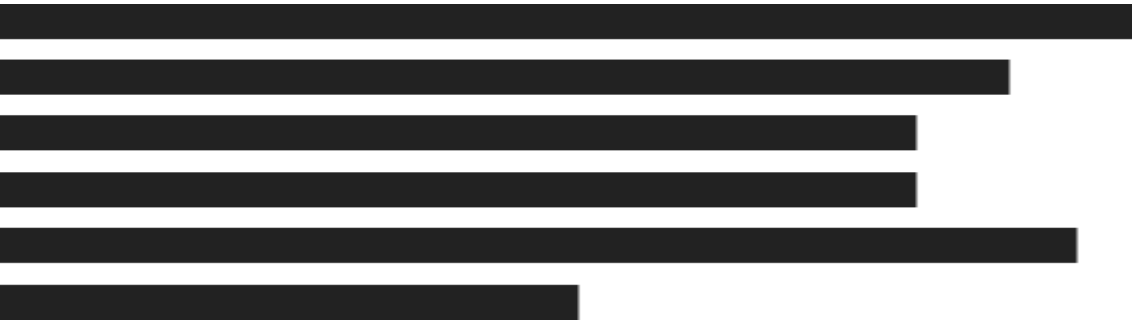




Permanence/Impermanence

Collecting and archiving contemporary clay practices



Conference, 24-26 June
2026



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University of Westminster - Little Titchfield Street
London W1W 7BY

Permanence/Impermanence

Collecting and archiving contemporary clay practices

This conference addresses how artworks in the 'expanded field of clay' can be made accessible and visible to current and future audiences. These works may be ephemeral, site-specific, participatory, or live, thereby posing significant challenges for museums.

Permanence/Impermanence - Collecting and archiving contemporary clay practices, is being held as part of the three-year AHRC-funded research project, Future Ecologies of Clay, undertaken by the Ceramics Research Centre-UK, University of Westminster, in partnership with the V&A (Grant number UKRI748).

The conference recognises that artists working in the expanded field of clay and beyond have increasingly produced works that are process-based, site-specific, participatory, performative, unstable, temporary, or intentionally vulnerable to change. These practices have profoundly extended the language of ceramics and clay; they also challenge many of the structures through which museums have historically understood collection, preservation, authorship, and display.

The questions the conference addresses include:

How do museums collect works that are not fixed objects, but events, encounters, residues, instructions, social relations, or transformations over time?

What does it mean to archive something that is materially unstable, participatory, or impermanent?

And how might artists and curators work together more collaboratively so that responsibility for the future life of artworks is shared more openly and imaginatively? These questions matter not only for clay, but for contemporary art more broadly. Clay becomes a lens through which to examine wider institutional understandings of permanence, value, conservation, and visibility.

Future Ecologies of Clay research will undertake four new models of practice that are being developed in collaboration with four UK museums. The conversations taking place in the conference and as part of the project's long conference will contribute directly to a Collection and Archives Strategy Document intended to support artists, curators and institutions in negotiating these challenges with greater confidence and ambition.

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Collecting and archiving contemporary clay practices

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE

12 noon	Registration opens
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LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03

1.20-1.50 pm CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION

Clare Twomey, Alun Graves
and Phoebe Cummings
HOST: Lucy Reynolds

1.50-2.50 pm KEYNOTE 1

Artist Florence Peake and critic Louisa Buck in conversation

3.10-4.10 pm KEYNOTE 2

Academics and conservators Hanna B. Hölling and Pip Laurenson in conversation

4.30-5.30 pm KEYNOTE 3

Curators Daniel F. Herrmann and Deborah Smith in conversation

5.30-6 pm PANEL DISCUSSION

Florence Peake, Louisa Buck, Hanna B. Hölling, Pip
Laurenson, Daniel F. Herrmann and Deborah Smith, with
Lucy Reynolds

6 -7pm

Drinks reception in Portland Hall

THURSDAY 25 JUNE

9 am Registration Opens

10-11 AM LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Curators Emily Stone and Alexandra Hodby in conversation

11.15-12pm	Lecture Theatre Natalie Baerselman le Gros Inherent Vice: Towards a history and conceptualisation of ephemeral clay practice in Britain	Room LG.08 Sarah Fraser, Julia Rowntree & Tessa Peters Participation’s Traces: What matters?	Room B.01 Becky Little Rock Becoming: Collecting practices that resist permanence Rosanna Martin Tools for Kith Making: Can a pond made as a site-specific intervention in the china clay extraction region of Cornwall create new opportunities for connection across a multi-species ecology? Marilen Rauch Material Soundscapes: Collecting, processing and archiving site-specific clays and their sound	Room B.02 Joshua Woolford Cascade Live: Bringing the ‘messiness’ of life and colonial history into the museum through clay Kate McLeod Provisional Monuments: Raw clay, photography and impermanence
12.15-1pm	Lecture Theatre Raheleh Filsoofi From Documentation to Collection: How process-based clay practice reshapes institutional engagement	Room LG.08 Fiona Jack Leftovers: On the afterlife of the thousands of wood-fired rocks from Riverbed at Artspace Aotearoa Sarah Christie Clay as a Site of Collaboration: Interdisciplinary, experimental, cross- border and open-ended practices Alicja Patanowska Beyond the Artefact: Embodied sculpture and the limits of object-based collecting	Room B.01 Bert Winther-Tamaki Recovering ephemeral Japanese ceramic projects from the 1980s	Room B.02 Simeon Koole, Charlotte Slark & Lily Crowther Capturing multisensory experiences of clay artworks

2-3 PM LECTURE THEATRE, G.03 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Artist Phoebe Cummings and curator Ben Roberts in conversation
Writing Sculpture

3.15-4pm	Lecture Theatre Rupert Faulkner Clay–Fire–Body, a performance by Hoshino Satoru, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, June 29, 2001	Room LG.08 Jules Pelta Feldman Coming Alive: Ceramics as always already conceptual	Room B.01 Catherine Roche Sensory Entanglement: Writing the body into clay Lucy Cran What Artistic Knowledge Is Overlooked When Participatory Art Objects Are Presented or Acquired as Educational Resources?	Room B.02 Christie Brown The Agency of Things: Transience and instability in site- specific clay artworks
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4.15 PM LECTURE THEATRE, G .03 Anders Herwald Ruhwald
The Politics of Fire: Unit 1: 3583 Dubois St

4.45 PM LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03 PANEL DISCUSSION - Emily Stone, Alexandra Hodby, Phoebe Cummings, Ben Roberts and Anders Herwald Ruhwald, with Lucy Reynolds

5.30 PM Drinks reception in Portland Hall

FRIDAY 26 JUNE

9 am Registration Opens

10-11 AM LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Artist Keith Harrison and curator Alun Graves in conversation

11.15-12pm	Lecture Theatre William Cobbing Clay Scrolling: Sticky connections between people and landscape	Room LG.08 Ashley Thorpe The Problem of Permanence: Ceramic objects and ephemeral encounters	Room B.02 Zoe Evans You Just Had to Be There: Striking the balance between artist's intention and integral preservation Laura König But What When the Whole Point is Contact? Offering physical exploration of ceramics art in museums and galleries Monica Cru-Hall Hands of Clay: Haptic learning and the Challenge of archiving experience in participatory clay practice	
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12.15-1pm	Lecture Theatre Louise Chennell Fired and Born: Preserving Rita Gudiño's clay performance	Room LG.08 Nicole Seisler Preparing: A case study in covert permanence Olivia Fero Against Documentation: The index cannot be archived Katy West Reanimating the Archive: Artist-led interpretation and digital mediation in contemporary ceramic collections	Room B.01 Megan Rowden From Workshops to Exhibitions: Designing experiential and archival frameworks for contemporary clay	Room B.02 Michael Dika Excavating the Ephemeral: The archaeological assemblage challenge to museum collecting practices Arran Gregory Earth Body Journals: Archiving clay through process, image and transformation Adrian Tan Resonance as Archive: Clay, rupture, and the politics of form in contemporary Singapore art
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2-3 PM LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Artist Clare Twomey and writer/curator Martina Margetts in conversation

Monument Beyond Permanence: Clay, museums and the politics of return

3-4 PM LECTURE THEATRE, G. 03 PANEL DISCUSSION

Keith Harrison, Alun Graves, Clare Twomey and Martina Margetts with Lucy Reynolds

CONFERENCE CLOSE

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE

HOST: LUCY REYNOLDS

Lucy Reynolds is a researcher, curator and artist, whose research focuses on questions of the moving image, feminism, political space and collective practice. She has published widely and lectures on creative research at the University of Westminster. She is editor of the anthology *Women Artists, Feminism and the Moving Image* and the co-editor of the Moving Image Review and Art Journal (MIRAJ). As an artist, her ongoing sound work *A Feminist Chorus* has been performed in libraries, galleries, cinemas, gardens and streets from the Glasgow International Festival, the Wysing Arts Centre, Grand Union galleries, Birmingham to Swedenborg Hall. Recent curatorial projects include the film and video exhibits in 'Women in Revolt: Art and Activism in the UK 1970 – 1990' at Tate Britain, and the accompanying film series 'Through a Radical Lens' and the conference 'Women in Revolt: Radical Acts and Contemporary Resonances'.

1.50 PM

FLORENCE PEAKE AND LOUISA BUCK IN CONVERSATION

Florence Peake (b. 1973) is a London-based artist making performance works intertwined with an extensive visual art practice since 1995. Presenting work internationally and across the UK in galleries, theatres and the public realm. By encouraging chaotic relationships between the body and material, she produces interactive sculpture, paintings that use the whole body's physicality, text, film and drawings. Peake's performance *Your Meaning Not Your Materiality* was presented at Leeds Art Gallery (2024) and will tour to additional UK venues in 2025/26/27. Her touring institutional solo exhibition 'Factual Actual: Ensemble' was presented at Southwark Park Galleries, London; Towner Eastbourne and Fruitmarket, Edinburgh (2023/2024). Her work was part of the group exhibitions 'Motion in Stillness: Dance and the Human Body in Movement' at Victoria Miro, London (2024/25), and Hayward Gallery's touring 'British Art Show 9' (2021). Other exhibitions and performances include: Venice Biennale 2019; CRAC Occitanie, Sète, France (2018), London Contemporary Music Festival, UK (2018); De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, UK (2018); Palais De Tokyo, Paris, France (2018); Hayward Gallery, London UK (2018), Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK (2017); Serpentine, London UK (2016); Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2016); ICA, London (2016); Modern Art Oxford (2016); BALTIC, Newcastle UK (2013); Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2012).

Louisa Buck is a writer and broadcaster on contemporary art. She is a Contributing Editor and London Contemporary Art Correspondent for The Art Newspaper and a regular reviewer and commentator on BBC radio and TV. She has written catalogue essays for institutions including Tate, Whitechapel Gallery, ICA London, MCA Australia, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Hepworth Wakefield. Her books include *Moving Targets 2: A User's Guide to British Art Now* (Tate 2000); *Market Matters: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Art Market* (Arts Council England 2004); *Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook* (Cultureshock Media 2006); *Commissioning Contemporary Art : A Handbook for Curators, Collectors and Artists* (Thames & Hudson 2012). In 2016 she authored 'The Going Public Report' commissioned by Museums Sheffield. Louisa was a judge for the 2005 Turner Prize and is a founding member of The Gallery Climate Coalition.

3.10 PM

HANNA B. HÖLLING AND PIP LAURENSEN IN CONVERSATION

Hanna B. Hölling is Research Professor at HKB Bern University of the Arts and Senior Fellow at the Collegium Helveticum Zurich. Her research, publications and teaching address subjects in material culture studies, history and theory of conservation, and the history of art since the mid-20th century. Amongst her books are two volumes of *Performance: The Ethics and the Politics of Conservation and Care* (Routledge, 2023 & 2024), *Activating Fluxus* (Routledge, 2026), *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change and Materiality in Media Art* (University of California Press, 2017) and *Revisions: Zen for Film* (Bard Graduate Center, 2015). She has been PI on SNSF-funded projects, such as Critical Conservation.

Pip Laurenson is Professor of Conservation and Director MSc in the Conservation of Contemporary Art and Media at UCL. Her writing, research and practice are rooted in a career working with forms of artistic practice that unfold over time, have complex social or technological dependencies, and often unsettle the structures of the museum. Starting her career as a sculpture conservator she went on to establish and lead Tate's pioneering Time-based Media Conservation section (1996-2010), and was Head of Collection Care Research, Tate (2010-2022). She has led various important research projects, including the Mellon Foundation Initiative *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum* (Tate, 2018-2022).

4.30 PM

DANIEL F. HERRMANN AND DEBORAH SMITH IN CONVERSATION

Gold and Mud: Clay and the hierarchy of artistic materials in Richard Long's *Mud Sun*, 2025

Since its bicentenary in 2025, visitors to the National Gallery are welcomed into the national collection of painting by a prominent, large-scale wall work by Richard Long. At the top of the Gallery's grand staircase, the artist created the four metre circle of *Mud Sun*, 2025. By applying tidal mud from the River Avon in sweeping, kinetic gestures, Long arguably completed the plans of the 1991 Venturi Scott Brown-designed building. The first prominent work of a canonic painting collection now features abstract mark-making in a distinctly humble material. This lecture presents Long's practice and medium for *Mud Sun* through the lens of material semantics. By looking at the discourse history of mud and clay and other geological matter in the context of traditional painting, its institutions and its conservation, it aims to take a close look at the role of museums in perpetuating or questioning material hierarchies.

Daniel F. Herrmann is the Ardan Curator of Modern & Contemporary Projects at the National Gallery, London. An Art Historian, he was previously Curator at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh and Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Since 2017, he has built the Modern & Contemporary strategy, programme and team at the National Gallery. They relate the National Gallery's collection to contemporary art and culture. An Associate Fellow at the Warburg Institute, London, he is currently working on an exhibition of German Expressionist Painting (2027) and the Catalogue Raisonné of Printmaking by Eduardo Paolozzi.

Deborah Smith is a curator / consultant working in arts and heritage. Her work explores strategies for collaboration and the presentation of interdisciplinary practices. She was formerly Director of the Arts Council Collection, the most widely circulated national collection of modern and contemporary British art, Interim Head of Programmes at the Serpentine Galleries, and Associate Curator at Arup. She currently serves as a judge for the Museum + Heritage Awards, a Shadow Advisory Member of The Box, Plymouth, on the University of Warwick Art Collection Committee, UK Parliament Collections Advisory Group and a member of the HS2 Independent Design Panel.

THURSDAY 25 JUNE

10 AM

EMILY STONE IN CONVERSATION WITH ALEXANDRA HODBY

Emily Stone was Project Curator of the Jeremy Deller Commission, *The Triumph of Art* at the National Gallery, London. She previously held posts at the Bartlett School of Architecture and was Assistant Curator, Public Programmes at Tate, co-curating projects including the FACTORY with Clare Twomey, and Psychic Friends Network with Simone Leigh. At the National Portrait Gallery, London, she was Inspiring People Participation Manager, curating 9 partnership projects and commissioning new work by artists including Sharon Walters. She is currently a Project Manager for arts charity Heart n Soul.

Dr Alexandra Hodby is Head of Programmes at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, where she leads exhibitions, collections, learning, and commissions across one of Europe's major centres for contemporary sculpture. Previously Senior Curator of Programme at Chatsworth, she has also held curatorial roles at Museums Sheffield and Kettle's Yard, and has taught about curating and museum futures with Tate and King's College London. In 2016, she completed an AHRC-funded collaborative PhD with Tate Modern and Goldsmiths exploring museums, learning and democracy. Her research and curatorial practice focus on public engagement, contemporary art and the activation of historic and complex sites.

11.15 AM

PARALLEL SESSIONS

JOSHUA WOOLFORD

Cascade Live: Bringing the 'messiness' of life and colonial history into the museum through clay

In 2023 I staged a 3.5 hour durational performance at the V&A Late curated by Ronan McKenzie titled *Cascade Live*. Building upon my *Cascade* ceramic sculptures to explore the personal, familial and cultural histories held within clay, I dug up wild clay in North London as a way to situate the project. Drawing inspiration from the overlapping material cultures of the Arawak, Taíno, Kalinago, West African, and European peoples across the Caribbean and repositioning them in direct relation to each other in order to confront the violent histories of settler colonialism and the trafficking of enslaved people which is evidenced through the geographical proximity of these previously disparate forms. I propose to present this project, the approach and development, as well as the documentation as an example of how live performance and working with raw materials within museum or gallery spaces demystifies the process of creation, and invites audiences in to experience the phase of creation and often invisible human labour behind exhibited artefacts. In this piece, since the sculpture was destroyed directly after the performance, the only remaining 'evidence' is the video and photo documentation, and the 6 buckets of clay in my studio. It was my hope that following the performance the V&A may acquire a print of the performance, for it to become a lasting part of their collection. In this regard translation from live performance to digital image is an important way for my practice to reach wider audiences. In presenting this project as a case-study—an example of live performance with clay disrupting the otherwise sterile, static and largely white sculpture gallery—I'd like to discuss the value of clay as a medium, and embodied art practice as a method, for engaging with colonial histories, while also questioning how such projects can be caringly curated and meaningfully sustained.

Joshua Woolford is a transdisciplinary artist working between performance, painting, sculpture, sound, video, and installation. Their work is rooted in cultural research, drawing from literature, music, and art, as well as their own personal experiences of being a member of the queer black Afro-Caribbean diaspora living in England. Joshua is currently a LAHP funded PhD candidate across Slade and the Royal College of Art with a project exploring anticapitalist and anticolonial resistance and performance. They also lecture at UAL (London College of Communication) the Royal College of Art (School of Architecture) and UCL (Slade).

KATE MCLEOD

Provisional Monuments: Raw clay, photography and impermanence

Sculptures made from raw clay are inherently unstable. To remain malleable, they must be continually attended to otherwise they dry, harden and crack, becoming vulnerable to collapse. Pursuing this precarity is central to many artists' practices, including my own. The material qualities of unfired clay offer a way of exploring fallibility and ephemerality, conditions that resonate with broader social, political and environmental instability. In this sense, clay can be understood not as a fixed substance but as an ongoing material process or flux (Ingold, 2010).

Drawing on my practice research, this paper examines how temporary sculpture made from raw clay can be exhibited by translating it into photographic images. Clay has energy when soft and yielding to touch, when embracing this fluidity, we can explore our material world and its 'continual becoming, entangledness, and processuality' (Finke & Weltzien, 2017). The challenge of retaining this state of flux for an audience has led me to strategies including performing the making process, building temporary sculptural installations, and photography. A recent work, *Reformer* (2026), brings a temporary raw clay sculpture into the gallery through a life-sized photograph. The image is clamped to an improvised support structure that echoes the provisional nature of the original sculpture. The sculpture itself existed only briefly. The image evokes a contested public monument: a female figure posed like a commemorative statue. This work is situated within a discussion of anti-monumental sculpture (Dezeuze, 2017, Sullivan, 2020). In contrast to the authority and permanence associated with colonial statues, raw clay foregrounds uncertainty, change and deterioration; it offers a counter-monument (Stevens, Franck & Fazakerley, 2012). In this paper, I critically explore both the potential and limitations of a photograph as the primary site through which such works are encountered as provisional monuments (Lejeune, 2022).

Dezeuze, A. (2017). *Almost nothing: Observations on precarious practices in contemporary art*. 1st ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Finke, M., & Weltzien, F. (Eds.). (2017). *State of Flux: Aesthetics of Fluid Materials*. Reimer, pp. 10

Ingold, Tim (2010). 'The Textility of Making,' in *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34(1), pp. 91–102.

Lejeune, R. (2022). 'Collecting the Ephemeral' [Online Event], *Considering Collecting*, Courtauld, London, Tuesday 8th

February 2022, Available at: <https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/considering-collecting-collecting-the-ephemeral/> (Accessed: 14.03.26).

Sullivan, E. (2020). 'Kara Walker's Fons Americanus: A Comic Anti-Monument,' in *Comedy in Crises*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 67–80.

Stevens, Q., Franck, K. A. and Fazakerley, R. (2012). Counter-monuments: the anti-monumental and the dialogic, *The Journal of Architecture*, 17(6), pp. 951–972

Kate McLeod is an artist and educator based in Dundee. She is a Lecturer in Contemporary Art Practice and Programme Director for Art & Philosophy at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, University of Dundee. Her sculptural practice explores material precarity, impermanence and anti-monumentality. Recently she curated and exhibited in *Things Fall* (2026), Phoenix Gallery, and *Antimonumental* (2024), Thames Side Studio Gallery. She has exhibited widely, including at the RSA, Edinburgh; Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland; and Andipa Gallery, London. Residencies include CoLab London and Brian Mercer Bronze Residency in Pietrasanta. Her research on studio pedagogy has been published in *MAKINGS* and presented at conferences including the Glasgow School of Art.

BECKY LITTLE

Rock Becoming: Collecting practices that resist permanence

This provocation arises from long-term work with unfired clay in building and art. Rather than aiming for permanence or completion, this way of working stays in relation with materials, place, and time. Clay-rich earth is dug, shaped, carved, and polished. The resulting object or structure is held for a while, then allowed to continue. Repair, reworking, and return are not responses to failure but part of the life of the work, echoing geological making and unmaking. Works from *Earthbound Orkney* are currently being repaired for a new exhibition. The repair is neither hidden nor corrective. It is a continuation of attention, as in vernacular earth traditions, where surfaces are maintained, buildings tended, and materials expected to weather and shift. Care builds cohesion and is learned through doing. Choosing not to fire clay keeps the work in flow. Unfired earth remains responsive to water, touch, and weather. It can be taken apart, remade, borrowed, and returned. It carries no firing energy or chemical stabilisation, remaining within cycles of use rather than being extracted. In a culture oriented toward consumption and replacement, this way of working quietly resists finality. Recent work, including *River of Earth (Earth Matters)*, extends this approach by working with soil not only as material but as an active presence. The structure, movement, and behaviour of earth shape the work, revealing flow and change. Rather than representing soil, these practices attend to how it acts and responds, giving earth agency. Instead of asking how such works might be preserved, this provocation asks what it would mean to collect practices that insist on relation rather than resolution. What kinds of stewardship become possible when change is not treated as loss? And how might acts of repair - visible, ongoing, and expected - be understood as part of the work itself?

Becky Little is an artist, builder, and conservator specialising in earth-based construction and material practices. Over three decades, she has worked with unfired clay in art, archaeology, and architectural projects, exploring how hands-on making can reveal the life of materials, place, and time. Her practice focuses on relational approaches to earth, attending to soil and natural materials as active participants. Becky has led collaborative exhibitions, research projects, and workshops that emphasise care, repair, and circularity in material culture, advocating for stewardship that honours both the human and more-than-human agents in the work.

ROSANNA MARTIN

Tools for Kith Making: Can a pond, made as a site-specific intervention in the china clay extraction region of Cornwall, create new opportunities for connection across a multi-species ecology?

This practice-based research project questions in what ways might sculptural tools, apparatus and site-specific interventions, devised through relations between domestic and post-industrial spaces, offer new opportunities for kith making. Kith making here is to 'denote a form of dynamic relation between beings...whose ground is knowledge, practice and place.' (Lewis, 2022). My practice is focused on this dynamic relation - can the artworks I make act as prompts for new connections across a multi-species ecology? How do I record and give value to those moments of impermanence? The domestic is defined by my experiences of solo motherhood; isolated, malleable, creative, closed, lonely, love-full, laborious, repetitive, soft. The postindustrial waste land is patchy, borderless, unintentional, hard, and brimming with ferality (Tsing, et al., 2024). Located on the outskirts of St Austell, Cornwall, the heritage of this site holds inherently masculine, extractivist and industrial labour practices. The site is live, and ever-evolving. The china clay extraction industry impacts the landscape in colossal ways, generating tonnes of waste in the form of quartz sand and mica. Materials gathered from this ground are used to create my artworks, transforming them into new wood-fired clay and ceramic pieces. The artworks I make are inspired by tools and machines such as spoons, sieves, wheels, balls, plug holes, brushes, and belly buttons. In this provocation I wish to explore how to record durational, ephemeral, site specific artworks and interventions. My proposition is to create an artist book inspired by the format of a Field Guide, drawing together artistic and observational practices that embody the practice of 'artist as ecologist' (Ramos, 2025). I will present excerpts from my work in progress of the making of my Field Guide, and wish to question how successful the format of a Field Guide is in the presentation of an embodied and transient practice.

Ramos, Filipa. 2025. *The Artist as Ecologist*. Lund Humphries Publishers | Lewis, Sophie. 2022. *Abolish the Family*. Verso Books.
Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena and Feifei Zhou. 2024. *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene*. Stanford University Press.

Rosanna Martin is an artist, educator and PhD student at Falmouth University. She has worked with clay for over 20 years, graduating with an MA in Ceramics and Glass from RCA in 2013. She spent her early years regularly visiting, swimming in, and sliding across a source of waste china clay on the River Fal where her grandparents worked as sheep farmers. Rosanna is the Creative Director of Brickfield, a research driven participatory brickworks set within the china clay landscape of Cornwall that uses waste clay, quartz and mica to collectively make bricks by hand.

MARILEN RAUCH

Material Soundscapes: Collecting, processing and archiving site-specific clays and their sound

This paper presents *Material Soundscapes*, an interactive audio-visual installation using self-extracted earthenware clays and field recordings from four sites in and around Gothenburg, Sweden. The work combines raw clay, sound and audience interaction to explore how place, material and process are interconnected and can be experienced simultaneously. The installation invites audiences to listen to the soundscapes of four clay sites and the processes the material undergoes to become usable. It creates an environment of interaction that stimulates a dialogue between matter (clay), places and people. The installation consisted of four site-specific raw clays presented in an interactive environment with loudspeakers and conductive elements. Each speaker continuously played a field recording from one of the clay sites. When visitors touched the wet clay together with a metal handle, recordings of the clay processing stages (digging, refining and handling) were triggered, interrupting the ambient soundscape. The clay therefore functioned simultaneously as material, interface and archive of its own transformation. Because the clay needed to remain wet in order to conduct sound, the installation was inherently unstable and materially time-based. The project involved collecting clay from four sites: two construction areas where clay had already been excavated and two natural environments where I excavated the material myself. Field recordings captured both the acoustic environments of these locations and the sounds produced through extracting and preparing the clay. Each place, material and time of day has its own inherent "voice" and unique soundscape. Using this work as a case study, the paper reflects on the challenges such practices pose for museum collections. If the artwork depends on mutable raw clay, site-specific sound and embodied interaction, what exactly can or should be collected? By examining clay as a conductive, changing and performative material, the paper proposes that sound recordings, process documentation and artist defined instructions may function as alternative archival strategies for representing ephemeral clay practices within museum collections.

Marilen Rauch is a ceramic artist working with self-extracted clay and ceramic minerals, field recordings and site- responsive installations. She creates dialogues and explorative synergies between landscapes, their materials, and the transformations they undergo. She is interested in the ephemeral states of extractive landscapes, exploring their material and immaterial properties. Her practice explores how material processes can be documented and remembered beyond the fired ceramic object.

SARAH FRASER, JULIA ROWNTREE AND TESSA PETERS

Participation's Traces: What matters?

Participatory events and socially engaged projects are a significant feature of contemporary art, with clay-based practices offering a wide range of opportunities for public engagement. For example, some direct invitations to individuals and communities to make, collaborate and creatively respond, include events instigated by Clayground Collective with various partners (since 2007), Clare Twomey's *Factory: the seen and the unseen* (Tate, 2017- 2018), Phoebe Cummings' *This Was Now* (Wolverhampton Art Gallery, 2020), and *Playscape* (2024-2025), a year-long collaboration led by British Ceramics Biennial Associate Artist, Sarah Fraser. While encompassing a broad spectrum of activities and ambitions, such initiatives share a concern to turn passive viewers into more active participants by developing opportunities for creative collaboration and facilitating social and collective experiences. For museums and other institutions, they can help bring repeat visitors, build greater engagement and connections with communities, assist interpretation, and increase the making, appreciation and understanding of art and culture. For artists, they offer another means of provoking and challenging thinking, of directly engaging with audiences and extending the possibilities and outcomes of their own practices. The panel will consider a range of issues, drawing on their individual artistic, educational, production and curatorial experiences of participatory practices. Some of the questions raised include: What might be the benefits to an institution of collecting participatory clay projects and their outcomes? What kinds of things merit being collected or recorded, and why? What are the key considerations when devising and developing an inclusive and meaningful participatory project? How is it possible to achieve a good balance between the interests of all concerned and avoid any sense of social extraction? And how can we assess the success of a participatory project in terms of the experience of individual participants?

Sarah Fraser is a ceramic artist whose practice centres around the collaborative efforts of people and communities, places and material, and how they come together to tell stories and shape the spaces around us. Fraser's work typically makes use of reclaimed waste clay and explores how it can be transformed with energy and attention into a vehicle for expression and transformation. Her most recent completed project is *Playscape*, a large-scale interactive rammed earth artwork presented at the British Ceramics Biennial, 2025, for which she was the lead artist and producer.

Julia Rowntree co-founded Clayground Collective with Duncan Hooson in 2007, bringing a performance and learning perspective from the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT). Since then, Clayground has engaged 1000s of participants in clay and making via large-scale participatory projects, education and interdisciplinary research. They have trained apprentices, taught teachers, commissioned artists and helped reshape the ceramic design curriculum at Central Saint Martins. Recognised by a National Award for 'commitment to passing on craft skills', their book *Clay in Common* offers a guide to anyone embarking on participatory practice. Julia was succeeded as Clayground's Producing Director in 2020 by craft professional Claire West.

Tessa Peters is a senior lecturer in the history and theory of art at the University of Westminster School of Arts. She is part of CREAM, a member of the University's Ceramics Research Centre and a supervisor on the graduate programme. Her research interests include the study of participatory art projects and points of crossover between art forms. She also works as an independent curator on exhibitions that frequently include a participatory dimension, and she writes about contemporary art, with a particular interest in clay-based practice.

NATALIE BAERSELMAN LE GROS

Inherent Vice: Towards a history and conceptualisation of ephemeral clay practice in Britain...

Given an often-perceived tendency for clay/ceramic/craft to be some decades behind in terms of the evolution of artistic theory and making, one could be forgiven for assuming that artists working in the expanded field of clay or with ephemeral clay practices is a recent development. However, given the ephemeral nature of these works and their resistance to being collected (whatever that may mean at the moment), it is possible that artists working in these ways have left little to no record. Part of the Future Ecologies of Clay project is to establish a history of this activity, which initial research suggests is in fact rich. The expanded field of clay and ephemeral clay practices align with theories of conceptualism and meta/anti-materialism in modern, post-modern and contemporary art. Whilst their making and collecting legacy shares much with conceptual art, the expanded field of sculpture, and performance art, their innate materiality sets them apart. This paper will examine case studies from artists such as Paul Astbury, Percy Peacock, Tony Hepburn, Nicholas Pope, Barry Flanagan, Richard Mackness, Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy as well as key exhibitions such as 'State of Clay' at Sunderland Arts Centre, 1978, 'Clay Sculpture' at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1980, and 'The Raw and the Cooked', 1993.

Natalie Baerselman le Gros is the Future Ecologies of Clay Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum. She is a PhD student at the University of East Anglia studying 'The Abstract Vessel: defining 'vesselism' in the New British Ceramic (1955-1995)'. Natalie is a curator, editor and writer of ceramic and has worked with important collections at the Sainsbury Centre and the Crafts Council. She recently authored *Gordon Baldwin: Inscape* and has written on clay for numerous publications and galleries.

12.15 PM

PARALLEL SESSIONS

BERT WINTHER-TAMAKI

Recovering ephemeral Japanese ceramic projects from the 1980s

The 1980s were a decade of rich experimentation in Japanese ceramics. While Euro-American perspectives on contemporary Japanese ceramics continue to favor vessel pottery associated with the tea ceremony and other pottery traditions, as well as kiln-fired sculpture, many ceramic artists in Japan pursued clay work far beyond the potter's wheel and kiln. This work was sometimes undertaken by artists better known for their more conventional ceramics, which is well represented in museums and private collections in Japan and overseas. Recovering their more ephemeral clay performances and installations presents a greater challenge to researchers. Nonetheless, documentary photographs and films, together with journalism, exhibition catalogs, and criticism, permit an assessment of the range and diversity of experimental ceramic works completed in Japan in the 1980s. Despite this male-dominated social context, three female artists—Fujita Akiko, Araki Takako, and Mishima Kimiyo—may be identified, together with male contemporaries—Koie Ryōji, Hoshino Satoru, and Itō Kōshō—as leading figures in trends known as “unfired” (anfaido) and “installation” (insutarēshon) ceramics. Their ephemeral work ranges from raking 5.6 tons of sand in a museum gallery (Araki Takako) to dispersing fired grog on a beach (Itō Kōshō), while their performances range from coating naked bodies with clay slurry (Hoshino Satoru) to open-air firings of architectural-scale sculptures (Fujita Akiko). Much of this experimentation was driven by a desire to reconceptualize ceramic practice as a ritualistic immersion in the primal elements, but there was also an increasing environmental awareness that reached a climactic statement in Mishima Kimiyo's *Wreck of Time 90* (1990), an installation of large, earthy blocks of broken ceramic shards and other detritus that suggested chunks of refuse exhumed from the landfill beneath the floor of the building where it was installed.

Bert Winther-Tamaki is Professor of Art History at the University of California, Irvine. Books on modern and contemporary Japanese art include: *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics* (with Louise Cort, 2003); *Maximum Embodiment: Yōga, the 'Western Painting' of Japan, 1912-1955* (2012); and *Tsuchi: Earthy Substances in Contemporary Japanese Art* (2022). Winther-Tamaki curated an exhibition titled 'Art & Ecology in Japan from the 1950s to the 1980s' at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2023 and is currently working on a book titled *Promethean Excesses of Contemporary Japanese Art in the Bubble*, an ecocritical view of Japanese art during the 1980s and 1990s.

RAHELEH FILSOOFI

From Documentation to Collection: how process-based clay practice reshapes institutional engagement

This presentation examines how documentation can transform the nature of ephemeral clay practice and create new pathways through which such work enters museum collections. It focuses on an ongoing project developed in collaboration with the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. My practice engages clay in unstable states — raw soil, unfired material, fired objects, and dust — materials that inherently resist permanence and challenge conventional frameworks of collection. These works were not initially conceived with museum preservation in mind. Instead, their ephemerality required documentation in order to persist beyond the moment of activation. Over time, documentation evolved from a practical necessity into an integral creative medium that reshaped the work itself. A central case is the evolution of the *Bite* project. The work began as a bodily and performative gesture in which biting clay functioned as a direct encounter between body and material, using physical imprint to explore vulnerability, presence, and transformation. Video documentation was initially used to record this action yet gradually became an active component that generated new meanings and led to the development of performance. The process eventually returned to object-making, producing ceramic works formed from clay that I process from locally collected soil, alongside video and process archives. Through this circular transformation between object, documentation, performance, and archive, documentation became inseparable from the artwork. This transformation enabled a new form of institutional collaboration. In partnership with the Nasher Museum, soil was collected and processed into clay within the institutional context itself, embedding material transformation into the museum environment. Rather than collecting a static object, the institution participates in an evolving cycle of extraction, transformation, action, and documentation, retaining both material artifacts and archival traces as part of the work's ongoing presence. By examining this trajectory, the presentation suggests that when

documentation becomes a creative medium, it not only reshapes artistic practice but also expands how museums may engage works rooted in impermanence, material transformation, and embodied experience.

Rahelah Filsoofi is an itinerant multimedia artist and collector of soil and sound whose work explores movement, migration, belonging, and social justice through clay, sound, performance, and dust-based media, creating immersive installations, community-engaged projects, and material archives that examine how transformation, displacement, and embodied experience shape cultural memory and challenge political and geographic borders. Filsoofi has exhibited nationally and internationally, including recent and upcoming projects at the Nasher Museum of Art, the Frist Art Museum, and the Gibbes Museum of Art. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the United States Artists Fellowship, the Joan Mitchell Fellowship, and the NCECA Innovator Award, and serves as the initiator and curator of the inaugural Clay Performance program at NCECA 2026. She is Assistant Professor of Ceramics at Vanderbilt University.

FIONA JACK

Leftovers: On the afterlife of the thousands of wood-fired rocks from Riverbed at Artspace Aotearoa

Riverbed was a workshop-based project and exhibition in New Zealand developed with prominent activist and former MP Sue Bradford and the Kotare Educational Trust. Over ten public workshops held between June 2018 and March 2019, more than 200 participants engaged in facilitated conversations while hand-forming small clay rocks. The thousands of rocks generated across the workshops were wood-fired and presented as a riverbed on the gallery floor, which visitors were invited to walk through and take from. The workshops invited participants to engage in facilitated group dialogue on complex issues while grounded in shared physical activity. Topics included mana whenua¹ histories of Tāmaki Makaurau² (with Ngarimu Blair), sustainable organising, women challenging power, reform versus revolution, and the challenges of speaking out for economic, social and ecological justice. Change, the project proposed, emerges not from a single stone but from many hands shaping the ground together over time. The rock is a ubiquitous and universally relatable form, yet it is also limitless in its physical possibility. There is no wrong way to make a simple rock, but there is also room for imagination and complexity. For the workshop participants, the task of making these small objects for the ever-growing riverbed brought a unique energy and focus to the gatherings. Their eventual distribution to gallery visitors extended this process further: a dispersed collection made by, for, and of the people. Of the 3000+ rocks made, approximately 1000 were left after the exhibition and those remaining pose challenging questions. What should be done with them and who owns them? What does it mean to collect a work whose value lies not in the objects themselves, but in the conversations, relationships, and collective labour that produced them?

1. Māori who have historic and territorial rights over the land.

2. Auckland, New Zealand

Fiona Jack is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. She teaches at the Elam School of Fine Arts, Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland. Fiona's artistic practice ranges from large-scale public commissions to social projects formed through dialogue and research. She draws on recognizable visual and textual languages to examine the systems, social movements, and politics of representation within forms that hold collective memory. Exhibitions include 'Public Clay' (with Sholto Buck and Elisabeth Pointon): Melanie Roger Gallery (2024), 'Everything': The Lightship (2022), 'Our Red Aunt': Glasgow Women's Library (2018), 'Riverbed': Artspace Aotearoa (2018), 'The Will of the People is Law': Commonwealth & Council, Los Angeles (2016), 'Living Halls': Govett Brewster Art Gallery (2010). She holds an MFA from CalArts and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Westminster.

SARAH CHRISTIE

Clay as a Site of Collaboration: Interdisciplinary, experimental, cross-border and open-ended practices

I would like to propose clay as a site of collaboration: not simply between maker and material, but rather between makers, via material. As artists we frequently claim to 'collaborate' with clay, to 'listen' and 'respond' to it, referring to the making process, generally unwitnessed outside the artist's studio. Or, materialized in performance, ephemeral, or socially engaged work. While recognising overlaps, I consider the value of collaborative practices that emerge directly between artists who choose to work together towards a shared, but perhaps initially unfixed, outcome, and that this form of practice could have a presence in the museum. Drawing upon my own and others' experiences of inter-disciplinary, international, and what I shall call 'inter-material' collaborative projects, I zoom out from a purely material or object-oriented understanding to recognize methods and processes of co-creation and co-authorship. I ask whether those process and their documentation could be considered collectable. Collaborative practice is artist-initiated, experimental, cross-border and open-ended.¹ It includes interdisciplinary practices,² and extends to 'inter-material' collaboration, where clay enters into dialogue with

parallel material practices,³ or even other media.⁴ Collaboration initiates dialogue and change. It challenges assumptions, shares resources and exchanges knowledge. It is interconnected and relational. It thrives in long-term, open exchange between artists working as equals, while nourishing their own practices. Unlike a transactional relationship filling gaps in knowledge, facility, or skill, collaboration is jointly conceived, researched, co-created or made via associative play. What could museums exhibit or acquire, how, and who for? Objects, performance, or participatory work, certainly. But since the unique value of collaboration lies in exchange, artists and museums could each re-appraise and carefully attend to processes of correspondence and documentation that are part of the work. Public sharing could prompt others to consider working collaboratively at a time when division reigns.

1. *Elsewhere: A Correspondence*, Sarah Christie (UK) with Robyn Phelan (Aus) 2025
2. *Reading Bodies*, Sarah Christie with Imperial College (2015-20); *Parallel Practices*, various artists with King's College London and Crafts Council (2014-15)
3. *The Source and the Mouth*, Sarah Christie with Julie Brixey-Williams (2026), *Crwydro / Wanderings*, Kim Norton with Jane Ponsford (2025-6)
4. Literature: Clayground Collective with poet Rachel Long at British Ceramics Biennial (2015); Sarah Christie with writer Nancy Campbell for HapticTacit (2025)

Sarah Christie is an artist, writer and creative collaborator. Her practice begins with clay as a primary material for sensing, thinking, walking, moving and making with. She invites correspondence and collaboration with other people, places, forms and materials. This 'call-and-response' approach creates space for unexpected outcomes to emerge. Sarah has exhibited widely, including at Southwark Cathedral, OVADA, British Ceramics Biennial, and Industry City, New York, and presented at the Australian Ceramics Triennale. Her writing has been published in the *Journal of Australian Ceramics*, and in exhibition catalogues. She teaches at Central Saint Martins, Imperial College and Kings College, and led studio sessions with AB Projects.

ALICJA PATANOWSKA

Beyond the Artefact: Embodied sculpture and the limits of object-based collecting

The processual nature of sculpture is inherent to the practice of its making. In contemporary artistic reflection it has become particularly visible, especially in work with clay - a material that retains traces of touch, action, and time. Form emerges through a direct dialogue between body and matter, indicating that the artwork is not only a finished result but also a record of its making. Form is largely shaped by embodied knowledge arising through contact with the material, which co-constitutes the process of the work's formation. Clay - one of the earliest materials of human culture - is distinguished by its responsiveness to touch and its capacity to record gesture, making it a particularly apt medium for practices grounded in action and process. This paper adopts a practice-based methodology in which artistic works function as epistemic experiments testing the relationship between the work, experience, and the institutional and spatial conditions of its presentation. It examines two case studies from the artist's practice - the project *Take Art* realised in Poland and the installation *The Ripple Effect* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London - as early and later examples of working with clay, both defined by direct bodily and tactile engagement between viewer and artwork. These projects demonstrate how sculpture may exist through experience, use, and activation rather than solely as a stable object. Touch is understood not as arbitrary interaction but as a potentially significant mode of experience that, under appropriate institutional conditions, can continue the body-material relationship constitutive of the work. Preserving such works therefore requires forms of stewardship that enable re-activation and experiential engagement rather than the mere storage of material components. The paper contributes to debates on the future of collecting process-based art by proposing a model of the institution as an environment that sustains artworks through ongoing activation and embodied encounters.

Alicja Patanowska is a sculptor working with ceramics at the intersection of contemporary art, craft, and environmental research. Her practice is grounded in embodied knowledge acquired through direct engagement with material, exploring environmental systems, extraction, and human-material relations from a non-anthropocentric perspective. She holds a PhD from the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław and an MA from the Royal College of Art. Her works are held in public collections including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), Korea, the Shanghai Museum of Glass, and the National Museum in Krakow.

Many contemporary clay artworks invite multisensory engagement, through touch or by creating environments where sensations such as sound, smell and humidity are central to the visitor experience. For example, the soundscape of Clare Twomey's liquid clayfall *Continuum* (2024) and the humid enclosed environment of Phoebe Cummings' installation *After the Death of the Bear* (2013) exploit the materiality of raw clay in ways which transcend the visual. Unless museums can find ways to accommodate and document these ephemeral sensory experiences, key aspects of such works are in danger of being lost to the permanent record. This panel brings together historical, curatorial and accessibility- focused perspectives to address the opportunities and challenges which multisensory works can present for collections management, interpretation and research. Museum documentation has traditionally focused on the visible properties of objects, using photography and written descriptions of appearance. Other sensations – especially touch – have not usually been considered important enough to record. This disparity is related to the enduring hierarchical distinction in gallery interpretation between intellectualised visual experience and the provision of self-consciously accessible or didactic tactile and interactive activities. The failure to take multisensory engagement seriously limits how ephemeral clay artworks can continue to be understood when they are no longer on display, since embodied experience of their materiality is key to their meaning. Panel members will discuss how museums can capture nonvisual sensations through methods such as description, oral history or critical 'translation', and what this might mean for the long-term accessibility and legacies of such artworks. A more holistic approach to documentation has the potential to enable richer interpretation for future audiences, giving ephemeral works a meaningful place in permanent collections; it could also facilitate historical research, feeding into the formation of a broader and more diverse canon of ceramic history.

Lily Crowther is a Research Fellow at the Ceramics Research Centre-UK, University of Westminster, where she works on the Future Ecologies of Clay project. She is also a curator specialising in 19th- and 20th-century craft and design, currently working at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and formerly at the V&A. Her research explores the roles of museums and collections in the transmission of embodied knowledge and skill; she is currently completing a doctorate at the V&A and the University of Oxford entitled 'Building Knowledge: experiments with collections at the Museum of Construction & Building Materials'.

Dr Charlotte Slark was the Research Fellow on Strand B of the AHRC-Funded Sensational Museum project. Charlotte is an interdisciplinary scholar who uses both social science and humanities methodologies to examine museums as institutions. She came to academia from the heritage sector and has experience working both front and back of house in museums. Charlotte is interested in challenging structural inequalities throughout the heritage sector.

Dr Simeon Koole is Senior Lecturer in Liberal Arts and History at the University of Bristol. He is a historian of modern Britain and its global entanglements, specialising in histories of the senses, sexuality, and science. His most recent book, *Intimate Subjects: Touch and Tangibility in Britain's Cerebral Age*, was published by University of Chicago Press in 2024 and has been shortlisted for the Royal Historical Society First Book Prize and European Studies Book Award. His current book project examines how the 19th-century transformation of ecologies globally—grasslands, softwood forests, plantations—transformed the form and capacities of bodies in Britain.

2 PM

PHOEBE CUMMINGS IN CONVERSATION WITH BEN ROBERTS

Writing Sculpture

Where does sculpture begin and end? Its borders are softer, more porous than we might imagine. It is not neatly contained within the limits of its solid materials; sculpture has atmosphere and exists as much in memory as in physical time and space.

This paper explores how ephemeral sculpture is recorded and translated through other mediums, focusing specifically on the potential of writing as part of layered traces of an artwork. How might text provide a means of re-performance, or prompt a new sculptural experience? How might written fiction document material fiction? Broader connections between clay and writing are explored, alongside key examples including artists such as Anya Gallacio and Richard Long. Cummings also draws on her own practice and research, recording transient works in clay over the past 20 years.

Phoebe Cummings is an artist and Research Associate at the University of Westminster. She studied Three-Dimensional Crafts at the University of Brighton before completing an MA in Ceramics & Glass at the Royal College of Art in 2005. She has undertaken a number of artist residencies, in the UK, USA and Greenland, including a three-month Arts/Industry residency at the Kohler Co. factory, Wisconsin (2008) and six months as ceramics artist-in-residence at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2010). Cummings was selected as the winner of the British Ceramics Biennial Award (2011) and was the inaugural winner of the Woman's Hour Craft Prize (2017). Recent exhibitions include Pallant House Gallery (2024) and Thomas Dane Gallery, Naples (2022).

Ben Roberts is a British curator and researcher with a particular focus on the intersection of interdisciplinary research, performance and social activism. He is founding director of the Artists' Research Centre and is presenter of the Art and Other Futures podcast examining international models of community building through creative practice. From 2025-26 Roberts served as Research Convenor at Tate developing research and study programmes across the museum's four sites and editing Tate Papers. Prior to Tate he was Director of Brighton CCA and held senior curatorial roles at Camden Arts Centre and Modern Art Oxford. He was Chair of Cubitt Artists in London (2017-22) and holds a MA in European Cultural Policy from the University of Warwick.

3.15PM

PARALLEL SESSIONS

RUPERT FAULKNER

Clay–Fire–Body, a performance by Hoshino Satoru, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, June 29, 2001

An illustrated summary of an essay written for a festschrift in honour of the Japanese ceramic historian Louise Cort due for publication by Taylor & Francis documenting a previously unrecorded clay performance entitled *Clay–Fire–Body* orchestrated at the V&A in June 2001 by the Japanese ceramic artist Hoshino Satoru (b.1945). A brief outline of the performance is followed by an explanation of the context within which the performance took place, namely the UK-wide Japan 2001 Festival and two displays of contemporary Japanese ceramics held at the V&A featuring works by Hoshino. One of the displays was of a large-scale ceramic sculpture Hoshino had made in Shigaraki in 1999 shown at the Ariana Museum in Geneva. His offer of lending this to the V&A before its return to Japan prompted the idea of asking him about the possibility of choreographing an outdoor performance resembling what he and his wife Kayoko had enacted on a beach in 1987. A description is given of the preparations needed to realise the 2001 performance and what happened on the evening of its enactment. This is followed by an explanation of the background to his and Kayoko's 1987 performance, which was a catastrophic landslide in July 1986 that destroyed their home and studio, and almost took the lives of their two young sons. A description of the 1987 performance follows, and an explanation is given of how the trauma of the landslide resulted in Hoshino starting to work solely with his hands and fingers in the way he has done since ever since 1989. A short discussion is also given of a performance Hoshino enacted in early 2002 at the time of a retrospective exhibition of his work at the Shiga Museum of Art.

Rupert Faulkner joined the V&A in 1984. He was initially involved in preparations for the opening of the Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art in December 1986. He was responsible thereafter for the care and development of the V&A's collections of ukiyo-e woodblock prints, Japanese ceramics, and contemporary Japanese craft and design. An important early outcome of the last of these was the exhibition Japanese Studio Crafts: Tradition and the Avant-Garde (1995). He continued to build the V&A's collection of contemporary Japanese craft and design over the next 25 years and since retiring in 2021 has acted as an advisor to his successor.

CHRISTIE BROWN

The Agency of Things: Transience and instability in site-specific clay artworks

The term site-specific in the context of ceramic artworks and installations once seemed to suggest a fixed entity or concept which referenced the place of presentation and display. Recent developments in this expanding field of clay practice however raise questions concerning the temporary nature of these works and suggest a more fluid interpretation of them may be appropriate, as ceramic artists broaden out the concept to include not simply a response to a place, but also to a memory, a history, a story or a collection, all of which might require new terminology. The definition of site-specific artwork is not especially transient when compared with unfired ephemeral clay works or socially engaged performative projects where no objects remain after the event. However, many artworks exist where site overlaps with performance and ephemerality, thereby creating an increasingly blurred and stimulating field. While some site-specific works may be lost or complete after their time of presentation, other works of this kind may find a different life in other iterations including museum collections, giving them new meanings, suggesting that material things in themselves have agency. This can raise

questions for a museum collection as to how best to represent the past event, as well as possible future works of this nature. Brown will explore these ideas within a framework of her own ceramic artwork, especially those that have been sited within museums: she will also consider examples of other clay artworks with a potentially hybrid definition that may be open for debate.

Christie Brown is an artist and Emerita Professor of Ceramics at the University of Westminster, London. She graduated from Harrow School of Art in 1982 and set up her north London studio that year. At Westminster, she taught on the BA, MA and PhD programmes whilst developing her sculptural practice. She co-founded the Ceramics Research Centre-UK at Westminster and is currently an advisor on the AHRC-funded project Future Ecologies of Clay. Brown is a member of the Royal Society of Sculptors and is represented by Messums.org. Her retrospective exhibition Significant Beings will be held in October 2026 at Messums West, Wiltshire.

CATHERINE ROCHE

Sensory Entanglement: Writing the body into clay

The sensorial qualities of clay-based artworks are uniquely potent. Imparting social, cultural, spatial, temporal and anthropological resonances, clay and ceramic materiality is richly associative, viscerally experiential, and conceptually profound. Works emerging from the expanded field of clay may further heighten sensorial registers, with time-based, ephemeral, interactive and performance practices often deepening awareness of the experiential realm. Grounded in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and drawing on a range of theorists from various fields, this paper will initially consider reciprocal viewer/artwork relationships formed through spaces of display. It will examine haptic approaches to vision, paying particular attention to the proximal connectivity that occurs between viewers of art and the surfaces that meet their gaze. The intense intimacy of these encounters is found to cultivate an embodied attitude in observers, a significant idea when considering the uniquely rich surfaces of clay-based art. The paper will then explore how these experiential potentials might be accessed by visitors to museums when works are no longer available in their original form. The phenomenological lens of film theory, particularly texts by Marks (2002) and Sobchack (2004), opens significant critical resonances that help to imagine their sensorial impact beyond the exhibition space. Employing Marks' notion of haptic criticism, I propose experiential writing as method of revealing the multi-sensory, bodily reciprocity that clay-based art provokes. As Sobchack has argued, a reader may 'inhabit' the lived experience of an artwork through the author's narrative. My experiential responses to Sam Bakewell and Ingrid Murphy's works will be woven around these theoretical propositions, offering a model of embodied writing as both an articulation and performance of the sensory intensities and bodily entanglements embedded within these ideas. As Harriet Hawkins (2010) notes, 'such writings are [...] written through the body, and in the same gesture writing the body into and through the accounts'.

Dr. Catherine Roche is a writer and independent researcher focusing on viewer experience of contemporary clay and ceramic art. She completed her PhD in 2024 through the Ceramics Research Centre at the University of Westminster. Her thesis offers a theoretical framework that maps the ways in which clay-based artworks impact the viewing subject, paying particular attention to the experiential, embodied potentials that clay and ceramic materiality invite. Catherine also holds a BA in fine art and an MA in art history, and previously worked as an artist and lecturer in fine art for over twenty years.

LUCY CRAN

What Artistic Knowledge Is Overlooked When Participatory Art Objects Are Presented or Acquired as Educational Resources?

This provocation draws on my work as part of the artist duo Leap Then Look, alongside my practice-led PhD research at the University of Westminster. Leap Then Look create interactive artworks and exhibitions that invite audiences to handle, rearrange and reshape sculptural elements through touch and movement. Through these encounters, the work is created and recreated through participation, with meaning and form taking shape over time. Our installations combine forms such as sculpture, performance and photography, and often involve communities in their creation. Since 2019 we have worked with several institutions across the UK including Tate, the National Gallery, the Royal Academy, Towner, Baltic, Turner Contemporary, the Henry Moore Foundation, Modern Art Oxford, Tramway and the V&A. Within these contexts, participatory installations are frequently presented through learning and engagement programmes and are sometimes acquired as "resources" intended to support audience interaction with other artworks or ideas. This framing raises an interesting question about how participatory objects circulate within institutions and how their artistic status is understood. Alongside this practice, my PhD research examines interactive art objects and the participation they invite as a form of time-based sculpture, shaped through active encounters between bodies, objects and contexts. The research

traces a lineage of practices across visual art, pedagogy and performance that similarly operate through embodied participation. Through examples from Leap Then Look's work, this provocation asks:

- Can participatory exhibitions be understood as a form of sculpture that has been overlooked and if so, why might this be the case?
- What happens when participatory objects circulate within museums under the category of "resource"?
- How might institutions better frame, steward and archive works that involve participation?

What might museums learn from existing models for collecting time-based practices—such as performance/re-performance—when considering how participatory sculptural works might be supported in the future?

Lucy Cran is an artist and co-founder of Leap Then Look, who create participatory artworks, exhibitions and events that invite audiences to touch, move with and remake works through play, experimentation and collective activity. Projects are often developed collaboratively with diverse community groups during the design phase and have been presented at leading galleries and museums across the UK and internationally. Lucy's practice-led PhD at the University of Westminster examines participatory art objects by drawing together practices from material-led pedagogy, postmodern and task-based choreography, and contemporary art, reconsidering them as forms of time-based sculpture from which her work with Leap Then Look extends. Her research also considers the place of this practice within the contemporary art museum, including how participatory works circulate through commissions for exhibitions, learning programmes and resources.

JULES PELTA FELDMAN

Coming Alive: Ceramics as always already conceptual

For contemporary artists who work with clay, elements of performance, unfinished process, and other experimental features serve to draw their work away from traditional pottery practices of the past and towards conceptual legacies more readily encountered in the mainstream art histories that have often ignored craft. This realignment towards an expanded sense of clay's possibilities has been at work at least since the 1950s, valorized by the likes of Peter Voulkos, John Mason, and other "studio potters" who at times showed disdain for the quaintness of tradition. Yet an emphasis on process over product, insistence on physical presence, and staging of viewer interaction have always been vital to craft practices in general and to ceramics in particular. For example, performance has long played a role through public demonstrations of wheel-throwing, and notions of interaction are implicit in potters' typical insistence that their things are to be used. (Compare Jim Melchert's apparently radical assertion about his highly conceptual "Ashtray" series that such work was "coming alive ... only when it was being used").¹ These few examples hint at a broader history of so-called expanded practices already held within clay's history. Rather than present conceptual and performance-based practices as a rupture with ceramic tradition, then, this paper proposes to embed them within it. What is at stake in this reconfiguration of history is not only our sense of contemporary art's past, but also our present treatment of historical practices: if we dare to invite interaction, change, movement, and precarity into our museums and collections as necessary elements of contemporary artmaking, then we must ask ourselves if these elements are not also crucial for the supposedly stolid ceramics pieces and practices of the past – if they, too, demand to come alive.

1. Griff Williams, *Jim Melchert: Where the Boundaries Are* (Oro Editions, 2025), 37

Dr. Jules Pelta Feldman is an art historian, curator, critic, and salonnière-e. They received their doctorate in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. They teach art history at California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Previously, they were postdoctoral research fellow for the research project *Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge*, hosted by Bern Academy of the Arts. Pelta Feldman has also worked at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Grey Art Museum, and written criticism for publications in the US, Germany, and Switzerland.

4.15PM

ANDERS HERWALD RUHWALD

The Politics of Fire: Unit 1: 3583 Dubois St

This paper will present and discuss the permanent immersive installation *Unit 1: 3583 Dubois St* by Anders Herwald Ruhwald. 3583 Dubois Street, in Detroit, Michigan, no longer exists. While the once-dilapidated 7,000-square-foot brick apartment building at this location still stands, the city has reassigned its address to 2174 Mack Avenue. This is a subtle bureaucratic change, but one that underscores a metaphoric loss of this place's history. Like so many in Detroit and cities

like it, this once-abandoned building holds memories waiting to be erased or revived. In his installation, *Unit 1: 3583 Dubois*, Anders Ruhwald repositions the building's identity, intertwining its past, present, and future.

The permanent installation consists of eight full-sized rooms and corridors inside one apartment of this building, which the artist purchased in 2014. Across the installation, fire is a key element that serves as material, process and subject matter. Something which both consumes and transforms, fire becomes the vehicle for Ruhwald's exploration of destruction and renewal. Using charred wood, ash, molten glass, steel, lead, tiles, bricks, found objects and black-glazed ceramics, Ruhwald meticulously composes an immersive, richly sensorial experience that is at once dramatic, nostalgic, and uncanny. *Unit 1: 3583 Dubois* operates as both memorial and proposition: materials and forms coalesce to retell, and thus reclaim, the past, animate the present, and suggest a shifted future. The installation took five years to complete and has remained open to the public since 2019. This paper will discuss the challenges of realizing and maintaining a large- scale artwork outside established art institutions and how Ruhwald used museum and gallery exhibitions as testing grounds for the ideas and materials that eventually became the final installation, now situated within the Detroit building.

Anders Herwald Ruhwald (b. 1974, Denmark) is a sculptor and installation artist whose practice is rooted in ceramics. Living and working between Copenhagen and Chicago, he received his MA from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2005. His solo exhibitions include *Century Garden* at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (2020) and *The Anatomy of a Home* at Saarinen House, Detroit (2012). Ruhwald's work is held in major public collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and LACMA. A 2024 Guggenheim Fellow, he has also led the ceramics program at Cranbrook Academy of Art and has been an associate professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

FRIDAY 26 JUNE

10 AM

KEITH HARRISON IN CONVERSATION WITH ALUN GRAVES

Keith Harrison's practice is involved with the physical transformation of materials, to unpredictable effect, in a series of live public experiments. Previous works include a Play-Doh pumping soundsystem with musician Beatrice Dillon, launching a full-size clay Rover 75 off a monumental ramp in Cannock Chase Forest, submitting a ceramic tiled structure to the grindcore onslaught of Napalm Death and a live choreographed interruption in the life of Preston Bus Station involving 32 buses performing a series of sequenced movements to a soundtrack by Preston Field Audio. Harrison was previously the recipient of Gasworks' International Fellowship at KHOJ, Delhi and Ceramics Resident at the V&A Museum. He is currently Research Professor at Bath School of Art, Film and Media and Guest Professor at KHiO/Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

Alun Graves is Senior Curator, Ceramics and Glass 1900–now, in the Decorative Art and Sculpture Department at the V&A, London. He is the author of *Studio Ceramics: British Studio Pottery 1900 to Now* (Thames & Hudson, 2023) and has written widely on 20th and 21st-century British ceramics and sculpture. He has curated many exhibitions including 'Alison Britton: Content and Form' (V&A, 2016), 'Simon Carroll: Expressionist Potter' (V&A / Ruthin Craft Centre, 2014–5), and with Sarah Griffin, 'Material Language: New Work in Clay' (New Art Centre, Salisbury, 2016).

11.15 AM

PARALLEL SESSIONS

WILLIAM COBBING

Clay scrolling: sticky connections between people and landscape

Clay is a central material in William Cobbing's work, both in its raw and fired forms, which he explores through sculpture and performance. In his videos, people are covered in craggy clay masks, often joining each other together, repetitively manipulating the amorphous surface with deadpan detachment. Boundaries between the protagonists are blurred, raising the question as to whether we shape the environment around us or if it shapes us.

Dr William Cobbing studied BA Sculpture at Central St Martins, De Ateliers artists' institute, Amsterdam, PhD by Practice at Middlesex University. Exhibitions include 'LER!' Museum Jorn, Denmark (2019), 'Human After All', Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, (2020), 'Social Substance', Airspace & BCB (2023), 'Inner Horizon', Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (2025), 'Video Craft', Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco (2026).

ZOE EVANS

You Just Had to Be There: Striking the balance between artist's intention and integral preservation

"It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not" - Thich Naht Hanh

Throughout human history there have been oral reinterpretations of stories, performances and events which help us understand and define the world we live in. We also celebrate the evidence of the fleeting moment in the objective form - a fading Turner, scribbled sheet music of Chopin, Emin's unkept bed. Moments that can be emulated, remade and conserved but never identical to the original. So why is it so difficult for us to accept transience within the medium of clay? Is it down to the tactility of the medium? Do we hold on so tightly to the materialist and capitalist view of collecting finished objects as an affirmation of status rather than the pure delight in watching others or ourselves taking part in the act of making? Or simply the haptic desire of holding clay objects that elicits a hunger to capture and preserve the performance or land art as something as equally precious as a piece precariously placed on a plinth? Arguably we can say that documenting a performance is a significant and needed reinterpretation of the work. But one that folds under pressure when true accuracy is only evident from witnessing the original visceral experience in person or the act of looking and holding the object in hand. In summary, what gives us as the onlooker, the archivist and gallerist the authority to change the impermanent and transient intention of the artist's work beyond that of relaying our own individual memory of the work?

Zoe Evans is a natural pigment and material artist, currently studying at Cardiff Metropolitan University Masters in Ceramics, with the outlook of PhD research into location-based materials research. Zoe's interest lies within materiality, sustainability and symbiotic relationship between artist and material agency. With an outlook of educating others to shift toward a more balanced and compassionate practice; one that supports the rehabilitation of the local environment and "closes the loop" within the artist's studio.

LAURA KÖNIG

But What When the Whole Point is Contact? Offering physical exploration of ceramics art in museums and galleries

When entering a museum or gallery, we do so with the long-cultivated and embodied behaviour of not touching the objects on display. That is rather new. The physical exploration of art and artefacts was an integral part of European museums well into the 19th century (Classen, 2012, pp. 136-143). As historian Constance Classen explains, a ban on tactile encounters was in respect and protection for the objects displayed and the belief that touch was of no cognitive or aesthetic value (p. 145). While the first argument carries a fair point, the latter is updated. Perception through touch opens wide and deep access to artworks (Driscoll, 2022). Workshops conducted within my research project on affective touch and physical interaction with fired porcelain have demonstrated a significant distinction between sight and touch perception. While sight intellectually contextualises what we see, touch creates an emotional, associative, and holistic physical connection with objects, emphasising the reactive bond between (ceramic) material and human flesh. While logical, the perspective that public display insists on a distance between the viewer and the artwork is frustrating. The paper raises and explores the following questions: How can we collect and exhibit fragile ceramic works whose core is the physical contact between the material and the recipient? What can we learn from the unfiltered, intuitive and curious approach of children in exhibition spaces? To what extent can art encountered through sight trigger muscle memory and tactile imagination to replace this connection?

Classen, Constance (2012) *The Deepest Sense: A cultural history of touch*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press

Driscoll, Rosalyn (2022) *The Sensing Body in the Visual Arts*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing

Laura Johanna König is a ceramic artist and researcher. With an educational background in Industrial Porcelain Design, she continued exploring the cultural and utilitarian significance of porcelain in a range of countries and artistic disciplines. Currently undertaking a practice-based PhD at the University of Westminster, London, Laura researches on sensory perception in art encounters and the materialisation of affective experiences in porcelain.

MONICA CRU-HALL

Hands of Clay: Haptic learning and the challenge of archiving experience in participatory clay practice

Clay has long been collected and preserved in museums as finished ceramic objects. Yet many contemporary practices in the expanded field of clay emphasise process, participation and encounter rather than permanence. This presentation asks: how might museums meaningfully document and archive clay practices whose primary significance lies in haptic experience rather than the permanence of the object itself? Working in Stoke-on-Trent, a city shaped by the ceramics industry, my practice brings together young people, heritage ceramic practitioners, and people with forced migration backgrounds who are encountering a new place through collaborative clay activities designed to foreground touch, material exploration and dialogue. In one activity, participants from different generations press their hands into clay while sharing stories about craft traditions and personal relationships with making. In another, people new to England create clay forms representing foods they cook or remember from their countries of birth, using clay as a medium through which memories of home, culture and belonging can be expressed and shared. Clay offers a uniquely haptic learning environment in which knowledge emerges through touch, pressure, texture and transformation. Through direct engagement with the material, participants encounter clay as a substance, and as a carrier of craft heritage, manual knowledge and embodied skills historically associated with ceramic production. Unfortunately, opportunities for haptic learning have declined in many educational and cultural settings, particularly following restrictions on shared tactile materials during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reduction of hands-on engagement raises questions about how future audiences will encounter materials such as clay and how museums might respond to this shift. By framing clay as a site of sensory encounter and learning not solely as an object, this presentation considers how museums might expand their approaches to collecting and documenting participatory clay practices whose meaning resides partly in touch, memory and shared making.

Monica Cru-Hall is a mother, author, creative practitioner, researcher and educator based in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. Her work explores the relationship between clay, community and storytelling, using participatory making to connect generations and cultures through shared tactile experiences. Her practice investigates how clay can act as a catalyst for dialogue around home, belonging and shared knowledge. Monica's research examines the role of haptic learning and embodied making in contemporary cultural practice and how these encounters inform the development of the ROOTS framework, her research approach exploring how resilience, openness, ownership, thriving and sustainability shape experiences of home, land and place-making.

ASHLEY THORPE

The Problem of Permanence: Ceramic objects and ephemeral encounters

In her important analysis of objects, exhibition design, and performance, Georgie Hook has argued that a "habitual engagement with everyday objects [...] alongside the systemic capitalist commodification of material goods, serves to magnify attitudes that cast them as passive, inert and expendable. Yet there is an inherent affectivity, instability and volatility to these seemingly mundane objects which [...] a sceneographic outlook can orient us towards" (Hook, 2024:367). Exhibition, Hook suggests, is one arena in which objects can be reactivated as meaningful. This paper extends Hook's analysis to propose that exhibition display, as a para-performative event that can only be accessed via ephemeral encounter, enables further connections between the object in the museum and the everyday world around us. Exhibitions, as liminal spaces and temporal encounters, have the capacity to foster appreciation and recognition in visitors, potentially invoking individualised memories, identities and questions of belonging. Encountering an object is ephemeral; every re-encounter is different, creating a layering of traces, a ghosting of presence, and a recognition of the transience of encounter. The implications of this observation are to moderate some of the divisions between object (dead and immutable) and performance art (alive and ephemeral), for both are in fact contingent upon ephemeral spectatorial encounter, memory, and modes of performative encounter. Recognising the ephemeral nature of object encounter positions all artistic endeavour as mutable, finite, and ephemeral. Accepting that the archiving of performance art requires a different approach to the trace, I nevertheless propose that the politics of ephemeral encounter trades in a contradiction between absence and presence, for an ceramic object itself is nothing more, or less, than a relic of the performative technical process that an artist used to produce it in the first place.

Ashley Thorpe is a Reader in the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has published thirteen books, including most recently *Contemporary British Theatre and the Imaging of China: Poststructuralism, Dialectics and the Shadow of Brecht* (Palgrave, 2026) as well as the co-edited collection *Intercultural Japanese Noh Theatre: Texts and Analyses of English-Language Noh* (Methuen, 2025). He has published three monographs on ceramics, including *Julian Stair: Memory, Material, Ceramics* (Yale, 2024) and has written articles for *Ceramics: Art + Perception*, *Ceramic Review*, and *New Ceramics*.

12.15 PM

PARALLEL SESSIONS

LOUISE CHENNEL

Fired and Born: Preserving Rita Gudiño's clay performance

The Ceramics Collection at Aberystwyth University has collected handmade ceramics since the early 20th century and includes examples of pioneer studio pottery, 19th century Welsh slipware and contemporary works by British and international makers. A priority in our current Collection's Development Policy is to acquire ceramics from the International Ceramics festival (ICF), held biennially at Aberystwyth since 1987. A key feature of each festival is to have a performance or spectacle kiln, on the Saturday evening. Many ceramics produced during these kiln firings make their way into our collection. This paper will look at a case study of Rita Gudiño, a ceramicist from the Philippines who staged a performance around a kiln firing *Lual* at the ICF in 2015. The kiln was in the shape of a woman giving birth, where clay babies were placed inside to be fired and 'born' during the kiln opening. Ceremonies with music, song and readings were performed during the lighting and opening of the kiln. The performance had an emotional impact on many of the audience members, with some saying it had a healing effect following traumatic experiences related to childbirth. A short documentary film was made by the artist using her own recordings alongside footage from audience members. For the ceramics collection, we acquired one of the raku babies fired during the performance. However, as an artefact it now exists removed from the cultural context of its performance-based origins. As a small museum with limited resources, cataloguing, storing and making these recordings publicly accessible is particularly challenging. This paper will explore the strategies we've been experimenting with, four festivals later, to fulfil moral and ethical obligations regarding documenting these performances to enable long-term availability for students, researchers and the public.

Louise Chennell is the Curator of Fine and Decorative Art at Aberystwyth University and has worked with the Ceramics Collection for over twenty years, beginning in the Ceramic Archive as a student before becoming Ceramics Curator (2018–2023). She has also held a number of roles within the International Ceramics Festival, including Festival Co-ordinator and Marketing and Communications Officer. Louise is passionate about providing meaningful professional experience for emerging curators and runs a student curator and internship programme while also teaching curating to undergraduate students.

MEGAN ROWDEN

From Workshops to Exhibitions: Designing experiential and archival frameworks for contemporary clay

Clay-based artworks that invite handling, movement, and participation generate experiences that are sensory, affective, and often temporary. While ceramic objects can be collected and conserved, the experiential dimension of participatory clay practice—how audiences physically and emotionally engage with material—remains difficult to represent within exhibition and archival frameworks. This paper presents the outcomes of a series of research workshops that investigate how audiences interact with clay and how these interactions might inform the design of exhibitions that better capture experiential forms of contemporary clay practice. The research forms part of a practice-led PhD examining relationships between artist, clay, and audience through the concept of Bond-making, understood as a physical, emotional, and psychological connection that emerges through material engagement. The workshops functioned as both artistic encounters and research environments where participants handled ceramic objects designed to be touched, moved, listened to, and explored. Audience responses were gathered through free-text reflections, word associations, behavioural observation, and post-event communication. These materials were analysed using a three-stage qualitative coding framework consisting of descriptive, axial, and latent coding. The findings reveal that engagement with clay consistently begins through embodied interaction rather than aesthetic judgement. Participants most frequently described their experience using sensory and affective language such as playful, tactile, fragile, joyful, and references to childhood or memory. The workshops also revealed behavioural indicators of Bond-making, including prolonged handling of objects, reluctance to relinquish them, acts of care toward fragile pieces, and continued engagement after the event. These outcomes suggest that clay-based artworks often operate as relational encounters rather than static objects. Drawing on these findings, and past works the paper proposes ways exhibitions might incorporate methods for capturing traces of these encounters. Approaches such as documenting audience language, behavioural interaction, and participatory responses offer ways of recording the experiential dimension of clay practice. Rather than attempting to fully preserve ephemeral encounters, these strategies allow exhibitions and archives to represent how contemporary clay artworks generate moments of connection between material and audience.

Megan Rowden is an artist, educator, and researcher working with clay in the expanded field of contemporary art. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins, titled *The Bonds Between Artist, Clay, and Audience: Designing Experiential Frameworks in Contemporary Art*. Her practice-led research investigates material-led practice, audience participation, and the relational potential of clay through workshops, exhibitions, and participatory artworks. Rowden is a Deputy Head of Visual Arts and a lecturer on the BA Ceramics at Morley College London. Her final PhD exhibition will take place in September 2026 at Morley Gallery, London. Her research has been supported by grants from the UAL Postgraduate Fund, Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust and the Oppenheim-John Downes Memorial Trust.

NICOLE SEISLER

Preparing: A case study in covert permanence

Four institutions have unwittingly collected my work. *Preparing* (2017-present) is invisibly preserved between layers of paint in gallery walls. In this ongoing series, each fresh piece of clay is wedged on the wall 100 times, and its tectonic history is traced in pencil lines that are partially erased when the next piece of clay is wedged on top of it. The wall is a recording device and a hurdle, forcing me to relearn a strategy that I developed over 25 years earlier. I was taught to wedge my clay one hundred times (and I always do), but I know several ceramicists who wedge their clay only ten times or pull it straight from the bag and are good to go. Meanwhile, some potters tally over 300 wedges before pulling a form. How much wedging is actually necessary; at what point is the clay properly prepared—not over, under, or unprepared? How much preparation is truly possible—for the clay body and for our human bodies? Is preparation a futile act? I have performed *Preparing* at private galleries, university galleries, and a museum; as a solo endeavour, and with participation from my former students. Although my teaching lineage is visible in their marks, the details and ultimate clay signatures are their own.

In an upcoming iteration of *Preparing*, volunteers will follow instructions (inspired by Sol LeWitt's instructional drawings) to produce the work in my stead. *Preparing* exists ephemerally as a performance, an act of endurance, and a temporary drawing for the duration of an exhibition, but its ghost also exists permanently in the wall upon which it was made. The trace of its iron stain is permanently embedded between layers of paint. *Preparing* is likely the thinnest ceramic work to inadvertently become part of several institutions' permanent collections. I propose to present *Preparing* as a case study of covert collection.

Nicole Seisler has exhibited widely at museums including the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, Craft Contemporary in Los Angeles, and the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona CA. Publications include her book *Recipes for Conceptual Clay (in the time of covid-19)* and her essay 'Camera as Kiln'. Nicole has taught ceramics at over a dozen universities across the US in the last 15 years and is currently Assistant Professor and Head of Ceramics at Lewis & Clark College in Portland OR, USA. Nicole is the Founder and Director of A-B Projects, a global hub for critical, conceptual, expanded ceramics.

OLIVIA FERO

Against Documentation: The index cannot be archived

This provocation argues that documentation, however sophisticated, cannot capture what makes expanded clay practice significant, because documentation structurally converts indices into icons. The problem is not technical but semiotic, and recognising this limit may be more productive than pursuing ever-better archival strategies. C.S. Peirce distinguished three ways signs relate to what they signify. An icon resembles its object (a portrait looks like its subject). A symbol relates through convention (words mean what we agree). An index has a direct, causal connection (smoke is caused by fire; a footprint is caused by the foot). Crucially, indices cannot be transferred to another medium without becoming icons. A photograph of a footprint resembles the footprint but was not caused by the foot. This challenge extends beyond ceramics. Anya Gallaccio's installations of rotting fruit and melting chocolate decay by design; what remains in the archive is documentation of decay, not decay itself. But expanded clay practice intensifies the problem. Brie Ruais's floor works, made by pressing and dragging her body through clay, are indexical traces of physical action: records of force, weight, and gesture. The participatory installations of Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* or Clare Twomey's *Factory* embed visitor action into their material constitution. In each case, documentation produces icons of indices: images that resemble the traces but have no causal connection to the forces that produced them. This is not a failure of documentation but a structural limit. No amount of improved technology or expanded metadata will overcome it, because the issue is ontological rather than technical. The provocation: rather than asking, "How can we better document ephemeral clay works?", we might ask, "What would it mean to accept that some works cannot be archived, only witnessed?" This reframing invites not better solutions but institutional humility about documentation's limits.

Olivia Fero is a ceramicist and writer completing an MA in International Ceramic Design at the University of Pécs, Hungary, and hopes to pursue doctoral research. Her practice-led work examines the philosophical frameworks through which ceramics is understood, particularly the categorical distinctions between vessel and sculpture, craft and art, material and concept. Recent work includes curating the international exhibition 'How Do We Live?' at Nádor Gallery, Pécs, and forthcoming critical writing for *Ceramics Now* magazine. She is developing research applying semiotic theory to contemporary ceramic discourse.

KATY WEST

Reanimating the Archive: Artist-led interpretation and digital mediation in contemporary ceramic collections

This paper argues, artist-led interpretation and digital mediation offer new curatorial strategies for activating museum artefacts. Using the live commissioning project HOUSEWORK (Sculpture House Collective x The Secret Collection) as a case study, it examines how contemporary ceramic practice can reanimate and generate new forms of engagement with collections that are otherwise largely inaccessible to public. The ceramics holdings of Paisley Museum include significant examples of 20th century British studio ceramics alongside a substantial body of 19th century industrial-wares. While a small number of objects are displayed, the majority remain in storage. Because museum accessioning commits institutions to long-term stewardship, collections continually grow while many artefacts remain unseen. This raises questions about how museums can sustain relevance and visibility of stored collections. HOUSEWORK, due to open at V&A Dundee (November 2026), responds through an experimental curatorial model, inviting contemporary practitioners to engage directly with objects held within the collection store. The project commissions SHC: Laura Aldridge, Nick Evans, James Rigler, to develop new works in response to selected artefacts. The artists translate elements of form, narrative and material character into new sculptural works reflecting their individual practice. This process can be understood as a form of

curatorial “re-performance”, in which historical artefacts act as catalysts for new creative production. The project, using LiDAR scanning, digitally captures the museum artefacts. These scans allow objects to remain in storage while being represented in an exhibition context without logistical and conservation constraints associated with loans. By presenting digital representations of historical artefacts alongside newly commissioned artworks, the exhibition tests how analogue objects, digital surrogates and contemporary practice might operate together within a hybrid curatorial framework. This provocation reflects on this curatorial framework and experimental methodologies being tested, asking how artist-led interpretation and digital representation may offer new strategies for activating stored museum collections.

Katy West is a curator, educator and ceramic practitioner based in Scotland. She lectures at the Glasgow School of Art and has developed exhibitions and research projects exploring the relationship between contemporary craft practice and museum collections. She has curated the new high-density display of twentieth-century studio ceramics at Paisley Museum (reopening after renovation this year) and has worked with organisations including Craft Scotland, British Council, Irish Craft Gallery, British Ceramics Biennial, V&A Dundee, Tramway, Glasgow. Her research focuses on curatorial activation of archives and the role of artistic interpretation in extending the meanings of historical objects within contemporary contexts.

MICHAEL DIKA

Excavating the Ephemeral: The archaeological assemblage challenge to museum collecting practices

My practice operates in the expanded field of clay through a process of archaeological assemblage: embedding excavated 19th-century ceramic fragments from Philadelphia into matrices of unfired, treated raw clay and reclaimed industrial materials. These works exist in a state of deliberate material tension—the historical shards are fired and permanent, while the surrounding raw clay remains mutable, vulnerable, and subject to continued transformation. This paper examines how such hybrid works challenge conventional museum collecting paradigms, which have historically privileged the fired, the stable, and the complete. Drawing on my collaborative excavations with Philadelphia communities and the resulting sculptural objects, I argue that the unfired clay matrix functions not as a conservation failure but as a conceptual necessity—a material acknowledgment that history itself is unfixed, contested, and still forming. I address the question central to this conference: when museums collect works like mine, what are they actually acquiring? Is it the object as it exists at a moment in time? The process of its making? The community relationships that enabled its creation? The potential for its future decay or transformation? Through this case study, I propose that works in the expanded field of clay demand new collecting frameworks—ones that embrace impermanence as meaning, documentation as insufficient, and the artist's continued relationship to the work as integral to its collection.

Michael Dela Dika (b. Ghana, based in Philadelphia) is an artist, curator, and educator whose work serves as a bridge between cultures. Dika uses clay and found materials to investigate themes of identity belonging, memory, and labor. Dika has received numerous honors, including NCECA Multicultural Fellowship among others. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including in Berlin, Turkey, the Delaware Contemporary, the Biggs Museum, the Black History Museum of Virginia, and the Richmond Museum. In 2023, he debuted a solo museum show at the Berman Museum of Art. He is currently a Windgate Resident Artist Fellow at the Clay Studio in Philadelphia.

ARRAN GREGORY

Earth Body Journals: Archiving clay through process, image and transformation

This paper considers how ephemeral clay practice might be collected not only through the object, but through its wider life in image, film and journal form. My *Earth Body* works are made in direct relation to landscape, often using raw clay and locally specific materials gathered, learned or exchanged on site. Each work is usually developed over four to eight weeks, whilst living within that landscape and alongside the community connected to it. They are shaped through weather, duration, touch, participation and chance. In this sense, they resist being understood as fixed sculptural objects alone. They are biomorphic interventions in direct collaboration with the environment, having no fixed beginning or end point. They attempt to hold not only what the piece looked like, but how it was made, what it learned from the land, and what continues happening after the moment of making. I propose *Earth Body Journals* as a way of thinking about how time landscape awareness and bio art might be held in collections and archives. The paper will focus on case studies from Borneo, Bali, Turkey, Spain and Finland. The journals record situated forms of knowledge, including palm fibre as a binding agent and locally made olive oil soap within land-based making practices. They also hold moments of negotiation with the site itself, including the presence of ants or hornets moving through and around the work, where making becomes a process of observing, adjusting and working with an ecology rather than imposing upon it. These materials, methods and encounters carry cultural and ecological memory inseparable from the work. The paper asks what museums are collecting when the

artwork remains alive to change. Can photography and filmmaking do more than document? Can they become part of the work's continued life, carrying sensory, pedagogical and ecological knowledge forward? It will also reflect, more subtly, on whether new forms of stewardship might preserve not only the artwork, but the land and relationships from which it emerges.

Arran Gregory is a British Sri-Lankan artist based in London working across sculpture, film and performance. His practice seeks to perceive the self through nature, rather than nature through the self. Working with clay in its raw form, and natural materials gathered directly from the land, he creates his *Earth Body* works: site-responsive interventions shaped through time, weather, touch and collaboration with local landscapes and communities. His works explore impermanence, ancestral and material memory, and the body as a site of perception. Through sculpture, photography, film and performance, as well as journaling, Gregory extends these encounters into forms that carry the work's life beyond the landscapes they belong.

ADRIAN TAN

Resonance as Archive: Clay, rupture, and the politics of form in contemporary Singapore art
(pre-recorded presentation)

Can the re-performance of a work or its translation into a different medium be productive in understanding the conditions surrounding artistic practice, rather than reductive? This paper addresses this question through the practice of Jason Lim, using his work as a lens to examine the politics of form in contemporary Singapore art, where tensions between permanence and impermanence are shaped by material, performative, and institutional constraints. From his early endurance-based performances in the 1990s, Lim positioned his body as both instrument and site of inscription, producing gestures that resist stable documentation and persist as traces. This becomes particularly significant in the context of the performance art ban in Singapore 1994–2003, which rendered live, body-based practices precarious. In *Three Tonnes of Clay* (1995), presented at The Substation, Lim displaces performance into material, embedding gesture into unfired clay that dries, cracks, and falls away. Here, impermanence becomes a strategy through which performance endures beyond its moment of enactment. At the Venice Biennale (2007), Lim's *Just Dharma* introduces a contrasting register of rupture. A suspended porcelain structure collapses and shatters, compressing time into an event of irreversible transformation. This shift from duration to rupture reflects broader conditions within Singapore, where artistic expression is shaped by discipline, control, and the negotiation of visibility. This paper concludes by reflecting on the author's curatorial text, *Long Decay* (2026), in which Lim's *Tintinnabulation* series, titled after Edgar Allan Poe's *The Bells* (1849), translates performance into distributed forms. Across ceramic bells, drawings, and moving images, resonance emerges as afterlife. Through this reading, the paper proposes "resonance as archive" as a framework for understanding how impermanent practices in Singapore persist as traces across time and space, where clay becomes a site through which the politics of form is negotiated and echoed.

Adrian Tan (Dr) is an artist-curator and art historian, and a Senior Lecturer at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), University of the Arts Singapore. His research and practice focus on archives, artistic communities, and visual arts pedagogies, with particular attention to how art engages publics in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Working across exhibition-making, art historical writing, and artistic research, his projects examine how histories are constructed, contested, and re-read through curatorial and archival practices. His work advances the role of exhibitions, archives, and public engagement as sites of teaching, learning, and knowledge production.

2 PM

CLARE TWOMEY IN CONVERSATION WITH MARTINA MARGETTS

Monument Beyond Permanence: Clay, Museums and the Politics of Return

Clare Twomey addresses monumentality and impermanence, including works from Delcy Morelos, Linda Sormin and Twomey's works *Monument* (2009 -2022) and *Continuum* (2024-2025). Positioned between expanded clay practices, museum practice and material culture, Twomey will challenge assumptions surrounding permanence, preservation and the monument itself. Rather than conceiving the monumental ceramic artwork as a fixed object destined for indefinite conservation, these projects propose a more contingent and relational model of stewardship grounded in circulation and return. Central to this approach is the return of ceramic material to the sites of extraction and production after exhibition, allowing the works to re-enter cycles of use, labour and landscape. In doing so, Twomey repositions monumentality away from permanence and toward process, care and ecological continuity. Such practices offer an alternative museological voice to the long-standing institutional impulse to preserve monumental works intact and indefinitely. Drawing on feminist

critiques of monumentality, authorship and collection practices, Twomey explores how ephemerality can function as a resistant strategy against traditions of permanence, authority and possession. She considers how museums might accommodate artworks intentionally structured around change, disappearance and return, and what new forms of care and documentation such practices demand.

Clare Twomey is a British artist, researcher, and curator (b. 1968) who lives and works in London, UK. Since the 1990s, she has developed a body of work exploring the social, historical, and material dimensions of clay and ceramic production. Working across installation, participation, and performance, her practice has been instrumental in shaping contemporary understandings of clay as a site of social engagement. She contributes to critical discourse through research, writing, and curating. She was awarded an MBE for Services to Art in 2022. Twomey has exhibited internationally, including at Tate Modern, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Academy of Arts, Museum of Modern Art Kyoto, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Yale Center for British Art, the Crafts Council, and the EdenProject.

Martina Margetts is a writer, curator, advisor and lecturer on contemporary material culture, former Editor of *Crafts* and Senior Tutor in Critical & Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art. Her exhibition 'The Raw and the Cooked: new work in clay in Britain' (1993), co-curated with Alison Britton, established UK ceramics within an expanded field of sculpture. Relevant essays are included in *The Ceramics Reader* (Bloomsbury 2017), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* (Routledge 2016), *Material Perceptions* (Arnoldsche 2018), *Post-Craft* (Sternberg Press 2022), *Journal of Modern Craft* (2023) and *CLAY Conversations* (University of Westminster/V&A 2024).

Future Ecologies of Clay (AHRC grant number UKRI748) is a three-year partnership research project between the University of Westminster and the Victoria and Albert Museum, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UKRI.

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity. Our mission is to champion design and creativity in all its forms, advance cultural knowledge, and inspire makers, creators and innovators everywhere. We share a 5,000-year old story of creativity through exhibitions, events, educational programmes, digital experiences, conservation, research and an ever-evolving national collection of over 2.8 million objects spanning every creative discipline. The V&A was the first museum in the world to establish a dedicated Research Department and it continues to be a core activity of the Museum today. We play a leading role in binding together the fields of art, design and performance; conservation and collections management; and object-led, museum-based learning.

The Ceramics Research Centre (CRC-UK) is a leader in the debates surrounding international contemporary ceramic practice, and critical discussion is essential to the development of the discipline. Members of the Centre are committed to exhibiting and publishing, as well as hosting and participating in conferences, symposia and dialogues. Building on their original focus on ceramic installation and art practice, and the interface between ceramics, performance and museology, their interests have expanded to explore social engagement, interdisciplinary curatorial practice and the nature of the ephemeral, within the broader context of clay in culture and society. The CRC-UK sits within the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM), University of Westminster; a world-leading centre and pioneer in practice-based, critical, theoretical and historical research in art, creative and interdisciplinary practice.

Future Ecologies of Clay, Project Lead: Professor Clare Twomey

Co-Leads: Alun Graves, V&A; Phoebe Cummings and Tessa Peters, CRC-UK

Advisor: Professor Emerita Christie Brown

Research Fellows: Natalie Baerselman le Gros, V&A; Lily Crowther, CRC-UK

Project Administrator: Sophia Matthews

Ceramics@westminster.ac.uk

CLAY EXHIBITIONS

LONDON:

Barbican Sculpture Court

Delcy Morelos: origo (until 31.07.26)

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2026/event/delcy-morelos-origo>

Camden Arts Centre

Donald Locke: Resistant Forms (until 30.08.26)

<https://camdenartcentre.org/whats-on/resistant-forms?elevation=Featured>

Cooke Latham Gallery

Serena Korda: The Golem Rises (until 03.07.26)

<https://www.cookelathamgallery.com/exhibitions/57-serena-korda-the-golem-rises/overview/>

Larkin Durey

Anina Major: Tender Seedlings (until 06.07.26)

<https://www.larkindurey.com/exhibitions/>

Lisson Gallery

Ken Price (until 25.07.26)

<https://www.lissongallery.com/exhibitions/ken-price>

South London Gallery

Ranti Bam: Sacred Groves (until 23.08.26)

<https://www.southlondongallery.org/exhibitions/ranti-bam-sacred-groves/>

Whitechapel Gallery

Gabriel Chaile: Archaeology of Memory (until 06.09.26)

<https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/gabriel-chaile-archaeology-of-memory/>

UK:

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

Break The Mould (until 06.09.26)

<https://www.ikon-gallery.org/exhibition/break-the-mould>

Petworth House, West Sussex

Felicity Aylieff: Expressions in Blue (until 27.09.26)

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/sussex/petworth/expressions-in-blue-monumental-porcelain-by-felicity-aylieff>

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Yorkshire

Hold to This Earth: Works by Contemporary Indigenous North American Artists from Tia Collection (until 18.04.26) <https://ysp.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/hold-to-this-earth-works-by-contemporary-indigenous-north-american-artists-from-tia-collection>



<https://futureecologiesofclay.org/>

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