

Ray Chan See Kwong
NEW RE NEW
2018

49 teacups: various local Chuen Lung clays, glazed and fired
Produced as part of the 2018 public art and community project *Hi! Hill!*, by the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Organised by the Art Promotion Office with Curatorial Partner (art in-situ): Make A Difference Institute, Hong Kong
Courtesy the artist

Mounted on *River bench*, recycled spotted gum bench and assorted hardwood legs, wax, by Bryden Williams of Mount Framing, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2021

Positioned in the water-rich Tai Mo Shan, the village of Chuen Lung sits north of Tsuen Wan, and overlooks Tsing Yi and Lantau Island. Chuen Lung's agricultural production has shaped its community and history: a Hakka village, inhabited by the Tsang people¹, tea plantations in the area scaled and dominated local work from the seventeenth century until the 1920s, later replaced in the 1950s and 60s by watercress, which was used widely across Hong Kong². In recent years, the rapid pace of development and shift away from village life in the New Territories has meant that only a few agricultural fields remain. But the memories of these green pastures, and the products they produced are still alive in local business, with piping hot dishes garnished with watercress, and tea an integral part of every table. The *Hi! Hill!* public art project worked with over a dozen artists to connect fieldwork, local memories and research with the local community.

As 'ceramic experimentalist' Ray Chan See Kwong sees it, the centuries of growth, movement and production in Chuen Lung have embedded memories into the soil of the village. In *NEW RE NEW*, Ray worked with Chuen Lung community members who are part of the local restaurant and tea industries to create tea cups made from local clay. The soil, described as having "a unique sand concentration and high permeability" is fittingly perfect for moulding and production of multiple small vessels. Formed and glazed by hand, each cup is glazed in a fluid pattern that mimics the flow of the water that ran atop this clay source, a flow mimicked by the custom 'river bench' built to display these pieces as part of *Drawn by stones*. Ray designed the *NEW RE NEW* cups with Cheung Lung restaurant owners in a collaborative process. They were made to be used, a product of the land, connected to it again by the earthy, local flavours of the tea that they have held.

1 Li Ho-fai, 川流不息：歷史中的川龍 RIVER OF TIME: CHUEN LUNG IN HISTORY, 2018, published by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Hong Kong

2 Li Ho-fai, 川流不息：歷史中的川龍 RIVER OF TIME: CHUEN LUNG IN HISTORY, 2018, published by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Hong Kong

Ruth Ju-Shih Li

Topography of Memory

2021- ongoing

Unfired raw clay, porcelain and string [forthcoming]

Custom installation setting with black aluminium gloss floor plinth and ceiling mounting system, w.3050mm d.1500mm

Commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2021

Courtesy the artist and May Space, Sydney

Topography of Memory represents Ruth Ju-Shih Li's most ambitious unfired porcelain installation to date. Premiering at the first iteration of *Drawn by stones* at Counihan Gallery in Brunswick, this site-specific installation piece has been conceived in response to the opportunity presented by the *Drawn by stones* tour to connect with place and community.

Ruth says:

“As a Taiwanese-Australian, the curatorial theme of contested histories and the exploration of the idea of Nationhood really hits close to home, triggering an array of questions surrounding how I see and define my own identity and, in turn, how I define my countries juxtaposed to how society or governments draw their boundaries. This work is an interrogation into, as well as a celebration, of place and how it forms the foundation of our individual experiences, narratives and ultimately defines our understanding of nationhood. I hope to create an open dialogue and space for people to express and discuss their own stories and how land and locality has played an important role in defining their individual realities. I am very excited for the opportunity to engage with local communities around Australia through workshops and site-specific installations, exchanging stories and experiences, allowing the work to grow with each new iteration and location.”

However, in the time of COVID-19, this work is paused – with the installation stage ready, it is hoped that *Topography of Memory* will be realised when the Ruth has the ability to travel and connect with Wurundjeri land, and the local community. If this becomes possible during *Drawn by stones*' exhibition period, the audience is invited to see this new work charted in the gallery space.

Dean Cross

Nothing Changes (apart/hide)

2016

Ngunnawal Ochre and fibre-based pen on craft paper

Triptych w.2280mm h.1020mm, comprising three artworks

w.760mm h.1020mm each

Dean Cross

Full Moon Dreaming

2016

Ngunnawal Ochre and fibre-based pen on craft paper

Diptych w.1520mm, h.1020, comprising two artworks w.760mm,

h.1020mm each

Both works courtesy the artist and Yavuz Gallery

Drawn by stones is grounded by the 2020 installation at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art of *Monuments*, Dean Cross' major site-responsive work. The exhibition was originally conceived to include this time specific work, an ongoing project since 2016, designed for exhibition every two years. Exhibited in 2020 at 4A's Sydney gallery to allow for its timely appearance, Cross' *Monuments* challenges colonial concepts of ceramics, memorialising and memory, with handfuls of white ochre – handfuls of Ngunnawal/ Ngambri Country – gathered by the artist's father on their property with permission from local elder and custodian of the land Auntie Matilda House – building a grid that spread across the gallery floors with a handful marking each year since invasion.

Nothing Changes (apart/hide) and *Full Moon Dreaming* were created by Dean in 2016 as he "was beginning [his] dreaming around *Monuments*". Drawn with the same white Ngunnawal/ Ngambri ochre, these form part of a suite of drawings that act as a preface to the *Monuments* project. They consider pre-contact life, and the displacement, disruption of white arrival.

As Kimberly Moulton writes in the article *Breaking ground: A history of Indigenous ceramics*:

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ceramic arts have been positioned as a fairly recent movement. However, for thousands of generations, Indigenous people have shifted the land to form installations used in ceremony, and painted and carved story into stone. Ochre has been gently extracted from the earth to be used on the body and moulded into cultural material made of fibre, wood and animal. The relationship to earth and the tangibility of its offerings have been connected to Indigenous peoples from time immemorial."¹

For Dean, the use of ochre was a testing of the boundaries of the material as both a traditional, and non-traditional drawing material – a process of: "finding a way for me to commune with deep, material, ancestral practices in a way that is authentic to me and my 21st Century experience."

Documentation of *Monuments* as part of the wider *Drawn by stones* project can be viewed at 4a.com.au/drawn-by-stones

¹ Moulton, K. (2015). Breaking ground: A history of Indigenous ceramics. *Art Monthly Australia*, (281), 31–34. [https://search-informit-org.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/doi/10.3316/informit.282163214178654](https://search.informit-org.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/doi/10.3316/informit.282163214178654)

Wen-Hsi Harman
Theory of land, from Land Series

2015

Handbuilt royale porcelain, with enamel, gold luster, multiple firings
h.60cm, w.52cm, d.3cm

Courtesy the artist

Wen-Hsi Harman
Territory, from Land Series

2015

Handbuilt royale porcelain, with enamel, gold luster, multiple firings
h.60cm, w.52cm, d.3cm

Courtesy the artist

Mounted on: blackwood bench and assorted recycled hardwood legs, shou sugi-ban finish, wax, by Bryden Williams of Mount Framing, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2021

Wen-Hsi Harman's *Land Series*, from which we see two works – *Theory of Land* and *Territory* – in *Drawn by stones*, was produced while undertaking a practice-led PhD in ceramics at the Bath Spa University. Considering the antique British maps of Taiwan in the collection of the British Museum, Wen-Hsi wondered:

“My homeland is Taiwan which is a land surrounded by the sea. It is such a beautiful island.

I am interested in why other people decide to map Taiwan. What is the purpose of mapping other people's land?”

Theory of Land and *Territory* are topographical porcelain ‘maps’ of this consideration – formed through repetitive impressions of the artist's thumb – imprinting herself, literally, onto the ‘land’ of clay. With the addition of gold lustre and enamel to this undulating ‘land’, Wen-Hsi references Taiwan's colonised gold mining history: during the most recent colonisation of Taiwan by Japan between 1895 and 1945, the areas known as Jiufen, Jinguashi in the Ruifang District, New Taipei City, were at the centre of Asia's largest gold and copper refinery. Taiwan's gold production and mining peaked in 1938, when Jinguashi produced 2,603 tonnes of gold mined and refined by local people, all exported for Japanese profit.¹

In attempting to materially reproduce this ‘human geography’, Wen-Hsi considers both her own place as a contemporary Tawianese artist living ‘between’ Taiwan and the United Kingdom; and the wider challenge of finding identification points in a complex, multi-colonised land. In her thesis, *On edge: exploration of cultural identity through ceramic practice*, she suggests:

“I feel that Taiwanese people still struggle to present their identity and still need to practise how to present their cultural identity in Taiwan and outside Taiwan.”²

1 Fulco, “A Throwback to Taiwan's Golden Age.”, 2020, via: <https://topics.amcham.com.tw/2020/07/a-trip-to-jinguashi/>

2 Harman, Wen-Hsi, *On edge: an exploration of cultural identity through ceramic practice*, 2018, thesis

Lakaw, Dogin, Palos, Lisin, Byimu with Wen-Hsi Harman
A Disappearing Culture – The Amis Earthenware Tradition In Taiwan
2015

Video, 10:06 minutes

[From left]:

1. *Diwas*

Ceremonial Amis earthenware pottery, h.8.3cm, w.7cm, d.8cm
Ceremonial cup used for alcohol

2. *Tatolonan*

Amis earthenware pottery, h.9cm, w.8.5cm, d.5.5cm
Used for the steaming of vegetables

3. *Koleng*

Amis earthenware pottery, h.13cm, w.9cm, d.7cm
Used for general cooking

4. *Atomo*

Amis earthenware pottery, h.12cm, w.10cm, d.9cm
Storage container

All works courtesy the artist and Amis earthenware potters Lakaw (born 1932), Dogin (born 1953), Palos (born 1948), Lisin (born 1956), Byimu (born 1957)

Mounted on blackwood bench and assorted recycled hardwood legs, shou sugi-ban finish, wax, by Bryden Williams of Mount Framing, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2021

Also produced during the research period for Wen-Hsi Haman's PhD, *On edge: an exploration of cultural identity through ceramic practice*, *A Disappearing Culture – The Amis Earthenware Tradition In Taiwan* is an oral and audio-visual history of a group of Amis women's pottery practice.

The largest matriarchal Indigenous group in Taiwan today, the Amis population is over 200,000, making up over 37% of Taiwan's total Indigenous population. The Amis have for generation after generation, through multiple periods of colonisation, maintained a strong earthenware tradition that is specific in its crafting and firing approach.

Spending extensive time with Amis women Lakaw (born 1932), Dogin (born 1953), Palos (born 1948), Lisin (born 1956), Byimu (born 1957), documenting their practice and stories, Wen-Hsi, Lakaw, Dogin, Palos, Lisin and Byimu capture in this collaborative video work the women's role in earthenware production, the ceremonial aspect of this ceramic tradition and the production process, giving audiences direct access to this material practice. By capturing the Amis earthenware tradition, it is hoped that this work will be a reference point for future generations to continue this unique ceramic process.

We see the intrinsically collaborative nature of making here: collection, wedging, batting and shaping of local clay from Amis land; collection and use of dried rice shells, small sticks and timber pieces from the seashore, and hay to build a unique firing environment, which produces beautifully fired, unglazed works for everyday use.

Jody Rallah

More than Stones – Throughout the Generations

2021

Clay bodies, charcoal (Yuggera Country), fired ceramic coolamons, looped audio track, wall drawing with Yuggera clay bodies and charcoals

Commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2021

Courtesy the artist

More than Stones – Throughout the Generations is an installation that contemplates the dynamic nature of clay as an ‘alive’ medium, through clay in various forms from the artist’s home Country (Yuggera).

Incorporating clay pigments, clay bodies and charcoal gathered respectfully after rainy periods on Country, clay fired into coolamon vessels, and audio storytelling, Rallah’s *More than Stones – Throughout the Generations* foregrounds clay’s role as a cultural facilitator.

Stemming from an experience at the Queensland Museum where Rallah saw a collection of her Ancestor’s cultural objects stored within staid archival systems and away from cultural access, *More than stones* represents an ongoing commitment to allow audiences to experience cultural materials as current, interconnected and powerful. Rallah says that the installation: “underpins clay as a symbol of cultural connection which brings people and place together.”

The fired coolamon elements within *More than Stones – Throughout the Generations* form part of the artist’s ongoing practice of creating these vessels, which has included the community-based project *250 Years (The Coolamon Project)*, in which Rallah collaborates with people from numerous Aboriginal Nations comprising the Australian continent to produce ceramic coolamons – Indigenous cultural vessels – and has produced 250 coolamons, representative of 250 years of resilience and cultural survival through colonisation. In her practice, Jody has independently created over 300 coolamons. The coolamon form, and making process, which more widely also incorporates the carving of bark from trees (creating ‘scarred’ trees that bear the marks of this removal of vessels) are linked in *More than Stones – Throughout the Generations* through Rallah’s incorporation of charcoal collected from trees that have fallen on Yuggera Country: used to etch on gallery walls echos of the shapes of these life-carrying forms.

In its gathering and activation of Yuggera clay, *More than Stones – Throughout the Generations* acts to decolonise the museological and colonial gaze that has sought to position Indigenous practice as inactive and tell new stories through this living material.