

Ceramics break into new world

VISUAL ARTS

Here&Now 14

Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
REVIEW LAETITIA WILSON

I write this from a conflicted point of interest. This is not a review so much as what could be called an invlew — or intimate review. In my role as curator of academic programs at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, I sense the fuss around installing new exhibitions as background buzz which suddenly clears to reveal galleries full and gleaming like fresh honey pots.

Here&Now 14 is especially so, with striking lighting bouncing off the textures and sheen of new works of contemporary ceramicists. It is the third iteration of the annual Here&Now formula, where an emerging curator is given the opportunity to showcase their skills in an A-class venue. This year's curator is Emma Mahanay Bitmead.

The crucial point of departure of this show is a shift in the making of ceramics from an insular practice to an expanded field embedded within the visual arts paradigm.

Modernist ideas of medium specificity have lost relevance in what has been called a post-medium condition — so say the theory pundits.

In other words, considering art as based purely within disciplines is no longer relevant in an era in which different media collapse into

one another and many artists take the concept as a starting point and then determine how best to manifest it materially.

What we see in this exhibition is ceramics embodying traditional techniques in the age-old form of the useful object, pushing expectations attached to the medium and collapsing it into the other art forms such as sculpture, ready-made, video and installation.

The extreme of this is Jacob Ogden Smith's work, *Video Edited in a Way as if to Imply Meaning*. It is a crudely humorous work that no doubt gets under the skin of the more purist potters.

YouTube videos of pottery tutorials are edited in slow motion, distorted and overlaid with Greek and Egyptian symbols, in front of which are displayed found pots with decals of the same symbols fired on to their surfaces — meaning, mythology and symbolism are tossed into a vessel of vacuousness.

Broken Silence by Luke Aleksandrow is a video projected on to the ground which displays pottery smashing down. The sound of this pierces the rest of the gallery space, which, as you might imagine, is disconcerting considering the amount of fragile objects in the room. It is another wry take on the traditions of ceramics reminiscent of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's famous *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*.

More in the direction of sculpture, then, is a work such as Andrea Vinkovic's *Shape of*



BOLD Warrick Palmateer's pots with a spectrum of Pippin Drysdale's ceramics in the background.



EXTREME Jacob Ogden Smith's *Video Edited in a Way as if to Imply Meaning*.

Thought. It looks like an organic, curvilinear geodesic dome springing out of a red-earth base.

It is luminescent from afar and intimacy with this work reveals a surface that has been carefully crafted to mimic the texture of ocean matter and the patterning effect of the movement of waves over time.

Overall, there is close attention to the highly stylised display of the works. Warrick Palmateer's bold, textured vessels rest proudly on a

custom plinth that dramatically slashes through the centre of the gallery. In the background, Pippin Drysdale's assortment of ceramics forms a sublime spectrum of colour from dawn to dusk along the length of one wall.

In her catalogue essay, Mahanay Bitmead places a lot of emphasis on the above-mentioned argument of the breakdown of the *Fortress Ceramics*, as ceramics move into the broader visual arts.

This is at the expense of teasing



ORGANIC A detail from Andrea Vinkovic's *Shape of Thought*.

out the voice of ceramics today and focusing on what makes the selected artworks relevant in the here and now. Fortunately, however, the exhibition speaks for itself, with artworks that are delicate, audacious, poignant and humorous. **E**

Here&Now 14 runs at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, UWA, until September 27.