also be used, and cause flashings of colour on the work depending on the element, the heat and oxygen availability within the pit. More dung and pine cones are then layered over the work, and other combustible material, such as dry leaves and wood is loaded on top, the pit is then set alight. It is periodically stoked for two to three hours to build up the embers. Once an even glow is achieved a final layer of wood is added and the pit is covered with corrugated iron, restricting oxygen and allowing for a slow combustion firing. The pit is usually cool enough to open and unload 24-36 hours later.

Pit firing safety: When handling the various oxides used in the pit, I wear thick gardening gloves and a ventilator mask, as some oxides can be absorbed through the skin or inhaled. Once the pit is set alight the mask is kept on while

stoking the pit, as some substances, such as salt, can become toxic upon reaction with the flames.

Dry black glaze: This glaze is a high barium glaze fired to 1260°C in an electric kiln within an oxidation atmosphere. The absence of silica in the glaze formula means the glaze contains no glass former. Together with the barium content, which is not a very active flux, a dry, textured surface is produced.

Glaze testing: When conducting glaze tests it is important to obtain as much information about the glaze from one test as possible. My method entails applying glaze to a test ring. The form of the ring means information is gathered about the way the glaze behaves on the outer surface, inner surface and sides of an object. I also apply the glaze in the same way I will on the eventual art piece. All of my works are dipped in a bucket of glaze or poured from a jug. Sometimes a combination is used as an uneven covering is often desirable to obtain varying thicknesses which allows for tonal and textural variation. Test pieces are dipped in the glaze, allowed to dry, and then half the ring is re-dipped, allowing me to ascertain the results of varying thicknesses. As the heat distribution in a kiln can be uneven, depending on the firing cycle and the age of the heating elements, I usually prepare two test rings: one to place at the bottom of the kiln, and one at the top.

Volcanic glazes: These glaze types obtain their qualities through introducing 2-15% of silicon carbide to a glaze recipe, or applying a silicone carbide slip beneath a standard glaze. I employ the former method. This chemical releases carbon which reacts with the molten glaze after 1000°C, causing the glaze surface to bubble. The bubbles then harden to form craters once the firing cycle finishes. A viscous glaze is a more effective base recipe as it is less likely to smooth as the glaze melts and cools.

Colourant testing: Following the test procedures described above, 5% rutile, 2% red ion oxide, 4% yellow iron and 8% manganese were introduced to the base recipe and applied to four different test rings.

Dry white glaze: This glaze was originally a university studio recipe, fired to 1100°C, which I modified by adding 10% magnesium carbonate. The original glaze contains 10% zinc oxide. Both zinc and magnesium are fluxes that shrink during drying and during the early stages of firing causing cracks and beads in the glaze surface. Since the glaze has a high surface tension these cracks do not heal as the firing progresses to the melting stage. Testing procedures were the same as those described above.

Colourant testing in dry white glaze: As I wanted to retain the white quality of the glaze, adding the colourant to the recipe would not have been suitable. Therefore oxide washes using copper carbonate, manganese oxide, rutile, red iron oxide and yellow ochre, were prepared and I applied them under the unfired glaze, and over the unfired glaze. While satisfied with some of the results this application method lost too much of the white quality of the original glaze, so I retested on some smaller pieces with a more diluted oxide wash. While these results retained more of the white glaze's integrity, the tonings were a little too subtle. I then painted the oxide washes over some finished glazed pieces and refired them. These results satisfied all my criteria.

Appendix 2

Final Photographic Documentation

Leaf litter pathway.

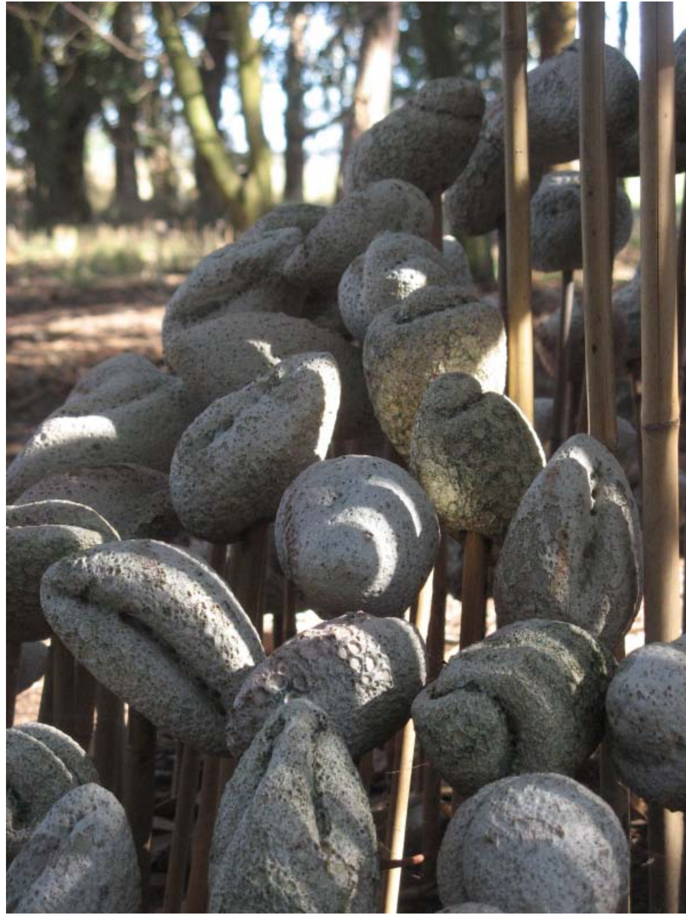
Approaching the central circle.

The central circle.

Horizontal layout of central circle.

Tree Spiral **viewed through portal.**

Tree Spiral.



***Tree Spiral* detail.**

***Mandala* viewed through portal.**

Mandala.

Mandala **detail.**

Memorial **viewed through portal.**

Memorial.

Memorial **detail.**

Water Mushrooms **viewed through portal.**

Water Mushrooms.

***Water Mushrooms* detail.**

Tree Huggers **viewed through portal.**

Tree Huggers.

***Tree Huggers* detail.**

Overall central circle and portal installation view.

Appendix 3

Pit Firing Photographic Documentation

Burnished and bisque fired forms.

Forms prepared with seaweed, chicken-wire and copper wire.

Prepared forms warming in sun.

Pit lined with wood, cow pats and seaweed.

Prepared forms layered seaweed, copper sulphate and iron oxide.

Gaps in the pit filled by spruce pine cones.

Pit is filled with wood, set alight, and continually stoked until an even distribution of embers is present.

Pit is covered with corrugated iron to enable a slow combustion firing.

Pit is uncovered 24-36 hours later.

Forms are removed from pit and cleaned with soft damp cloth.

Forms are polished with a wax based product.

Forms are placed in the environment.

Appendix 4

Water Mushrooms Photographic Documentation

Forms are thrown using double ended throwing technique.

Form is inverted in chuck to complete throwing.

Chuck is secured to wheelhead, and form is thrown.

Completed form.

A small opening was left in these forms to allow for mounting on metal rods.

Form is manipulated while still soft until the desired shape is attained.

Completed manipulation. Pieces allowed to dry for bisque firing.

Bisque fired pieces are glazed.

Glazed pieces are loaded into kiln with other volcanic glaze forms.
As they are glazed all over, they are fired on old electric kiln elements.

Completed *Water Mushrooms* installed in environment.

Appendix 5

The Installation over Time

As the seasons changed from Autumn to Winter, algae began to appear on the unglazed components of the ceramic sculptures.

Sap began to ooze from some trees.

\
Leaf litter accumulated within the *Tree Spiral*, and spiders were observed weaving their webs.

***Tree Spiral* evoked a different mood late on Winter afternoons.**

***Water Mushrooms* during a Winter deluge.**

As Spring approached wild flowers began to bloom, both in the water and along the creek bank, offering a new conceptual element to the installation.

Glossary

Bisque: Preliminary firing to ensure all moisture evaporates from clay body. This firing must be performed slowly at initial stages to ensure steam can escape gradually, avoiding explosions. This firing also hardens the clay body for easier handling at the glazing stage.

Burnishing: Compresses and realigns the clay particles, contributing to a degree of water proofing (utilised by tribal societies). A sheen is also achieved, which is used for aesthetic purposes in modern societies. Any smooth object, such as the back of a spoon or smooth stone can be used for polishing. As the finished piece is still porous, due to low firing, it can be sealed with a wax product. This will also protect the delicate surface.

Centring: This process turns the rough clay ball into a smooth dome, showing no signs of oscillation as it spins on the wheelhead, enabling a successful, symmetrical form to be thrown.

Chuck: An open thickly thrown piece of clay with a wide, thick base which is secured to the wheel head with a thin coil of clay.

Grog: Crushed or ground fired clay of various coarseness added to clay body to provide texture, strength, reduce shrinkage or open clay body.

Leatherhard: Partially hardened clay due to evaporation. Clay is firm enough to handle without distorting, yet workable for turning, incising, clay additions and slip application.

Opening: The process where the form is opened by inserting the thumb or finger into the middle of the centred clay as it rotates on the wheel.

Oxidation: An oxidised atmosphere occurs when there is ample oxygen in the kiln. This will always occur in an electric kiln, and in a gas kiln occurs when primary and secondary air sources are left open during the entire firing.

Reclaim: If clay has not been fired it can be recycled to its plastic state. Initially it must be allowed to dry, then broken up into mall pieces and covered in water. Once the water has been absorbed the mixture is turned onto a board and allowed to become pliable enough for reworking.

Reduction: The amount of oxygen in a gas kiln is reduced by partially closing the primary and secondary air supplies. To obtain oxygen the flame leeches into the

glaze ingredients and clay body, altering its chemical composition, and therefore changing the colour of some glazes.

Smoke firing: The smoke firing process is similar to pit firing, except that only sawdust is used to carbonise the clay surface. A coarse sawdust will allow for more oxygen flow, resulting in a patchy grey surface, while a fine sawdust will give a stronger more even black surface.

Throwing: Term used to describe process of making forms on the potter’s wheel.

Turning: Trimming the form’s base and sides with a wire tool to refine the shape and even out any thickness. It is at this stage, for example, that a bowl’s footring will be created.

Walls: After opening the clay the form is raised and lifted by pressure on the inside and outside of the opened clay walls.

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