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**Ceramics Collections – *exploring object engagement beyond the known historic models  
of clay practice***

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**Ceramics Collections – *exploring object engagement beyond the known historic  
models of clay practice***

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**PhD by publication**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the University of  
Westminster for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

This practice-based research examines ceramics collections and artistic practice. It explicitly focuses on the exploration of object engagement beyond the historic models of clay practice and the uses of clay as a medium through which to examine cultural and museological challenges. It is centred on five artworks by the author made between 2006 and 2015 (*Trophy*, 2006, *Forever*, 2010, *Exchange*, 2012, *Piece by Piece*, 2013, *Manifest: 10,000 hours*, 2015). These employ advances in curatorial practice and theory that have informed the curation of ceramic artefacts held by museums seeking to reframe the relationship between material culture and clay culture, and the modes and devices of how ceramics are displayed. These five exhibition works have interrogated traditional understandings of ceramic collections in museums and their boundaries. These exhibitions, together with this commentary, constitute this PhD by publication. Ceramics, clay practice and craft are the context of these developmental works that have expanded thinking within the field. The thesis discusses the long-term development of ceramic and craft practices of immersive works that can be used as a tool to access our understanding of ceramic collections and trajectories. The research recognizes shifts in the contextual development of craft practice and in the literature developing alongside practice during a period from the 1960s onwards. In the contextual review the museum and the collections in focus are addressed in the contexts of audience engagement, participation and live works, and issues are raised in relation to time-based works and shared authorships. The critical developments of clay practice are also addressed within the timeframe of each section. Each of the five artworks is outlined in terms of context, research and development. These works have addressed the main question of how ceramic collections may be animated and explored through the audience's participation. Through ten years of research, experimentation and close investigation, these questions have been slowly and carefully developed to test the boundaries of knowledge regarding arts and museum practices, encouraging a continued relationship with these concerns.

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My final thanks go to the University of Westminster who provided this research context and the opportunity to publish this work.

**Author's declaration**

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Clare Twomey'.

Clare Twomey

May 2018

## **Introduction:**

Most people think of museums as institutions which 'collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens' which they hold in trust for society. (House of Commons, 2007)

Since 2006, I have undertaken five exhibition works which have interrogated traditional understandings of ceramic<sup>1</sup> collections in museums and their boundaries. My aim has been to challenge the historical models which, as exemplified by the statement above, assume that objects have fixed identities and that museums are sites of cultural exchange; my work investigates how objects engage with authors and audiences. The works are:

***Trophy***, September 2006, **Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.**

***Forever***, October 2010 – January 2011, **The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, USA.**

***Exchange***, June 2013 - September 2013, **The Foundling Museum, London, UK.**

***Piece by Piece***, October 2013 – January 2014, **Gardiner Museum, Toronto, Canada.**

***Manifest: 10,000 hours***, July 2015 – June 2017, **York Art Gallery, York Museums Trust, UK.**

These five exhibitions, together with this commentary, constitute my submission for PhD by publication. These exhibitions have challenged traditional methodologies and museum structures for ceramic collection engagement. They have focused on studying the relationship between visitor and object to see how it has encouraged people to play an active role in the museum experience.<sup>2</sup> Underlying them have been three main research questions:

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'ceramic' here is used in reference to the finished or fired clay objects retained in museum collections.

<sup>2</sup> There are many works in the ten-year time frame that I have exhibited that have not been included in this

- How can ceramic collections be animated and explored through audience participation?
- How can strategies of performance<sup>3</sup>, time-based work and making inform further understandings of the ceramic collection?
- How can shared ceramic making in relationship to museum ceramics collections build the public understanding of historic collections?

Ceramics, clay<sup>4</sup> practice and craft<sup>5</sup> are the context in which I place the argument of my developmental works that have expanded thinking within the field. This process began from my three years at the Edinburgh College of Art where I was trained in all the craft skills of clay practice when undertaking my first degree. The department's teaching focused on the historical context, from which studio ceramics practice emerged. Therefore, my academic research began with the investigation of historical studio ceramics in which, typically, an individual maker undertakes all aspects of manufacturing. This process, dating from pre-1900 with the Martin Brothers and leading to the influential works of Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, and Hans Coper, was extensively written about by Oliver Watson (1993), who unfolded their developments in the ceramic practices of Baldwin (late '60s), then Henderson (mid '70s),

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thesis as they address other research contexts. Such works include *Consciousness/Conscience* (Twomey, 1999; 2001-04), which is only referenced in developmental terms, plus significant others such as *Monument at MIMA* (Twomey, 2009), *Specimen* (Twomey, 2010) from the Royal Academy of Arts, and *Humanity is in our Hands* (Twomey, 2015-16), commissioned by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

<sup>3</sup> 'Performance' describes the choreographed actions of the artwork. Theorists, such as Roselee Goldberg, stress the active and involving nature of performative artworks. Goldenberg includes the viewers of, or audiences for, the artwork within the category of performers, and alongside those whose actions are directly instigated by an artist for reasons that 'live, immediate responses to an artwork are essential to the completion of the work' (Goldberg, 2004, p. 9).

<sup>4</sup> 'Clay practice' here is used to describe the use of the material and the artist's response in that material.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term 'craft' to refer to the broader applied arts disciplines linked by theories of skill and craftsmanship. I am mindful of Glenn Adamson's suggestion that 'craft' might be 'usefully conceived as a process,' and as 'an amalgamation of interrelated core principles' that include serving as a supplement to art and foregrounding material experience and skill. Indeed, he identifies 'skill' as 'the most complete embodiment of craft as an active, relational concept rather than a fixed category' (Adamson, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Fritsch (mid-late '70s), Britton (late '70s), Smith and Stair (early '80s), Eastman (late '80s). With reference to these developments in the field, critical writer Garth Clark (2006) established Studio Ceramics as a continuing contemporary concern. The studio ceramics movement has since been thriving and developing through a new generation of makers that lack the anti-industrial context to work against, while developing new creative contexts that include a more collaborative and contextual reach. During my MA at the Royal College of Art, tutors such as Martin Smith and Alison Britton were the core staff of my educational experience in the context of the studio practice. This has given me a highly focused craft education and enabled me to understand in-depth the importance of ceramic collections and their relationship to museum culture.

The body of practice-based research discussed here uses clay as a medium through which to examine cultural and museological challenges, specifically the impact of the contemporary in a material culture steeped in history. Recent advances in curatorial practice and theory have informed the making of ceramic artefacts held by museums, also seeking to reframe the relationship between material culture and clay culture, and the modes and devices of how ceramics are displayed. This was the focus of the AHRC-funded research project called *Ceramics in the Expanded Field*<sup>6</sup> of which I was a co-investigator, alongside Christie Brown and Julian Stair, and during which Laura Breen, as a PhD researcher, undertook one of the most in-depth reviews of ceramic collections to date. The AHRC research project allowed the team to investigate the history of the expanded field of ceramic practice in the context of museum exhibitions. In my introduction to the project-related publication, *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* (2016), I claim that the artist's role in the museum has had a significant impact, exposing liminal spaces which allow for new forms of cultural engagement; the curator, whose role may expand from its core of cultural translation, may sometimes aid and encourage this process. As indicated above, in my art practice I have challenged the conformity of historical modes of museum display, introducing alternative dialogues with objects and cultural narratives that encourage this process.

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<sup>6</sup>Ceramics in the Expanded field was a 3-year funded Arts and Humanities Research Council project funded to produce the first critical overview of the relationship between contemporary ceramics and curatorial practice in museum culture through artistic collaboration with specific collections and the publication of critical writing.

Through this and other contingent actions, the works referenced from my practice have used narratives as vantage points from which to examine the mechanisms of display, object interrogation and observations on culture within the traditional landscape of the museum. Ceramic collections are conventionally understood as a linear system, as an accumulation over time and across materials: the ceramic object, by means of preservation and display, becomes a vehicle for a social and historical narrative. My works over the past decade have questioned these longstanding practices through the strategy of making artworks as response. I have drawn on curatorial and cultural developments, which represent material history as a site of exploration, highlighting the shifting role of the museum from a place of keeping to a place of doing. The research questions are framed in the developing modes of practice, outlined in the methodology, which investigate through ceramic practice, the museum as context, audience engagement and participation<sup>7</sup> with ceramic collections, as well as live works within ceramic displays. I have specifically asked these questions about collections and our relationship with them in a contemporary landscape, creating a bridge between socially engaged practice and the permanent collections.

The series of exhibited works under discussion (*Trophy*, 2006, *Forever*, 2010, *Exchange*, 2012, *Piece by Piece*, 2013, *Manifest: 10,000 hours*, 2015) explore the distinction between the roles of artist and curator, and their relationship with the culture in which they were developed to reach the final exhibited form. I have used new dynamic methods of large-scale display and participation which have previously had a limited use in museum collections, and certainly not featured in craft-based ceramic collections. The research practice I have undertaken has been a new approach to the area of specialism. During this ten-year period, material, developmental forms of making, and issues of time and display, have impacted on museums and makers, as well as on the objects, and on the experiences of these developments. These bodies of work are informed by a complex mix of politics, material development and societal reflection. The exhibition space has been transformed by the impact of contemporary clay, funding requirements to attract more diverse audiences, and

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<sup>7</sup> 'Participation' describes a situation where the audience has an active or contributing role in the artwork. In addition, as Claire Bishop points out, the notion of participation and participatory art signals the involvement of many people, as opposed to the one-to-one relationship that is associated with 'interactivity' (Bishop, 2012, p. 1).



challenges to traditional modes of curatorial practice. The works I have published are also concerned with processes of collaboration, and new approaches to making and display, which together allow ceramics to instigate a culture of transformation that is more than a fleeting deviation from its long-term historical trajectory.

The works listed above represent a consistent commitment to this field of practice; these pieces are an iterative process of building up a unique approach to the museum as a context for exploratory transitional installations with a significant lasting impact on both the subject and the context.

### **Methodology**

This research has focused on establishing the long-term development of ceramic and craft practices of immersive works that can be used as a tool to access our understanding of ceramic collections and their trajectories. The research recognizes shifts in the contextual development of craft practice and in craft theory that has developed alongside practice during a period from the 1960s onwards. Craft theory as a term of reference is significant in that it provides an anchor to the philosophies around practice as addressed by Philip Rawson's concern for the expanding of crafts traditional context (Rawson, 1971) and Garth Clarke's preoccupation with 'Studio Ceramics' as a continuing contemporary concern in craft practice (Clark, 2006). More recently Glenn Adamson has considered the relationship between studio-based ceramics and ceramic works created as reflections on specific sites (Adamson, 2010). The thesis posits craft theory as the paradigm from which the new methodologies identified here perform a shift in practice. In the earlier stages of this period, craft critical writing was comprised of a mainly introspective series of texts that analysed technical advances in pottery, rather than seeking to provide a critical response to context and a discussion of why ceramics might be being made in its current forms. I have drawn upon the accumulated knowledge of ceramics as a material practice and on the wider visual arts in terms of leadership and expansive conceptual thinking. The works I have drawn upon are those that I have experienced over the past 30 years of my art practice, from visiting the art collective General Idea's work *Putti* in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (General Idea, 1993) to being a participating visitor at the Serpentine Gallery in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *The Sweetness of Life* (2000).

Focusing on the relationship between ceramic practice and the museum, this research uses collections to show my contribution to the discourse of ceramics. Conceptually my research explores ceramic collections from a wide perspective, one that acknowledges the roles of material, makers and historic events that surround the history of the collection, and which are not held in object terms alone. Taking the selected ceramic collections as core sites for studying different visitor responses, the research investigates the trajectory of museum engagements across a broad spectrum of the arts, as well as locating the specific developments in clay practice. Furthermore, the research explores how museums have been used to frame art-oriented ceramic practice over the past ten years, while examining the gaps between such practice and wider visual arts culture, and the specific nature of clay practice development.

I approached the breadth of museum practice and clay practice as a dialogue that has constantly been affected by both. By paying attention to the role that clay can have within collections that are informed by individuals and collective and institutional concerns, I was able to acknowledge my own involvement in this process, through my works.

Consequently, the fundamental research that I carried out showed that, although the relationship between ceramic artists' practice and museum collections has been addressed in a number of articles, exhibition catalogue essays and books published since the late 1990s, none of these have developed a body of practice-led research that examines the relationship between ceramic art practices and museums and developments in the wider visual arts context.

Therefore, I was led to conduct a contextual search that focused on live participation and ceramics, as well as the development of museum culture as an expansive site in the early 1990s. By focusing on arts and curatorial practice I was able to obtain a thorough understanding of the ways in which different museums had framed collection engagement, noting any references to clay and participation practice. This search was globally driven and my findings indicate that in the early part of the period under consideration there were few instances of such practices. Therefore, I found myself examining specific cultural and

curatorial situations of established impact and shifts in practice, enabling myself as an artist to articulate new questions regarding ceramics practices. This process has informed the choice of collections and responses that I have made in the works examined in this research.

The works from the wider visual arts that I have asserted as influential to my research and artwork development are works that I have experienced in galleries and sites of practice. This experiential nature of research has had a large impact on my methodology in terms of experience and resonance. This has given me access not only to the conceptual concerns of the wider visual arts but also a way of understanding those concepts in physical terms. These experiences were drawn on in my questions that address the lack of large-scale immersive works available in the area of ceramic museum practices. In my methodology I have explored the history of previous works at the museum and, in every work realised as part of the research, I have considered the potential for scale, and immersive and expansive modes of expression as unforeseen tools for the use of the collections teams. All this has created a challenge to institutions, whilst delivering impactful works for visitor engagement. The challenges have resulted have resulted in new approaches by curatorial staff. Evidence of this can be found in the following statement:

“With Clare’s project we were really able to draw attention to a collection that had been at the museum since 1941 in completely new ways ... for our audiences to make the connection between contemporary art and historical art, for them to be active participants in the project. It was so multifaceted; it was everything from the history of British ceramics to the continuity of a company like Leeds Pottery that Clare worked with. That could then make connections for people about the state of the British pottery industry today compared to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It made connections with an actual object from the Burnap Collection. And [it] made connections to the Burnap collection which came in between 1941 through 1957. And it also was an exploration about all kinds of human emotions such as responsibility and value, greed, lying. So it brought up so many different kinds of issues that we are still exploring in other projects. I’m thinking about other ways that audiences can

participate with art". Catherine Futter, Ph.D., Director, Curatorial Affairs, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. USA (2016 impact interview with Kim Bagley).

The selection of museums and collections in this body of research has arisen from the development of the key questions. *Trophy* (2006), the starting point of the research, took place at the V&A and was an artistic response to the closure of the ceramics collection due to a theft of historical works. The collection was therefore under threat, while the museum's safety as a site was being questioned. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art which holds a significant collection of British ceramics and with a bequest that had been under very specific instructions for display. Therefore, in the case of *Forever* (2010-11), the history of the collection and the institutional care for the collection was examined within the process of the development of the research.

The shared dialogues around the works that I was making, along with the debates I was raising within ceramic practice, became the catalyst for all the working relationships with the museums that resulted in the five commissions set out in this research. Specifically, ceramics collections have been a rigorous part of my process of project making.

Searching the collections, therefore, became a starting point for all the works including a broad analysis of their context and nature, their origins and history prior to their display within museums. My work involved investigating the location of the archives and making visits to them. Not only were the displayed collections visited, but also the artefacts in storage. One of the most adventurous experiences was visiting the Nelson-Atkins archive, which is held off-site in a series of high security underground caves.

In approaching each project I undertook interviews and cultivated in-depth dialogues with curators to benefit from their expert knowledge. The aim of each encounter was to guide the discussion towards the main objective of the research while highlighting particular areas of interest for critical review. This interview and reflective process provided a contemporary understanding of the impact of these historic collections and raised possibilities for public engagement with them. Through this process of historic analytical research and interviews it has been possible to posit a relationship between the object's history and the lived history of

the collector that forms a stimulus to the development of the artwork.

This archival and museum search develops along with the process of forming the frame of the project through the collection of information in photographic form, sketch form and document form. Therefore, by writing and drawing through the use of a sketchbook, the boundaries of each project are tested and thought through. Consequently, the sketchbook becomes an active place for dialogue and self-negotiation, allowing me to develop a concept that can be communicated to the museum/commissioner. What evolves from this process is usually a verbal and visual presentation that elaborates on the conceptual frame, the viability and the impact of a project. This is the point in the process that a construct for a highly focused artwork is initiated.

The process of manufacturing may take a variety of forms, responding to the needs of the conceptual frame identified and developed. For example, in some of the works it becomes vital that I create a site for the exchange of skills within communities, while in other works it seems vital that an industrial producer is hired to manufacture the piece. Each artwork demands a series of specialist techniques that will be new to me and also to my team of assistants, which is always a rewarding part of any project. While this new technical challenge allows the team to bond and grow along with the development of the project, it also develops and maintains the processes of making as a lived experience, as a multiplicity of people work on the same project.

### **Contextual Review**

Within the contextual review the museum and the collections in focus are addressed in the contexts of audience engagement, participation and live works, and issues are raised in relation to time-based works and shared authorships. The critical developments of clay practice are also addressed within the timeframe of each section; these are set out chronologically from 1960s onwards, to chart the concerns of both established and emerging practices. The contextual review focuses upon the trajectory of works that I have been exposed to as a practicing artist and researcher, specifically in order to understand the relationship between the developments in the wider visual arts and the field of progressive ceramics practice that is

sited in museums.

The museum as a context is a central theme of the research and the exhibited artworks. The museum is acknowledged as a cultural signifier, not only for society at large, but also for the artists and curators whose practices are sited within institutions that collect and display cultural artefacts. In terms of ceramic practice and the critical texts developed within the field of ceramic-specific dialogues, it is vital to recognise the call for ceramics that was set out in the early 1970s by Philip Rawson's book *Ceramics* (1971); this was to encourage an expanded vision of ceramics, one that was no longer limited to the object alone. This affordance of the breadth in context for clay, beyond the traditional end points, directly relates to the expansion of the ceramic collection. The wider context of material practices, where objects were afforded dialogue about their making, and not only their finished states, was developed by Paul Greenhalgh in a key text where he proposed a new understanding of clay due to changes within the wider socio-political and cultural environment. In a published lecture titled 'Social Complexity and the Historiography of Ceramic' (Greenhalgh, 2001) he points to the ubiquity of ceramics, both across history and in everyday life. He argues that given its plurality of existence in terms of function, time and geographical space, and its appearance in multiple discourses, ceramics has proved to be particularly problematic in relation to modernism's preference for singular or pure meanings, noting that whilst,

'... the high modernist canon included objects made with clay, the complex totality that has been the genre of ceramics was at best oblique to the canon, and at worst excluded from it' (Greenhalgh, 2001).

He suggests, however, that high modernism's peripheralization of clay practices was ripe for challenge. Indeed, the context of the museum has changed continuously throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, reflecting and adapting to artistic, academic and societal transformations, and this is where Greenhalgh presents an argument for ceramics taking a meaningful role in culture and society in what he refers to as a new 'phase of complex modernism' (2001). In his essay titled 'Ceramic process in the museum: revolution or recidivism?' in *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* (2016), the art historian and theorist Glen R. Brown explores the recent history of attempts to establish and challenge the

boundaries of ceramics practice. Brown warns against the idea that ceramics has recently entered into the expanded field of sculpture, as he argues that to a very significant extent it has always been part of 'a cultural space in which sculpture was simply another a part' (Krauss, 1979) - along with Krauss's examples of labyrinths, Japanese gardens and the ritual spaces of ancient civilizations. He writes:

'The expanded field for sculpture, rather than opening a new insight for ceramics into the complex, could just as easily be regarded as having provided a new avenue of access for it to the museum's galleries, through a return to a very old emphasis on process and the dispersion of meaning across time and space. From this perspective there is no need to validate contemporary process-orientated ceramics through reference to avant-garde transgressions in other art media that occurred more than forty years ago' (Brown, Stair & Twomey, 2016, p. 71).

The University of Westminster research project 'Ceramics in the Expanded Field' examined the relationship between the museum ceramics collections and contemporary ceramic art practices and found that the relationship was in its infancy in curatorial terms. The research, undertaken by Laura Breen, (2016) highlighted how ceramic artists' relationships with ceramic collections and museums has a long historical context through the work of education teams. For example, there were those who undertook ceramics-related activities in the V&A educational department, but Breen found no trace of their influence within the permanent collections and histories of clay in the museum.

There has been a discernible shift in the role of museums, whose role has broadened from making collections available to academics and specialist visitors to serving the public at large. In 1969, the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence R.I., invited Andy Warhol to curate an exhibition from their collection resulting in the landmark exhibition *Raid the Icebox 1*. Warhol undertook the brief ignoring the conventions of logical historical display and instead exhibited complete collections of various types of mundane objects, regardless of their provenance or condition. This paradigm has been followed by artists such as Michael Asher, Hans Haacke and Fred Wilson, who since 1980 have used 'institutional critique' to explore the politics and collection policies of museums. In 1992, African-American artist Fred Wilson placed a sign on

the front of the Maryland Historical Society that claimed 'another' history was now being told inside. This work explored alternative histories and narratives and also called attention to the fact that a museum display should not be misrecognized as a neutral communication. While making his seminal contributions in London, in 1994, James Putnam instigated and curated the critically acclaimed *Time Machine* exhibition at the British Museum (Putnam, 1995-96) which juxtaposed contemporary art with historical artefacts. In 1999, he established the British Museum's Contemporary Arts and Cultures Programme, whose aim was to re-examine history, art and artefacts in the context of current cultural concerns. His programme presented the museum's collection in a new, critical light. It was thus during this period that the term 'museum as medium' emerged, which Putnam (2009) took as the title for his book, in which he explored how artists' interventions in museums have redefined the role of the museum.

This redefinition can be seen in ceramicist Edmund de Waal's *Modern Home* (1999) at High Cross House, Dartington; the exhibitions *Give and Take* (2001) at the Serpentine Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum; *Uncomfortable Truths* at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Anatsui et al., 2007); and Grayson Perry's *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* (2011) at the British Museum. All these exhibitions emphasized the shift in the relationship between artists and museums, which have increasingly become sites of practice. My work *Trophy* at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2006 can be placed in the context of these curated works which consider the museum as a medium.

In my works that focus on audience engagement, I investigate developments in audience interaction that have challenged conventional modes of cultural consumption and questioned traditional museological policies. In *Trophy* (2006), *Forever* (2011) and *Exchange* (2013), I focus on the liminal spaces in museum culture. In terms of curatorial and ceramic-specific critical theory it was Judy Chicago's installation *The Dinner Party* (1974-79), shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1979, and which brought together the story of women, decorative ceramics and monumental scale, that enabled more questions to be raised around the role of the ceramic collections and displays in museum culture.

Martina Margetts was editor of *Crafts Magazine* from 1978-87, where she opened up the traditions of clay practice to wider exposure, inviting poets, sculptors and art critics to



respond to the world of craft. This formed a setting of agendas beyond craft in isolation. In 1993, Margetts and ceramicist Alison Britton curated *The Raw and the Cooked: new work in clay in Britain*, a touring exhibition which attended to the question of the divide between ceramics and sculpture, reframing clay as a material not separate from the concerns of those in the wider visual arts. The mode of display left behind the stranglehold of the plinth in an attempt to liberate the works, offering ways that clay could be seen afresh. The exhibition was sited in white cube spaces, including the Barbican Art Gallery, London, and the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, and both critically and through exhibition practice, it presented a restaging of ceramics as more than passive; the works could be seen as distinct from the domestic world of craft in the home, and frequently engaged directly with the surrounding space.

Two essays which take forward the argument that works in clay can adopt a critical perspective are Laura Breen's 'Re-defining ceramics through exhibitionary practice' (Breen, 2016), in which she argues that the developments in the field of ceramics have been fraught with difficulties and struggles with identity, and Ezra Shales' 'The museum as medium-specific muse' (Shales, 2014), where he asserts that ceramics has occupied a special relationship within the museum. These texts expose the changing relationship and critical understanding of the relationship within ceramics and highlight aspects of art practice outside of the canon of clay. When Antony Gormley's *Field* (1991) prevented people from accessing vast spaces in museums, or when Ann Hamilton's *Corpus* in MassMoCA (2004) invited viewers to step into the frame of the artwork, the works departed from the traditional policies of museology: the art began to be about the liminal space which had previously been sacrosanct in museum culture. When the visitor is invited to renegotiate the rules of the museum experience, the work becomes fluid and collaborative. For example, in Catherine Bertola's seminal work *Ballroom* (2007), the audience members became witnesses to the professional dancers whose dancing brushed away a beautiful dust pattern that Bertola had created on the floor. Works which are not realised as object-focused displays encapsulate broader ideas, and might be referred to as projects. As Claire Bishop elucidates, artistic projects of the 1990s become an indicator of a renewed social awareness; a shift that began to be theorized by art historians and critics, yet never completely. Bishop elaborates:

‘The clearest articulation of the ‘project’ as a way of working is to be found in sociology, put forward by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999). They argued that the current ‘spirit of capitalism’ emerged in the 1970s and 80s in response to two main critiques that came to a head in 1968 but which have remained constant for over two centuries: the artistic critique and the social critique. The clash between these two critiques can easily be seen in various forms of social and political engaged art today’. (Bishop, 2014, p. 250)

Developments in the wider visual arts, which have seen the museum shift from being a container for objects to being a context have been mirrored in recent clay practice, where context and material histories have become equally crucial.

A comparable development in craft gallery practice may be observed in installation works and participatory projects. One example is Piet Stockman’s *Floor Installation*, first displayed in the UK in 1999 in *UN-Limited*, an exhibition curated by Emmanuel Cooper for the Crafts Council Gallery, London. Stockmans’ work formed part of a group show engaging with multiples and his *Floor Installation* (Stockman, 1999) comprised thousands of blue-rimmed white porcelain bowls that filled the gallery floor, creating a wash of blue lines that floated above its surface. Each bowl was exquisite, but unattainable, as there was just one viewing area, with no walkways through the work. In 1999, this work was thoroughly subversive of craft gallery practice: the bowls had no active function and transgressed the norm of a sacred, singular object exalted on a plinth; the display area was simply the bare floor. Cooper and Stockmans’ intentions for the future were clear. Stockmans expanded the boundaries of crafts thinking: Because of the finesse of the installation he created respect for the craft object, yet he also subverted it with a thoroughly concept-driven motive.

The interventions of both Gormley and Stockman’s prompt the audience to question the use of the gallery space. These artists’ ability to enact such a sumptuous narrative before us derives from a growing momentum to move beyond the object, by deploying interventions, full-scale installation and participation. Indeed, participatory practice has also been part of this trend to broaden the role of objects in art and craft practices.

Audience participation was an active agent in 1993, when the art collective General Idea presented *Putti* in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (General Idea, 1993). This work consisted of a display on the floor of the museum of thousands of seal-shaped soaps, which visitors could take away to use. When I visited this work in San Francisco 1993 it felt like a rare moment in the museum, an affordance to participate, to be active in the museum. The sculpture was thus dispersed and spread across the world to reach a large and engaged audience through use; all the soap suds eventually returned to society's central water systems. General Idea (1967 to 1994), a collective of three Canadian artists, Felix Partz, Jorge Zontal and A. A. Bronson, pioneered participation art. As curator Frédéric Bonnet noted, 'the group understood that the artist was no longer someone who made things to hang on walls, but a commentator on society'. (Smith, 2013)

From the early 1990s, the Serpentine Gallery engaged with the development of installation and participation works in two significant exhibitions. In the first, *Take Me (I'm Yours)* (1995), conceived by artist Christian Boltanski (1995) and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, international artists were invited to display utilitarian objects. The visitor could touch and remove the artworks, thereby playing an active role in the artwork and, as with *Putti*, they become the means of dispersal. The second exhibition to engage visitor participation at the Serpentine was Felix Gonzalez-Torres's solo exhibition, which included his work *The Sweetness of Life* (2000); again, visitors were invited to participate by taking objects away from the exhibition, this time sweets which were piled in a rich carpet across the gallery floor; in doing so, they depleted the artwork. Gonzalez-Torres's intention was that 'authorship' of this work became a means of collaboration between the maker, presenter, owner and viewer.

When considering the participation of the viewer and their ability to relate to the traditional ideology of craft, I like the idea that every object might be recognized as having a significant presence owing to the value of its material and its special handmade qualities. In 1999, I took these issues as a point of departure when I made my first work of audience engagement in Korea, called *Consciousness/Conscience*, . For this, visitors were invited to walk across a fine, low-fired, fragile porcelain floor to access another part of the exhibition space, an action which required physical engagement with the displayed object in the

gallery, and the participation which was invited thereby caused the object's destruction.

Time-based works or projects in the museum which explore the live and the unstable as a subversive dialogue are evidenced in the work of Keith Harrison, where the audience bears witness to a performance of clay transformation. For Harrison, as for Gonzalez-Torres, the outcomes of the works' performative aspects only materialise in the audiences' experiences of them. The experimental and temporary nature of Harrison's work could be observed in a five-hour exhibition comprising two of his works at the V&A in September 2006 (the same event at which I exhibited *Trophy*). The first work, titled *Last Supper*, was a time-based, site-specific work located in the Raphael Room. It consisted of thirteen electric cooker elements which heated twenty clay blocks systematically over a period of three hours. The colour system employed for the blocks and their placement was taken from Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. As the electric elements heated, chemical changes became apparent in the space and the work: steam gently left the clay and entered the atmosphere of the room, so that viewers perceived change and evolution in what they saw and felt. As Harrison explains, "the process of transformation is an intrinsic part of the work" (Twomey, 2007). For the second work, *M25 London Orbital*, Harrison made a replica of the M25 out of 167 ceramic Scalextric-like track sections, using the internal and external spaces of the V&A's sculpture court and central courtyard. This work, which fired over the five-hour time period, captured and presented change, generating a strong dialogue with clay practice.

Such projects challenge traditional notions of the exalted individual ceramic object that has been dominant over at least the past two centuries. This has been the basis of my works *Trophy* (2006), *Forever* (2011) and *Exchange* (2013). Other artists addressing similar issues, such as Theaster Gates, have been stimulated not only by museum culture, but also by social concerns. Such projects do not simply deliver a formed and finished object, confronting the visitor with a pure, isolated monologue; they enable the visitor to experience more than a finite display. Interaction, audience participation and physical change are also central to the idea of the project as, for example, in the work of Lucy Orta, who has challenged the formal constraints on artists, through her work as a nomadic artist. In her body of work presented at the Barbican's Curve Gallery in 2005 under the title *70x7 The Meal Act XXIII: Lunch with Lucy* (2005), Orta invited the audience to participate in various ways. For example, they

could dine at a table of ceramic plates, all carrying emblems from the exhibition, which referred not only to her concerns of water scarcity but also about community since the plate defined the meal as one of shared experience. This use of plates within the performance of a hosted dinner references not only a traditional understanding of ceramics function, but also its role as part of the social fabric.

Interaction and site-specific artworks were part of the developing ceramics oeuvre in the late 1990s and early 2000s, assuming significance in the clay practice of Christie Brown, Carol McNicoll, Phoebe Cummings, Linda Sormin and Edmund de Waal. All these artists have explored the narrative of site in their practice. In particular, Brown's work, *Fragments of Narrative* (2000) at the Wapping Project space in London's Docklands was a contribution to explorations of clay dialogues within a 'non-craft space'. The work was an architectural intervention, being created as a site-specific response to the large industrial environment of a late-19<sup>th</sup> century hydraulic power station. In Brown's words:

'The scale of the space was daunting and challenging. The structure of the main interior echoed a Romanesque church with high windows and columns and the whole site was filled with the traces and memories of its previous existence as a place where steam power was generated to animate bridges and lifts'. (WPT, 2000)

In 2001, McNicoll made a room in the Bergen Kunsthall, noting that: 'the domestic setting which visual art's avant-garde left behind sometime around 1945, is the context I find most interesting' (Veiteberg, 2005). Accordingly, she wallpapered the previously white-cube exhibition room, and added objects brought from shops, such as vases and bowls, to pieces of furniture selected from the museum. By using historic furniture instead of plinths, McNicoll created an eclectic context in which to exhibit her handmade objects. Three years later, in 2004, De Waal made a site-specific museum intervention titled *Arcanum* in the National Museum of Wales, assuming the dual role of curator of objects from the museum's applied arts collection, and creator of a site-specific work in one of the museum's galleries. The exhibition catalogue explains:

'In this exploration of the collection he selects and arranges part of the eighteenth-century porcelain collection and places new work of his own in dialogue with it in

the frame of a domestic place setting'. (De Waal, 2005)

In the early 1990s, there were extensive efforts to define such practices. As Michael Archer writes:

'To call some disposition of materials, objects or artefacts an installation with any degree of authority presupposes familiarity with a clutch of related terms: location, site-specificity, gallery, public, environment, space, time, duration. Consequently, a definition of installation must also shed light upon the contemporary significance of this surrounding vocabulary'. (De Oliveira, Oxley & Petry, 1994)

Since it is evident that the term 'installation' is now commonly used in clay work, it is vital to identify works that can demonstrate the rigour and awareness which Archer demands. It is also important to recognise that many of the artists mentioned above whose practice involves temporal and site-specific works have made considerable contributions, which have shaped current practice to the material-specific concerns of craft context.

Glenn Adamson questions the relationship of the studio to live practice in his essay '... And into the Fire: Post-studio ceramics in Britain' (2010) which considers examples of contemporary ceramic practices where studio-based ceramics have given way to works created as reflections on other sites, such as factories, museums and social spaces. This situation has developed space for the artist Theaster Gates to be an exponent of ceramics viability as a live material through practice. Tessa Peters in her essay 'Ceramic art in social contexts' (2016) made a case for ceramics as a social material in live and non-live exhibition sites, where contemporary actions and performance instigated by an artist can influence the subsequent thinking and behavior of members of its audience. Laura Breen rightly claims (2015) that curators are pivotal in the creation of spaces for performative and experimental works in clay to be housed in museum sites. However, I would argue that curatorial departments do not act independently as authors, as they are responding to the demands of artists to explore in more experimental and contemporarily relevant means ceramic works that reach beyond the institute (as gate keeper of the collections) into history and beyond. In this ongoing development of explorative clay practice, it is vital to address the concept of live works and fixed-time exhibitions: the

longstanding issues of fixed or unfixed times in the culture of museum display and collections are challenged in *Trophy* (2006), *Forever* (2011), *Exchange* (2013) and *Piece by Piece* (2014). In emphasising the performative actions of material and the culture of exhibitions, Beatrice von Bismarck states:

‘Processuality is a key feature of exhibitions. Various time-based aspects, including forms of progression and development, timing and dynamics, significantly impact the production, presentation, and reception of exhibitions. The early twenty-first century has seen a clear rise in the number of curatorial approaches that explicitly address temporal dimension and take them on as subject. Such endeavors have resulted, amongst other things, in different forms of deregulation regarding traditional institutional parameters. The dividing of exhibitions into phases, sequences, pre- and post-events clearly stands apart from the typical notion of the exhibition as a self-contained, one-time experience. (von Bismarck, et al., 2014: 8)

Alongside the complexity of the processuality and fixed or unfixed time-based exhibition we must also acknowledge the rise of clay performance work that has a different trajectory from that of participation or installation. In 1955 Kazuo Shiraga, a member of the Japanese avant-garde group Gutai, performed *Challenging Mud* (Shiraga, 1955), which has become an icon of clay performative works; Shiraga used his whole body to physically transform a patch of clay mixed with plaster, cement and gravel, thus representing a struggle between the human body and matter. Jim Melchert’s *Changes* (1972) was a performance work which emancipated clay from ceramics, instigating a material relationship to performance and time. In this time-based work Melchert invited guests to immerse their heads briefly in liquid clay and then let the clay dry, experiencing clay as an active force. This relates to von Bismarck’s emphasis on processuality as a key feature in developing works. A less performative installation-based, temporary work in a gallery space is Satoro Hoshino’s *Reincarnate: Pre-copernican Mud* (1999), shown at Musée Ariana, Geneva, which used clay-based practice to enhance understanding of the scale of works that could be made in transitory fixed forms. From this construction of large temporary landscapes of clay, it is possible to examine the area of fixed-time work in clay practice. Similarly, Canadian artist Linda Sormin’s sprawling work consumes spaces, showing us a practice which plays a temporary role in the gallery

space. The effortless chaos that she creates seeks to identify itself with the domestic, but, by bringing conflict into harmony, she leaves the viewer in a blissful hunt for clues and anchors in the work. Sormin states:

‘The work demands that I negotiate my presence before it, around it, under it, through it. The site looms above and veers past, willing me to compromise, to give ground. Overbearing and precarious, its appetites mirror my own. I roll and pinch the thing into place; I collect and lay offerings at its feet. This architecture melts and leans, it hoards objects in its folds. It lurches and dares you to approach, it tears cloth and flesh, and it collapses with the brush of a hand. What propels the desire to make and compulsively make? Is this how I reassure myself, prove that I am here? If a tonne of clay is in the room, and over time it is transformed – behaving and misbehaving – because of me, is it through making that I perform identity and establish presence?’ (Bernard et al., 2007, p. 36)

Other artists identifying with temporal instability are Caroline Tattersall and Phoebe Cummings. Tattersall delivers a sense of vulnerability and decay through material use and the display of her works, as exemplified by *Aftermath* (Tattersall, 2008) and *Domestic Appliances* (Tattersall, 2008). Cummings explores environment and space: her work *After the Death of the Bear* (Cummings, 2013) envelops the exhibition space and lures the viewer into the notions it creates, encouraging them to learn more about the roles she has created there. As Cummings states: ‘the fragile constructions become *impossible* objects where the viewer is confronted with their physical presence, and made conscious of their behaviour within the room’ (Hanaor, 2007, p. 37).

As traditional clay practice, has been expanded, and installation and time-based works have developed deeper relationships with viewers, ideas of exchange have emerged. My works *Everyman’s Dream* (2012), *Exchange* (2013) and *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* (2015) have offered differing perspectives on participation and authorship. In works such as *Trophy* (2006), where the visitor has a major impact on the form and role of the exhibition, singular ownership by the author dissolves. Such pluralistic authorship has blurred the boundaries within museum



culture between presenter and participant, generating a productive friction between artist as instigator and audience as participant/co-author. My works exploring curation and authorship – *Trophy* (2006), *Forever* (2011), *Exchange* (2013) and *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* (2015) – challenge traditional concepts of control and authorship to suggest collective authorship, and define craft as a collective activity, as argued by sociologist Richard Sennett (2012) and sociologist and media theorist David Gauntlett (2011). My collaborative works, as well as my works involving audience interaction, often use unconventional formats which are ephemeral, site-sensitive, or which involve multiple materials, genres, platforms and places. In such cases, curators may effectively be included in the authorship structure, as they work closely with me on questions of preservation, ownership and future display. Discussions around authorship and curation allow greater understanding of the impact of such strategies, acknowledging their historical and cultural significance. As Catherine Wood observes, ‘we experience the work not only through space and time, but through an awareness of the encounter having a social dimension, often a sense of reciprocity, even, via the act of participation’ (Wood, 2016). Through my research-led exhibition works, I have explored the critical landscape where museum, artist and object transgress cultural boundaries to engender more than the mere accumulation of material.

## **TROPHY**

***Trophy***, 29 September 2006, **Victoria & Albert Museum, UK.**

A temporary installation, consisting of a display of 4000 small birds made in Wedgwood blue jasper clay installed in the V&A's Cast Courts.

Curator: Alun Graves.

Placed at the center of the V&A, a historic museum with one of the world's leading ceramics collections, *Trophy* challenged the museum's traditional modes of display. By rejecting the closed system of display, the work was responsive to audience and site. Donald Kuspit suggests, 'For Greenberg the meaning of art is open-ended, however much the work of art may seem like a closed system' (Kuspit, 2010). From this perspective, *Trophy* offered an alternative mode of interaction and display: it was the first clay intervention to address installation, temporary modes of display and audience engagement at the V&A.

In 2004, the exhibition *A Secret History of Clay* at Tate Liverpool presented a large survey of works from Gauguin to Gormley to outline clay's long history as a medium used widely in the visual arts. My work at this exhibition, an iteration of *Consciousness/Conscience*, examined experimental and expansive ways of seeing a material steeped in fixed traditions of display and interaction. This development enabled the research for *Trophy* to explore the relationship between the assumed roles of the museum as an institute, the curator as an instigator through invitation to artists, and the public as a participant.

The Trophy project was initiated by an invitation from the V&A, which was seeking to make the public conscious of clay practices developing outside the museum's activities. Oliver Watson, who had held the post of Ceramics Curator at the V&A, had taken the stance in that the museum would not collect large scale works. But it was his successor Alun Graves who made the invitation to commission *Trophy*, as it fell within his vision of the work of the V&A collections. In 2003, Alun Graves spoke about his ambition in *Ceramic Review* Magazine: 'In my mind, if ceramic practice forms an important and considered element to a work, whether it be sculpture, installation or performance, then it is appropriate material for the museum to engage with' (Graves, 2003, p. 24). As the permanent ceramic galleries

were closed for a period of five years, the one-night exhibition, *Clay Rocks*, was held to create a continued awareness of the material within the museum. My initial discussions with Graves focused on the collections and the five-hour exhibition period in which a temporary work could be installed. In particular, the curatorial team was keen to find innovative ways for the public to engage with clay. Through these conversations, I began to understand the exhibition's ambition and the particular dialogues it was initiating: Graves was inviting a new vision about what the collection and the field could enable.

The outcome of that invitation was the creation of *Trophy*, which presented contemporary ceramics practice to the V&A curators. Graves liaised with the sculpture department to ensure the use of the Cast Courts for this unusual temporary exhibition. The work consisted of 4,000 blue birds, each of their backs stamped with the V&A logo, 'Wedgwood' and 'Clare Twomey'. As *Clay Rocks* opened, the birds were laid out in the Cast Courts, where the public could pick them up and take them away. My concept for the work was inspired by the museum's role in keeping objects safe, and the public's engagement in the history of these objects. The work encouraged visitors to consider the role of the object, the role of the museum and the value that accrues to ownership. The research questions interrogated the interface between museum sites and ceramic interventions. Participation was a major concern of the Arts Council England's major 2006–2008 plan, which supported the *Museummaker* programme, and which stated: 'We will ensure that more high-quality work reaches a wider range of people – engaging the mass both audience and participants.' Sarah Weir, Executive Director, Arts Council England (London), said of *Trophy* in 2006:

'We are delighted to be supporting this innovative project at the V&A. Clare is challenging the boundaries of ceramic practice through a temporary installation which will allow the audience to take away their own personal piece of the art work'. (Weir, 2006)

The art historian Helen Potkin noted that contemporary art in this context "can be seen as part of the strategy to create distinctiveness and contemporary relevance" (2011, p. 209). At the V&A, the project could be seen as a way of broadening the museum's role from its core of preserving historic collections to wider contact.

*Trophy*, which addresses questions of the role of the audience through participation, emerged from existing practices of participation in the wider visual arts, which had previously not been explored in ceramic practice. Historically, ceramics in a museum context has ascribed a fixed rather than a negotiated role to the object. This project explored how contemporary ceramics might contribute a broader understanding of the audience's role, asking specifically how ceramics practice approaches and accounts for this in the design and production of site-specific ceramic interventions. The exhibition's success was evidenced in the visitor responses and the positive impact on staff and curators. This simple yet demanding piece instigated a fluid situation that required new responses to a collection of objects with a novel role. This change of role impacted the museum and its visitors. For Graves, the work was a public declaration of the museum's commitment to encourage artists to respond to the museum collection in new ways.

The core concept emerged from initial research visits to the, then, closed ceramics collections at the V&A. When I subsequently took a residency in Hungary to work on the concept and to experiment with scale and materials, I developed the key themes about large spaces and interaction, and learnt new ways of using clay materials. These initial ideas were further explored through sample works in Wedgwood Jasper clays in the UK, and, after curatorial discussion, a final design and agreement on final work was made. The work involved collaboration with Wedgwood, who provided the Jasper Blue clay material, technical support and the back stamp which identified the birds as a collaboration between Wedgwood, the V&A and myself.

The limited time frame and specific museum context had a large impact on the possible ways to deliver the temporary project. It became clear that a key motif to be taken from the museum was the identity of the materials to be used and the relationship this might build with the public. The blue birds were selected as an icon for their endearing scale, their unreachable nature and their imposing colour, while the Wedgwood blue was selected because of its historically powerful connotations and revered ownership by the public. These two elements, endearing and precious, were chosen as the chief components of the ceramic intervention; the public was thereby encouraged to willingly take ownership of the object, without specific instruction. The use of ceramics chimed with cultural values about objects

and fragility. The work also developed a sense of each visitor becoming a collector, adding a new object to their objects at home. The original design of the birds was researched during the residency in Hungary: a basic bird design was taken from a Hungarian antique decorative bird found in an antiques market in Budapest, then altered to represent a generic bird, rather than a specific species. Once a final bird design was completed, five variations on this were made, so that the installation recreated the variation found in natural forms. These five designs represented different sitting positions and different scales. Once approved by the curators, ceramic moulds were made for the production of the 4,000 birds, which were all made using a slip casting technique. Slip casting is a simple method of pouring liquid clay into a porous mould, so that the clay forms a hardened surface due to its absorption into the plaster. My sketches also showed how the objects would be placed in the gallery space, a vitally important consideration for the museum departments who needed to agree the placement. A team of six assistants helped cast the birds in the studio, which were then fettled, and the casting lines were cleaned off the birds. These were then fired in the studio kiln and polished with a diamond-faced pad to give a smooth surface, of the same quality as Wedgwood ceramics.

The birds were placed on the floor and the plinth spaces amongst the plaster sculptures in the Cast Court. Installing the work took three days, with the help of four assistants and the curatorial team at the V&A, during which time the Cast Courts were closed to the public. The exhibition was open for five hours on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The public queued to enter the Cast Courts, where all the birds were laid out on the floor and on the plinths; for five hours, the public had the opportunity to take a bird from the space. They were not stopped from taking a bird away with them, but there were no instructions in the space to do so, and people followed the behaviour of others in the space, each taking a bird. As viewers left the Cast Courts, they were handed a small piece of paper that asked them why they had taken the bird, and, if possible, to send a picture of where the bird had been taken after it left the museum.

When the exhibition opened, the museum security was overwhelmed by the demand to enter the space. A set amount of fifty people every fifteen minutes was given access to the exhibition, while waiting visitors queued down the full length of the V&A central corridor.

Other members of the public could view the activity from the balconies above the Cast Courts. As the visitors left the exhibition space with their birds in hand, the people waiting in the queue could see what was being taken, which built expectation and excitement in the gallery. The whole work involved careful prior negotiation with the museum teams and curators: through a detailed set of agreements, the staff facilitated the presentation of this exhibition to the public. Audience participation was recorded on film, and was further evidenced by the personal statements emailed to the artist after the exhibition.

At the end of the evening only two hundred birds remained, which were taken away the following day. Every bird that was removed from the museum revealed the public's willingness to take ownership of an artwork. As a conceptual piece whose value lay in its ability to effect change and stimulate action, the overall message was one of ownership and risk. The exhibition created an opportunity for the visitor to engage with an artwork, thereby generating change, ownership and a deregulation of the museums' institutional structures.

*Trophy* thus contributed towards new understandings of how to involve audience members as active agents in generating meaning in site-specific ceramics practices. The work addressed the changing roles of museum objects and visitors. The integration of ceramics into the Cast Courts created an immersive environment which encouraged audiences to reflect on the relationship between the existing museum site and the newly placed objects. The new objects prompted the visitor to make a narrative connection between the contemporary and the historical. The sense of immersion was reinforced by the interactive demands of the installation, which operated as a catalyst for object appreciation and social actions; in this respect, the audience was required to actively engage with the object and the site. This negotiation both involved understanding pre-existing rules of the institution and developing a new relationship with it through the artwork. Finally, the installation contributed insights into how to unify the spatial complexity of site. The use of repeated objects ensured a thematic consistency and brought a sense of coherence to the Cast Court exhibition, while challenging audience members to engage with, and participate in, the concepts of the work. Martina Margetts cited *Trophy* in her essay 'The Walls Come Tumbling Down':

'The unprecedented feature of *Trophy*, 4,000 tiny birds made in Wedgwood's

jasperware, scattered in the Cast Courts of the V&A in 2006, was the chance for the public to take a bird away, out of the museum, 'freeing' an emblem of nature; in the space of one evening, all the birds flew away with us as individuals. In relocating the birds to new locations, new narratives about collections of things and their habitats were recorded through online postings. This project represented a complex temporary acquisition and total loss from the museum's point of view but again for new individual owners who could value something freely possessed. The project focused on the ambivalent process of what a museum possesses on our behalf and what we wish we owned and revalue when we do.' (Margetts, 2016, p. 23)

## **FOREVER**

*Forever*, October 2010–January 2011, **The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**, Kansas City, Missouri, USA.

A time-based installation consisting of 1,345 ceramic cups, whose design was derived from an original ceramic found in the Burnap Collection.

Curator: Catherine Futter.

*Forever* took my investigation of audience participation and site further. This work was my response to the historic Burnap Collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, a collection of British pottery only surpassed in size by that of the V&A. This work's participatory dimensions demanded of the public a deep commitment to be included in the ownership and aims of the artwork. The issues of time and display in this work are specifically linked to Bishop's theory of the project and its social dimensions. I also alluded to works from outside clay practice, specifically the art practice of General Ideas in the '80s, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's large engagement works of the '90s.

The project began when the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art approached me to create a work for the Block Building contemporary wing of the museum. The curators' actions, and their willingness to explore and challenge institutional policies, were crucial to the development of the work. I developed the concept, designed the objects to be displayed and oversaw the creation of the 1,345 ceramics in Stoke-on-Trent, UK. The museum curator Catherine Futter and her team arranged the museum, the daily interactions with the work, and the final collection of all the objects by the public. The museum developed and sustained a substantial website to record the project.

The work consisted of 1,345 ceramic cups, whose design was derived from an original ceramic found in the Burnap's British Ceramics collection. The project was displayed as a temporary artwork, inviting audience participation through letting visitors choose one of the cups to keep. In doing so, they were obliged to sign a legally binding agreement of care for the selected cup, which was labelled with the new owner's name for the duration of the show. Over the exhibition period, members of the public gradually took ownership of every cup in the installation, and, at the end of the exhibition, all 1,345 cups were collected by



their new owners (see film supplied in supplementary material).

The use of contemporary ceramics as an interventionist medium in the reinterpretation of museum collections is now well-established: De Waal with his *Arcanum* (2005) focused on the role of the ceramic artist as an interface with educational teams within the museum and beyond, and Brown's recent work *Dreamwork* at the Freud Museum in north London (Brown, 2012-2013) presented poetic reinterpretations of Freud's collection of artefacts. The Museummaker initiative established a nationwide programme for work of this sort, and the V&A promotes a residency scheme for such projects. My own project extended these approaches by asking how audience relationships to ceramic objects might be recast, beyond the roles of visitor and viewer. Specifically, my practice asked how ceramic interventions might be used to create a lasting audience relationship with the ceramic object, museum and, by extension, the artist.

Through a number of site visits over a three-year period, I was able to establish a conceptual framework to understand the Burnap collection and its relationship to the museum as a whole. These visits involved extended discussions with Futter about the role of contemporary ceramics in a museum of historical works. My analysis of the collection led to a series of photographic and drawn studies, from which I documented a caudle cup made in Stoke-on-Trent in 1720 (maker unknown)<sup>8</sup> one of the first ever salt-glazed pots. From my technical drawings, photography and sketches, I produced designs for the cup and the furniture used for the installation. The museum agreed to develop a work with me that would replicate the 1720 cup 1,345 times, mirroring the total number of objects in this part of the collection.

The geography of the museum meant that, while the historic pottery was in one building, the proposed work would be housed in another modern gallery on the same site. The architecture presented an implicit opportunity to create a dialogue between the original collection and the installation. Following discussions with the curator, I developed visual

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<sup>8</sup> The cup, now part of the Burnap collection in Nelson Atkins Museum USA, and inscribed "Mrs. Mary Sandbach her Cup anno dom 1720", is noted for being the earliest-known dated piece of English salt-glazed stoneware.

concepts to use the new gallery space in a way consistent with the existing framing of works in the museum. A major impetus for the project was my desire to develop new forms of audience engagement with the collection. Having found in the museum's archive the original deed of gift from the Burnap family, which drew up care and duty guidelines for museum ownership of the collection, I proposed that something similar could be used as a way of engaging audiences with the new artefacts being manufactured for the installation. The word 'forever' was used repeatedly in the original deed – not a word that would form part of covenant of care for a museum in 2010, but one which had a poetic ring to it, making it suitable for a more exploratory modern work. The word 'care' was also highlighted in the deed, forming a key element of the proposed narrative of audience engagement. My hypothesis was that, just as the original deed had passed a collection of artefacts to an important public museum, so also the audience could be invited to claim ownership of one of the newly produced cups 'forever', by signing a similar legally binding document of care.

I used measurements from the historic ceramic as a frame of reference for the technical drawings which would guide the model-makers in Stoke-on-Trent in the production of the new cup. I reduced the diameter of the cup from 25cm to 11cm, to create a more domestic scale. The work was produced by Hartley Green, a small manufacturer of historic creamware pottery, which uses traditional ceramic skills. Most of the Burnap Collection had originally been made in the Stoke area. First, a model was produced, followed by the making of production moulds for slip casting. The work was then slip cast, with hand-pulled handles for every cup. Each of the 1,345 cups had an identification number on the base to signify its place in the collection. In the gallery the cups were labelled with the title of the work and their number. When a visitor agreed to take care of one cup, it was marked with its new owner's name.

Critically, the atmosphere of the room suggested a traditional museum environment and the labels evoked designs seen on old museum cabinets. My sketches were developed into design drawings for the exhibition furniture, which was similarly themed. In the museum environment which was created, the visitor assumed a new role. The curators and administrators were responsible for selecting potential cup owners in a daily lottery which attracted 10,000 applications. Gallery staff were responsible for daily interactions with the

artwork, guiding visitors to the documents, and signing and delivering cups to a collection point. Managing a live event for a three-month period was a new experience for the gallery. Post-exhibition discussions with the curator and staff showed how the installation had enabled them to re-focus on their duty of care to the museum exhibits, and also to develop new relationships with visitors to the museum, by conceiving of them as active participants, rather than merely people passing through. Through these activities the project facilitated conversations outside the gallery environment, aligning the project with Malcom Gladwell's ideas about people who 'link us up with the world' (Gladwell, 2000).

The project reconceptualises the relationship between audience and the museum-sited ceramic artefact along a number of axes, and thus produces new ways for ceramics practitioners to engage with institutions and audiences. By giving away the work to exhibition visitors and binding them to obligations of care, *Forever* changes their role from viewer to carer and owner. In the process, innovative methods for audience engagement are produced, as quasi-legal institutional procedures usually relating to donors are applied to modern ceramics practices. The relationships established in this process bind artist, audience and artwork together over periods that extend far beyond the end of the physical exhibition. *Forever* thus plays with questions of time, reinterpreting and questioning the normative processes of ceramic exhibition which fix these relations within institutional contexts. The website portal for the *Forever* project has received 28,000 visits since the exhibition closed in 2010 (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2017). The owners of the cups have registered photographic records of the work in their homes and have left comments and testimonials about the project on this website.

## EXCHANGE

**Exchange**, 14 June 2013 - 15 September 2013, **The Foundling Museum**, London, UK.

A display of 1550 cups and saucers installed for three months, in an exchange participation artwork.

Curator: Stephanie Chapman.

*Exchange* advanced ideas about site and narrative within an artwork beyond the previous focus on the museum and the artist: my project instead focused on audience engagement, specifically, the values of interaction and processuality identified by von Bismarck as key concerns in the early twenty-first century. The work consisted of 1,550 apparently identical white cups and saucers, each inscribed with a 'good deed', a socially positive action proposed by members of the public, supporters, staff and trustees.

The Foundling Museum, London, commissioned the work to advance their vision that artists should be at the heart of the museum. The original 18<sup>th</sup> century vision of Thomas Coram, Hogarth and Handel is still enshrined in the museum, which is a place 'where artists and children have inspired each other since 1740' (The Foundling Museum, n.d.). In enabling today's artists, musicians and writers to work alongside vulnerable young people, the Foundling Museum casts new light on their stories, evoking some very personal and moving responses. The museum curator worked collaboratively with me to instigate an artwork involving continuous audience participation over the three-month exhibition period.

My concept was inspired by the acts of exchange and philanthropy that lie at the heart of the Foundling Hospital – the UK's first children's charity and England's first public art gallery. The museum was seeking proposals to explore its history and collections through interchanges with contemporary art. Initial discussions with the curator of the Foundling Museum, Stephanie Chapman, focused my attention on the historical richness of the collections. In particular, the wider curatorial team was keen to find innovative ways for the public to engage with the human and sensory experiences suggested by site. Through conversations with them, I began to understand the complexity of the site and the particular dialogues it provoked. During the initial phase of research, my interviews with the team

suggested some key themes, notably the impact of the museum's human and emotional context on visitors; it became clear that a key motif in the museum was the mother and child relationship. I chose the cup and saucer as the chief component of the ceramic intervention, because they are paired objects like mother and child. Pairing and separation thus became a key theme and motif of the project. The staff also welcomed the use of ceramics, as a material that suitably echoed the objects originally used in the hospital.

On this basis, I composed a written and illustrated proposal. Ideas were further explored through sample works in clay, and, after discussion with curators, a final design and agreement was made. Access to the museum archive allowed me to research the original cups and eating vessels, and select the final design for the cups and saucers. Once this was approved through consultation with the curators, technical drawings were developed to allow the production of the cups and saucers. These drawings also showed how the objects would be placed in the gallery space, a vitally important consideration, given the complexity of matching and ordering the 1,550 final cups and saucers.

All the good deeds to be inscribed on the artwork were sourced from groups across the UK which were connected with the museum; the exhortations to do good deeds included: 'Go out and raise £50 for Tear fund'; 'Leave £1 in a vending machine so the next person gets a free drink'; 'Teach someone to cook'; 'Read aloud to someone'; 'Buy a homeless person a coffee'. The curator Stephan Chapman liaised with the community teams to elicit the sentences. The Foundling Museum team oversaw all aspects of production, and visited my studio in order to understand the production process and expected delivery of the live work. The sentences were edited and placed on ceramic transfers, which I designed, using motifs from the plaster work in the museum. The production of the cups and saucers themselves involved developing a relationship with Dudson China, who made them using a standard process of slip casting according to a design which I chose for its simplicity and functional appearance. In my London studio, a small team of five undergraduates was trained to place the transfers on the base of the cup and the face of the saucer, so that they were invisible when cup and saucer were placed together. They were then transported back to Stoke-on-Trent for firing by renowned British manufacturer Emma Bridgewater, before

being glazed and delivered to my studio in London, where the long process of matching cups and saucers and the 1,550 individual deeds took place.

For the exhibition, the cups and saucers were laid out in rows on long trestle-tables, which almost filled the room, replicating the long dining rooms of the Foundling Hospital, and thus creating a dialogue between the history of the museum and the ceramic intervention. Working with the installation team, I mapped all placements of cups and saucers. The artwork was installed over two weeks as planned. Following careful prior negotiation, during the exhibition the museum controlled the day-to-day interactions, monitored by myself. Through a detailed process of organisation, the staff agreed that every day, there could be ten exchanges with members of the public. The selection process, based on a blind lottery on entering the museum, replicated the random nature of the hospital's acceptance of babies. Those selected were invited to choose a cup from the hundreds laid out on tables. In exchange for agreeing to complete the good deed, they could keep the cup - if not, the cup would be re-placed and the possibility for exchange turned down. If the cup was taken, the saucer was left behind, the decal at its centre now revealed, to inform subsequent visitors of the good deed to be done. The exhibition thereby provided another layer of content and fresh insights for the visitor. Those who took the cups were also invited to log their actions on the project web page (Foundling Museum, 2016).

In the context of ceramic practice, my research thus interrogated the interface between museum sites and ceramic interventions. *Exchange* grew out of existing practices, but asked additional questions about the role of the audience in participatory practice. While audience had often been the focus of conceptual and digital art practices, ceramics had historically concentrated on issues of craft and material. This project explored how contemporary ceramics might contribute a broader understanding of the audience's role in the field than had previously been the case; specifically, I asked how ceramics practice approaches and accounts for the audience's role in the design and production of site-specific ceramic interventions.

Along with visitor responses, the positive impact on staff and trustees, some of whom had

been sceptical about contemporary art, affirmed the exhibition's success. This simple but also highly complex piece caused people to pause, and take stock of what it must have been like for the many thousands of women who decided to give their children up to the Foundling Hospital's care in exchange for a better life for their son or daughter. For Caro Howell, the director of the Foundling Museum, the piece was a public declaration of the museum's commitment to put artists at the core of what they do, validated by support from the Arts Council's 'Grants for the Arts' fund.

Moreover, *Exchange* was indicative of Bishop's description of 'the social turn' in art (Bishop, 2006, pp. 179-185): *Exchange* was a prime example of socially-oriented art in the expanded field of ceramics, as I sought to construct a thought-provoking situation as a spur to social action. The work was created through the acts of collaborators who are physically and temporally dispersed; it generated multiple encounters, as participants at the stage of post-production were invited to respond to the participants at the pre-production stage of the project. In sum, the work was a conceptual piece whose value lay in its ability to effect change: the overall message was 'be generous'. The deeds inscribed on the cups and saucers were many and various, described as generating a mixture of excitement and dread among the ten people who each day made their selection from the rows of white cups. 'Plant some spring bulbs in a neglected corner of your neighborhood' and 'Clean your room without being asked' are two more examples of the deeds. Another said 'Foster a child', which was the ultimate expression of the Coram mission.

Like *Trophy*, *Exchange* therefore contributes new understandings of ways to involve audience members as agents in the generation of meaning in site-specific ceramics practices. First, the integration of ceramics with the original schema of the rooms created an immersive environment, which I designed to encourage audiences to reflect on the relationship between the existing museum site, with its historical features and objects, and contemporary, place-based exchange; it also prompted them to make a narrative connection between the contemporary and the historical. Secondly, the sense of immersion was reinforced by the demands of interacting with the installation, which operated as a catalyst for object appreciation and social actions: the audience was required to actively

generate historical, material and spatial relations as they interacted with the work and reflected on the role of the original Foundling Hospital. Finally, like *Trophy, Exchange* contributed insights into how to unify the spatial complexity of site in an extended ceramics installation. The use of repeated objects ensured a thematic consistency and brought a sense of coherence to the gallery, while offering the audience members a challenge to engage and participate with the work's concepts. The installation elicited themes of activism, anxiety and philanthropy – all highly pertinent themes to the context of the Foundling Hospital.



## **PIECE BY PIECE**

***Piece by Piece***, October 2013 – January 2014, **Gardiner Museum, Toronto, Canada.**

A live, large-scale ceramics installation consisting of a maker, a workbench, three objects from the museum collection and the continuous production of original objects for three months in the gallery space.

Curator: Rachel Gotlieb.

*Piece by Piece* was a large-scale, live ceramics installation created in response to an invitation from the Gardiner Museum, a ceramic specific collection. The work took over an area of 20m x 10m, meaning the gallery became a live artwork space for three months. The project explored the roles of the museum object, authorship and live performance within the traditions of a collections-based museum: plinths were removed, and the museum's custodial role was inverted, as a large, ethereal performance space was created. I thus used performance to question values relating to collection-based museums; the work can be viewed through Catherine Wood's theory of performance and the awareness of encounter at play in live works. (Wood, 2012)

*Piece by Piece* consisted of a performer who assumed the role of maker within the artwork for a period of three months. The artwork was set as a tableau. At the entrance to the space, on high, enclosed vitrines stood three commedia dell'arte figurines from the Gardiner collection: *Harlequin*, *Leda* and *Scaramouche*, which symbolised perfection. At the other end of the room, the maker/performer worked each day at a bench, making figurines; their role was to endure failure and enhance their skills. The space in between was filled with 2,000 pre-made figurines, which were added to daily by the maker/performer, who was continuously making copies of the originals on display. After each figurine was made, the maker/performer had to decide whether it was good enough to be placed in the growing tableau, or whether it should be discarded in a pile beside the work bench. This was a novel space in the museum: neither factory nor studio, it became a liminal space. The curator Rachel Gotlieb described it as space 'where time undoes meaning and where we forget, or, as Twomey imagined, a fairytale in the manner of Rumpelstiltskin' (Gotlieb, 2016).

Research for *Piece by Piece* began with an invitation to the Gardiner Museum in 2012, as

the museum intended to commission a work that responded to their collection. When I visited the renowned collection as part of the initial research, I worked with Gotlieb to identify parts of the collection that were of particular interest to the collector George Gardiner. I quickly came to dwell on the collection of comedia dell'arte figurines, which occupies a central place in the museum and was a particular delight of Gardiner. This collection and its making became the focus of the research for this project: its personal nature and breadth led me to questions about the role of the collection, and its construction as a cohesive dialogue. This resulted in a new perspective on the Gardiner collection, as a set of objects evoking a history of individuals. The archives and the museum were used as a source of research, which led me to approach the museum as a place of dialogue with the public. This initial examination of the ceramics collection led the focus of the final live work to fall on an exploration of the skills of the individuals who made the collection. The project thus worked with the idea of making as dialectic across history.

The project was created in London and in Canada over a period of twelve months. I conceived the initial project idea, developed the designs, managed the materials and conducted training for the performance aspects of the artwork production, while the museum maintained the build and continued support for the growing artwork and performance. The performance was rehearsed in London in the presence of the curator, as well as supporting staff from Siobhan Davies Dance Studios who had assisted with my previous work, *Is It Madness. Is It Beauty* (2010), and who worked closely with me on the performance aspects of the work, giving critical feedback on performance presence and role. The form of the installation was influenced by my desire to show clearly the significance of making to the ceramics collection. Sketches and a text outline of the proposed work were presented to the museum and used as the basis for developments in the performance work and model making of the objects. The museum made digital scans of the original ceramic objects and sent them to London for 3-D printing; moulds were taken, and the casting of the two thousand objects began in London. The pre-performance work was conducted by a team of six people. In Canada, more training took place during the installation period, and every day the artwork grew as objects were made continuously, bringing the final total after three months to 3500 objects.

*Piece by Piece* was made at a time when research into the use of performance in clay practice was established, but had yet to be fully explored. Since the 1950s, performance has been a well-documented and influential method of approaching clay: the American artist Jim Melchert and the Japanese ceramic artists Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino have made impacts. Although Keith Harrison's work, also mentioned above, has looked at ceramics beyond the boundaries of the traditional, encased museum setting, the dominant mode of contemporary ceramics practice still focuses on ceramics as a singular and situated material object in museum contexts. My previous performance work at Siobhan Davies Dance Studios in London influenced my research in this area of practice: *Is It Madness. Is It Beauty* (2010) was a live work where a durational performance enabled one performer to unsettle time by focusing attention on presence and absence through processes of production and performance; the work was a cycle of hope and destruction, as water was poured into raw clay bowls in the hope that the bowls would survive; this was choreographed as a continuous loop of actions. *Piece by Piece* builds on this previous research, representing a step forward in approaches to the medium of performance in museum contexts, through long-term exhibition and generative authorship.

*Piece by Piece* was intended to create a relationship with the collection of comedia dell'arte figurines in the gallery on the floor below. Although the figurines convey the historical skill involved in ceramics making, these dialogues of making are poorly articulated in the museum, secondary to the role of the final object within the collection. *Piece by Piece* therefore examined, illustrated and performed the actions of making that form a final work in clay. This work exposed the role of the individual maker and their relationship to the site of the collection. It also used the physical dimensions of the gallery space to engage the viewer in questions about making, and to highlight the sheer amount of skill and dedication required throughout the history of ceramics and object making. As research, *Piece by Piece* proposed that a live installation over three months could enhance perceptions of the artefact and the skills in the making of ceramics in museum displays. It drew attention to the many hidden individual makers in a historic museum collection, and the level of skill we can observe in the objects on display. In doing so, the work contended that making and

display should be considered as equally important subjects in a reciprocal relationship. I drew on Helen Carnac's live work *Side by Side* (2012), where as a craft practitioner she worked with dance artist Laila Diallo to create dialogues of movement. This work has created a larger framework for exploring movement and craft practices, after seeing that her work formed in many ways a continuation of my own practice.

Through this artwork, new knowledge and understanding about creative roles was developed between me, the curator and Siobhan Davies Studios. For example, the Gardiner Museum had never undertaken a live work. The production of *Piece by Piece* brought together curator, educational teams, makers and performers, and produced new ways for them to work together. It also produced a unique environment for local ceramics communities to develop a more contemporary understanding of ceramics practices in terms of making objects. *Piece by Piece*, as its name suggests, was a gradual undertaking; its implementation at the Gardiner Museum has developed multiple new perspectives on the possibilities for ceramic installation in public galleries, enabling and extending public understanding of contemporary ceramics.

Overall, *Piece by Piece* extended dialogues of the live in contemporary ceramics practice by challenging traditional perceptions of production in the museum. Both the collection and the museum are questioned by this artwork's live production, which re-casts ceramic history as a record of skilled production. *Piece by Piece* argues that, in live work, 'making' can be discerned in the collection. This uncovering of skills, and of the historical individuals involved in making, transforms our understanding of ceramic history. In the process, it extends the imaginative reach of contemporary ceramics practices by showing how they can articulate making as a live activity in the museum, an activity which is central rather than secondary. This research built on the model seen in previous works in other museums, whereby large-scale ceramic interventions can exist as temporary statements in dialogue with permanent collections. This work has been unique in revealing the hidden dialogues of skill. The work's live environment presented past, present and future together, prompting many visitors to go and view the permanent collection from which these figures had been taken.

## **MANIFEST: 10,000 HOURS**

***Manifest: 10,000 hours***, July 2015 – June 2017, **York Art Gallery**, York Museums Trust, UK.

A large-scale ceramics installation, consisting of 10,000 ceramic bowls made with the public in workshops and assembled in York Art Gallery.

Curator: Helen Walsh.

In *Manifest: 10,000 Hours*, processes of collaboration and shared authorship are key to the large-scale ceramic sculpture. The work examines cultures of making and skill, which have been explored by theorists David Gauntlett and Richard Sennett, and the historical learning of skills.

*Manifest: 10,000 hours* is a large-scale ceramics installation exhibited in the contemporary craft context of the Mezzanine Gallery of the newly established Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) at York Art Gallery. It consists of 10,000 ceramic slipcast bowls made with community groups in York and London. The work is 8m x 6m, reaching right up to the newly exposed decorative ceiling in the upper main gallery. I was invited to create a work in response to the re-opening of the studio ceramics collection in its new building after two years closure for refurbishment. The initial project idea was developed after visiting the collection several times, after which I developed the designs, managed the materials, the teaching teams for production, the build and the completion of the sculpture. The project's emphasis on skill was derived from the world-leading collection of British Studio ceramics at the gallery, donated by Reverend Eric Milner-White, Dean of York, W. A. Ismay (the UK's most prolific collector of post-war British studio ceramics), and the pioneering craft gallerist Henry Rothschild.

My project was inspired not only by the dedication of these collectors but also by that of the makers, whose careers were closely followed by the collectors. The collection clearly displays the transmission of skills and techniques across generations of makers, who have shared in a community of endeavour. The elements of skill and development can be seen in the objects, as well as in the personality-driven collection. These were the areas of interest for this project, which sought to emphasise the dedication and learning required to make works in clay which highlight not only in a lineage of making, but also how this can be seen

in a museum collection. The final work displays the 10,000 hours which, reputedly, it takes to become a skilled maker/craftsperson.

Research for *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* began during my residency at the V&A in 2011, and was prompted by the ceramics collection there and an investigation into making in my own ceramic practice. I took the question of 'why make?' as my starting point in the residency. As part of the initial research, along with research colleagues, I organised a series of seminars in 2011/12 at the V&A and the University of Westminster to challenge and highlight common approaches in practice. These seminars were edited into articles, which can be viewed on the 'Ceramics in the Expanded Field' website. (2017) I developed these themes further in workshops in the USA and Ireland, where we discussed individuals' relationship to making, their ways of learning skills and reasons for choosing to make objects. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* grew out of these activities, exploring issues around site-specificity, the history of studio ceramics production and the individuals involved in this process. This research influenced my approach to the handmade studio collection of York Art Gallery, where I worked with Helen Walsh, the ceramics curator, in the exploration of the archive in both object and paper form. This archive and my dialogue with Helen transformed my understanding of the collection, from a set of objects to a history of individuals. After testing the bowl project at the V&A in 2011, and following other group experiments in the USA and Ireland, I approached the York studio ceramics collection with a specific agenda of testing ideas about the development and transference of skills. The project works with the idea of making as a dialectic or conversational process – for example, a process of making in one generation becomes a point of leadership for the next generation.

The project was made with the support of 150 individuals, who came to workshops and made bowls over a three-month period, thereby acquiring new skills and cultural experience through the process. The form of the installation was influenced by the desire to show clearly the significant and intimidating amount of time it takes to become a skilled craft practitioner. Initial sketches of the proposed work were presented to the museum and used as the basis for models of the display frame to be produced with an art production company. The work was built and installed on site at York Art Gallery over a one-month period by a team of fifteen people, including trained museum technicians

and hired art manufacturers from Stage One, and an art fabrication company, which installed the frame that formed the sculptural form on which the bowls were placed.

The work created a relationship with the studio ceramics collection, which displays makers' work generationally. It is this 10,000 hours of time that is represented in the final work, in the 10,000 bowls piled up in the gallery space. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* celebrates the tradition of the handmade in clay practice and its relationship to the historic model of craft; it not only examines the role of the object and its relationship to the maker but also the site of the collection. As a large-scale work, it relies on the physical dimensions of the gallery space to engage the viewer in questions concerning the making and the dedication to the skills needed throughout the history of ceramics. As research, *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* asks how perceptions of the artefact and the skills behind the ceramics held in museum displays can be explored through an installation on an exceptional scale. Additionally, it draws attention to the many individual makers in a collection and suggests that the discrete ceramic object on display can be considered as a subject in its own right.

Overall, the project is indicative of a current approach to the medium of participation and authorship. The artist Theaster Gates is also working with projects and the production of situations. For example, his project *Soul Manufacturing Corporation*, presented at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2013, is a speculation on alternative futures for the economy, the environment and society. In this work he used clay and people as his principal materials: three skilled potters and three apprentices performed a transfer of skills. In a similar manner, *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* creates a meeting point in the theoretical divide between the skills of the maker and those of the novice. This draws on the work of Daniel Charny, curator of the *Power of Making* exhibition at the V&A Museum, who suggested that 'skill is not something that is written down; it's handed on. The passing on the baton is much important' (Charny, 2011). *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* not only materialises three months continuous and collective labour in making the slipcast bowls, it also embodies the participants' knowledge. This again returns us to the relationship between generations of makers within the collection. Inside the cabinets on one side of *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* stands the work of Hans Coper, maker of countless objects, on the other side stands examples of work by Lucie Rie. Indeed, generations of ceramic makers are on display who

have tirelessly made inspirational, skilled and articulate objects. Such displays of studio ceramics are the context of *Manifest: 10,000 Hours*: each bowl on display represents one hour out of the thousands accumulated in the collection, enabling the viewing of 10,000 hours of skill.

When this work was made, David Gauntlett had already published his work *Making is Connecting* (Gauntlett, 2011), and the large movements of 'Craftivism', which reflect concerns about political and social causes, often in small community-based groups, were well underway. Both of these refer to an awakening of community connections between making and the dynamics of shared and collective actions of material production. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* reflected on such maker movements in a context of authorship and established a relationship with the museum.

Through this project new knowledge and understanding was developed between me and the manufacturers in terms of creative roles. For example, the art installation team was less used to working directly with artists in an iterative manner, and my prior experience working in craft contexts had not prepared me for the complexity of engineering involved. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours*, as its name suggests, was a huge undertaking for all concerned, but its implementation at York has developed many new perspectives on the possibilities for ceramic installation in public galleries, extending public understanding of contemporary ceramics.

*Manifest: 10,000 hours* extends the expressive and conceptual scope of contemporary ceramics practice by challenging traditional perceptions of the clay artefact through the large scale of the installation, its multiple authorship and its treatment of ceramic history as a record of skill exchange. By physically and literally realising the notion of the discrete, crafted ceramic, it argues, counterintuitively, that 'making' can be employed as an effective creative method for displaying shared skills and a lineage of the history of individuals. In the process, it extends the imaginative reach of contemporary ceramics practices, by showing how they can articulate an argument beyond the domain of utility-focused craft practices. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* was the first work to be commissioned by York Art Gallery after its re-opening in 2015, and thus played a key role in the repositioning of the gallery.



Such research, in a similar way to my other projects and also to temporary exhibition statements, shows how large-scale ceramic interventions can co-exist in dialogue with permanent collections. Like my other works, again, this work has revealed the dialogues of skill and its reproductive qualities.

## Conclusion

In the past ten years, there has been a redefining of clay as an active and lively voice to add to the culture of museums and art culture. This change can be seen in artistic practice, curator engagement and critical texts which have been highlighted in my thesis. Through ten years of research, experimentation and close investigation, my three research questions have been slowly and carefully developed to test the boundaries of knowledge regarding arts and museum practices, encouraging a continued relationship with these concerns.

- How can ceramic collections be animated and explored through audience participation?

The thesis addressed the question of animation and audience participation by tackling the methodology through the lens of participatory practice from a broad historic purview (von Bismarck, et al., 2014, p. 8) and the emergence of post-structuralism making activities emerging from museum cultures (Putnam, 1995-96). An understanding of these contextual histories has assisted the development of new strategies to engage the public, such as in a form of ownership of ceramic artefacts associated with a museum, as exemplified by *Trophy*, (29 September 2006) and *Forever*, (October 2010 – January 2011). The animation of narratives underpinning such ceramic objects, and resulting from the methodology not only revealed new understandings of the historic collections, but also presented new methods of audience engagement that had not previously been exposed or initiated in ceramic collections. *Trophy* and *Forever* formed clear relationships with the public, and extended from tentative actions to directed and purposeful actions in the museum.

- How can strategies of performance, time-based work and making inform further understandings of the ceramic collection?

Throughout the thesis I have aligned theories of performance (Wood, 2012) and theories of making practice (Gauntlett, 2011; Sennett, 2012) to create a meeting point where a new

methodology of artist practice can further inform an understanding of the ceramic collection (Gotlieb, 2016). This is exemplified by *Piece by Piece* (October 2013 – January 2014). Such a methodology clearly identifies an ambition to draw an end to the rigid separation of practices, and in a way that has not been negotiated previously in the context of ceramic collections (Graves, 2003, p. 24).

- How can shared ceramic making in relationship to museum ceramics collections build the public understanding of historic collections?

The articulation of new knowledge addressing the tangible relationship to ceramic collections through shared making in the thesis is found in the theories of social science (Gauntlett, 2012) when overlaid with the theories of post-structural practice (Glen R. Brown, 2016, p. 66 - 72) and viewed through the lens of early participation perspectives (General Idea, 1993). The work *Manifest: 10,000 hours* (July 2015 – June 2017), demonstrates that these worlds of activity do not need to be artificially divided by the outmoded role of the museum as only having the duty of safe keeping; I have through the thesis presented the argument for museum as active force in knowledge transference other than the fixed object site of traditional museum practice. The methodology employed in the production of this work, combined with its contextual overview, has provided the pivot for the ceramics collection to be viewed through a lens of activity, as opposed to passivity. In the case of *Exchange*, (14 June 2013 - 15 September 2013), the two theories of social practice and post-structural making similarly intersect with the concerns of institutional role and public engagement, hence creating through this theoretical grasp a new knowledge and experience of the museum collection.

This body of research (2006-2017) and PhD thesis establish a stable, clear and original methodology that has shaped new and unique ways for audience, institute and museums to access historic collections and for those histories to be animated. These issues for museums are both civic and academic. Historically, within museum culture, the prevailing methodology has been theoretical. Yet, through this body of research I have used practice-based methods that have clearly enabled audiences to engage with museum collections through non-academic routes, this serving an additional understanding of the role of museums amongst the wider public.

Within this body of artworks there have been points where the limit of scale has affected the possibilities of the project. Some of the works are still undergoing change in order to attain their full possibilities. The works of participation that now belong to members of the public are not shared with me; they represent a lasting experience for the participant and still open questions for my research. The same is also true for many of the works by other artists discussed in this thesis. Ultimately, this thesis will have laid foundations, while raising the necessary questions, that will help to highlight a number of the issues involved, to produce further and more effective bodies of work.

In September 2017 the bodies of work discussed here informed the next steps for the research when I took up the position of Lead Artist at Tate Exchange, an entirely new program for the Tate Modern that explores how art makes a difference in society. Tate Exchange occupies a whole floor of the new Switch House building of Tate Modern, and also takes place at Tate Liverpool and Tate Britain. It has an online platform for wider public engagement.

Furthermore, it is an open experiment that seeks to explore the role of art in society. It includes international artists, contributors from different fields, the public, and over 50 Associates, who work within and beyond the arts, creating nine months of participatory programs, workshops, activities and debates. Through this project in which clay, performance, and skills exchange are used as core elements, I am forming a program that will examine further means through which participation may build lasting relationships with museum collections and culture. I will work closely with five of these associate groups to undertake further research in to the long-term impact that participation and exchange can have in communities that are involved in art projects. At the start of the first two weeks in my role as lead artist I will transform Tate Exchange into a factory making everyday objects from clay to explore ideas around the concept of 'Production'.

In week one I will invite the public to join the production line and learn the skills of working with clay. Each participant's labour will be exchanged for another person's object from the factory. In the second week the factory is redundant and invites the visitor to clock in and

consider the role of the human in various forms of production. I will ask the public to consider where does production happen now? How do we experience it? What does production mean in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century and beyond? The factory I build in the Tate is a place to discuss the transactions and transformations of labour that create knowledge and community. In the factory we will examine skills and how we form exchanges at work, with ourselves, and with others. In the conclusion of this body of sustained research that has undertaken a continued line of enquiry I aim, through the ongoing work, to challenge my findings further and continue in my contribution to narratives of art practice.

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**Clare Twomey**  
**PhD by publication**

**Ceramics Collections – *exploring object engagement beyond the known historic models  
of clay practice***

**Portfolio of Artworks**

# Trophy

29 September 2006

**Victoria & Albert Museum**



*A temporary installation, consisting of a display of 4000 small birds made in Wedgwood blue jasper clay installed in the V&A's Cast Courts.*





*Trophy* in the Cast Courts of the V&A, the public engaging with the artwork.



Individual ceramic birds taken by the public over an exhibition period of five hours.





*Trophy in the Cast Courts, V&A*



*Trophy in the Cast Courts, V&A*



The research and exploration for *Trophy* began during an artist in residency period in Hungary where the concept was developed and experiments with scale and materials were undertaken.

Above: Photography of the antique bird models, my development in plaster form and the first clay casts in Hungarian porcelain.

Opposite page: Development in material form of the key themes of multiples, spaces and interaction. The post-it notes developed in a temporary format concepts of space in a variety of forms, this experimentation progressed to the final installation layout.





Below and opposite: The original proposal documents sent to the V&A. A written text and a drawing sent to Alun Graves curator of Ceramics and Glass Collections at the V&A as a proposal for the work. From this initial proposal which underwent a series of changes and developments that become the final work in the V&A in 2006.

CLARE TWOMEY

*Trophy-a temporary installation at the V&A*

**Craft Rocks**

Trophy

The aim of this piece of work is to make a brand new artefact, a new collectable, a rare collaboration with the public.

Three organisations will collaborate to make this brand new object:

The V&A Museum

Wedgwood Manufacturing

Clare Twomey

Wedgwood will provide the traditional Jasper blue clay, a highly revered material. This material is intrinsically linked with the finest of Wedgwood china. It has been used for hundreds of years to make the highly esteemed Wedgwood collections. It is steeped in British tradition. It will be used to make a new object. The object will immediately assume a role of preciousness and distinction due to the association of this material.

This brand new object will be placed in the V&A museum to reflect its status. A rare object.

One collection of the objects will be placed in a cabinet, in the way one might presume to view many objects at the V&A.

This presentation will make the new objects status clear, this is a protected precious object that Museum presents for the public to view.

The rest of the brand new objects will be placed in the museum around this cabinet. These objects become vulnerable because they are not protected, they are free to be touched, moved and taken from the Museum. They become very exciting objects because they are available to the public; they are in contrast with the ones displayed in the cabinet, unprotected. This new object that will be made is a bird. A group of small birds, fine and delicate, they are free and playful; their flight allows them to be mysterious and poetic in our vision. The placed birds are a contrast to the fixed gallery environment of permanence, great care, aimed to keep and protect.

As you walk into the Gallery at the V&A there will be a wave of thousands of birds perched. They are active in their groups, we feel as if we have a magical glimpse, a valuable moment to observe. These fine and fragile birds washed across the gallery space have just arrived; they are ready to leave. You will be able to observe the group as you enter the room, as you walk further you will be among them, seeing their activity become part of the dreamscape they possess as a group.

The viewers of this composition will be free to take a bird, a memento of their experience.

They will be able to take a rare and special object from the V&A.

They can have a real piece of Wedgwood for their home. They can take one bird in their hand as they leave.

There will be devastation to the composition of the birds, a slow and gentle deterioration of the wonder. The magic of a group is being drained in an attempt to *take a little home*. One of thousand birds, it would be hard to tell it was gone. This has an accumulative effect; the taking one by one will be evident. The wonderfully rich composition will be transformed into a thin layer with lost birds being left in high corners, now hiding out of reach. The collective work has changed; it has been robbed of its fullness, because the visitor wanted to have a precious thing to take home. A choice that is made by the public, the guest.







Below: An example of the responses sent by the public who took a bird from the V&A exhibition.



Below: The press release sent out to highlight the coming exhibition at the V&A.

*Clare Twomey in collaboration with Wedgwood and the V&A has made a new temporary work.*

**"TROPHY"**

will be exhibited in the Cast Courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum on the 29th September 2006 from 6.30pm – 11pm.



Trophy is a work that will fill the east courts with 4000 Jasper Blue birds. The birds sitting amongst the classical sculptures create a three-dimensional landscape to walk within. The mystery of their arrival contrasts with the audience's choice to take one from the vast collection. This dilemma of breaking up the collection to take a trophy home is a personal decision all the visitors to the east courts will have on the 29th September. Each bird has been made as part of this valuable and rare collaboration, all 4000 stamped with the collaborators mark to verify this creation of a new object.

*Sarah Weir, Executive Director, Arts Council England, London, said:*  
*"We are delighted to be supporting this innovative project at the V&A. Clare is challenging the boundaries of ceramic practice through a temporary installation, which will allow the audience to take away their own personal piece of the art work".*

[www.vam.ac.uk/fridaylate](http://www.vam.ac.uk/fridaylate)

[www.claretwomey.com](http://www.claretwomey.com)



*Trophy* in the Cast Courts, V&A.

# FOREVER

October 2010 –January 2011

**The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**, Kansas City, Missouri, USA



A time-based installation consisting of 1,345 ceramic cups, whose design was derived from an original ceramic found in the Burnap collection

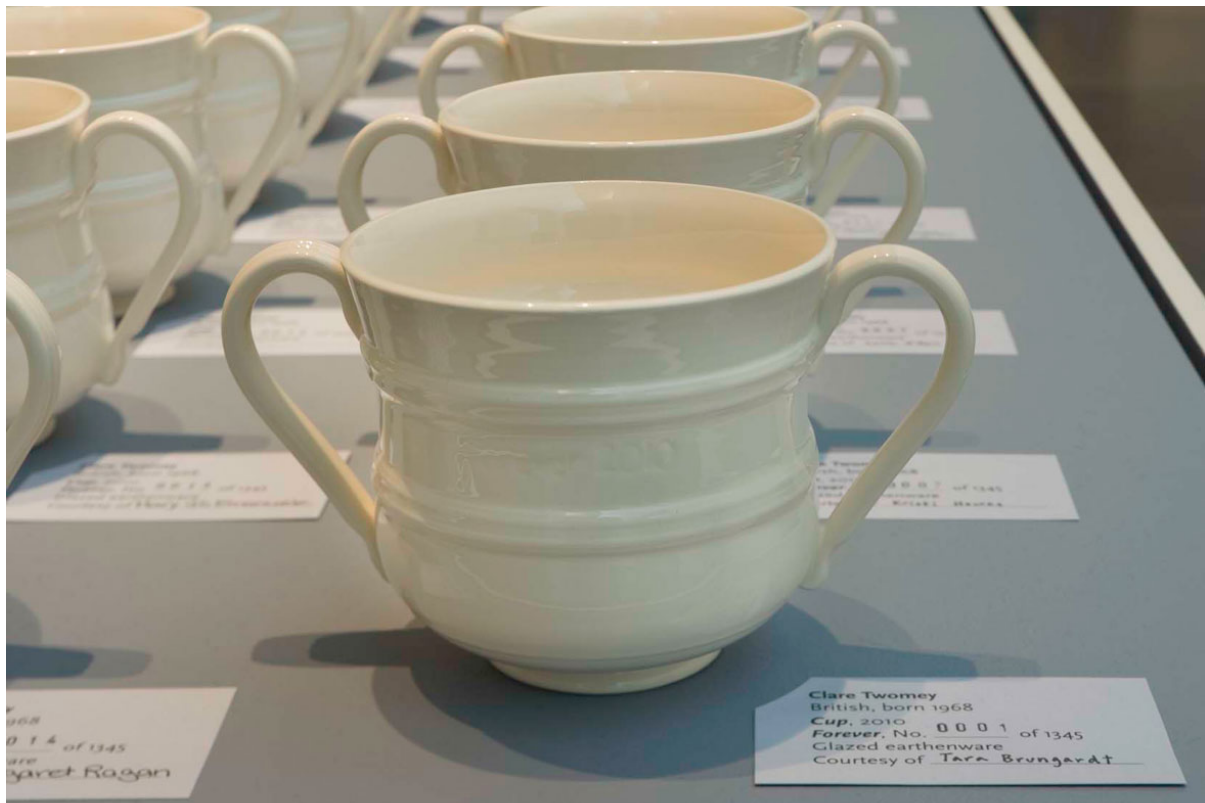




*Forever* installed at the Nelson Atkins Museum.



The 1345 cups that formed the work *Forever* on display, at the Nelson Atkins Museum.



Each of the 1345 cups was presented with a museum label that displayed the ownership of the cups by the public.

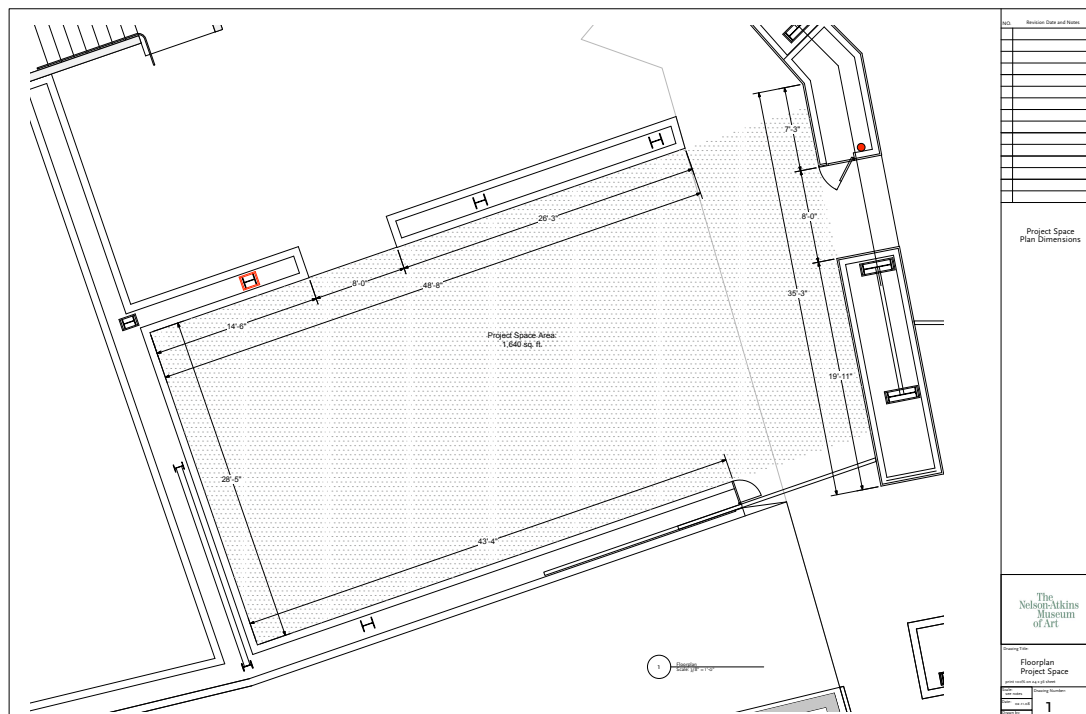
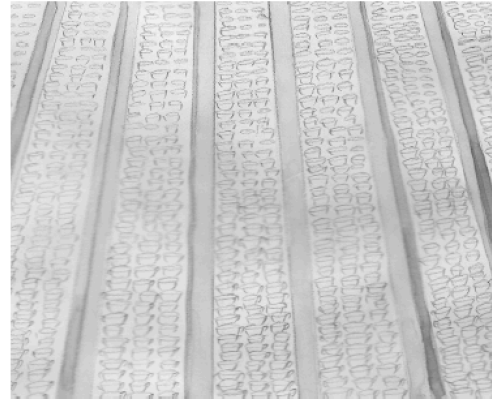




The original caudle cup, part of the Burnap collection in Nelson Atkins Museum USA, and inscribed “Mrs. Mary Sandbachc her Cup anno dom 1720”, is noted for being the earliest-known dated piece of English salt-glazed stoneware. This cup was the design replicated for the exhibition, *Forever*.



Below: A photograph of the original cup selected from the collection, the designs and the sketch's that formed the presentation sent to the curator for the exhibition proposal.





DEED

This instrument made and entered into this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_, by and between

\_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_,  
Name City

hereinafter called the **Owner** and the NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART, hereinafter called the **Museum**, regarding *Cup* # \_\_\_\_, an element of an exhibition conceived and carried out by the artist Clare Twomey, entitled *Forever*, held at the **Museum** October 9, 2010 to January 2, 2011.

1. The **Owner** agrees to retain in trust forever *Cup* # \_\_\_\_.
2. *Cup* # \_\_\_\_ shall never be sold and shall be retained by the **Owner** and their successors in trust forever.
3. *Cup* # \_\_\_\_ shall be treated and handled by the **Owner** in a manner in keeping with a work of art.
4. *Cup* # \_\_\_\_ has a dual purpose to serve, having both aesthetic and educational value, and shall be exhibited.
5. Owing to the rarity, fragility and value of *Cup* # \_\_\_\_, it shall not be subjected to unnecessary handling, but shall be as far as practicable be permanently displayed.
6. When not on exhibition, *Cup* # \_\_\_\_ shall be stored in such a manner as to be reasonably available for inspection and examination by all serious-minded students and experts desiring to inspect or examine it.

In order to express the acceptance of the gift and its assurance that the terms and conditions thereof will be carried out the undersigned heretofore set their hands this day \_\_\_\_\_ of 20 \_\_\_\_.

Name	Address
E-mail address	Telephone number

☐ Please check if you are over 18.

☐ Please check to accept that the names of selected owners will be posted on [www.nelson-atkins.org](http://www.nelson-atkins.org)

The undersigned representative of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art sets their hand to this document on \_\_\_\_ January 2011.

Visit the *Forever* web page on the Nelson-Atkins website [www.nelson-atkins.org/art/exhibitions/forever/](http://www.nelson-atkins.org/art/exhibitions/forever/) to see a list of selected owners. To pick up their *Cup*, selected owners should bring their Deed and packing materials to the Museum during public hours January 5–9, 2011.

Opposite: The original deed for the Burnap Collection from the archives of the Nelson Atkins Museum.

Above: The new deed for the 1345 cups of the new work *Forever*.

DEED OF GIFT

THIS INSTRUMENT made and entered into this 17 day of May, 1941, by and between FRANK P. BURNAP and HARRIET G. BURNAP, husband and wife, of Kansas City, Missouri, parties of the first part, hereinafter called the Donors, and J. C. NICHOLS, HERBERT V. JONES and ROBERT B. CALDWELL, University Trustees under the last will and testament of William Rockhill Nelson, deceased, parties of the second part, and hereinafter called the Trustees, WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, Donors are the owners of a collection of English Pottery and other ceramics (hereinafter referred to as the Collection), a portion of which Collection is now in the possession of said Trustees for the purpose of exhibiting the same, and

P.B. WHEREAS, the Trustees maintain an art exhibit in the  
J.B. William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and desire to acquire said Collection under the terms and conditions hereof as a part of the works and reproduction of works of fine arts now held by them, and

WHEREAS, the Donors desire to convey said Collection by gift to said Trustees and their successors under the terms and conditions hereof, in order that said Collection be retained in perpetuity and that lovers of art and others may at all times have an opportunity of viewing and studying the pieces comprising said Collection;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises, the Donors do hereby give and convey to said parties of the second part and their successors in trust forever, their complete Collection of English Pottery and other ceramics designated as pieces numbered consecutively from 1 to 982, both inclusive, and identified by lists and photographs thereof in possession of each party hereto, under the following terms and conditions, to wit:



*Forever, the 1345 cups on display, at the Nelson Atkins Museum.*

# Exchange

14 June - 15 September 2013

**The Foundling Museum, London, UK**



A display of 1550 cups and saucers installed for three months, in an exchange



participation artwork



*Exchange on display at the Foundling Museum.*



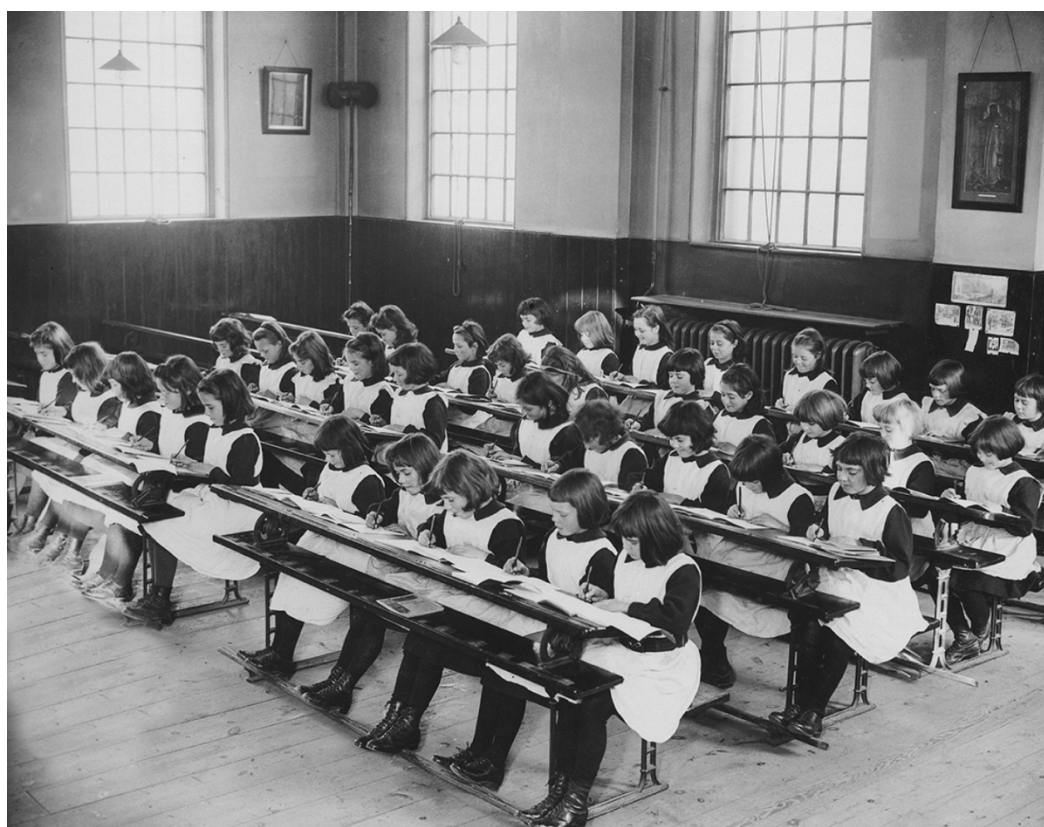


Detail of the cups and saucers that formed *Exchange* at the Foundling Museum.





Archive photographs from the collection of the Foundling Museum, these photographs depict the regimented life of the foundling Children. These photographs influenced the design of the final exhibition display for *Exchange*.





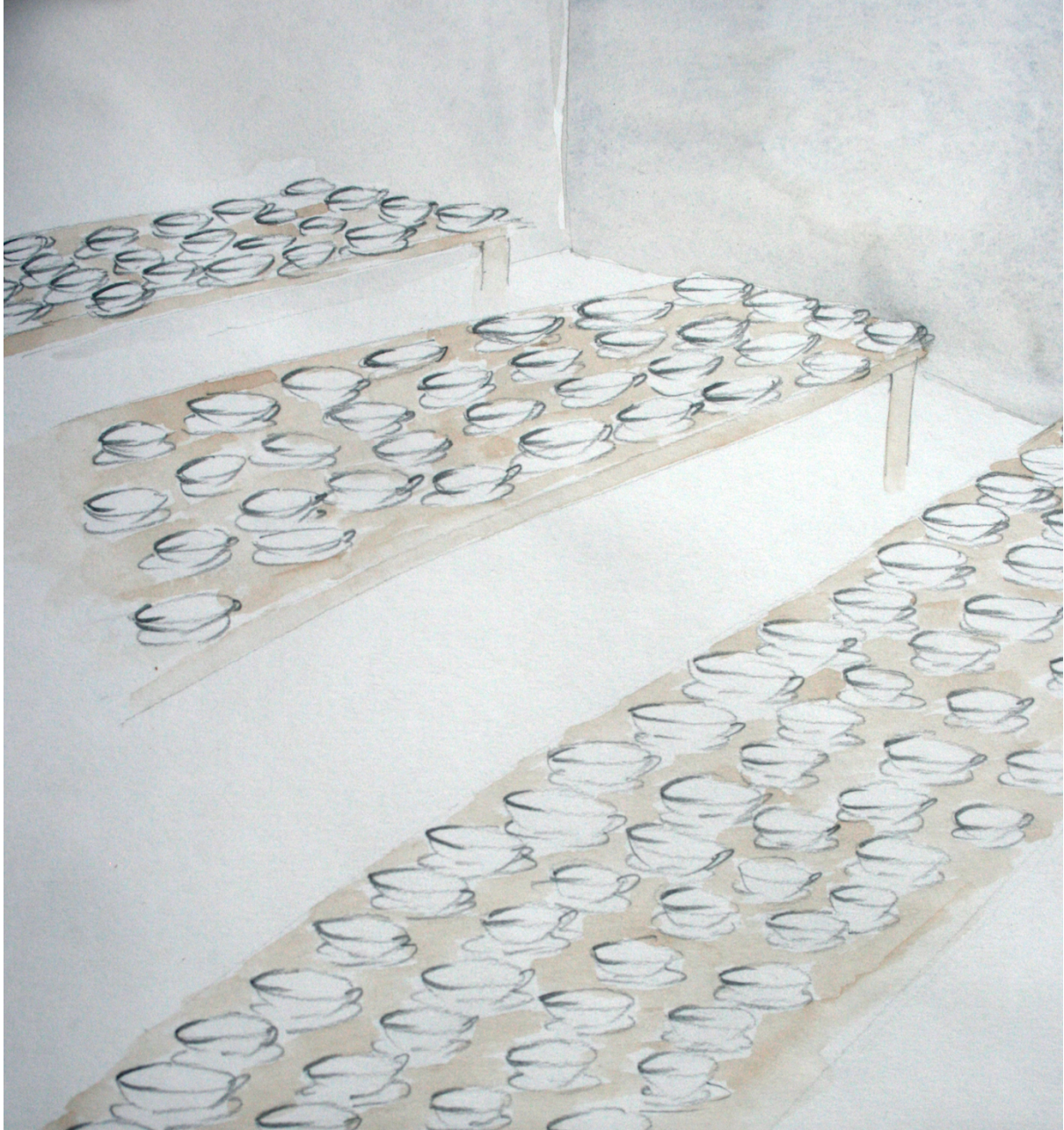


Objects from the archive of the Foundling Museum, these tokens (above) informed a large part of the concept of *Exchange*. The ceramics below from the archive of the museum informed the design of the cups and saucers for *Exchange*.









Above: The original artwork drawings that were part of the proposal to the Foundling Museum for *Exchange*.

Opposite: The artwork for the base of each cup and saucer that were applied to the ceramics cup and saucers with decal transfers in the studio before firing in Stoke on Trent.







Opposite: The industrial firings of the cups and saucers for the exhibition.  
Above: The decal transfers being applied by hand to each of the 1550 cups and saucers.

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20 September 2013

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What an experience our recent trip to the Foundling Museum turned out to be.

Visiting the exhibition and reading some of the good deeds already taken, stirred emotions not felt and ideas not considered for quite some time.

My husband and I had a lovely journey home after our visit; everyone we met along the way seemed unusually friendly and warm, even on the underground!

A couple of days later my husband (not usually moved by Art) revealed that, whilst walking around the tables reading the good deeds, he had decided not only to accept the challenge on the cup he had chosen but also to adopt several of the others. One of these was to 'Smile at everyone you meet' and he had undertaken the task that very day! I can't wait to see which of the other good deeds he has chosen.

And so to my good deed cup number 1353.



Having only recently moved to the south east I was unaware of the many local charities serving the area around our new home. After visiting their website and being made aware of the wonderful work the London Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy do, I have donated £20 in order to provide a parent and child session at the centre.



27 September 2013

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I am pleased to report that I have completed my "good deed".  
(479)

Last friday (20th September) I hosted an afternoon tea and cake and jam sale to raise funds and awareness of the charity Genes for Jeans, currently the total raised is £133.00 with a bit more to come, not including donations made directly to Genes for Jeans.

Clare Twomeys exhibition was so clever and looked amazing too. I feel very priviledged to have received a white token on my visit and it spurred me on to become involved with a charity that I knew little about, so thank you

Penny

These are the responses sent in by the participants of the Exchange project. These were sent to the Museum via tumbler, hundreds of responses were given by the participants.



Today I scattered cornflower seeds on a very unloved-looking grass verge!

Please find attached a photo of my cup and the seeds.

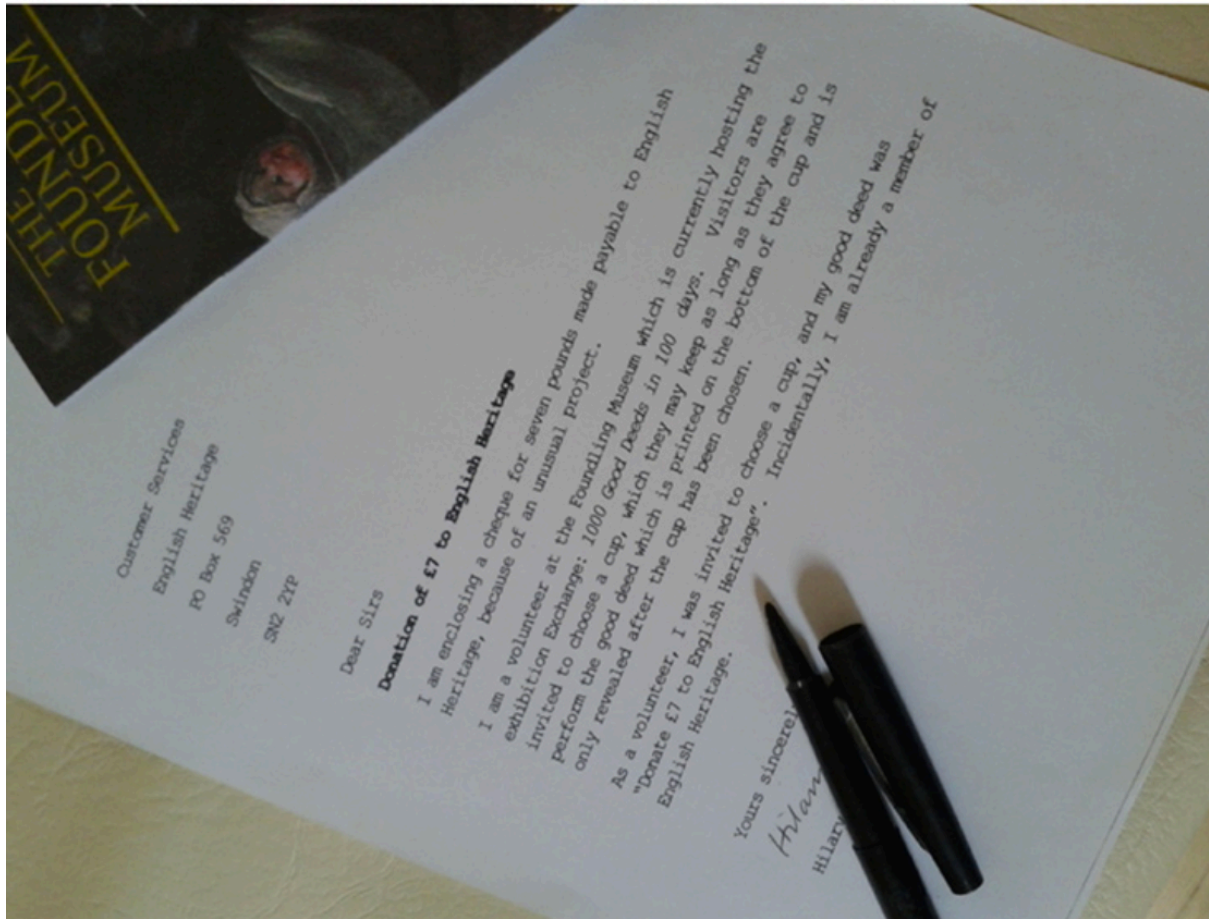
I would never have thought of doing something like this and, even though it was actually a very simple thing, I felt quite nervous and out of my comfort zone.

Thanks for giving me the chance to push my own personal boundaries!

Ruth



9 July 2013



7 pounds donated to English Heritage by Hilary.



Detail of the base of the cups that formed *Exchange* at the Foundling Museum

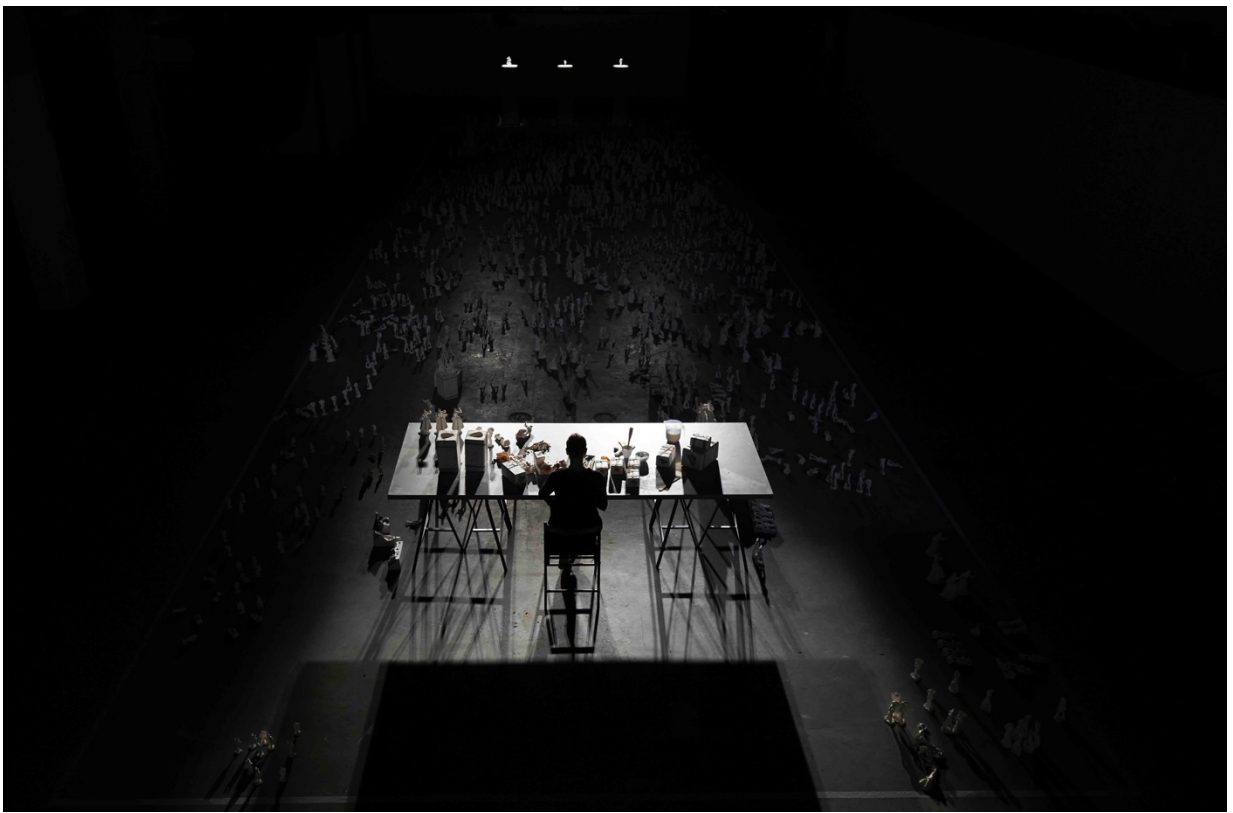
# PIECE BY PIECE

October 2013 – January 2014

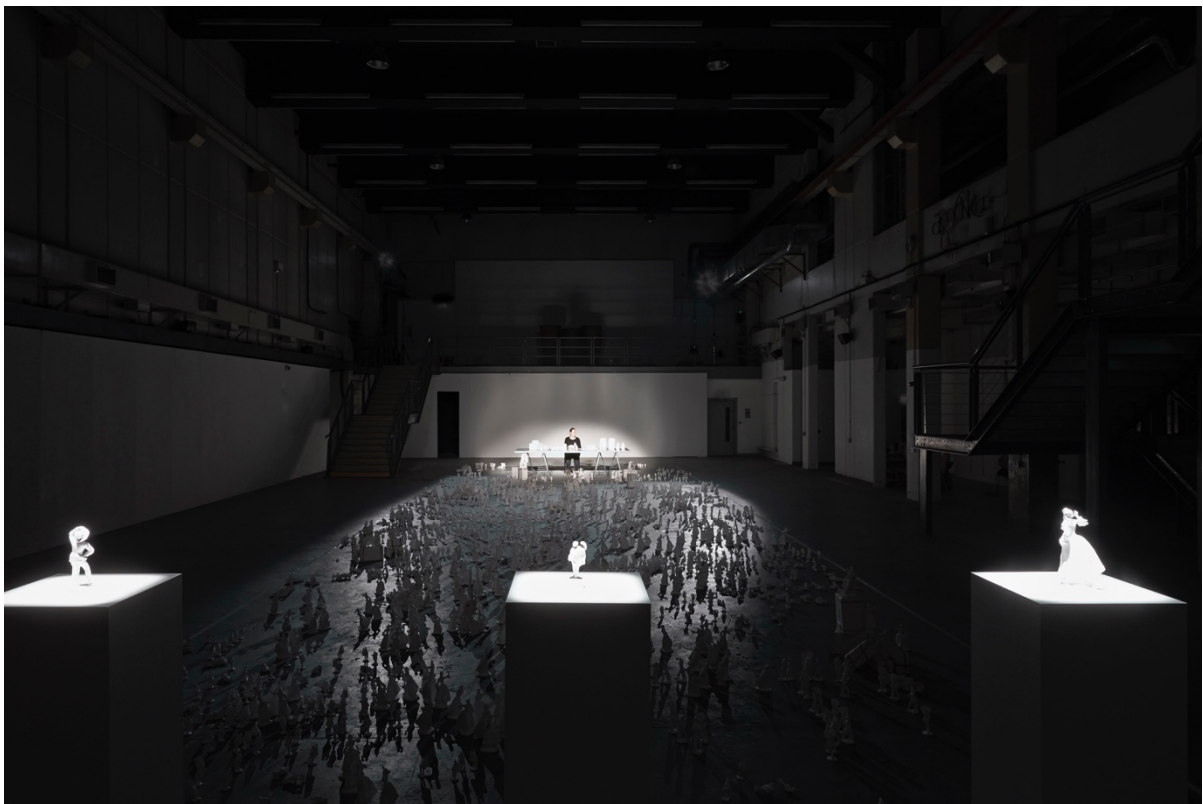
**Gardiner Museum, Canada**



A live, large-scale ceramics installation consisting of a maker, a workbench, three objects from the museum collection and the continuous production of original objects for three months in the gallery space.





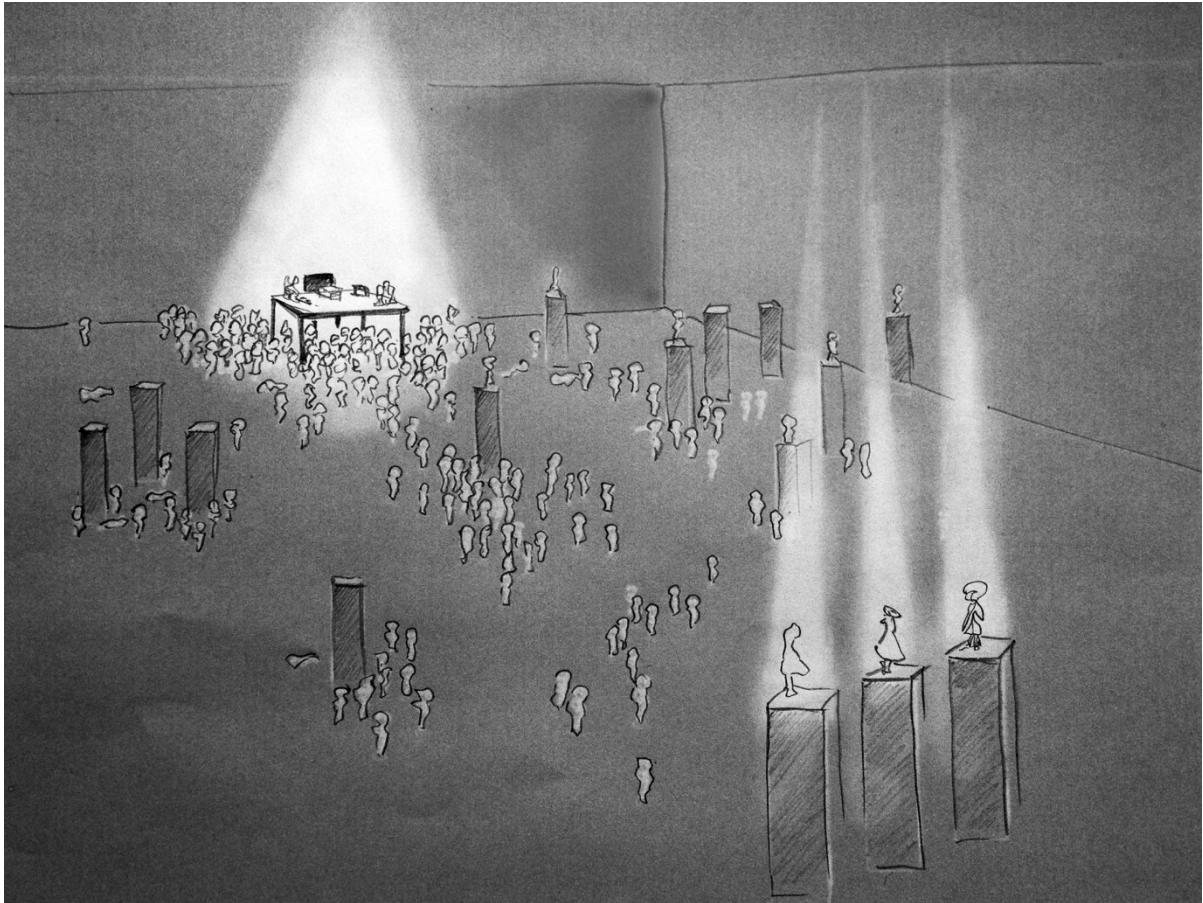


*Piece by Piece*, installation view of the artwork.



*Piece by Piece*, the performer is shown here at the bench making the replica ceramic objects from the Gardiner Museum collection.





The artwork original drawings that were part of the proposal for *Piece by Piece*.





Above: The original comedia dell'arte figurines Leda, Scaramouche and Harlequin, from the Gardiner Museum collection

Below: The scanning of the original figurines in Toronto, the plaster moulds and resin 3D prints of the scans, the first clay casts of the figurines.





*Piece by Piece*, live at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto.





# MANIFEST: 10,000 HOURS

July 2015 – June 2017

**York Art Gallery**, York Museums Trust, UK



A large-scale ceramics installation, consisting of 10,000 ceramic bowls made with the public in workshops and assembled in the York Art Gallery.



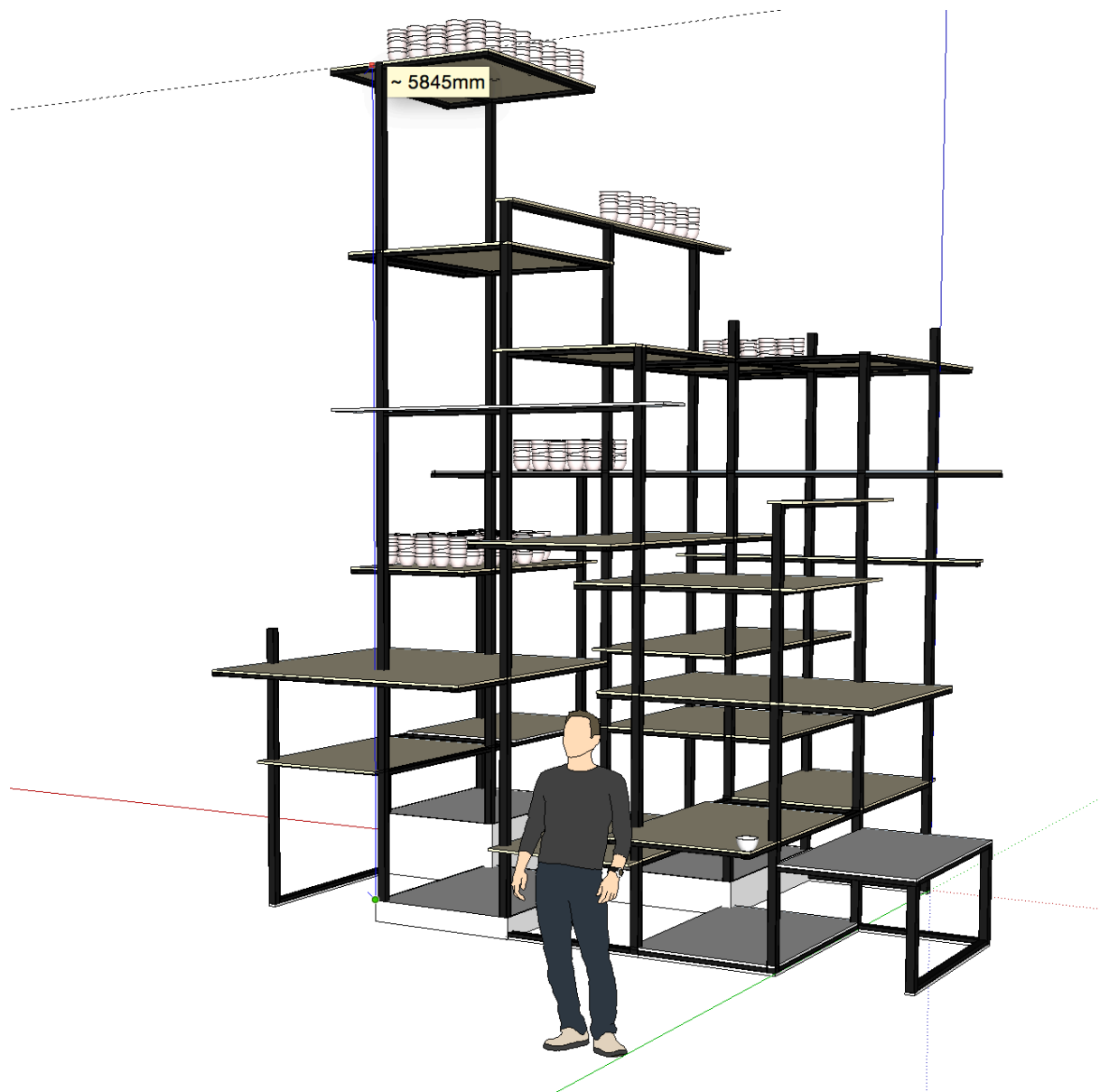


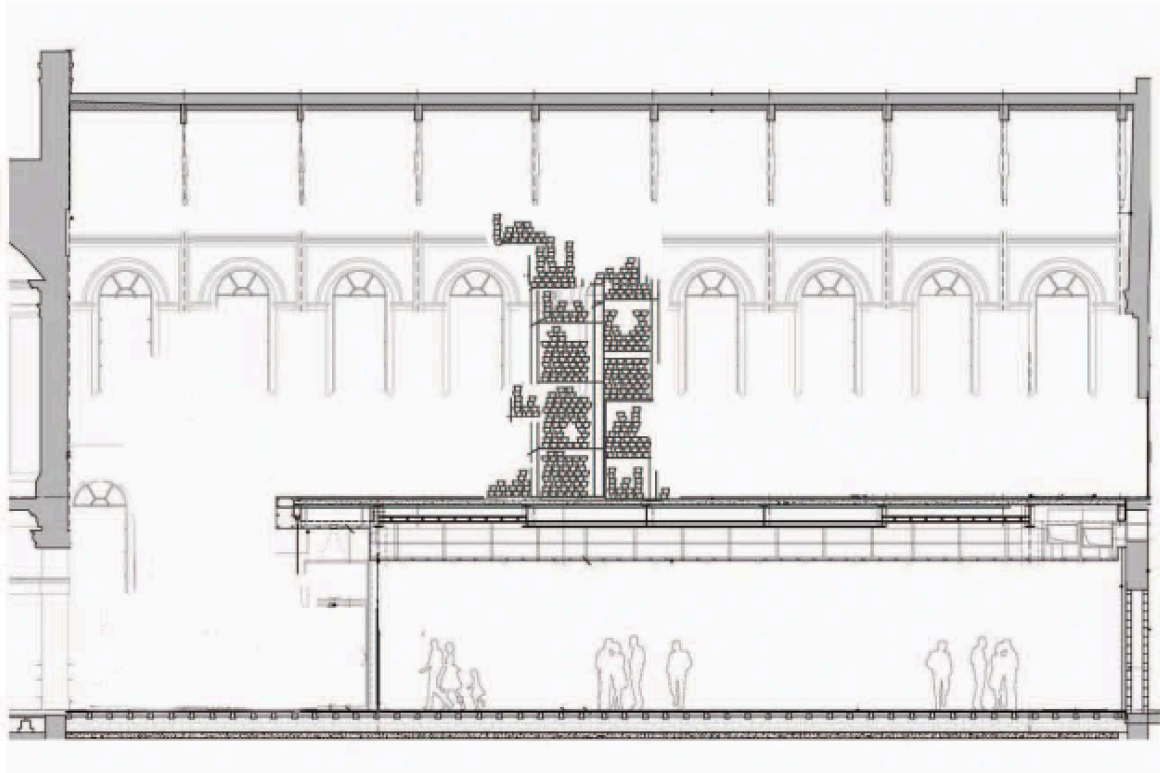


*Manifest: 10,000 hours* installation at York Art Gallery.









Above and left: Proposal drawings, and technical drawings for the artwork.

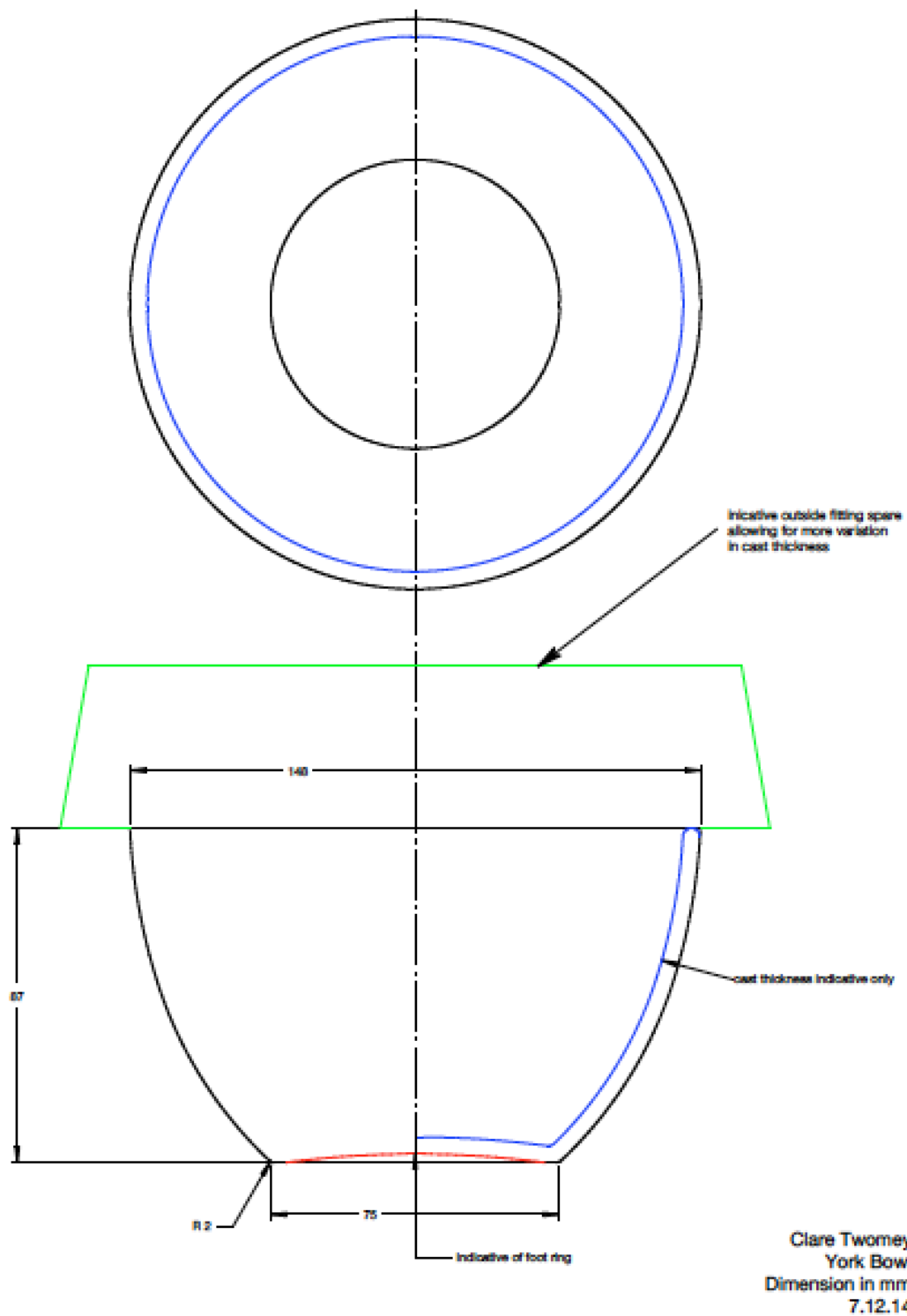
Below: Step by step photographs of the build of the artwork over a two-week period.





The cast ceramics bowls from the first workshops in York and the technical drawing made to produce the moulds for the project.

# MODEL SIZE









The making events in London and York that brought together the hundreds of participants who made in a collective workshops the 10,000 bowls.





Manifest: 10,000 hours installation at York Art Gallery.

