



e  
2013 nucleo  
contemporary clay





146 Artspace Hobart August 1 - 29, 2013  
Sawtooth ARI Launceston September 6 - 28, 2013

curated by  
Serena Rosevear and Patrick Sutczak

Produced after the close of the exhibitions, this document is an expanded version of the exhibition catalogue and is intended to serve as a record of the Enucleo - contemporary clay project. For a copy of the exhibition catalogue please contact the curators.







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## Preface

What more do you need than a facilitating of empathetic relationships between materials, spaces, and makers that brings about a successful and refreshing view of a field of practice? In drawing artists and artworks together in *Enucleo: contemporary clay* the curators, Serena Rosevear and Patrick Sutczak, have exercised their discernment as intentional, speculative, purposeful but not necessarily with a guaranteed outcome. Risky business. Yet simply viewing the exhibition at its two very different Tasmanian outings - at 146 Artspace (Hobart) and Sawtooth ARI (Launceston) - provided me with a demonstration of the strength of the premise on which these two curators have worked. The fractured, office foyer-cum-gallery space in Hobart isolated objects in niches, across thoroughfares, and in window spaces, restricting views and limiting any approach to the objects. At Sawtooth, the high roof, white walls and changing light could have diminished the more delicate pieces, reducing an intimacy that was the occasional by-product of the 146 Artspace experience. Yet in both spaces the collected pieces 'worked', and each visit was as if seeing that work anew, piling idea upon idea onto form.

In sticking with their brief of purposeful arrangement the curators retained each artist's voice, the intent in each work, while finding value (and some interesting installation moments) in both spaces. And what a selection of artists. From Rosevear herself, making the wry yet pointed observations on her craft and its display that were the motivation for the exhibition; through cool arrangements by Sanné Mestrom; and the video *(de)composition* of Arun Sharma: all the artists addressed the premise of the exhibition with élan and wit. That premise, that an organ or form that lives,

breathes and performs can be separated from its supporting body to take on a new life of its own, is an intriguing one. For me, *Enucleo* frees clay from the vessel and from the imposition of all the pejoratives you might use that reflect the unthinking end of craft (the pot-on-a-plinth syndrome) and unnecessary stylism in arts practice generally. At Sawtooth, in conversation with artist Penny Byrne, it became clear that what *Enucleo* attempts, by concentrating on a single material, is to liberate a field of practice and let it loose in the wider world of ideas, politics, and exemplary making. There is no end to it: thinking, working, creating, life.

Dr Deb Malor

## Introduction

" For those concerned with putting objects into public view, the plinth is a familiar device. Its clean flat surface creates a separate neutral space on which we can gaze upon the object from all angles and appreciate it in its own right as a thing of beauty. The plinth makes art."

(Kevin Murray, 2003)

Favoured within white cube spaces as an object upon which to herald greater objects, the visual silence of the white plinth is not only appropriate, but convenient. Within the object-based medium of ceramics the plinth is at home: the obvious mode of presentation. But in this era where our gaze has been trained to encompass the space beyond the object, where galleries have become destinations as much for the space that encompasses the art as for the art itself, does the plinth remain appropriate? Or does it add to the visual clutter, taking up space within the space, distancing the viewer from the art? Having become accustomed to these dynamic spaces and new media contained within, is the viewer still able to engage with art within the comparatively inanimate environ of white cubes within white cubes? *Does the plinth make art?*

*Enucleo - contemporary clay* was designed to explore how an exhibition of ceramic work would look in the absence of plinths.

The challenge of curating a group show is to choose and present each artist and work individually, while simultaneously representing the conceptual intent of the

complete exhibition. When the concept itself is intended to question an historically understood mode of exhibition the challenges of installation become new. As curators, Patrick Sutczak and I placed ourselves in an unfamiliar zone between the white cube and 21st century designed-for-art spaces. With the convenience of the plinth rejected, the installation of Enucleo became closer to *hanging* rather than *placing* the works as in a conventional object-based exhibition.

With limited capacity to influence the spaces within which the work would be presented, and the mode of presentation already resolved by the artists, the placement of each work within the space was our only device. Tethered to the walls the angle of view of some works was compressed towards two dimensions, while others relied upon the walls to reference their physicality in space. Ironically the piece directly referencing the work of a painter was one of few that could be encircled, providing the third dimension essential to this artist's reinterpretation of the works of a master.

I find it difficult, knowing this exhibition so intimately, to reflect objectively upon the physical outcomes. Enucleo assembled a collection of works unlike any other I am aware of, by a list of artists of a caliber beyond what I could have dreamt when starting the project. The look of the show was unique in my experience, but perhaps my perspective is subjectively skewed. I have to question whether, in the era of MONA, the Tasmanian audience received the exhibitions with as much questioning as the broader Australian ceramics community may have. Perhaps, perhaps not.

The production of a catalogue was a goal set early on and, as

became the custom with this project, the idea grew when potential was realised. One catalogue became two, with the production of a B&W version prior to the exhibition period and this but-wait-there's-more colour version that seeks to record the project more fully. This document is important to me as an enduring output of a process through which I have gained valuable professional development.

As I write I am travelling home from a trip during which I was most fortunate to be able to visit some of the artist as I returned their works, feeling a mix of relief and sadness that the project is almost complete. Hit the catalogue print button, distribute the Pozible rewards, submit the acquitals and it's done.

Am I finished with the plinth as a subject? I'm not sure, but I do know that I'm yearning to get back to making some of my own art, and I've resolved that I don't need a plinth to make it so.

Serena Rosevear

## Putting on a show: the making of *Enucleo*

Towards the end of 2012, Serena Rosevear and I (along with our peers) were neck-deep in completing our Honours year in contemporary art at the University of Tasmania's College of the Arts. So deep in fact, that we only had a few weeks to go before assessment and everything else that could be classed as *everything else* was down the list of priorities. Or so I thought.

It was a Sunday afternoon when Serena called me to tell me about a project she had been toying around with and wanted to run it by me for some input. I was fascinated, not only by the underlying ideas of the project, but by the fact that a fire had been burning inside of her for some months and that it was more intense than our upcoming honours assessment. Serena wanted to curate not one exhibition, but two. They would take place in Hobart and Launceston during August and September of 2013, the premise would be very specific, and the work would be outstanding. As I wandered around the garden with the phone up to my ear, I listened, nodded, drank my coffee and thought it all sounded great. *Go Serena.*

What I didn't realise for the bulk of the conversation was that Serena wasn't just wanting my input, she was also wanting my commitment to collaborate. Her vision was affirmed, *everything else* wasn't. The application deadline for the exhibition space in Hobart (at 146 Artspace) was rapidly approaching and Serena asked me to look over it and contribute to her idea, so my attention was on what she had prepared and assisting her in securing 146 in August of 2013.

True to her word, Serena emailed the draft application an hour later, and true to my word I read it carefully. It was

all there and I looked it over for quite some time. It had a working title *Get Off That Plinth!* and proposed an exhibition that challenged traditional modes of presentation by exploring the approaches to clay in the contexts of artist autonomy and audience engagement. There was a strong focus on presenting works that could not be objectified, cordoned off, or elevated to a certain consideration by the positioning of them upon a white rectangle as is seen frequently in the gallery and museum environment.

With *Get Off That Plinth!* Serena wanted to find some of those works that rejected the plinth and bring them together. I made a few edits and added general feedback, one of which could almost be considered sacrilege to someone's idea - a name change. I didn't know if she would ignore it or embrace it, but I offered the title of *Enucleo*. Initially (almost sympathetically!) it became a working title after Serena agreed to my suggestion. It would grow on her, and I was pleased to contribute in some way. It was a variation on a medical term meaning to remove without further detriment. The plinth was gone, yet the work remained - a process of *enucleation* that would separate something intact from its familiar association.

And that was the beginning. In order to be successful in our application at 146 and we had to set about securing artists. This was to be a daunting yet rewarding experience, and one that netted us the calibre of work that we strived to exhibit. Overcoming the initial hesitation in contacting artists who we found inspiring was simply a case of doing it.

During a national ceramics conference in Adelaide earlier in



2012, Serena listened to a number of speakers that not only inspired her, but also challenged her approaches to ceramics and the position of her own practice in a contemporary context. Among those speakers were Penny Byrne, a Victorian based conservator and artist, and also Arun Sharma from New South Wales. Both artists were producing work that fit neatly into the premise of what was at the core of *Enucleo*, and so were the first to be approached.

Arun Sharma confirmed his interest in the show, and Penny Byrne followed shortly after giving us an injection of confidence that we could continue to other artists and strike up a dialogue that would either result in new works being produced for the exhibition, or securing works that we flagged as being perfect for demonstrating the premise of our exhibition. During this time we had also secured the space in Northern Tasmania at Sawtooth ARI in Launceston and we had the bedrock of what was to be a longer road leading to the successful culminations of the two exhibitions.

As emerging artists and honours students about to embark on our careers, we were somewhat tentative about applying our education and training in an endeavour beyond the tertiary institution. The reason for this was certainly not a lack of knowledge or enthusiasm, but rather due to fulfilling our own expectations as to the outcomes for ourselves, the participating artists, yet more importantly the audience we hoped to attract. As 2012 became 2013, Serena continued with her practice while I went on to higher-degree study. The 'bumping-into-each-other' at art school of the previous year and working through ideas was no longer there so we inevitably had to create a more ordered line of communication

and establish regular milestone meetings and progress reports. The collaboration was well underway, and *Enucleo* became very real with the passing of each and every week as we worked through identifying artists, looking at the logistics of freight, considering insurance, and establishing a plan to fund it all.

At times our ambitions reached international shores as we searched far and wide for work that screamed out to us. We found it in China and America and our email exchanges and subsequent *Vimeo* or *YouTube* viewings and website links back and forth resulted in a degree of excitement. It also resulted in a conversation about the shrinkage of the world through internet connectivity and global instantaneity. We reached an obvious conclusion. Starting a dialogue with international artists was free, but global post and insurance was not. It wasn't just a question of how far could we reach, it was also a question of financial restraint. Our budget was shoestring to say the least. By this stage, we had identified and listed a number of artists in Victoria and New South Wales to approach and even then we were becoming aware of how much of our projected funds would be eaten up in simply getting the works to Tasmania. Lessons were being learned and decisions were being made without compromising *Enucleo's* premise. We were still on track and moving forward in leaps and bounds with a revised national focus. It was then we realised that we had the show we wanted. We just needed to hit the keyboard and start working down the list we had revised over an afternoon in the back of my garden drinking black tea and swatting a mosquito every other minute.

One by one we worked down the list - former TCotA international artist-in-residence Marta Armada, Walter Auer, Alexandra Standen, Juz Kitson, Sanné Mestrom, Addison Marshall, and Kris Coad. Each of them opened up a conversation with us and expressed their interest. We continued conversations with Penny Byrne and Arun Sharma. We had nine artists who were on-board and we were in regular conversation with us over many months prior to the first of the two exhibitions to take place at 146 ArtSpace in August. We drafted and finalised artist contracts, fine-tuned the details and established the obligations of both the artists and ourselves. This was an important administrative process to go through and something neither of us had ever done before. Every artist signed so we knew we were on the right track.

There was also a question looming out in the ether about our tenth and final artist - Serena herself. With Serena being a ceramicist and emerging practitioner it was unclear if she would include her own work in the exhibition, or if she even should. Being the initiator of the project and curator, she was grappling with a decision about what form the work would take and how it would be presented in the different spaces. We talked about this on and off, and eventually I realised that her participation in the exhibition was a conclusion she could only reach herself. There were underlying thoughts that ignited the whole exhibition in the first place and Serena appeared to be working through them at her own pace, in her own way. She would let me know when she was ready. Until such time, we worked on exhibiting nine.

Early on in designing *Enucleo*, we wanted to see if we could seek funding to bring an artist to Tasmania during the exhibition to give an artist talk at one of the exhibition spaces, and also present an arts forum at our training ground, the Tasmanian College of the Arts. This was another component to *Enucleo* that we felt would enhance the exhibitions and connect the audiences with one of the makers to gain insight into their processes and practice. We were both in admiration of Penny Byrne's work and were excited by the possibility of hearing her speak. Serena had had the pleasure before in 2012, and was keen to bring her to Tasmania and I wasn't going to disagree. We applied for funding from Arts Tasmania for an Arts Bridge grant and we were successful. We could now fly Penny over and we set about locking in dates for her to give talks in Launceston and Sawtooth ARI and the art school.

As August rapidly approached we had to start organising freight and securing something we thought would be relatively straightforward - insurance. As it turned out, this wasn't to be the case and we became aware of how difficult it was to ensure that all the works that we had in the show, each with a substantial value attached, were covered. We were both in a bit of a spin because insurance was something we had left to the last minute. It wasn't that insurance wasn't available through various avenues, it was simply that what we were doing was, unbeknownst to us, *unique* and therefore hard to package. We weren't a 'gallery', we didn't have locked representational contracts with the artists, the work was being exhibited in two locations, and there were also issues with security, handling, installation and transport of works.

At that point with just a few weeks to go we were having trouble resolving the insurance, and Serena was dedicating a decent amount of time to sorting it out. It was apparent that we needed to inform the artists of the situation, and if there were to be any reluctance on their part to participate, then we wouldn't have a show.

While we ended up reaching a resolution and all our artists happily confirmed commitment to the show, it was a situation that we had approached with a degree of naivety. We flagged it as an important lesson, and got to work arranging freight. But even as we started that process, another obvious question surfaced, where were we sending the works to? It was another example of how the smallest details can trip a project up. We laughed at the thought of overlooking the fact of storage prior to the exhibition. With the problematic issues of insurance it seemed as though we had squared it all away only to potentially jeopardise the arrangement by knocking a box off a table at home!

A few quick decisions about safe storage were made and we off and running again. Installation day at 146 Artspace in Hobart was firmly in our sights and *Enucleo* was one step closer to opening. All we had to do now was finish working on a small black-and-white catalogue that would accompany both exhibitions in situ and undertake a condition report - and then somehow that would be it. The discussion, planning, emailing, phone-calling, and head-scratching would culminate into the days of the fun stuff - install and the opening. Stage one of *Enucleo* was about to happen and we couldn't have been more pleased with the journey.

I wanted to write this piece for this catalogue not only to share our experience of *Enucleo* from idea to realisation, but also to inspire the graduates, artists, emerging curators, and those (like us) just entering the arts and cultural industry, that anything is possible if one is willing to take the steps toward making it happen. Research and talking to people is paramount. Seeking advice from funding bodies gave as a valuable insight into how we would propose and budget the project, which in turn allowed us to refine it. Talking with our university educators and alumni (initially to gauge feedback) generated excitement and confidence. Our family and friends whom we consulted, well, they just did what *family* and *friends* do – they were there to catch us. Every step of the way we were met with generous enthusiasm and support. This was further evident in the financial backing by those interested in the project via our crowd-funded *Pozible* campaign. As a result, we were able generate the funds to return the works to the amazing participating artists and produce this very catalogue.

*Enucleo* at 146 Artspace was a wonderful success. The very talented Alexandra Standen flew down especially to Hobart to install her own work and lovingly gave us her time, company and friendship of which we are forever grateful. The September component of *Enucleo* installed at Sawtooth ARI in Launceston was an incredible experience. The challenge of a completely different space was exciting and ultimately very rewarding as we found ways to adapt the cohesiveness of the exhibition. We brought in some old-fashion know how and building expertise in the form of David Rosevear to make certain artworks behave as they were intended. David drilled,

cut, hammered and constructed aspects of the show that made it more than we had imagined.

The University of Tasmania's Dr Deb Malor hosted a delightful conversation with Penny Byrne at Sawtooth ARI and the very next day Penny took to the lectern at the Tasmanian College of the Arts to deliver a forum about her work and future direction as an artist and conservator. Both events were magnificent and we were coincidentally also able to reunite Penny with some of her former students now working as conservators at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston.

*Enucleo* from my perspective became more than an exhibition. It became something that I can safely say Serena and myself are incredibly proud of. It was a step into potential for us both. From when we both awkwardly met as first year undergraduates at an orientation day in 2009, to sitting together crunching numbers and compiling a list of national artists to contact four years later, *Enucleo* became an application of our education and independent experiences within the arts at a state and national level. We learned valuable lessons that we will carry forward as we embark on our careers and none of it would have been possible without the faith and generosity of the artists featured in *Enucleo* and their unwavering support of our project.

Patrick Sutczak

The text on the following pages has been extracted from the essay written by Patrick Sutczak for the exhibition catalogue.

*Growth of the Exotic* combines a range of elements that could be internal in nature. With elements and shapes that bulge, fold, protrude and connect, Juz Kitson's work allows for type of voyeuristic unease sparking both an attraction and repulsion. There is a sense of sexuality at a fundamental level - of sex organs, of complex workings, of softness and flesh, and of the biological mechanics within us all.

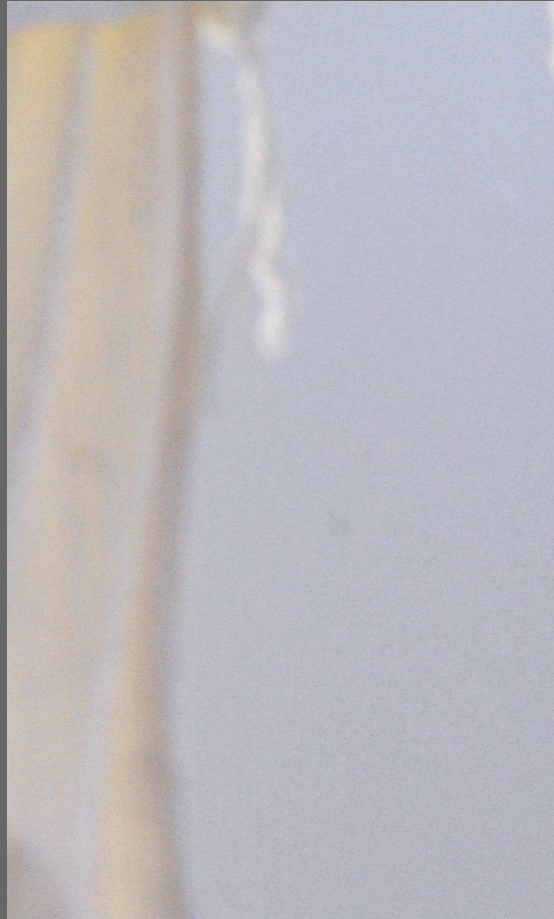
Juz Kitson

*Growth of the Exotic*, 2012





*With Washing Day Kris Coad asks us to think about environmental and personal impact directly associated with site. Her work is in response to the ingenuity and necessity of how everyday people lived with the pollution of the former South Melbourne Gas Plant (that now houses her studio). As a way of combating the emission of black dust into the air from the Gasworks, local residents would hang their washing in pillow slips to protect the clothing within. The banality of daily tasks is brought to the fore and we are invited to make emotional connections through memory and place. The artist has used clay to recreate the outer surfaces of fabric while hiding internal garments only discovered through transparency and light play.*



Kris Coad

*Washing Day, 2013*





Addison Marshall

*In My Eyes You Do Not Exist, 2013*



*Struttin', 2013*



*Addison Marshall is an example of an artist contemplating how presentation affects his work. Struttin' and In My Eyes You Do Not Exist open themselves up to look at the relationships between materials and unexpected outcomes of physics and the dissection of spaces. Meaning is as malleable as the clay components and a dialogue is discovered only when elements acting under weight and gravity connect. Placement is a fundamental aspect to his work and raises questions about the space around objects as much as the spaces his works inhabit.*

# Walter Auer

*Space Boy, 2013*

*Ideas of comfort and familiarity are challenged as we recognise the shape of a plush toy bear to discover its once soft lovable skin inverted, its innards gutted and its carbonized surface foreign. Everything about the bear as a cultural item of childhood significance is altered and a new relationship is created. Suspended, Space Boy hangs in mid-air in a pose that is difficult to separate from being interpreted as playful or sinister - carefree and trusting, or nightmarish and sacrificial.*







*In Still Life with Nine Objects, 1954 Sanne Mestrom explores copying and creating alternate versions of painted objects in clay, allowing them to be transformed in three-dimensional space. Drawing from the still life modernist paintings of Morandi, Mestrom has extracted the interplay between light and object that Morandi offered the viewer, and has allowed her objects to develop their own context. Rather than an appropriation, the transference between the pictorial and the sculptural presents an opportunity for the objects to take on an originality previously constrained, and prompt a discourse with the different environments that they interact with.*



# Sanné Mestrom

*Still Life with Nine Objects, 1954, 2013*



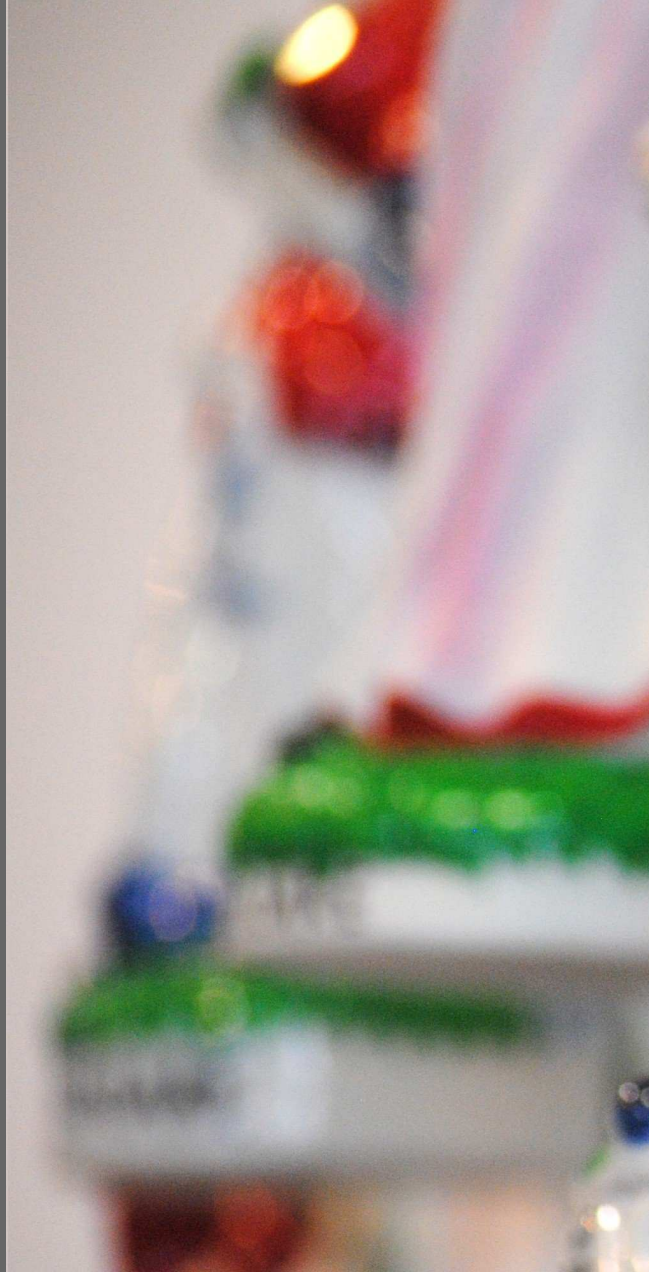
*Investigations toward the body,  
relationships between nature, the internal  
and the external can also be found in the  
work of Marta Armada who combines the  
physicality of place with body adornment.  
Intimate and personal, the closeness of  
object against skin coupled with her  
aesthetic is a form of documenting her  
connection to the landscape and her  
location in the world.*

Marta Armada

*untitled, 2013*



*Penny Byrne confuses and provokes us with her figures and plays us against our own understanding of how recognisable forms should behave. iProtest Taksim Square Souvenirs is part of ongoing work that is influenced by global protests and online connectivity enabling for mass assemblage. The artist has repurposed sourced souvenir porcelain figurines to highlight the recent occupation of Taksim Square in Istanbul. With the Turkish flag emblazoned across faces and clothing, the figures suggest they are united in their solidarity reminiscent of the actual protest participants. The prominent symbol of social media stands out like a banner of connectivity in the new world.*







Penny Byrne

*iPROTEST Taksim Square Souvenirs, 2013*

*In Arun Sharma's work (de)composition: lovers, the careful attention to detail in the sculpting of his embracing figures is destined to decay. The anticipation of dissolve and fracture is met with emotion as the viewer is invited to think about life, love and loss. The forces of nature upon the clay dictate the inevitability of formlessness and structure - two lovers in an intimate pose destroyed by time together.*



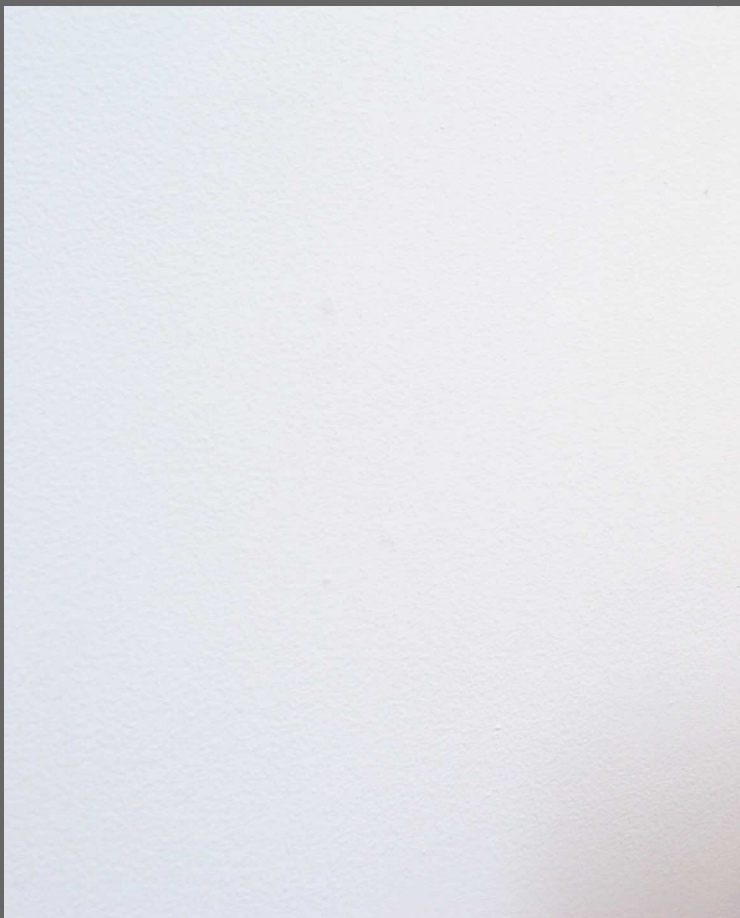
Arun Sharma

*(de)composition:lovers, 2013*





Alexandra Standen immerses herself in the qualities of clay and connects with its fragility and potential to explore energy, emotion, space and volume. Within and Without features the work of carefully constructed and arranged ladders. Each piece is unique and embedded with an ongoing inspiration taken from Italian writer Italo Cavino's *Distance Of The Moon*. The structural forms of the ladders bare deliberate evidence of the artist's hand as she embraces the materiality of the medium while identifying the life, breath, and motion of her creations. Her work is considered, contemplative, and personal. The bridging of the ancient history of clay extends to objects of containment and inner space from Standen's own environment, experience and memory.





# Alexandra Standen

*Within and Without, 2013*



# Serena Rosevear

*Things that might otherwise sit  
in your kitchen cupboard, 2011*

Ongoing investigations into the tensions between maker and medium can be discovered in the works of Serena Rosevear. The late Gwyn Hanssen Pigott remains a source of inspiration for Serena as she developed her own practice throughout her undergraduate degree and now, beyond. Often returning to Pigott's work as a source of direction while navigating her own future as a transdisciplinary artist, Serena has created work that responds to direct conflicts between object and viewer, function and form, display and desire. *Things that might otherwise sit in your kitchen cupboard* is the outcome of academic investigation coupled with the intellectual and internal struggle of finding one's own place as a maker. In the work, a dual grouping of unassuming vessels are placed upon a plinth that exists in two places simultaneously. Divided by glass, the work is also divided by context, blurred by presentational conflict.



*These themes are carried over in what will be a live process-as-performance sitting in the Sawtooth ARI gallery space. There, Serena will continue her investigations by inviting dialogue between audience, artist, object and process. And it is because of Serena's past and future investigations, that Eucleo exists at all.*





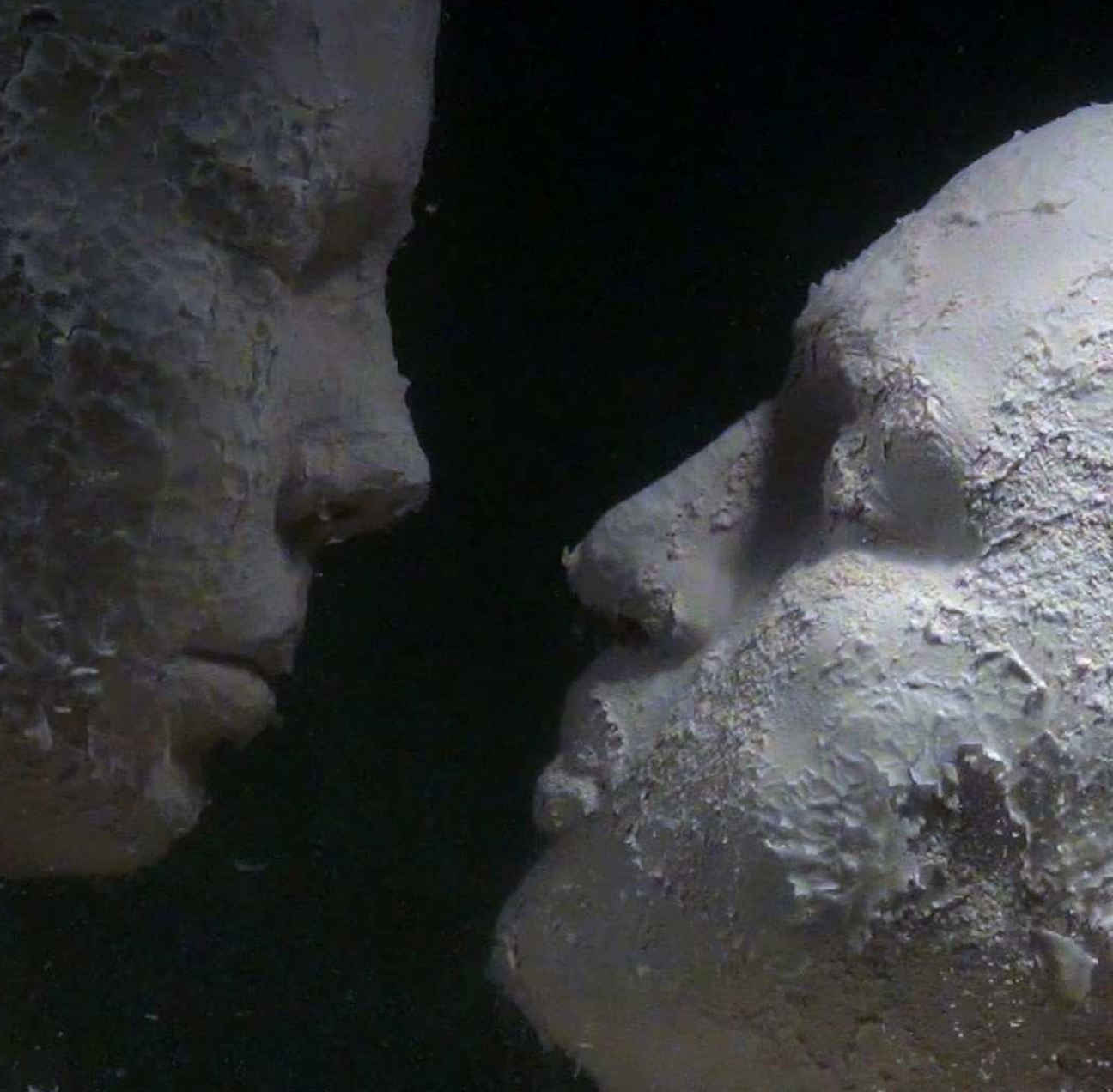


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