

Adil Writer

Adil Writer, a Bombay architect, has lived in Pondicherry since he came to study ceramics at Golden Bridge Pottery in 1998. He is now a partner at Mandala Pottery in the international community of Auroville. He strikes a fine balance between making functional tableware and his own studio ceramics. He has had solo showings of his ceramics and paintings in Japan, Indonesia, Bombay, Delhi and Bangalore. Writer has organised residencies for groups of Indian artists in Fuping, China (2013) where works were made for the permanent collection of the FuLe Ceramic Art Museums, and Korea in 2014. An invited artist at Shigaraki Park in Japan and Gaya Ceramic Centre in Bali, he concluded his residencies with solo shows, "Secrets and Lies". In 2015, he co-organised a soda firing workshop with Ruthanne Tudball in Auroville. Wanderlust is the driving force behind his travels, and his architectural background fuels an interest in 'fired-house' technology, as conceived by his teacher Ray Meeker. Writer demonstrated variations of this at Janet Mansfield's property "Morning View" in 2008 as well as fired stacks in Fremantle in 2012.



Sharbani Das Gupta

Sharbani Das Gupta studied design at NID, Ahmadabad and ceramics under Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith in Pondicherry. She has exhibited in UK, China, Greece, USA and India including a permanent installation at the Sculpture Garden at Hyatt, Chennai and is featured in Ceramics Art and Perception (CAP). She has also written for CAP, Ceramics Ireland, New Ceramics and the Dao magazine. At NCECA 2013 she curated Naturalization, was co-curator for Traditions Evolving. She has been an Artist-in-Residence at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft; Skopelos Art Foundation, Greece; Indian Museum project at FLICAM, Fuping; and most recently at Naori, South Korea. In spring 2015 she was in a two person show 'Terra Firma' sponsored by the Brown-India initiative. She is currently showing at Santa Fe Clay and the Las Cruces Museum of Art. She is due to exhibit in 50 Years/50 Women, at NCECA in Kansas City in 2016.



Janet DeBoos

After completing a science degree at the University of Sydney in the 60's, studied under Peter Rushforth at East Sydney Tech 1970/71; taught at Canberra School of Art for four years, returning to Sydney to teach at various suburban TAFE colleges as well as East Sydney, before resigning to go sailing, finish writing the glaze section of Handbook for Australian Potters (her third publication) and start a production pottery (Brindabella Pottery) which she ran with her partner Michael Wignall for almost twenty years. Was Head of Ceramics Australian National University (ANU) School of Art from 1998-2012. Over the last sixteen years she has become a regular visitor to China- engaging in projects with industry as well as undertaking residencies, and teaching (China Academy of Art). She is Australasian representative on Council of the International Academy of Ceramics, and currently Emeritus fellow at ANU.



Gerry Wedd

Gerry Wedd was born at McLaren Vale, South Australia, in 1957. He lives and works in Port Elliot, South Australia. He completed a Master of Visual Art at the University of South Australia in 2009 and a Bachelor of Design (ceramics) at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Adelaide in 1986. Solo exhibitions include RIP: surf and sea, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Gold Coast, Qld In the woods, Craft Victoria, Melbourne (2011); and Deep in the woods, Damien Minton Gallery, Sydney (2010). He has participated in group exhibitions including Horizon, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway (2013) Designing craft/Crafting design: 40 years of JamFactory, Adelaide (2013-ongoing); Ein tag am strand, Handverk Gallery, Munich, Germany (2011); Blue, Object, Sydney; and CLASH: contemporary sculptural ceramics, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW (2010). In 2010 he was an Australian representative in the Havana Bial in Cuba. Wedd was a designed for Mambo Graphics between 1991 and 2005. He was a finalist in the Basil Sellers Art Prize for Sport in 2014, was awarded the City of Hobart Art Prize in 2010 and the Sydney Myer Fund Ceramics Award in 1998.



Madhvi Subrahmanian

Born in Mumbai, was trained under Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith at the Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry, India. She attained her MFA from SMU, Dallas, TX under Peter Beseacker. Madhvi has participated in several public art projects such as, a collaborative project on a pavement in Mumbai, works for Mumbai domestic airport and a bench for a Singapore park. She has also attended several artist-in-residence programs- such as The Fule International Ceramic Museum in Fuping (China), Watershed (Maine) and The Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park (Japan). Her works have been published in various magazines such as Ceramic Art and Perception, Ceramics Monthly and in books such as Paper Clay by Rosette Gault, Smoke firing by Jane Perryman and Contemporary Ceramics by Emmanuel Cooper. She has participated in many solo and group exhibitions around the world and her works are in several collections. Madhvi currently lives and works in Singapore.



Trevor Fry

Trevor Fry is a Sydney based artist and ceramicist. He studied art history at the University of Auckland and graduated in painting from the University of Canterbury, and is currently completing a PhD at Sydney College of the Arts where his research is focussed on the ambiguous status of ceramics and clay in contemporary art. He exhibits extensively from the recent large-scale figurative installation in Sexes at Performance Space in Sydney to numerous other shows incorporating video, collage, drawing and ceramics at First Draft, Peloton, MOP Projects, Artspace and Marrickville Garage in Sydney, CCAS in Canberra, Michael Lett Gallery and Artspace in Auckland and Chiayi City Koji Pottery Museum in Taiwan. His work is preoccupied with the subversive application of the sexual and energetic in art. He is widely known for his hyper-romantic figurative ceramic sculptures, wild archaic deities in ecstatic gestures, hollow constructions built by coiling to the limits of the technically possible.



6x6—a formula for cultural alchemy

Kevin Murray

Specifically, 6x6 is a 'form and surface' collaboration where one person makes the basic object which the other completes. The understanding is that culture consists of a number of concepts that can take different forms of expression, sometimes with exhilarating effect. It's as though we only explore one dimension of our culture at home, leaving other facets to be revealed elsewhere.

6x6 involves three Indian and three Australian ceramicists. Each artist makes six versions of the same form. One of each of these is then mailed to the other five who finish it in their own style. The objects chosen are redolent with meaning.

Let's look at the offerings.

Originally from Mumbai, **Adil Writer** now lives in Auroville, which is an experimental international community nestled in the forest of south India, now a hub for ceramics.

For his chosen object, Writer draws from his heritage as a Parsi, the ethnic group that migrated to India when Persia converted to Islam. Parsis follow the Zoroastrian faith, which is sustained by intricate rituals involving sacred objects. For 6x6, Writer has chosen the saes (or sace or ses), a circular rimmed metal tray that holds silver objects. It is activated on special occasions such as the thanksgiving (jashan).

As a diasporic object, the story of the saes takes the Parsi story beyond Iran. 6x6 continues the process of cultural dispersal to a land across the ocean.

On the other side of the process, Writer has soda/wood-fired the five works by other artists. Ironically, fires his kiln with Australian mountain ash timber which was planted around Auroville 40 years ago for reforestation.

Sharbani Das Gupta developed her skills at Golden Bridge pottery, Pondicherry (just next to Auroville), under Ray Meeker. Her work combines an interest in the formal properties of clay with its potential to provide critical commentary on the key issues of the day, such as global environment.

Sharbani has chosen the kaavad ('god box'), which is a portable shrine developed in Rajasthan around 400 years ago. In turn, Sharbani has made her received objects more useful, transforming them into a plumb line, hand warmer, magnifying tube and acupuncture chart. It makes us wonder how many of our utilities began life as something more ceremonial.

Madhvi Subrahmanian has also followed the ceramics path south-east from Mumbai to Pondicherry. Subrahmanian is particularly interested in the ancient symbolism of clay and pottery in Indian culture. Her object, the yoni, is a Hindu symbol of the divine mother, Shakti or Devi. In the temple, it is a vessel form that channels libations to the symbol of the male god, Shiva. The yoni brings to 6x6 a particular understanding of multiplicity present in Hindu thought, especially in relation to the mystery of male and female duality within the indivisible whole. So in the logic of this collaboration, each of the artists have the opportunity themselves to offer libations in the form of pattern, glaze or smoke.

Subrahmanian's own process involves smoke-firing, warm terra-sigillata colours derived from earth stones that are burnished and waxed. These colours are similar to those produced by Indian fabric dyes.

Adelaide's **Gerry Wedd** plays with the cultural differences of West and East. He has subverted the regal language of blue and white ware to express the popular dimension of Australian culture, including surfing, football and rock music. His offering is the iconic Australian thong. There's an uncanny resemblance between the lingam and the thong. Both are similar shaped containers for a human appendage. But the concept of libation is an uncommon one to such a pragmatic country as Australia, which does not usually subscribe to sacrifice as a cultural practice. Wedd's responses are related to the Logic Magic Kingdoms by Eduardo Paolozzi, which combined his own sculptures with several hundred museum artefacts. Such 'collaboration' confuses authorship and opens up new perspectives.

Trevor Fry is a creature of Sydney. As well as exhibiting in public galleries he is involved in Sydney's artist run scene and has shown in the Mardi Gras festival. Fry was part of the Wild Boys collective that stages radical drag performances. His work is provocative, creating transgressive objects with deviant sexual and scatological meanings. Fry tests the boundaries of this project by creating six different objects from the letters of the word 'English'. The linguistic legacy of British colonisation is clearly one of the strongest links between Australia and India. Fry subverts the capital letters with scenes of debauchery, invoking the cultural corruption that occurs on both sides of the Indian Ocean. Fry also uses a camouflage design, which is both critical and decorative. He immerses these pieces in the contested terrain of Australian politics.

Janet DeBoos is both a local artist, reflecting the natural beauty of the Brindabellas where she lives, and a potter of the world, working in countries like China. She is an advocate of the 'distributed studio', involving collaboration between artists in varied times and places, drawing on their own specialisations. Her work involves a cultural patchwork, juxtaposing different designs on the one piece. For this show, DeBoos celebrates Australia's myth of the noble failure, using in this instance the example of Ned Kelly. Sidney Nolan's 1948 series of paintings reduced the bushranger to a black mask with a letterbox opening. One positive consequence of that failure is a cultural pluralism, which DeBoos realises in the variety decals and glazes she uses on her received pieces.

Conclusion

6x6 demonstrates the power of clay to create a cultural alchemy. At one level, the works give new expression to another's cultural forms. But through this most plastic medium, we are reminded how much cultures themselves are fluid, reflecting continual displacement.

Kevin Murray is a writer and curator, Adjunct Professor at RMIT University and a Vice-President of the World Crafts Council Asia Pacific. A longer version can be found at www.craftunbound.net



6x6 Interpreting craft in Gondwana

Civic Library Exhibition Space
Civic Square, Canberra, ACT
8-12 July 2015