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The States and Status of Clay: Material, Metamorphic and Metaphorical Values.

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The States and Status of Clay:
Material, Metamorphic and
Metaphorical Values.

By Lu La Buzz

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University in
partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Art, Design and Architecture
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

July 2017

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Thanks to my dear friends for their emotional support and joyous enthusiasm, especially Carol, Fi and Tracey who offered quiet spaces of retreat for writing. Thanks also to Sue for her kindness.

To my mother, Joan, and the memory of my father, Bob, who nurtured my creativity from a young age and whose love will always be a source of encouragement.

Finally, special thanks to my fiancé Manfred, for his devoted support and steadfast belief in me.

Author's Signed Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

During this self-financed doctoral study I have presented a series of papers, performances and exhibitions. I have also developed and delivered clay-based workshops in gallery spaces and clay heritage sites. Seminars and conferences have been attended in the interests of research and professional development. Details of these events are listed below.

Papers Presented

18 March 2009	<i>The Clayness of Clay</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Plymouth University
15 September 2009	<i>States and Status of Clay</i> MARE 500 Work in progress presentation Plymouth University
24 February 2010	<i>Raw Clay, Meaningful Interventions</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Plymouth University
22 February 2012	<i>Clay and the Senses</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Plymouth University
5 July 2012	<i>Recovering Drowned Clay</i> Water: Image (Conference) Land/Water and the Visual Arts Plymouth University

Exhibitions and Performances

3-26 February 2010	<i>Finding Place</i> , PhD Research Exhibition Scott Building, Plymouth University
14-23 March 2012	<i>Manifestations of Place</i> , PhD Research Exhibition Scott Building, Plymouth University
1 September 2012	<i>The Living Figurine</i> Environmental Utterance University College Falmouth

12 December 2012	<i>Behind the Mask</i> , Meadowbrook Community Centre Dartington, Totnes
28 Jan - 1 Feb 2013	<i>Behind the Mask</i> , Birdwood House, Totnes
1 May 2013	<i>Conscious Clay</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Scott Building, Plymouth University
27 November 2013	<i>Blinded by Clay</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Scott Building, Plymouth University
9 December 2015	<i>Clay Bellows 2</i> Land/Water and the Visual Arts Scott Building, Plymouth University
27 April 2017	<i>Ecologies Expo 17</i> , PhD Research Exhibition Roland Levinsky Building Foyer, Plymouth University

Artists Workshops Delivered

2009 - 2012	<i>Clay Day</i> (Annual Summer workshop) Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot
2013 - 2015	<i>Clay Collective</i> Collaborative series of workshops linking Spacex Gallery with the Bridge Collective and Uneath Studio, Exeter

Courses Completed

January - October 2009	BSAC Ocean Diver qualification Totnes Sub-Aqua Club
June 2010 - August 2011	BSAC Sports Diver qualification Totnes Sub-Aqua Club

Key Workshops Attended

19 March 2010	The Transfer Process Workshop Graduate School, Plymouth University
12-16 April 2010	General Teaching Associates Course Graduate School, Plymouth University
9 March 2017	Preparing for the Viva Graduate School, Plymouth University

Conferences Presentations and Exhibitions Attended

- 27 November 2008 *Biodiversity and Ball Clay*, Ball Clay Heritage Society
Kevin Bastow, Kingsteignton Community Centre
Newton Abbot
- 15-17 April 2009 *Framing Time and Place* (Conference)
Land/Water and the Visual Arts
Plymouth University
- 26-27 June 2009 *Land and Expedition* (Symposium)
Land/Water and the Visual Arts
Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
- 2 July 2009 *Heaven and Earth*, Richard Long
Tate Britain
- 22 August 2009 *Field for the British Isles*, Antony Gormley
Torre Abbey, Torquay
- 17 September 2009 *The History of Par & Fowey Harbours*, China Clay
History Society (CCHS), Gerry Williams
Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum
St Austell
- 24 January 2010 *The Pigs of Today are the Hams of Tomorrow*
Live Laboratory Symposium, collaboration between
Plymouth Arts Centre and Marina Abramovic
- 1-2 July 2010 *Land and the Metaphysical* (Symposium)
Land/Water and the Visual Arts
Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
- 18 July 2010 Richard Long, *Way with Words*
Dartington Hall, Totnes
- 17 August 2010 Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Blood and Feathers)*
Tate Modern
- 19 August 2010 *Unearthed*
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts,
University of East Anglia, Norwich
- 23 August 2010 *Underwater*
Spacex Gallery, Exeter
- 28 December 2010 *Sunflower Seeds*, Ai Waiwai
Tate Modern
- 23-24 June 2011 *No Man's Land* (Symposium)
Land/Water and the Visual Arts
Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University

13-14 June 2013	<i>Phenomenology's Presence</i> (Conference) University of Sussex
10-11 July 2013	<i>Mapping</i> (Symposium) Land/Water and the Visual Arts Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
20-26 June 2014	<i>Nocturnal</i> (Symposium) Land/Water and the Visual Arts Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
24-25 October 2014	<i>Of the Earth</i> (Conference) Land/Water and the Visual Arts Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
25-26 June 2015	<i>Wilderness/Wildness</i> (Symposium) Land/Water and the Visual Arts Roland Levinsky Building, Plymouth University
4 February 2016	<i>Soil Culture: Deep Roots</i> Peninsula Arts, Plymouth University

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Signed: Lu La Buzz

Date: 14th February 2018

Abstract

The States and Status of Clay: Material, Metamorphic and Metaphorical Values.

By Lu La Buzz

This doctoral project combines a performance-led practice with contextual research in order to demonstrate how arts practice can challenge historical perceptions of clay and enhance its material status. The core knowledge deduced from this research is that embodied performance transforms connectivity between artist and clay and produces a unified incarnation of both elements.

Through the use of immersive research methods I gained insights which could not have been predicted - particularly that my experiential performances were a process of 'clay becoming' in which I ultimately became the clay.

In terms of locality, the practice, comprising eight performance-led works and related documentation, focuses on the China Clay and Ball Clay of South West England. Traditionally in the arts, these materials are associated with ceramics, where through heating, clay becomes rigid and fixed. In contrast, my research investigates the textural fluidity and metamorphic potential of these clays in their raw state.

The practice encompasses two interrelated groups of work; the *In-breath* and *Out-breath*. These terms are significant in three respects. Firstly they define two different modes and moments of practice. Secondly they refer to myself as a living component of these practices. Thirdly they reflect the cultural associations of clay as a metaphor for life.

During the initial exploratory '*In-breath*' phase of my practice, comprising four site-specific pieces, I engaged with clay at sites of historical relevance, building an expansive knowledge of my material. During the later '*Out-breath*' phase, identification with site was relinquished. These works took place within neutral spaces, allowing the clay to be explored in relation to my body.

The introduction of layering, where photographic elements of private clay rituals were situated within the context of a live performance, allowed a texturally dynamic and immersive experience to be created for both artist and viewer. By collecting and preserving clay traces from these live performances (e.g. foot and body prints) additional value was given to the embedded significance of the clay.

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Performance-led Works

This thesis comprises eight performance-led works as listed below. Documentation of all eight works is presented in the Appendices (2.1-2.6 & 2.8-2.11*) and can be viewed on Vimeo.

There are eight Vimeo links - one for each of the eight performance-led works. These should be viewed whilst reading the text at positions indicated by the author.

The works are listed in the most appropriate viewing order rather than chronologically.

Clay Launch (2012)
Charlestown
Cornwall

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269150388>
Video/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Recovering Drowned Clay (2011)
The wreck of SS *Zaanstroom*

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269151220>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Lakeside Statue (2010)
Decoy Country Park
Newton Abbot

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269152097>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Parent Rock 1&2 (2010/2012)
Dartmoor/Scott Building
Plymouth University

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269152620>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Conscious Clay (2013)
Birdwood House Gallery
Totnes

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269154401>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Clay Being (2013)
Neutral outdoor space

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269155316>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Blinded by Clay (2013)
Scott Building
Plymouth University

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/269156844>
Video, M Balmforth/Editing, Lu La Buzz

Clay Bellows 1&2 (2015)
Neutral Indoor space/Scott Building,
Plymouth University

Available at:
<http://vimeo.com/270596397>
Video/Editing, Lu La Buzz (with clips
and stills by audience members)

*Appendix 2.7 is omitted from this listing because it documents a project whose purpose is purely contextual.

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Glossary

Amphill Clay	This fossil rich clay comprises grey to buff stratum inter-bedded with marine fossils. As the name indicates, it was initially studied at the village of Amphill, Cambridgeshire.
Ball Clay	A highly plastic clay which typically comprises a series of buff to grey seams. The term Ball Clay derives from the former method of digging the clay into cuboidal lumps which, after successive handling, became rounded and ball like in shape.
China Clay	This fine white clay is classified as a primary clay because it can be found still enclosed within the granite from which it was born. This is in contrast to other clay types (including Ball Clay), which have been transported away from their parent rock. China Clay, as the term suggests, was named after the fine Chinese porcelain of which it is a constituent.
Clay Noodles	Following extraction China Clay is extruded into pellet like forms called noodles. In the clay industry they provide a convenient method of transporting material since they reduce incidence of airborne clay dust.
Kaolin	Known as China Clay in Britain. The term Kaolin comes from [kao high + ling hill] the Chinese mountain in the Jiangxi province, where supplies of the clay were first obtained.
Keuper Marl	A predominantly red clay which underlies areas of the Midlands. It is commonly used in the manufacture of bricks. The name Keuper originates from a larger succession of rocks in South West Germany.
Oxford Clay	This fossil-rich clay underlies areas of Oxford and comprises a predominantly grey/blue material bearing ammonites and other marine fossils. As the name suggests the clay was first recognised and studied in Oxford.
Slip	A runny liquid form of clay comprising clay and water. Material of this consistency is smooth, reflective and fluid to the touch.
Slurry	Clay of this consistency is less watery than slip. It has a gunky texture which is extremely sticky to the touch.

Preface

Raw clay has been the focus of my work for 25 years. This unceasing fascination began during my BA (1991-1995), when I discovered an outcrop of *Keuper Marl* clay in the grounds of the University of Derby. The visual and textural appeal of this ancient red clay, with its striations of blue/green 'skerry bands' provided a vibrant contrast to the comparatively bland 'potter's clay' which was delivered to the University in bags.

Seeing the clay in its own habitat was a revelation. I dug the clay by hand and used sculptural methods to explore its materiality and embedded history. From this first encounter, I developed further site-specific projects exploring different seams of clay. In 1995 I designed and constructed *The Time Consolidation Unit*, this aluminium capsule on wheels accompanied me on rail journeys across Britain collecting clay from the last 400 million years of Earth history. Other key projects include the *Continental Couplet* (1999-2000), which united clays from Europe and America, and *Solution Pipe Memorial* (2000), which investigated a series of naturally occurring chalk hollows, filled with residual yellow clay.

In the initial stages of my MA at Oxford Brookes University (2004-2006), I again drew inspiration from local clay deposits. In *Descending Strata* (2004), I led participants down a steep hill in order to reach the underlying *Oxford Clay*, whilst in *Rebirth* (2006) I rose naked from a bed of the same, fossil rich clay.

Touching Earth (2006) was my final MA project. Set in the low-lying flats of Cambridgeshire, this project involved jumping from a plane and parachuting

into an expanse of *Amphill Clay*.

Whilst carrying out these projects I have become increasingly aware of two generally held opinions/assumptions. First, that clay holds a low material status, and secondly, that because I work with clay, it is assumed I make pots or ceramic sculpture. Clearly my work does not fit either of these categories, and it is for this reason I have felt an increasing need to challenge and counter these attitudes. Situating my practice within the Land/Water and the Visual Arts research group, Plymouth University has allowed me to test a range of methods within the context of artists working diversely with film, photography, graphite and stone.³

Its proximity to the sea has also enabled me to pursue a long held dream. In 1996, while reading *The Edge of the Sea*, by Rachel Carson, I encountered a description of a submerged outcrop of clay.⁴ Until then I had explored only land-based clay and so the knowledge that clay existed out at sea - beneath the waves - opened a new world of opportunity. For 15 years I had imagined myself diving to the seabed and resurfacing with a bounty of clay. This ambition was fulfilled in 2011 during the early stages of my research when I recovered China Clay from the collapsed hold of a sunken clay carrier.

Introduction

This doctoral project combines a performance-led practice with contextual research in order to challenge historical perceptions of clay. The main outcome of the research is a series of performance artworks, with their own individual meanings, but which collectively demonstrate how a specific art practice has enhanced the status of clay as a material.

This practice concerns the China Clay and Ball Clay of South West England. These materials are traditionally associated with ceramics, but the research focuses on raw clay and its textural fluidity, metamorphic potential and relationship to the granite from which it was born. In contrast to the conventional methods in which clay is used to make a product or artefact, my work is ephemeral in nature, comprising mainly performance-led pieces supported by photographic documentation and material traces.

My PhD practice encompassed two interrelated phases of work. These I have termed; *In-breath* and *Out-breath* and they are significant in three respects. Firstly they define two different modes and moments of practice. Secondly they refer to myself as a living component of these practices and thirdly, they reflect the cultural associations of clay as a metaphor for life.⁵ Breath is a basic physiological action. Through the introduction of air, we draw vitality into our body and release that which is not required.

Rather than existing as a predetermined structure to be followed, the *In-breath* and *Out-breath* phases emerged during and in response to my developing practice.⁶ As a concept, they can be traced back to my experience of scuba dive training which I undertook in order to reach one of my research sites.

During the *In-breath* phase, which comprised four site-specific pieces, I engaged with clay at sites of historical relevance, building an expansive knowledge of my material. During the *Out-breath* site-specific associations were relinquished. The four body-specific performances that comprise this phase take place within neutral spaces, allowing the clay to be explored in relation to the context of my own body.

Thesis Structure

The written thesis comprises three main sections. PART ONE: *Clay Status* situates my research, whilst PART TWO: *In-breath* and PART THREE: *Out-breath*, analyse my practice. The conclusion draws all three parts together confirming my findings and restating the argument. This is followed by the Appendices, endnotes and references. At specific points within the text the reader is instructed to view video material which is provided on an accompanying USB flash drive.

Parameters of the Research

The study concentrates primarily on raw clay, but fired clay objects and functional uses of clay are also included to provide context. In PART ONE for example, the properties of fired clay are introduced as a means of comparison and to emphasise the distinct properties of raw clay. In Chapter Three, and Chapter Four, fired clay appears in the work of four contemporary artists. In these works the fired status of the piece is integral to the implied meaning, the relevance of which contributes to the thesis argument as a whole.

In Nichole Howard's *Kular* project (2012), for example, the lightly fired clay cups smashed to the ground after use provoke questions regarding the nature and status of clay.

Connectivity between myself and my material is created through the use of my body. In *Parent Rock 1* (Appendix 2.4), *Parent Rock 2* (Appendix 2.5) and *Clay Being* (Appendix 2.8), this involved coating my naked body in clay. In making these works, my intention was to create a raw unencumbered union with the clay, not to comment on the rights and experiences of women. Where artists who are linked with feminist art are discussed, e.g. Ana Mendieta, it is only because the immersive nature of their work bears similarities to my own practice, rather than the political intent.

This contrasts with the research of Philip Lee, in which clay is an essential component, but where emphasis is firmly placed on the artist's body rather than inherent properties of the material. In this respect Lee's work is beyond the parameters of my research.

In order to investigate place, history and change within the clay industry I visited working and disused clay sites with members of the Ball Clay Heritage Society (BCHS) and China Clay History Society (CCHS). Training with Totnes Sub-Aqua Club (TSAC) was also carried out in preparation for projects pertaining to the *In-breath* phase.

In contrast, more body-orientated practices including yoga, conscious breathing and mindfulness, whereby a non-reactive awareness of the present moment is developed, prepared me for the *Out-breath* phase.

PART ONE: *Clay Status*

This initial section sets up an argument for the status of clay. It explores the material properties of clay and analyses why clay is considered to be of low

status and how arts practice can be used as a means of recognition and acknowledgement. This is split into four chapters.

Chapter One, Materiality

This first chapter explores clay's origins, historic usage and material status. Primary focus is given to South West China Clay and Ball Clay, these being the focus of my performance-led practice. The textural and tonal differences between these clay types are identified and explored in terms of their status and associated usage, thus providing a material context through which my works can be viewed.

Clay has been used in the production of societal objects for the last 20,000 years. By discussing these items in terms of their historic appropriation and material construction, I provide a starting point from which the malleable nature of clay can be explored on a symbolic and mythological level.

Chapter Two, Myth and Symbolism

This second chapter investigates the material qualities identified in Chapter One in relation to myth and symbolic meaning. Clay creation stories, where clay is used to form the first man (Genesis being an example), are investigated in terms of clay's metamorphic and transformative properties. This is relevant to my practice since it incorporates ritualistic acts where my body is transformed by a coating of wet clay. This becomes relevant to the lived-in experience of the clay which emerges towards the end of the *In-breath* and in the *Out-breath*.

Evidence for clay's low status is further examined in this chapter through the biblical portrayal of clay in the hierarchical division between god 'the creator' and man, 'his clay'. In addition, clay is used as a symbol of death and in ritual practices to mark the passage of time. These symbolic associations are reflected in the work of Antony Gormley, Charles Simonds and Ana Mendieta. This chapter therefore gives a basis to my later analysis of contemporary contextual practice within Chapters Three & Four.

Chapter Three, Arts Practice, Objects and Installation

Contemporary arts practice is further explored in this chapter. With a focus on clay objects and installation, it investigates a series of artists who have brought recognition to those aspects of clay which are traditionally considered to be of little value. Nobuo Sekine's *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* (1969), for example, draws on the formless nature of clay, while the work of Andy Goldsworthy explores the fragile characteristics of clay as it dries out, shrinks and becomes wizened.

In both these examples clay, as a material, is presented in a relatively raw, unfettered state, with minimal intervention. A greater understanding and appreciation for clay as a material can be established through the analysis of such pieces. By exploring object and installation based works comparisons can be made between a static artwork made from clay and an embodied piece created through performance.

Chapter Four, Arts Practice, Performance

Performance as a means of investigating clay is discussed in this chapter. Unlike works in the previous chapter, which are object-orientated, these pieces take

the form of an action or series of actions. The works discussed in this chapter are symbolic and ritualistic, and in this respect they relate closely to Chapter Two. Comparisons exist, for example, between Genesis and Charles Simonds' seminal performance, *Birth* (1970), in which Simonds was 'reborn' from a New Jersey clay pit. Social deficiency and clay are also explored in this chapter. JJ McCracken's *Hunger Philadelphia*, for example, uses performance as a means of highlighting the practice of Geophagy or clay eating.

By exploring clay within the context of performance this chapter provides a basis for situating my own performance-led practice and brings PART ONE to a close.

PART TWO: *In-breath*

This section discusses the four site-specific works which comprise the *In-breath* practice. The purpose of these works was to gain experiential knowledge of my material by engaging with aspects of clay's lost or concealed history. In terms of structure, the *In-breath* is split into three chapters.

Chapter Five, *Release and Recover*

This chapter examines two of the four *In-breath* works, *Clay Launch* (2012) (Appendix 2.1) and *Recovering Drowned Clay* (2011) (Appendix 2.2). These works explore the overseas transport of China Clay and memorialise dates on which clay was lost to shipwreck. Taking place at an old China Clay port and a shipwrecked cargo vessel, these works involved ritual handling of clay and in the case of *Recovering Drowned Clay*, a 28 metre descent to the sea bed. In these works the clay exists as a substance located outside my body, connection is made via my hands only. The chapter assesses how acts of remembrance and commemoration can give meaning and value to clay.

Additionally it highlights the limitations of these methods in preparation for Chapter Six, where more immersive techniques are established.

Chapter Six, *Embrace and Embody*

In this chapter I discuss the two remaining *In-breath* works, *Lakeside Statue* (2010) (Appendix 2.3) and *Parent Rock 1* (2010) (Appendix 2.4). These works are more body-orientated than those discussed in to Chapter Five. Where previously I had recovered and released the clay using my hands, in these pieces my body and face were coated in clay. *Lakeside Statue* takes place at a disused Ball Clay pit and explores the historic working methods which have defined its name and character. In contrast, *Parent Rock 1* focuses on China Clay and takes place at the clay's granite origins on Dartmoor. This chapter demonstrates how a more integrated connection with material and site can be achieved by applying clay directly to the body. It also completes my initial analysis of the four *In-breath* projects in preparation for Chapter Seven, which focuses specifically on the documentation of *Parent Rock 1* and its follow up practice *Parent Rock 2*.

Chapter Seven, *Forms of Documentation*

This chapter investigates the photographic methods which have helped to distinguish *Parent Rock* as the most significant of *the In-breath* projects. *Parent Rock* differs from other *In-breath* projects in that it comprises two elements: *Parent Rock 1* (2010) is the original site-specific work carried out on Dartmoor, whilst *Parent Rock 2* (2012), is the impromptu live intervention created in response to its exhibited documentation.

The result of carrying out a performance in response to the documentation of a previous work served to extend the meaning of the original documentation. In order to understand this process more clearly I compare *Parent Rock* with the work of Ana Mendieta who, like myself used film and photography as a means of sharing her work but, unlike myself, did not perform in front of her documentation.

This chapter brings my site-specific practice to a close. It is followed by a summary in which the key findings within PART TWO: *In-breath* are identified. This prepares the reader for PART THREE: *Out-breath*, where the work becomes increasingly immersive.

PART THREE: *Out-breath*

This section discusses the four body-specific works which comprise the *Out-breath* practice. These works are mindful and ritualistic, the aim being to sink into an immersive state, as a result the relationship between myself and the clay becomes more reciprocal and symbiotic. Like the preceding *In-breath*, this section is split into three chapters.

Chapter Eight, *Repetition and Immersion*

Using *Conscious Clay* (2012-13) (Appendix 2.6) as an example, the purpose of this first *Out-breath* chapter is to compare the experiences at three indoor exhibition venues and assess the benefits and accumulative effects of repeating a performance several times.

In contrast to the *In-breath* works, in *Conscious Clay* my existence as a recognisable human form was reduced to just a clay head. From an outsider's

viewpoint the head appeared to be resting on a white plinth, though in reality my body was concealed inside the plinth. In this confined situation, I gained insight into three significant research areas, which are discussed in this section. First how repeating the performance enabled me to drop into an increasingly immersive state. Second how contrasting groups of people responded to the clay head in differing ways and third how those views altered when people discovered that there was a living presence beneath the clay covered mask.

By analysing the effects of repeating a performance several times in confined circumstances this chapter prepares the reader for Chapter Nine, *Conditions of Unease*, where I consider discomfort as a valid emotional response to my work.

Chapter Nine, *Conditions of Unease*

This chapter investigates how live practice can provoke feelings of discomfort for the audience and practitioner. This is relevant to the *Out-breath* phase of my research, where the body specific nature of the work is more direct and confrontational. In order to identify the presence and characteristics of unease two contrasting pieces are analysed, the *Living Figurine* (2013) and *Clay Bellows 2* (2015) (Appendix 2.7 & 2.11).

I consider *Clay Bellows* to be the more successful of these pieces despite the seemingly negative responses it provoked. Similar feelings of discomfort were characteristic of *Conscious Clay* and *Blinded by Clay* (Appendix 2.9), both of which involved confining my body and masking my senses with clay. Through this analysis it became evident that feelings of discomfort are a necessary component to my lived-in experiencing of the clay. In this respect, it also distinguishes the nature of the *Out-breath* practices from those of the *In-breath*.

By validating these feelings this chapter prepares the reader for Chapter Ten, which acknowledges the material traces left behind after the event.

Chapter Ten, *Traces and Remains*

This last *Out-breath* chapter investigates the occurrence and significance of a residual clay print of my feet, which was deposited on the floor at the end of *Clay Bellows 2*. It explores the materiality of this trace and establishes links between *Clay Bellows 2* and *Parent Rock 2*, which also resulted in a clay body print.

By comparing these traces with those made by Marina Abramovic and Holly Hussain (first introduced in Chapter Four), the impromptu nature of these marks is revealed, as is the fragility of the material. Since *Clay Bellows 2* was the last of my *Out-breath* projects, this trace represented a physical and symbolic stepping away from my practice, a concluding episode whereby I relinquished the lived-in experience and dis-inhabited the clay. The implications of this are discussed within the wider context of my practice, as is the process of collecting and preserving the material remains.

All three chapters in this last section are drawn together in a summary where I identify the key findings within this section and relate them back to those identified in PART TWO.

Conclusion

This section brings my study to a close. It defines how my relationship to clay has been unexpectedly transformed through this research, and how this transformation has led to the identification of my core contribution to

knowledge. The nature of this contribution is clarified with two poignant examples. Finally I determine how, by honouring the unexpected, my research has accomplished much more than I originally thought possible.

Appendices

This section is split into two parts Appendix 1.1-1.6 contains maps and emails whilst Appendix 2.1-2.11 contains text and photographic documentation of my practice. The Appendices are followed by the Endnotes and Bibliography.

PART ONE: *Clay Status*



Fig 1 China Clay recovered from the wreck of *SS Zaanstroom* (2011)

Chapter One

Materiality

$\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\cdot 2\text{SiO}_2\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ Hydrated aluminium silicate
Chemical formula of pure clay (kaolin)⁷

This first chapter investigates the materiality of clay, with emphasis on South West England China Clay and Ball Clay which are the subject of my performance-led practice (Fig 1). After exploring the origins and composition of clay I investigate the characteristics of raw as opposed to fired clay. This leads to an examination of how clay has been used by humankind throughout the ages. Finally, I consider where clay is positioned within the broader hierarchy of materials.

Origins and Composition

Clay is classified as a soft rock and consists of silica, alumina and chemically bonded water. It is the product of weathered igneous rock which, over the course of millions of years, has been ground down and transformed by the action of physical and chemical erosion.

In its purest form, clay is called kaolin and has the previously detailed chemical formula (p.17.).⁸ This however, is a rare occurrence since there are seven different groups of clay minerals and although kaolin is the purest of these groups, it seldom occurs in its purest form, more often than not, it contains a percentage of lime, magnesia, soda or potash.^{9/10}

The chemical and physical characteristics of any particular clay deposit are dependent upon the parent rock from which the clay originated and the environmental conditions in which the clay was formed. Tonally, clay can range in colour from white through buff, tan, blue grey to black. These variations are due to the presence of impurities, such as carbonates and iron compounds, which are familiarly present in common red clays.¹¹

In terms of my research, kaolin, or China Clay as it is known and referred to in South West England (and from here on throughout this thesis), is the result of decomposed granite and presents itself as a relatively pure, white powdery substance, still enclosed within the granite from which it was born. In contrast Ball Clay, the result of erosion and deposition into lakes waters, typically displays a series of dark grey and lighter buff/ochre coloured seams. The grey seams contain carbonates (as described above) and are representative of swampy conditions, whilst the lighter clay bands (which can contain iron)

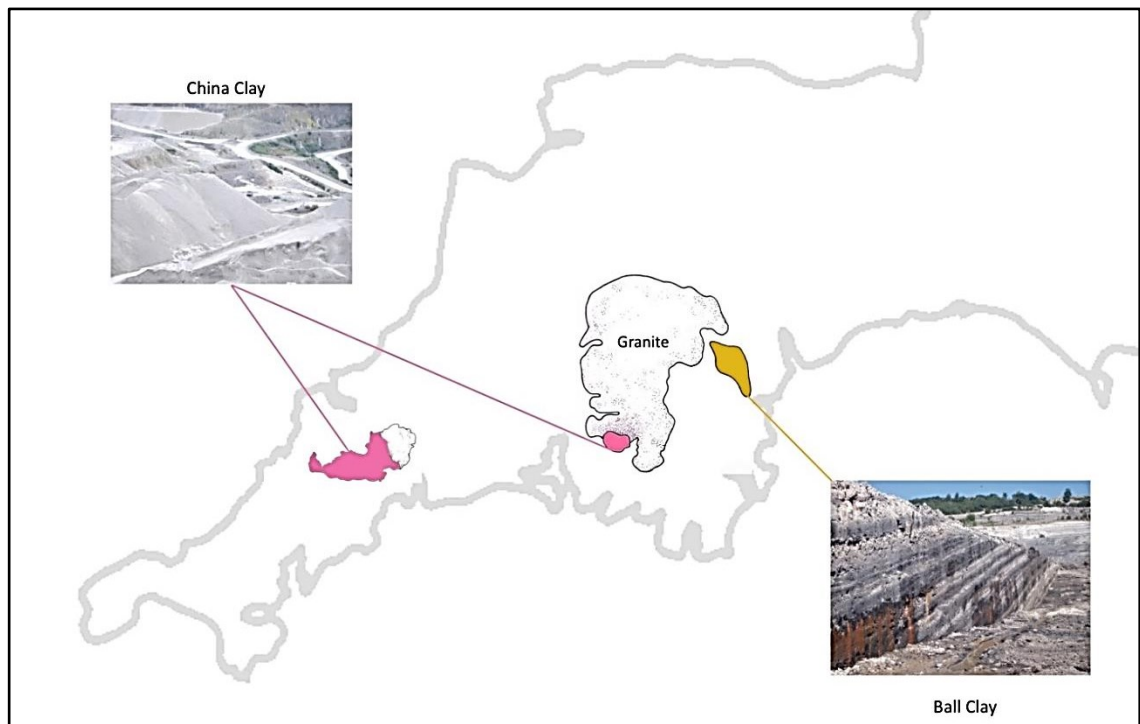


Fig 2 China Clay and Ball Clay deposits of South West England

represent periods of clearer water (Fig 2).¹² Both China Clay and Ball Clay share the same 'parent rock' - they both originate from granite and consequently both contain the clay mineral kaolin. However, in the case of Ball Clay, the coarse quartz and granite particles which are characteristic of China Clay have, during their sedimentary journey, been ground down. As a result, the material has gained plasticity, a property which will be discussed below. On the other hand, China Clay, which remained in contact with its parent rock during formation, is less flexible and can, like crumbly non-cohesive pastry, be described as 'short'. These variants affect the general usage and status of the material. China Clay, which is deemed to be of higher status than Ball Clay is introduced into a clay body to induce whiteness and strength, whilst Ball Clay provides plasticity and thus enhances metamorphic capabilities (see Appendix 1.1 'Clay Thought Diagram' for information on the existence, extraction and variable status of these clays).

Although regarded as notable clay resources in Britain, South West China Clay and Ball Clay represent only a tiny percentage of world clay deposits. Clay in its most generic sense is ubiquitous, readily available and plentiful on almost every landmass and island. If, as the American author Susan Staubach has suggested, you were to gather up all the clay 'and spread it evenly over the surface of the earth... you would create a mud layer a mile in thickness.'¹³

Plasticity of Clay

The word clay derives from the Anglo-Saxon word 'claeg' meaning sticky. Likewise in Classical Latin, clay is referred to as 'glus' - translating to glue, an appropriate description of clay's predominantly tacky, malleable nature, which is generally described as being 'plastic'.¹⁴ Plasticity is, 'the ability of clay to respond to pressure with a continuous and permanent change of shape in any direction without breaking apart, and hold that shape when released.'¹⁵ This ability is determined by the size and shape of the clay particles, which, in comparison to other earth materials, are relatively small (clay particles are <0.002mm as opposed to sand 2.00-0.05mm), flat and plate-like in structure. When lubricated with water the particles slide past and over one another. This sliding motion, which geologist Colin Bristow likens to a pack of cards being shuffled, induces material flexibility and allows the mass of clay to become soft and malleable.¹⁶

In the previous section I described China Clay, with its relatively coarse particle size, as being 'short', in comparison to Ball Clay which comprises smaller particles and is in contrast highly plastic. The textural differences between these two clay types is a prime example of how size of individual clay particles can affect the entire material mass of clay.

Before mechanisation 'clay tasting' was the traditional method which Ball Clay workers used to determine quality. During a modern day 'clay tasting' session led by Michael Carson, Technical Manager of WBB Minerals (Devon), I experienced how high quality clay seams have a smooth buttery taste, whilst the low value clay is crunchy and sucks moisture from the tongue.¹⁷

These differing qualities and textures determine what the Ball Clay will be used for and can be split into three basic categories: the smooth buttery clay is used in the production of fine grade ceramics. The crunchy more open-textured material is used for sanitary ware, whilst the grittiest clay (historically known as 'brokes' because 'the non-sticky quartz causes them to break up readily'¹⁸) is used for refractory materials, such as brick linings for industrial furnaces.¹⁹

From Raw to Fired

Its unique, transformative capabilities allow clay to exist in a multitude of states and conditions ranging from wet and fluid at one extreme to hard and vitreous at the other. In its raw state, the most distinguishing characteristic of clay is its plasticity. Once subjected to fire, however, it becomes hard and can never return to its former state of mobility. As Glenn Adamson, Head of Graduate Studies, V&A, has observed, 'a ceramic object is fixed in time, unlike silver which can be heated and reshaped via hammering, clay; once it has been fired, marks its place in time'.²⁰ At 600 degrees centigrade irreversible chemical changes take place and it becomes ceramics. As observed by ceramic historian and artist Edmund de Waal, 'clay and ceramic are polarised states of being, motion and stasis.'²¹ If you drop a fired clay vase it will shatter but the pieces will remain hard and rock-like. Such durability is vital to the work of archaeologists who, as Suzanne Staubach points out, rely on ceramic

fragments more than any other artefact, to date settlements and understand ancient cultural life.²²

A geological equivalent of the firing process which, according to archaeologists, has become an established means of rendering clay into a hardened state since Neolithic times, is metamorphosis. During this process pressure from underground heat transforms clay into hard metamorphic rocks such as schist gneiss or slate, which cannot, be moulded and manipulated by hand like clay.

When considering these latter metamorphic properties, the term 'Ball Clay' becomes significant since it reflects the material's ability to morph from 'cube' when cut, to 'ball' following the successive handling which historically took place during transit. As will be seen in PART TWO (Chapter Six) the 'ball', with all its historic associations, becomes a potent symbol in my performance-led practice. Such transformation from cube to ball would not be possible with another, less yielding material such as granite, marble or sandstone.

In 2004, Edmund de Waal described clay as an 'actual material' and in so doing, expressed the opinion that other materials perhaps have less reality, or less able to induce that immediate connection with hands and fingers.²³ This observation highlights the unique attributes which clay, as a material, has provided to society over the centuries.

Material Uses and Implications

The immediacy and directness of clay as a material, was realized 25,000 years ago when the hands of Palaeolithic man moulded the famous, 'Venus of Dolni

Vestonice'. This four inch, female form, is the oldest known clay figure and predates the use of clay to make functional pottery by approximately 14,000 years.²⁴

By Neolithic times (10,000 years before present), clay had become a vital part of the economy. In addition to its use in architecture and the production of pottery, three dimensional tokens rendered from clay were used as a form of currency in the trade of agricultural and manufactured goods. Each of these small clay renderings, which can be equated with today's sterling, bore a definitive value, one token equalled one sheep, for example. They were the mainstay of Neolithic society and elaborate measures, were taken to prevent them being stolen.²⁵ It is ironic therefore, that a material generally considered so lowly in today's hierarchy of materials should, in this instance, exist as an indication of wealth. This is due to material availability and whilst artefacts such as pots and tokens provide records that clay, as a material has been used since Neolithic times, rarer clay types, such as Ball clay and particularly China Clay, have a shorter history of usage.

According to records English China Clay has only been in use since the mid 18th century when Plymouth Chemist William Cookworthy, recovered it from Tregonning Hill, Helston, Cornwall, and used it to produce hard paste porcelain which, at that time, was only available from China.²⁶

Today in the contemporary age China Clay is still used in the manufacture of porcelain and other ceramic 'whiteware', although its predominant use is in the paper industry both as a clay pulp filler and as a coating for high grade art paper, where a smooth white surface is necessary for clarity of print (70 % for

paper as opposed to 21% for ceramics, the remaining 9% is used for plastics, rubber and paint²⁷).

Despite this relatively recent usage within the printing industry (coated paper appeared in the 1830s²⁸), the relationship between clay and written/pictorial communication is archaic. Nearly six thousand years ago Sumerians used wet clay tablets as a medium for storing temple records, business accounts, laws, maps and other more personal messages.²⁹ These air-dried tablets, which characteristically bear a series of impressed cuneiform lettering, evidence how clay can accept and register the impression of touch. A reed implement or stylus would have been pressed sequentially into the clay surface to create what has, through the course of several thousand years, proved to be a lasting literary legacy.³⁰

Clay in its air-hardened state, as in the case of a clay tablet, can, retain its shape even if splashed with water. However, if a tablet was soaked in a bucket of water it would slump and disintegrate. This explains why mud buildings which are exposed to periods of rain, can survive for generations if well maintained.³¹ As Suzanne Staubach points out, it would take 'extended exposure to a lot of water to return an adobe brick to mud.'³² This was evidenced by archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, when in 1950 she excavated ten thousand year old adobe bricks from Jericho, the city of biblical legend.³³ In Afghanistan the world's first windmills were made from sun-dried bricks in the ninth century.³⁴ Similar building methods are still used in the 21st Century. Only fifty metres from my current home in Devon for example, there stands a community built cob shelter made in 2006, using locally sourced clay.³⁵ It has been estimated that one third of the world's current population live in homes made from unfired clay. If you add

fired clay bricks to this equation, it rises to more than half the global population living in clay homes.³⁶

Hierarchical Positioning

As stated by Simon Groom, 'clay is present everywhere except in consciousness.'³⁷ This observation highlights clay's commonality and corresponding lack of hierarchical status. As individuals we interact with clay every day through the buildings we inhabit and our daily usage of cups and plates. Paper, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals all contain clay in varying proportions. Yet it is still held in low regard.

The versatility of clay is unlimited. Such flexibility and freedom may, as noted by several practitioners, also be its limitations. This was recognised by Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi, who commented:

...in a medium like clay anything can be done, and I think that's dangerous. It's too fluid, too facile... The very freedom is a kind of anti-sculpture to me. When I work with a material like stone, I want it to look like stone. You can make clay look like anything - that's the danger.³⁸

In this respect clay is unpredictable - it refuses to be pinned down. Clay has the ability to mimic all manner of materials and here lies the paradox that clay, with all its lowly associations, has the power to replicate those materials which are considered to be of greater value and social significance than itself.

Examples of clay's low material status can be seen in overseas trade from the Devon port of Teignmouth during the 19th Century. Locally dug Ball Clay was considered to be an unpopular cargo due to its 'high bulk-low value' status.³⁹ This dismissive attitude is further evidenced by the failure to recover clay from

shipwrecked cargo vessels. At Charlestown Shipwreck and Heritage Centre, Cornwall, the collection of shipwrecked cargo is abundant with coal, iron and marble, but no clay exists.⁴⁰ This seems particularly remiss, since the museum is built on the site of an old China Clay port. Clay, it would seem is unworthy of such recovery. In my performance-led practice I redress this imbalance, as discussed in PART TWO: *In-breath*.

A simple comparison between different materials (and clay's corresponding lack of status) can be seen in the tradition of assigning wedding anniversaries to specific materials. Originating in medieval Germany,⁴¹ this tradition assigns progressively more valuable materials to successive years of marriage; silver signifying 25 and gold 50 years, for example. A revealing factor is that whilst fired clay products are moderately rated at 9 years for pottery and 20 for china, raw clay remains unclassified, despite the fact that offerings of paper, wood, iron and tin are rated respectively at 1, 5, 6 and 10 years.⁴²

These material facts and depictions, contribute to how clay as a material is perceived by society, as do symbolic portrayals such as those found in the Bible, which will be investigated in Chapter Two.



Fig 3 *The Golem* (film publicity material 1920)

In Jewish folklore, clay figures known as Golems were moulded by man to protect the Jews in times of persecution.

Chapter Two

Myth and Symbolism

'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'

Genesis 2.7

As established in Chapter One, clay has the ability to change shape and form due to its high plasticity. In this chapter I discuss how these metamorphic characteristics play an important role in mythology and symbolism, particularly in relationship to human mortality.

Clay's associations with life, death and the passage of time are evidenced through a range of cultural, literary and biblical sources.

Life

In the previous chapter the material nature of clay was explored. These qualities have shaped how clay is used as a metaphor for life. From a Western point of view, the biblical story of Genesis, where God created man from clay, is the classic clay creation story and as such, will be discussed in greater depth on pp.37-39.

Genesis however, is just one of many such narratives. The commonality and widespread localities in which clay creation myths occur (e.g. North America, Africa and China), reveal two things: firstly, how abundant and easily available clay is and secondly, how clay's essential qualities have been used throughout history to reflect upon the origins of humankind.

In stories which date back to ancient Samaria 2000-1500 BCE, the cultural and social status of people were determined by the method or type of clay from which they were formed. In the African Shilluk story for example, differing cultural races and skin complexions were determined by the local colouring of the clays:

In the land of the white... [the God Juok] found a pure white earth and out of it he shaped white men. Then he came to the land of Egypt and out of the mud of the Nile he made red or brown men. Lastly, he came to the land of the Shilluks, and finding there black earth he created black men.⁴³

The Shilluk story reveals a vivid awareness and honour for the varying colours which comprise earth and in this respect is relevant to my own research where I am using two very different clay types, China Clay and Ball Clay.

In contrast to the Shilluk narrative the Chinese creation story (350 BC) focused on wealth and social standing. During the making process a poor/rich divide was created, whereby the people who were modelled by 'Nu Gua's' hand became rich and powerful, whilst the people formed by flicking droplets of clay from a river cane became poor and unlucky.⁴⁴ Within the context of these creation stories, clay can be seen as the 'prima materia' of man, 'the basic secret of man', as Swiss psychologist Marie-Luise von Franz describes it.⁴⁵

In Jewish folklore, clay figures known as Golems (Fig 3) were moulded by man to protect the Jews in times of persecution. The nature of this legend differs from clay creation myths in that Golem did not transform into flesh, but retained a solid clay body whose living spirit was controlled by man. In several accounts of this legend, it is a requirement that such figures be made from 'virgin soil from a place where no man has ever dug.'⁴⁶ This concept alludes once again, to the alchemical notion of the 'prima materia'. In the Bible, the word Golem (as with the alchemical term 'prima materia') refers to an embryonic or incomplete substance (Psalm 139:16).⁴⁷ With its ability to change from formlessness to form, clay embodies such embryonic characteristics; its plasticity facilitating an ongoing process of change, revision and effacement.

In David Almond's novel *Clay*, which investigates issues of life and death through the making of clay figures, the relevance of creating such figures from clay, as opposed to other materials is powerfully revealed. When considering the option of making such figures from wood for example, Almond's character states that 'Wood's been alive already so it's dead. And how can you get something dead turn to something that's alive again?'⁴⁸

This comment relates once again to Edmund de Waal's description of clay as an 'actual material' (Chapter One, p.22.). It is direct and responsive, it holds within its strata, the potential for change and transformation. Unlike wood which originates from a tree - a living, growing entity; clay is formless and in this sense it is 'pure'. As Almond's character goes on to suggest, when creating life 'You got to start from the start... from something that's never been nowt.'⁴⁹

The term 'clay body' is used to describe the actual clay mixture that is used in forming objects.⁵⁰ It attributes the material with a physical unity, and in this respect suggests that clay is comparable to the 'human body'. This notion is relevant both on a symbolic level, where clay is equated with human flesh and on a scientific level. It has been found by modern scientists that the chemical composition of soil (clay being fine-grained soil mixed with water), corresponds to certain elements found within the human body.⁵¹

There are, according to Professor Dr Zaghoul El-Naggar, six basic elements which are a shared commonality both to soil and the human body.⁵² This discovery is of relevance to Muslim scientists such as Dr Zaghoul El-Naggar, since it draws links between the mythical creation of man from clay, as detailed in the Q'ran (and in the Bible) with the chemical evidence presented by modern science.

In addition to male characters, females (to a smaller degree) also appear in clay creation narratives. In Greek mythology for example, Pandora was created from clay and brought to life by the four winds.⁵³ Whilst in the mid 20th Century, Wonder Woman, the DC comic book super-heroine was depicted as having been formed from clay. However in the case of Wonder Woman the

clay creation myth was abolished after psychologist Dr William Moulton Marston, the original creator of the character, died.⁵⁴ It was, as noted by Andrew Dyce, deemed to be too implausible that a 'lump of clay made human' could be gifted with the strength and power that Wonder Woman possesses.⁵⁵ In the context of this thesis, this change of storyline supports the notion that clay is considered to be of low status. This attitude is likewise reflected in the legend of Golem who was denied by his creator, the power of speech and thus regarded as a soulless creature. Furthermore, when all practical use for the creature had been exhausted, its clay body was reduced to dust.⁵⁶

In the legend of Golem the metamorphic properties of clay become a symbol not only for life, but also for death. This is just one of many examples where clay is associated with death, as discussed below.

Death

'For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

Genesis 3:19

Clay, in its raw unfired state, is transitory. It can be formed and diminished with ease, as is reflected in the above biblical quote which expresses the inevitably bound nature of life and death. After burial, a body decomposes and becomes clay-like, first of a moist sticky nature, then as the body's water content evaporates it merges and becomes one with the soil.⁵⁷

In literary practices clay has been used to symbolise the interrelated conditions of life and death. In Almond's *Clay* (discussed on pp.31-32.) for example, the

main character uses clay extracted from his father's freshly dug grave to mould a human face. In this instance clay is used as a symbol for renewed life. However, as the face is promptly obliterated and destroyed by its maker, the symbolic meaning of clay is reversed. Clay is now equivocal to death - specifically the death of his father, from which Almond's character knows there is no return.⁵⁸

Again clay is symbolic of life and death in Dylan Thomas's *The Force That through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower* (1934). In the last line of the third verse he writes, 'How of my clay is made the hangman's line'. Here Thomas tells us that both his 'living breathing' body and the physical implement of 'death' (the hangman's line) are made from clay (in other words clay equates to life and death). The implication of this statement is that the material; the clay from which life is initiated, is the same as that which ends life.⁵⁹ Life and death are thus an endless, ongoing process, as the Bible states, 'we return to the earth from which we were born.'⁶⁰

The theme of clay and human mortality continues in James Joyce's short story *Clay* (1905).⁶¹ Towards the end of the story a game of divination occurs, whereby blindfolded participants reach out and pick an object. These objects are said to foretell the participant's future. Water, for example represents continued life. Clay, which was selected by Joyce's unfortunate character, represents doom and the threat of early death.⁶²

In the above examples, clay is defined as a symbol of 'human' distress and death. However, it has also been used to describe the state of the planet, as in George Gordon Byron's apocalyptic poem *Darkness* (1816), where on line 72

the end of the world is morosely described as 'A lump of death - a chaos of hard clay'. As stated in Chapter One, when clay dries out it becomes hard and non-malleable, it cannot be manipulated and thus becomes lifeless and inert as suggested in Byron's poem.

The changing conditions of clay, as it hardens, shrinks and becomes less responsive are central to my performance-led practice, as will be investigated in PART TWO: *In-breath* and PART THREE: *Out-breath*.

Ritual

'In the name of Allah... let this earth cure and heal all my ailments and keep me safe from all fears.'

Muslim prayer, to be recited before picking clay.⁶³

Ritual practice is characterised by highly formalised activities used either in worship, or to mark the transition from one state of being to another; birth, coming-of-age, marriage, death for example. It is also used in arts practice as a means of framing and isolating an action from the everyday. This approach is relevant to my own practice and as such will be explored in PART TWO: *In-breath* and PART THREE: *Out-breath*.

As previously discussed, clay is a potent symbol of life and death, particularly in ancient cultural society. It thereby follows that this prime, most basic of materials should appear in ancient rituals and to a lesser extent in religious practice today.

Traditionally in Iran, ritual practice began as life emerged - on the day of birth,

when 'Blessed clay from Kerbela (*khak e torbat*) was touched and the same finger was placed in baby's mouth for protection while prayers were read.'⁶⁴ Clay from the holy city of Karbala, Iraq was and still is considered sacred by Shia Muslims who believe it to remedy all pains. Hence the ritual prayer quoted at the beginning of this section, which would traditionally have been recited before worshipers picked the sacred clay or 'Khak e Shifa', as it is also known.

A further religious context in which clay is associated with healing is the biblical story (John 9:6-15). In this narrative Jesus applied clay to the eyes of a blind man who, after washing in the pool of Siloam miraculously gained his sight.⁶⁵

The difference between these religious narratives is that unlike the generic clay which Jesus used to perform his miracle, Karbala clay is a specific type of clay, traditionally made available and beneficial to all who visited the city. The word 'picked', as opposed to extracted or dug, is relevant in this context because it was recommended that only a minimal amount of earth should be taken, no more than a 'seed of grain' in size.⁶⁶ This restriction conveys the importance and value placed upon the Karbala clay.

In contrast to the use of clay as a substance for healing the ill, the Indian Festival of *Rali Shakar* is a annual event which honors and utilises the transformative characteristics of clay. In spring each year clay figures of men and women are made for young unmarried women who adorn and honour them for ten days before ceremonally 'marrying them'.⁶⁷ Following their 'marriage ceremony' the clay figures are immersed into the waters of a nearby pond or stream where they slowly disintegrate and once again become part of the earth.⁶⁸ With their sequential progression through creation, marriage and

death, these clay figures are symbolic - both in terms of marriage as a traditional rite of passage in Indian society and our ongoing relationship to the earth.

Though rare in western cultures, symbolic application of clay to the face and body is traditional in tribal cultures. Aborigines for example, use clay ceremoniously, particularly during funeral rites, when men are painted with white clay as a sign of mourning.⁶⁹ White clay, or 'tany ravo' which literally means happy earth,⁷⁰ is likewise considered sacred in Madagascar, where it is used ritualistically to enhance contact with the dead during ancestral Blessing.⁷¹

The Biblical Portrayal

The depiction of clay as a low status material is significant in the Biblical text. It is crucial right from the beginning - in Genesis when God creates man from clay. This initial event, with God as ultimate creator, sets up a hierarchical precedence which can be traced throughout the Old and New Testament. God is symbolised as the great potter (at this time there was no craft/art divide) and man his clay - putty to be moulded and remoulded as he sees fit. With limbs and body of clay, man (unlike God) is linked to the physical world, he is perishable and mortal.

This is highlighted in the book of Job, where through no fault of his own, the honest dependable Job, falls prey to hard times. He appeals to God, requesting that he should be released from his pain that he should be returned back to the clay:

'Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again'

Job: 10.9

By identifying himself as clay, the despairing Job confirms God to be the divine potter, and clay - the substance of his own body - an abiding material, forever subject to God's will. It has been observed by the physicist and theologian Lambert Dolphin, that God, in his role as potter has the ability to create, or remake any man, whilst the clay itself, being subservient to the potter, has not the power to object.⁷² This is the case with Job, God does not allow Job to die, to return to the clay, as he requested. Instead his continuing life becomes a symbol of God's will over mankind.

In Genesis, God used clay to make the first man. Similarly in the New Testament, John 9:5-15 (previously discussed p.36), Jesus uses clay to make a blind man see. In both these instances, clay is used as a basic physical material through which God or Jesus can exert powers of creation and transformation. The so called 'divine power' of God is accentuated by employing what is considered to be a common, everyday material (a lowly opinion of clay exists in successive biblical scriptures). If gold or silver, for example, had been used in the healing of the blind man, emphasis would have been placed on the material as a precious entity, rather than Jesus' own inherent power to heal.

A material hierarchy comparable to the views held within modern art is presented in the Bible. For example in Daniel 2:31-33, the King, upon looking at a magnificent statue, is dismayed to find that whilst the head is made of fine gold, the feet are a combination of iron and clay. Descending from head to feet the

material status of the statue descends from gold at the top to silver for the torso, then thighs of brass, legs of iron and finally clay.⁷³ The implication of clay feet being that the statue, or biblical kingdom as it was used to symbolise, was built on weak foundations and was thus destined to crack and break apart.⁷⁴ This view of fragility equates both to the perceived fragility of man (in contrast to God), and to modern art's admiration of strong robust materials, where bronze and marble were highly regarded and the more fragile clay and plaster generally confined to the making process.⁷⁵

In recent centuries the story of Daniel has given rise to the well know phrase 'feet of clay'. First used by Lord Byron in his 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte' 1814, this phrase describes a seemingly heroic or admirable person whose underlying character is flawed.⁷⁶

This derogatory opinion of clay and low hierarchical positioning leads to issues raised in Chapter Three, *Arts Practice; Objects and Installation*, where these 'flaws' are highlighted and used to best effect.

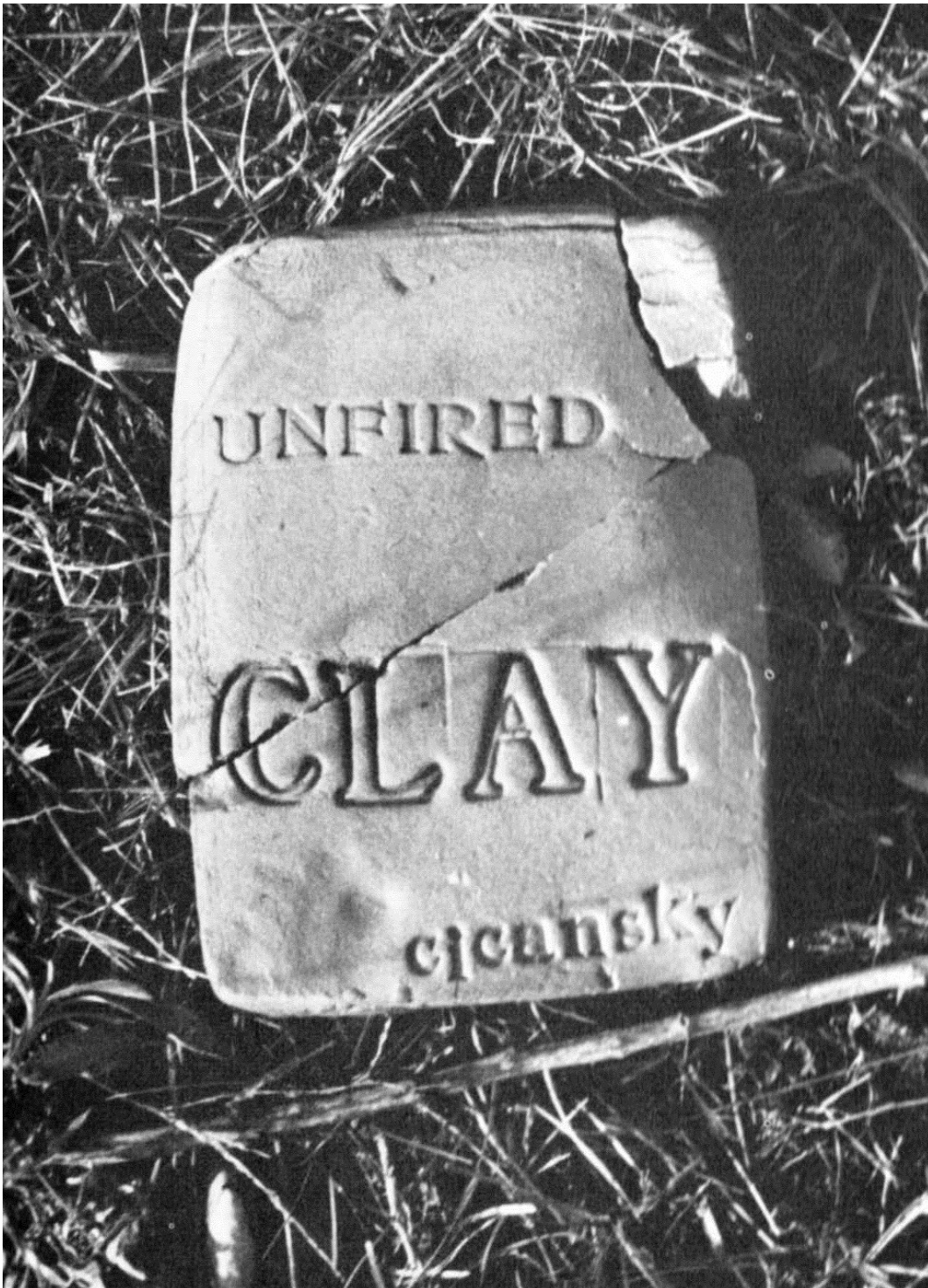


Fig 4 Jim Cicansky, *Unfired Clay* (1970)

Chapter Three

Arts Practice, Objects and Installations

'To work with... [clay] is to make something out of nothing.'⁷⁷

Edmund de Waal, ceramic historian and artist

In the above quote the word 'nothing' bears testimony to the low regard in which clay is generally held. It is precisely this attitude which has motivated my research. In this chapter I investigate ways in which artists have created works that bring recognition to those aspects of clay, which are traditionally considered to be of little or no value. Rawness, formlessness, messiness, commonality and fragility are all fundamental characteristics of clay. In this chapter I explore these material qualities within the context of clay objects and installations, from a fine arts perspective.

Rawness

In January 1970 the *Unfired Clay* exhibition took place at Southern Illinois University. This outdoor exhibition challenged the traditional assumption that clay as a material has to be fired. Unlike ceramic works, which are rendered hard by the firing process, these unfired pieces, of which there were 62, were entirely temporal and beholden to the weather.⁷⁸ On a farmland site in South Illinois, exhibitors placed their raw artwork outside in the 'knowledge that their contribution would become completely integrated with the ancient earth.'⁷⁹ Among the exhibitors Jim Cicansky produced what can be described as a clay talisman for the exhibition; a book sized clay tablet bearing the words 'Unfired Clay' (Fig 4).⁸⁰

With each letter purposefully stamped into the soft clay surface, the work bears similarities to ancient clay tablets (as discussed in Chapter One, p.24.).

However, unlike such tablets, which record trade activities and other societal transactions, the lettering on Cicansky's clay tablet is self-professing; the words 'Unfired Clay' embody the material and the material embodies the meaning. In its directness and simplicity the work acts as a symbolic rendition - not only for the *Unfired Clay* Exhibition at Southern Illinois but for the entire spectrum of raw, as opposed to fired works.

Judging by the percentage of unfired works exhibited at *A Secret History of Clay; from Gauguin to Gormley* (Tate Liverpool 2004), such works are relatively rare. This exhibition was the first time any leading British fine art gallery had devoted a major exhibition to work made in clay.⁸¹ From the 140 exhibited works, which spanned the twentieth century, only ten were unfired pieces, two of which originate from the 50s and 60s and seven from between 1972 and

2004.⁸² This undoubtedly suggests that in comparison to fired work, few artists have explored the medium of raw clay as an end in itself. Those who have, include Richard Long, Nobuo Sekine and Andy Goldsworthy.

As an exhibitor of the *Unfired Clay* exhibition, 34 years before Tate Liverpool's presentation of clay works, Don Hoskisson's *Fast Dissolve Pot* (Fig 5.) challenged two widely held assumptions at that time. Firstly that clay should be fired and secondly that a 'pot', the most familiar of clay objects, should be functional. Nestled in the Illinois snow, Hoskisson's raw clay pot, defies such conventions. With the words 'Fast Dissolve Pot' circling the vessel's rim, it was only a matter of time before the pot dissolved and disintegrated back into the earth.⁸³

With its focus on the temporal, transitional nature of clay and its relationship to the environment, the event at Illinois provided a counterpoint to the conventional method of fixing clay through the firing process. In contrast to the usual object-orientated focus, an appreciation of the soft, temporal aspects of the clay was instead advocated.



Fig 5 Don Hoskisson, *Fast Dissolve Pot* (1970)



Fig 6 Richard Long, *Muddy Waterfalls* (1984)

Fig 7 Richard Long, *White Water Line* (1994)

As stated by Evert Johnson, in his review of the event:

There was something spiritually appropriate in the implication of the pot returning to the earth... The whole idea was a joyful denial of the notion that art is a precious commodity of greater importance than the nature of man.⁸⁴

Messiness

Richard Long's *Muddy Waterfalls* (1984) (Fig 6), which comprised a series of huge muddy splashes set against the white walls of the Anthony dOffay Gallery, reveals the basic primal nature of mud.⁸⁵ Such pieces, stated arts critic Adrian Searle, inhabit 'the immediacy and presence of a gleeful shout.'⁸⁶ Rather like jumping into a muddy puddle.

Clay or mud is associated with child play - the making of mud pies - and it was suggested by Christopher Grunenburg, former director of Tate Liverpool, that these childlike association are one reason for clay's exclusion from traditional histories of art and modernism.⁸⁷ In the 1950s, for example, the messy inchoateness of clay provoked disdain amongst modernist critics who valued

solid more predictable materials such as bronze and steel.⁸⁸ In contrast to such views Long, who grew up during the modernist era, tells how the mud of the river Avon formed him. 'I was born with my feet in that material. It is in my DNA.'⁸⁹ Long, who has used river Avon mud successively in his installations, recalls the childhood joy of heaping mud into a circle and pouring water into the centre.⁹⁰ He revisits the Avon mud banks again and again, referring to the Avon as his 'home' river.⁹¹

In his installations, Long embraces the viscous quality of mud, its shift from liquid to solid and its indefinable materiality, qualities which, as indicated by Edmund de Waal, were abhorrent to modernist writers.⁹²

In contrast to the solid but malleable state in which most artists use clay, Long is concerned with fluidity rather than three dimensionality. In *Muddy Waterfalls*, wet grey-brown mud in its liquid state, was flung at the wall. Whilst in *White Water Line* (1990) (Fig 7), Long used a watering can to pour liquid China Clay onto the floor of Tate Britain. In creating these two dimensional mud works, Long draws attention to the fluid nature of the material. As it drips and runs each installation is a demonstration of clay in its elemental state. The clean, structural lines of the gallery providing a ready inversion to the formlessness of the mud which, within this context, is lifted in stature, from its muddy river bank origins.⁹³

Formlessness

Nobuo Sekine's *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* (1969), embraces the raw formless materiality of clay, a characteristic which has proved challenging to artists and critics alike.⁹⁴ As previously stated (Chapter One p.25.), Isamu Noguchi



Fig 8 Roger Hiorns, Mark Titchner and Gary Webb, *The Dirt of Love* (2004)
 Fig 9 Nobuo Sekine, *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* (1969)

was frustrated by the fluidity and freedom of clay. Unlike stone, it was for him, a difficult material to pin down.

Such feelings are familiar to artist Roger Hiorns, who in 2002, along with fellow artists Mark Titchner and Gary Webb, spent a day in a studio with a ton of clay. The expectation was that they would create a collaborative sculpture. However, what emerged instead, was a record of their struggle with the physical and sensory nature of clay.⁹⁵ Hiorns commented on the resulting film *The Dirt of Love* (Fig 8) (shown at Tate Liverpool, 2004⁹⁶) 'we went into the studio dreaming of Rodin but the actuality was Vito Acconci.'⁹⁷

In its raw, unformed state clay is, as Hiorns discovered, unpredictable and unstable. It can however, also hold the potential for change. Both such qualities were present in Sekine's *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* (Fig 9), also exhibited at Tate Liverpool, 2004. The dense, two ton mass of clay which comprises this piece was positioned 'lump like' within the gallery space. Its physical presence provoking within the audience, a state of tension between its visual

awkwardness and on a more instinctive, personal level, the desire to touch, manipulate and create form, an activity which was invited and central to the artists intent.⁹⁸ Thus throughout the duration of the exhibition (28 May to 30 August 2004), the mountainous heap was gradually altered, shifted and transformed by visitors; an activity which I witnessed and participated in.⁹⁹

In contrast to the bulkiness of Sekine's clay mound, evenness and fluidity was the focus of Antony Gormley's *Host* (1991 - 1997), in which he flooded the entire contemporary exhibition wing at the Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Germany, with a mixture of clay and saltwater.¹⁰⁰ This substance, comprising clay from inland Saxony and water from Kiel Harbour, covered approximately 3,000 square feet and whilst for Sekine's audience, the experience was potentially tactile and hands on, for those visiting Gormley's exhibit, the experience was one of visual and olfactory contemplation. The substance was of a liquid consistency (past the point of malleability), and visitors could view the piece from a designated viewing point only.¹⁰¹

In conjunction with *Host*, which was displayed in the contemporary wing of the museum, Gormley at the same time, exhibited *European Field* (discussed on pp.48-50.) in the historic wing.¹⁰² Acting as a counterbalance to *Host*, this exhibit, with its crowd of individually formed clay figures, served to emphasise yet further the raw, formless material nature of *Host*.

Whilst *Field*, with its identifiable forms is directive in its content and implied meaning, *Host* and *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* are by comparison, **not directive** of intention. They are primarily a manifestation of unformed matter.

'Caught between the will to form and the plastic freedom conferred by its own

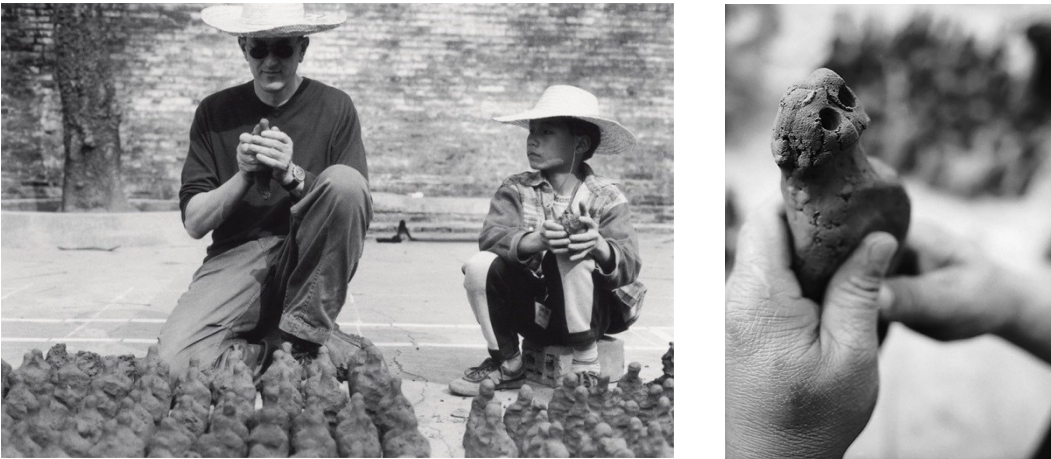


Fig 10 Antony Gormley, *Field*, Work in progress, Xiangshan, China (2003)

materiality, clay in this most basic of states, becomes a signifier of pure potentiality.¹⁰³

Commonality

Clay is a common and accessible earth material, for this reason it was used to create Antony Gormley's *Field* (1990 - 2003) (Fig 10-11). This series of five installations was made in five countries, using clay native to each locality.¹⁰⁴ As a material, clay is, states de Waal, 'inexhaustible stuff. It is cheap. It has little value in the hierarchy of materials: it is demotic, basic, primal. It is earth.'¹⁰⁵

The clay used to create Gormley's installations is common brick clay, abundant and freely available. Gormley's *American Field* 1990, for example, was made using clay from a brickworks in San Matias, Mexico. The 30 tonnes of clay needed to create *Field for the British Isles* (1993), (which contributed to Gormley's 1994 Turner Prize win) was obtained from a brickworks in Merseyside.¹⁰⁶ This divergence of locality but commonality of material, reveals in itself, the common presence of clay on a global scale. Similar installations



Fig 11 Antony Gormley, *Field for the British Isles* (1993)

were made in Sweden (1993), China (2003), and Japan (2004), all using commonly occurring clays.¹⁰⁷

As with much of Gormley's work, this piece, which comprises thousands of tiny clay figures, uses the human form to explore man's relationship with the Earth.¹⁰⁸ In accordance with the specifics of each locality the figures which comprised the five installations, were made by members of the local community. Again this signifies commonality and connectedness; each one squeezed from a lump of wet malleable clay which references creation myths, where clay was the common substance used to make the first man.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the occurrence of such creation myths ranges in locality from America to Europe and China, which reveals clay to be both an abundant source material and in terms of its plasticity, conducive to the making of mankind. Gormley himself has stated that *Field*, with its mass population of figures, questions 'the big issues of... life and death, of the self and the world.'¹⁰⁹

'*Field is*', Gormley says, 'like a living organism'.¹¹⁰ The work embraces community in its widest sense, both through its commonality of material and participatory method of making. Gormley further describes the process of making *Field* as 'a kind of harvesting - it's about tilling the earth with your hands but instead of making something grow it is the earth you are forming directly.'¹¹¹ Clay, whether it be in Mexico or Merseyside is the common denominator of *Field*. Through the constant, familiarity of this material, which, states curator Simon Groom, has for too long been dismissed as 'humble', a sense of community spirit was engendered within the makers.¹¹² From an audience's perspective, the democratic nature of the material acts as a channel through which a 'singular image of humanity' can exist.¹¹³

The ubiquitous nature of clay is also presented in Nick Rands *Earthly Spheres* (1998/99). In this case however, emphasis is placed on the gathering in of clay from disparate localities, rather than enlisting volunteers to work with the clay at designated localities. The act of clay retrieval is further investigated in PART TWO: *In-breath*, where I compare Rands' methods of collection with my own.

Fragility and Breakage

When viewing Andy Goldsworthy's *Clay Wall* (2000) (Fig 12) we, as an audience, are confronted with an expansive wall of unfired clay, which has dried out, shrunk and cracked.¹¹⁴ It reflects the natural instance of clay drying out in the landscape, bearing cracks and fissures which would similarly be found on a desiccated lakebed. Similarly in 1996 at the Burnaby Art Gallery, British Columbia, Japanese ceramicist, Sadashi Inuzuka covered the floor with liquid clay, a material which promptly shrunk and cracked apart as it dried.¹¹⁵ In Clare Twomey's *Consciousness/Conscience* (2004), the gallery was carpeted



Fig 12 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall* (2000)



Fig 13 Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Steps* (2014)

with brittle bone china which cracked and disintegrated under foot. These pieces draw awareness to the fragile, breakable nature of clay.¹¹⁶ As Goldsworthy has stated, 'clay reveals its most unpredictable qualities as it dries and shrinks.'¹¹⁷

In the case of Twomey's work, it was a requirement that the clay tiles were lightly fired to prevent airborne clay-dust filling the gallery. As Twomey states in email correspondence:

The tiles are fired to the first stage of cristobalite change, about 540/500 degrees so that they are none carcinogenic. This was tested by Royal Crown Derby so that the tiles could safely be placed in the gallery environment.¹¹⁸ (See Appendix 1.2)

In Goldsworthy's *Clay Steps* (Fig 13), exhibited at Folkestone Triennial (2014), a stairway is carpeted with grey fissured clay. Its desiccated surface suggests an arid landscape but one, as arts critic Fisun Güner points out, 'which is as precarious as thin ice. We can attempt to ascend, the piece might be saying, but the ground beneath our feet may just give way.'¹¹⁹



Fig 14 Clare Twomey, *Consciousness/Conscience* (2004)

As detailed in Chapter Two, the fragile, unstable qualities of clay are explored in the biblical text of Daniel 2:31-33, where feet made from clay, were used to symbolise weak foundations. Twomey's clay flooring, which invited gallery visitors to walk upon and consequently break the fragile clay underfoot, gives grounds to such material concerns (Fig 14). Speaking on the interactive nature of Twomey's clay floor, de Waal, reflects 'The consciousness of moving in the space was made contingent on destruction.'¹²⁰ Breakage was a certainty. The transient nature of Twomey's work is further explored in PART TWO: *In - breath*, where comparisons are made between Twomey's site-specific practice and my own.

In contrast to Twomey's floor piece, which focuses on ground level and our tactile journey across her fragile clay terrain, Goldsworthy's *Clay Wall* exists on a vertical plane. The effect being that when viewing the work, instead of looking downwards towards our feet we gaze outwards, a position of higher esteem.

This serves to shift our perspective of clay, quite literally, from a low down substance to a material of higher standing. By taking a naturally occurring process, repositioning it within a gallery setting and elevating its usual horizontal plane into a vertical plane, Goldsworthy honours and monumentalises the naturally occurring cracks, which by traditional values, would be regarded as faults or flaws.

The clay objects and installations explored in this chapter are simple in form with no unnecessary features.¹²¹ By using direct methods of making, e.g. throwing liquid clay at a wall or squeezing a lump of clay to make a figure, an honest expression of clays material nature is revealed. This in turn brings recognition to those aspects of clay which usually go unnoticed.

Having explored static artworks made from clay, my investigation is widened in Chapter Four, *Arts Practice, Performance*, where clay is explored in relation to performance and ritual action.



Fig 15 Charles Simonds, *Birth* (1970)

Chapter Four

Arts Practice, Performance

This chapter reflects upon contemporary practices that explore the material nature of clay through performance and ritual.

The concept of emergence is initially explored. This is followed by ingestion, connectivity, disintegration and finally immersion and burial. Each area of discussion relates to a different aspect of human existence. Collectively, these points of enquiry evidence how clay's mutability reflects the natural process of life and death. It also acts as a preface to my assertion that clay bears its own distinct life-cycle.



Fig 16 Charles Simonds, *Birth* (1970)

Emergence

In 1970 Charles Simonds created what was to be his seminal work, *Birth* (Fig 15-17). This work, documented as film, involved burying himself in a New Jersey clay pit and re-emerging from it - his naked body streaked with clay.¹²² With its responsiveness to touch, clay is (as discussed in Chapter Two) a potent symbol of creation, and Simonds responds to its primal qualities: rawness, tactility and sensuality, in this piece.

Site and timing were significant to Simonds who had recently graduated from the University of California, Berkeley and returned to the east coast of America, where he was born and grew up.¹²³ This act of homecoming prompted within him a re-definition of self in respect to place, materiality of place and belonging. In a 1977 interview, Simonds recalls how discovery of the clay led to the creation of his own mythology where he literally buried himself in clay and was reborn from it.¹²⁴

Within the context of creation stories, clay can, as detailed in Chapter Two (p.31.), be seen as the 'prima materia' of man. This concept relates to Simonds



Fig 17 Charles Simonds, *Birth* (1970)

whose entire practice appears to have grown from this one event; Allen Harkness further describes Simonds performance as his 'clay baptism'.¹²⁵

When exploring Simonds work in relationship to the Bible, it becomes evident that, not only is *Birth* equivalent to the initial stages of Genesis where man was formed from clay,¹²⁶ but the development of Simonds' later works further develop unfolding of this biblical narrative. In the successive stages of Genesis, creating life from clay (the first stage), is followed by the populating of a deserted world. Simonds' work is reflective of this narrative. In the early 1970s, following *Birth* and other immersive acts (for example *Body-Earth*, as discussed later in this chapter) Simonds used the clay to make a succession of tiny architectural structures. These structures, nestled within the cityscape of Manhattan, were 'inhabited' by an imaginary race, which Simonds called the *Little People*. In terms of materiality, the significant factor is that the clay pit from which Simonds made the tiny bricks (the same pit from which he had dragging his clay-born body) had also provided the raw material for some of Manhattan's older buildings.¹²⁷

The autobiographical connection between site, self and material was a revelation to Simonds who was born in New York City in 1945. In a 1977 interview with Daniel Abadie, Simonds explains the origins of these people. 'In the beginning I laid down a piece of clay and it was a place. First there were objects - different ritual places, then slowly the notion of a people developed and the earth was populated'.¹²⁸ As John Beardsley suggests, Simonds' work:

Hypothesises an identity between the landscape, the structures we build on it, and our bodies... He observes the varying modes of our lives in different landscapes and the ways in which our social conventions, our architecture, and the evolution of our thoughts correspond to where we live. His works are a physical expression of these observations.¹²⁹

In my opinion Beardsley's somewhat remote perspective overrides the basic truth; that Simonds' relationship with clay is tactile - his work grew from clay. The substance itself inspired him to create increasingly complex structures.

Ingestion

JJ McCracken's performance *Hunger Philadelphia* (2012) (Fig 18-19), in which nine clay-covered women chew and swallow clay, explores the practice of geophagy, or earth eating, which occurs in underprivileged areas of America.¹³⁰ The practice spread from Africa to the United States through the slave trade which, as geographer Dr Vermeer suggests, would explain why geophagy occurs more commonly in black populations, although the poverty-stricken of other races are known to eat clay.¹³¹

Laden with clay fruit and vegetables, McCracken's performance at the Painted Bride Arts Centre, Philadelphia, is visually abundant; yet the material of abundance, is a food substitute in the form of clay.¹³² As stated by Ran



Fig 18-19 JJ McCracken, *Hunger Philadelphia* (2012)

Knishinsky, fine grade clays such as Montmorillonite acts as a detoxifier and nutritional supplement when taken in small doses.¹³³ However, when eaten within the context of poor communities, clay is a food of last resort, the eating of which, according to writer Beth Ann Fennelly, holds negative connotations.¹³⁴ American physicians condemn the practice which, in excessive quantities can, as pointed out by Dr Veermer, cause intestinal blockages. Such symptoms were reported in 2008 when a Haitian woman, interviewed for NBC News, said her daily diet of clay cookies gave her stomach pains.¹³⁵

In Haiti, even the most basic food staples, such as rice and beans are sometimes beyond the means of the poorest people. However, 'clay cookies', made of clay dug from the islands Central Plateau, are comparatively cheap. In 2008, as reported by National Geographic, the price of two cups of rice was 60 cents, whereas a clay cookie or 'dirt cookie' as they are commonly referred, sell for the 'dirt cheap' price of 5 cents.^{136/137} Such poverty similarly exists in parts of Philadelphia, the site of McCracken's performance.

Taking place at 'dinner time' (between 6:30pm and 8:30pm) on two successive evenings, the aim of *Hunger Philadelphia*, was to define, reveal and ultimately transform Philadelphia's inner-city poverty crisis.¹³⁸ Clay remnants from the performance were recycled and used to build a bread oven.¹³⁹ In this piece McCracken reveals clay to be a material of transformative abilities. This is evidenced firstly in its transformation into a visually recognisable food source (i.e. the clay fruit and vegetables) secondly, in the performance which marked a shifting of awareness to those who attended, and thirdly through its further incarnation as a bread oven for a homeless shelter. McCracken's work is further discussed in PART THREE: *Out-breath*, where I compare McCracken's use of clay with my own.

Connectedness

Human interaction and connection with the earth is a vital element of Holly Hanessian's project *Touch in Real Time* (Fig 20). This participatory work which began in 2011, focuses on the simple ritual of shaking hands, a familiar method of greeting in many cultures. As Hanessian explains:

I asked to shake and then hold the hands of participants. Each handshake contained a wet piece of clay, imprinting each participant's hand with my own. I held onto their hand for 15-20 seconds, the time it takes for the bonding hormone, oxytocin to be released into our bodies. As the project evolved, each handshake became an intimate moment in time with another person.¹⁴⁰

During this process the soft clay was squeezed and compressed between the hands thus altering its shape and surface texture. The intimacy of the physical exchange coupled with the tactile qualities of clay provided a nourishing one-to-one experience which, suggests Hanessian, in the current age of computer communications is a rare and valued experience.¹⁴¹ The nature of the resulting



Fig 20 Holly Hanessian, *Touch in Real Time* (2012)

Fig 21 Ian Giles, *Clay Meditation* (2013)

clay trace bears relation to my own practice and as such is discussed in PART THREE: *Out-breath*.

A sense of connectedness also occurs in Ian Giles's *Clay Meditation* (Fig 21), *Kettle's Yard* (2013), where pairs of participants were invited to paint each other's face using wet clay and their bare fingers. Having applied the clay, the drying process then acted as a lead for the meditation 'almost like a clock or a timer', says Giles.¹⁴² As the clay dried, cracks and crevices gradually appeared on the participants' faces. The visual and experiential transformation which took place is an analogy, the artist suggests, for time and human mortality.¹⁴³

This work comprises three basic elements; clay, the human body and time. In this respect it is similar to native ritual practices (as described in Chapter Two p.37.), where clay is applied to the body during funeral rites. In the case of Aborigine ritual, clay is used ceremonially to honour and connect with the dead. In Giles' work however, the presence of clay on the body serves to heighten the awareness of one's own existence. In such a work we connect



Fig 22 Nichole Howard, *Kular* Project (2012)

Fig 23 Nichole Howard, *Kular* Project (clay cup being smashed, 2012)

with the prime materiality of clay, earth as substance. This being true, both from a participant's viewpoint, and an onlooker's perspective who, when experiencing a face covered with clay, is confronted with the human body in a raw abstracted sense.

Disintegration

Nichole Howard's *Kular* project (2012) (Fig 22-23), involved serving coffee to guests in disposable clay cups.¹⁴⁴ These lightly fired vessels bore reference to traditional *kular* (clay cups), used for serving tea on open-air *chai* stalls in India, a practice which, according to BBC correspondent Judy Swallow, has almost disappeared owing to the introduction of plastic.¹⁴⁵

Having finished their drinks, Howard's guests were invited to toss or chuck their cups onto the floor.¹⁴⁶ This action reflects the use of *kular*, where following consumption, the redundant clay cup was promptly thrown to the ground, where it disintegrates back into the earth. In terms of value these low-fired cups, made from locally dug clay were literally 'dirt cheap'.¹⁴⁷ Glass bottles, on the

other hand were at that time valued commodities. This was evidenced by Journalist Manfred Ropschitz in 1978 who, after purchasing a bottle of local cola at an Indian train station, was stunned to discover he was being accompanied by a young boy, who clung to the outside of his train carriage, his sole purpose being to retrieve and return the empty bottle when the drink was finished.¹⁴⁸ Such extreme investment in material is in complete contrast to the valueless clay cups, which, as witnessed during the same journey, were routinely thrown out of the train window.

As in the case of traditional *kular*, Howard's clay cups, are roughly made and highly porous. 'I'm not attempting to replace the disposable plastic cup with a permanent ceramic one', she says 'but rather switch up the disposable tradition with a friendly material, terracotta.'¹⁴⁹ In the case of Howard's work, the ritualistic practice of breaking the cup makes the work meaningful. As described by Howard, 'It's a visceral experience, the audible pop of the object as it breaks up into a million tiny pieces, the force generated by your own body, the sight of a pile of shards that you've contributed to.'¹⁵⁰ As with the traditional *kular*, which gradually disintegrates back into the soil, the growing pile of shards created from Howard's work will in time, be mixed back into clay and contribute to the making of future pots.¹⁵¹

The legacy of the clay cup and its hierarchical associations are significant to the Dalits, a severely oppressed group of people comprising almost one quarter of India's 1.2 billion population who have adopted the symbol of the clay cup as their emblem.¹⁵² As is documented on the 'Dalit Freedom Movement' website, when a Dalit, visits a cafe for a cup of tea, they are served in a clay cup (rather than the usual glass or metal cup that other customers are



Fig 24-25 Jim Melchert, *Changes* (1972)

provided with). After drinking the tea, they are then 'expected to crush the cup on the ground so that no other person risks being polluted by the cup the Dalit touched.'¹⁵³ The term Dalit means 'those who have been broken and ground down by those above them in the social hierarchy'.¹⁵⁴

Howard's work draws positive attention to the temporal nature of clay and celebrates its fragility. She is not concerned with permanence; on the contrary her overarching aim is to invest more value in the disposable nature of clay and the simple clay cup.

Immersion and Burial

The act of immersion is fundamental to Jim Melchert's *Changes* (1972) (Fig 24-25). In this piece the artist and several participants 'enact a return to the Earth', by dunking their heads in clay slip and sitting for an hour while waiting for it to dry and crack away.¹⁵⁵ During the event, restaged in 2010 at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston (CAMH), participants' eyes, ears and



Fig 26 Charles Simonds, *Body-Earth* (1974)

Fig 27 Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Genesis in Mud)* (1982)

nostrils were sealed with clay.¹⁵⁶ This served to create a deeper, more materially immersive experience than Giles' *Clay Meditation*, where (as detailed pp.60-61), only the faces were covered. We were, as participant and art critic Douglas Britt said in 2010, 'leaving the world outside to turn our attention inward - an experience akin to meditation.'¹⁵⁷ As explained in Tate Gallery literature (the Tate showed a film of the original 1972 event in 2004, which I viewed), the clay slip 'encases your head so that the sounds you hear are interior, your breathing, your heartbeat, and your nervous system.'¹⁵⁸

Whilst the conditions present within Melchert's piece were precise and controlled, the nature of Charles Simonds', *Body-Earth* (Fig 26) was primal and raw. In this 1974 piece Simonds facing upwards on his back, slithers his way through a quagmire of clay slurry. His bodily movements directed by the behaviour of the wet clay, as it sticks and pulls at his naked body.¹⁵⁹

In respect of bodily exposure, the partially immersive conditions of Simonds' piece become complete in Ana Mendieta's performance *Untitled (Genesis in*

Mud) (1982) (Fig 27). In this piece, which took place at an unmarked, unclassified site, thus devoid of any prior cultural beliefs or meaning, Mendieta's entire body and face were buried completely beneath a pile of dark mud. As she breathed in and out, the mound gradually shifting as though she were in, as Olga Viso describes it, 'an antediluvian life-force'.¹⁶⁰ In her 1985 interview with Joan Marter, Mendieta recalls how worms crawled over her body during the performance.¹⁶¹ Viso reinforces the subhuman nature of the encounter yet further by describing Mendieta's presence in the mud as almost amphibian.¹⁶² Having previously explored the notion of concealment and burial through the use of flowers, branches and stones, in this wholly subterranean performance, which Mendieta considered one of her favourites, her unification with the earth becomes complete.¹⁶³

Ana Mendieta's site-specific performances are further discussed in PART TWO: *In-breath*, where I compare and contrast the photographic processes used to document her work with my own.

The works in this chapter involve an action or series of actions, i.e. painting one another's skin with liquid clay or smashing a hardened clay cup to the floor. In each case the artist is led by the inherent qualities of the material and in so doing attributes clay with symbolic meaning and value.

By exploring clay within the context of performance and ritual action this chapter provides a means of situating my own performance-led practice, which is the subject of PART TWO: *In-breath* and PART THREE: *Out-breath*.

PART TWO: *In-breath*

Introduction to *In-breath*

'In this very breath that we now take lies the secret that all great teachers try to tell us.'¹⁶⁴

Peter Matthiessen, novelist and naturalist

The purpose of the *In-breath* phase, comprising of four site-specific pieces, was to gain experiential knowledge of clay in a variety of states, and to test methods by which clay as a material might be invested with significance.

The four experimental pieces each consider a different aspect of clay's hidden history, the purpose of which being to build historic understanding, as well as sensory awareness of clay as a material. The *In-breath* phase was wide ranging in terms of location and environment, encompassing the granite of Dartmoor and submerged depths of the English Channel.

In preparation for this series of works, visits to working and disused clay sites were carried out in order to gain an understanding of history and change within the clay industry. These visits were accompanied by members of the Ball Clay Heritage Society (BCHS) and China Clay History Society (CCHS), whose personal insights expanded and enriched my understanding.

One project site was located underwater, in a deep-sea location. During the scuba diving training necessary for this experience, I grew increasingly aware of my breath, particularly as a means of drawing in energy and controlling movement.

This practice of conscious breathing developed into the twin concept of *In-breath* and *Out-breath* as both structure and methodology for the research. The terms are significant in that they define two fundamentally different modes of research. They also indicate myself as a living component of these practices, and reflect the cultural associations of clay as a metaphor for life.

To breathe is to be alive; 'it corresponds', states French philosopher Luce Irigaray, 'to the first autonomous gesture of the living human being. To come into the world supposes inhaling and exhaling by oneself.'¹⁶⁵ As a performance-led artist for whom meanings are transmitted through actions of the body, I am dependent on breath as an embodied component of my practice.

Structurally the *In-breath* is split into three chapters. The first and second of these chapters introduce and examine my site-specific projects (with two projects allocated to each chapter). By contrast, the third chapter is concerned with photographic documentation of the work.

Chapter Five, *Release and Recover*, examines two works which explored the overseas transport of China Clay during the 19th & 20th century. These clay rituals involved recovery and release of material at sites of historic relevance. Contact with the material was carried out via my hands, which I used to scoop, lift and carry the clay. In these works the clay existed as a substance, located outside my body.

In Chapter Six, *Embrace and Embody* my engagement with clay became increasingly body-orientated as I held the clay in my arms and applied it to my bare skin. During this process my perception of the clay changed from that of

an external substance to one that was integral to my body and its inherent movements.

Chapter Seven, *Forms of Documentation* explores the video and photographic methods used to record my site-specific practice, particularly the body-orientated pieces discussed in Chapter Six. I investigate how an impromptu live intervention carried out in front of the exhibited documentation extended the meaning of the site-specific work by introducing a living dimension.

All three chapters are drawn together in the summary where I clarify and define the key findings within this section.

The *In-breath* phase, where personal experiencing of the clay is gained through site-specific practice, leads to the subsequent *Out-breath* (PART THREE). During this phase identification with site is relinquished and my experiencing of clay is carried out through the physical bounds of my own body.



Fig 28 Shipwrecked China Clay recovered from *SS Zaanstroom* in 2011 - on the centenary of it sinking.

Chapter Five

Release and Recover

This chapter introduces the first two site-specific works within the *In-breath, Clay Launch* (2012) (Appendix 2.1) and *Recovering Drowned Clay* (2011) (Fig 28 Appendix 2.2). These works took place at sites historically associated with the export of China Clay.

Initially I discuss the subject of site selection. This is followed by material engagement and comparative approaches, where I compare my work with that of Clare Twomey and Nick Rands. Next I assess the effectiveness of *Clay Launch* and *Recovering Drowned Clay*, both in terms of material engagement and the acknowledgement and commemoration of clay as a material.

Site and Historic Relevance

Clay Launch and Recovering Drowned Clay involved commemorative actions whose site and timing gave recognition to the shiploads of China Clay which were lost to shipwreck from the 19th Century to the present day (this being the earliest recorded incident of shipwrecked clay in Lloyds Shipwreck Index).¹⁶⁶

My initial intention was to recover clay from a wreck close to the clay's source - off the coast of South West England. However, none of the 49 clay cargo wrecks listed in Lloyds Shipwrecks Index of the British Isles (South West), were locatable or accessible to dive (see Appendix 1.3, Shipwrecked Clay).¹⁶⁷ I extended my search to include the entire south coast of England. This process revealed *SS Zaanstroom*, located 9 miles off the coast of West Sussex, to be the only accessible clay wreck. Additionally, it highlighted the multitude of lost clay carriers which have never been found.¹⁶⁸ In view of this information, it was appropriate to carry-out two projects; one to recover the clay (as initially planned) and another to commemorate those boats whose clay cargo could not be recovered.

Clay Launch (2012) (Fig 29-30; <http://vimeo.com/269150388>), fulfilled this second project. A determining factor when selecting an appropriate dockside location for this project, was that Charlestown is home to the Shipwreck and Heritage Centre.¹⁶⁹ The centre claims to hold the largest private collection of shipwreck items and artefacts displayed publicly in Europe. However, as previously noted (Chapter One p.26.), it does not include or acknowledge China Clay in its collection of shipwrecked cargo, despite being located on the site of the old China Clay works. *Clay Launch* redresses this imbalance by acknowledging those boats that left Charlestown and subsequently sank with

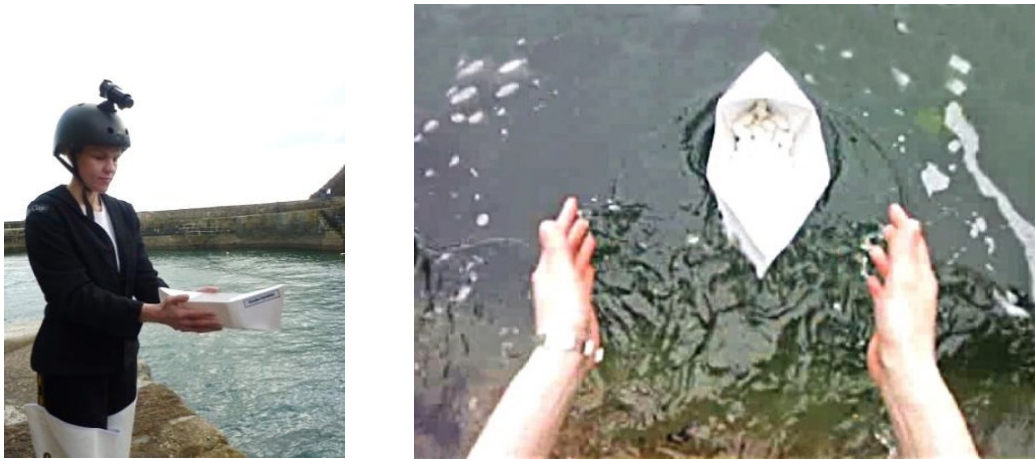


Fig 29-30 *Clay Launch*, Charlestown, Cornwall (2012)

no reported traces of the wreckage.

During 2012, the paper boats and their clay cargo were launched one by one, on the anniversary of their sinking. The timing of *Recovering Drowned Clay* (Fig 31-32; <http://vimeo.com/269151220>) was also determined by historic events, although in this case the period of lapsed time was more significant. Unlike *Clay Launch*, where the day and month but not the year, were acknowledged, in *Recovering Drowned Clay* my actions, which comprised a 28 meter descent to the collapsed hold of *SS Zaanstroom*, commemorated the centenary year on which this Dutch steamship sank on its homebound journey from Fowey to Amsterdam in 1911. Initially I had planned to impress dates and lettering into the clay thus making it into a commemorative medallion, however, this no longer felt appropriate after recovering the clay and completing *Clay Launch*, as discussed on p.81.



Fig 31-32 *Recovering Drowned Clay (SS Zaanstroom)* (2011)

Material Engagement

In *Recovering Drowned Clay* physical engagement with the clay did not take place until the end of the piece - until I had descended to the seabed and reached the ship's hold. This was in contrast to *Clay Launch*, where I was in contact with the boats at the start of the piece, holding them in my hands before carrying them down the slipway and releasing them into the water.

Having visited Charlestown prior to the event, I was familiar and comfortable with the site. This was not the case with *Recovering Drowned Clay*, which I carried out 'blind'. This unknown element generated tension around the clay. In the lead up to the event I was uncertain whether remnants of clay cargo, still existed in the hold. The viability of my endeavour was confirmed by Worthing Divers in July 2011, who assured me that clay was still present on board *SS Zaanstroom* (Appendix 1.4).¹⁷⁰ However, uncertainties persisted as to how I would locate and identify it. According to Divernet, in 2006 the China Clay existed as 'chunks', but what would the clay be like five years later?¹⁷¹ How would I retrieve the clay? Would it be stiff and unyielding, soft or perhaps take

the form of a thick slurry? These unknown factors served to charge the clay with enigmatic qualities and reverence.

The materials used in *Clay Launch* were devoid of mystery and tensions. The boats were constructed from China Clay coated paper (this being readily accessible with 50% of Cornish China Clay currently used in the manufacture of paper¹⁷²). Whilst the China Clay 'noodles', which acted as cargo, were supplied by Headon China Clay works, who routinely process the clay in extruded, 'noodle' form for handling and transport purposes. Unlike *Clay Launch*, where the physical materials were familiar and accessible, my initial engagement with the Zaanstroom clay was limited to what I had read and what I had imagined. Internally, I had carried the notion of underwater clay recovery since 1996 - since reading Rachel Carson's description of submerged clay in *The Edge of the Sea* (see Preface p.xxvi. and Appendix 1.5).¹⁷³ Through a rigorous process of elimination, I had scaled my search down to this one boat.¹⁷⁴

Initially planned to take place in 2012, the project was brought forward by a year when I realised that the boat had sunk in 1911. By carrying out the project in 2011 I would mark the centenary; the clay was loaded with symbolism. During the project my emotional engagement with the clay swung from apprehension during the initial search, to relief and elation upon recovery. Visibility was poor, so I was reliant on my sense of touch. A sudden drop in depth indicated I had reached the ship's hold. As my fin touched the bottom, a cloud of thick sediment rose. Prior to this moment, the clay had existed only in my mind, but when I scooped it up in my gloved hand it took on a physical presence and assurance.



Fig 33 Nick Rands, *Earthy Spheres*, (1998-99)

Comparative Approaches

Nick Rands' *Earthy Spheres* (1998/99) which comprises 4000 spheres of mud collected from worldwide localities, bears similarities to *Recovering Drowned Clay*, in that the subject of the work is material collection.¹⁷⁵ Unlike the shipwrecked clay which was retrieved from an exacting, relatively inaccessible site, the spherical lumps of mud which comprise Rands' work, were collected at random (Fig 33). In email correspondence (Appendix 1.6) Rands explains 'I was just picking up mud wherever I happened to be... Brazil, and possibly even Zimbabwe and California, the Isle of Wight and Northumberland etc.'¹⁷⁶

In terms of timing and collection, again Rands states that there was 'No specific order'.¹⁷⁷ This again was in contrast to the Zaanstroom China Clay, which was recovered on the centenary of its sinking.

In both *Earthy Spheres* and *Recovering Drowned Clay*, conscious movement of clay (or mud as it is described in Rands' work) draws attention to a material, which would (had it been left in situ) otherwise remained unnoticed. This is

similarly the case in *Clay Launch*, though in this instance the material is released rather than collected.

Clare Twomey's *Blossom* (2007) is comparable to *Clay Launch*, since it involves a process of letting go and liberating a series of clay objects to the elements (Fig 34-35).¹⁷⁸ Taking place at the Eden project, on the site of an old China Clay pit, *Blossom* consisted of 10,000 handmade China Clay flowers which were 'planted' on site by a team of seven horticulturalists.¹⁷⁹ Although described as an installation rather than a performance-led piece, the action of 'planting' the flowers can be equated with the launching of the boats; a contemplative moment, in which each object was, one by one, gifted to the elements.

By comparing my work with Twomey's, issues surrounding the representational forms in *Clay Launch* became increasingly problematic. As representational objects, Twomey's flowers were appropriate to the Eden Project's planted landscape. This was likewise the case for *Clay Launch*, where each boat represented a named clay carrier. However, in the case of *Clay Launch*, the material from which the boat was constructed was too far removed from the original clay. China Clay coated paper is rigid in comparison to raw clay and whilst this attribute facilitated the construction of a vessel which could, to some degree, float, as a performer, it distanced me from the material qualities of raw clay. This for me resulted in a feeling of disconnection and emptiness - my primary aim had been to commemorate the loss of the clay, rather than the boats which carried it.

In *Recovering Drowned Clay*, my connection with clay was, by contrast, direct and deliberate. This prompted a surge of energy within my body - one which

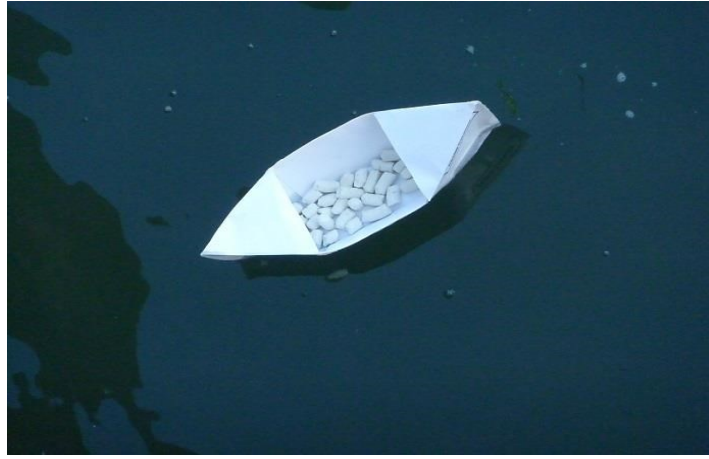


Fig 34 Clare Twomey, *Blossom*, The Eden Project, Cornwall (2007)

Fig 35 *Clay Launch*, Charlestown, Cornwall (2012)

was not present in *Clay Launch*. This reaction served to confirm the necessity of material contact within my practice.

When comparing my clay recovery methods with those of Rands, it becomes evident that ritual timing, as it was carried out in *Recovering Drowned Clay*, promotes status, definition and exclusivity, whereas relaxed, open ended methods of collection, such as those used by Rands, emphasise multiplicity and ubiquity.

Effectiveness in terms of Material Engagement

I found *Clay Launch* unsatisfactory owing to the lack of physical contact with the clay. Whilst launching the boats, my hands were cupped around the paper sides of the boat. The paper contains clay, but cannot be described as being clay. Unlike *Recovering Drowned Clay*, where my gloved hands were in contact with the clay and its material texture could be felt between my fingers, in *Clay Launch*, tactile engagement with the clay was indirect and emphasis

was placed on the boat as a commemorative object, rather than on the China Clay.

Recovering Drowned Clay required engaging with the clay on a deeper physical and emotional level. The clay, embedded within the collapsed hold was inaccessible without the use of specialist breathing equipment. It was a requirement that I learnt to scuba dive and complete a higher level exam in order to reach the required depth of 28 meters.¹⁸⁰ Visibility was poor, thus other senses came into being; I was groping to find the clay in an alien environment.

In previous works I was familiar with the clay before the performance but in this case it was unknown to me - I knew it was China Clay, but did not know what state it would be in after being submerged for a century. In this respect my meeting with this material was raw and untainted. The recovered clay emerged in a form of its own, and contrary to my earlier plans of making a commemorative medallion, I did not want to change the natural textural qualities in any way.

Effectiveness in Terms of Clay Appreciation and Commemoration

The major difference between *Recovering Drowned Clay* and *Clay Launch* is that whilst the former is successful in its reclamation of genuine shipwrecked material, the later makes do with recently extracted clay in an attempt to signify that which is lost and irretrievable. In this respect I consider *Clay Launch* to be a secondary project, since it recalls and remembers rather than physically retrieves. This is a rightful position - *Clay Launch* was developed, not on its own terms, but in response to *Recovering Drowned Clay* and had I not pursued the

possibility of clay recovery in the first instance, the need for this project would never have arisen.

In both clay rituals, an action or series of actions were carried out within a predetermined timeframe. The boats were launched on specific dates throughout the course of a year, whilst the clay was recovered 100 years after *SS Zaanstroom* sank. The observance of these timings served to formalise and ritualise my actions. In the case of *Clay Launch*, the action was simple; carry a boat to the water's edge and launch it into the sea. By attributing a name to the boat and launching it on the day that the boat sank, the action was transformed into a commemorative act. Furthermore, by repeating this action again and again in recognition of the six boats, the commemorative meaning of the piece was strengthened.

The purpose of ritual says author and humanitarian Serge King, is 'to focus attention, establish significance, and achieve a beneficial result.'¹⁸¹ As a performance, *Clay Launch* complies with this statement - by focusing on a historic event and signifying it with an action, honour is given to that which is lost and forgotten.

Unlike *Recovering Drowned Clay*, which took place in a physically challenging and pressurised environment, *Clay Launch* was more easily achieved and less loaded with expectation. The work involved release of material, not retrieval and it was not a requirement that the boats remain indefinitely afloat, since their purpose, as objects, was symbolic rather than functional. In *Recovering Drowned Clay* however, successful retrieval of the clay, was the only credible outcome. I had just one chance to retrieve the clay under a time constraint of

40 minutes, the maximum length of time I could stay underwater until my oxygen supply ran out.

In terms of commemorative timescales, 100 years is generally considered to be worthy of acknowledgement. The 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Rouse Simmons*; the so called 'Christmas Tree Ship', was celebrated in 2012 for example.¹⁸² In the case of *SS Zaanstroom* however, Newham Sub-Aqua Club, who have owned the wreck since 1980, made no plan to commemorate the anniversary.¹⁸³ Worthing Divers, who took me to *SS Zaanstroom* in 2011 and who visit the wreck annually, were likewise unaware of the centenary. It is evident that this anniversary would have gone unnoticed, had it not been for my project.

China Clay collected from *SS Zaanstroom* is unique and exclusive; it stands alone; representative of a distinct moment in time. In terms of material, the uneven clay form recovered from *SS Zaanstroom* bears traces of its submerged history. Where once the China Clay was white, it now bears mottled tones of orange; an infusion of rust from the ship's corroded hold. By appropriating ceremonial observance to this anniversary I revived that which was lost and forgotten and gave value to that which no longer held value. It is my intention that the recovered clay (and associated documents) should be displayed at Charlestown Shipwreck and Heritage Centre. This would further enhance its status and provide contextual significance owing to the museum's former use as a China Clay works.



Fig 36 *Lakeside Statue*, Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot (2010)

Chapter Six

Embrace and Embody

This chapter analyses the two remaining site-specific performances *Lakeside Statue* (2010) (Appendix 2.3) and *Parent Rock 1* (2010) (Appendix 2.4). These works took place at sites of clay origin.

Similarly to Chapter Five, the initial point of discussion is site selection. This is followed by material engagement and comparative approaches, where my practice is compared with that of Charles Simonds and JJ McCracken. The subject of public presence is thereafter explored. This is relevant to *Lakeside Statue* and the research exhibition *Manifestations of Place* (2012), where I carried out a live intervention in front of photographic images. Next I discuss audience experience and assess the means through which *Lakeside Statue* and *Parent Rock* give acknowledgement to clay as a material.

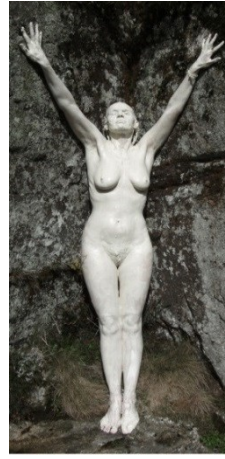


Fig 37-38 *Parent Rock 1*, Dartmoor (2010)

Site and Historic Relevance

In terms of site, *Lakeside Statue* (Fig 36; <http://vimeo.com/269152097>) is specific to Decoy Lake as a precise and identifiable locality. This is in contrast to *Parent Rock 1* (Fig 37-38; <https://vimeo.com/269152620>), whose overriding purpose was to establish the material relationship between China Clay and granite. As such the piece is broadly defined as taking place on Dartmoor.

China Clay bears a close geological and geographical relationship to granite; it is formed from granite and remains intimately bound within it until extraction. Likewise my live sculpture, which involved adjusting the shape of my clay-covered self to fit the shape of the granite, reveals an intimate relationship between the hard granite and its softer clay offspring. In contrast to *Lakeside Statue*, which explored a point of human intervention with the clay (the pit and its historic workings) *Parent Rock 1* reflects a geological process which took millions of years to complete. During *Parent Rock 1*, the initial ritualistic act of covering my body with clay reflects the chemical transformation of granite into China Clay.



Fig 39-40 *Lakeside Statue*, Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot (2010)

In contrast, the main purpose of *Lakeside Statue* was to draw attention to a former Ball Clay pit and its associated working methods - in particular 'the ball' as a recognised unit of dug clay (Fig 39-40). The majority of people, when asked, are familiar with the term China Clay - the name is self-explanatory. In contrast, few people have heard of Ball Clay. Richard Long, for example, was unfamiliar with Ball Clay when I asked him at the 2010 'Ways with Words' festival.¹⁸⁴ This was despite him having worked extensively with China Clay (*White Water Line*, being an example pp.44-45.). To the layperson the name is obscure since it describes, not the final saleable product, as in the case of China Clay but the original method by which the clay was dug. In addition to *Lakeside Statue*, I have also used clay-based workshops, for example Clay Day (Appendix 1.7), to explore and demonstrate the nature and working methods associated with Ball Clay.

During the early part of Decoy's 115-year working history (1850 -1965¹⁸⁵) and prior to mechanisation, clay from Decoy was dug from the pit floor in traditional cube shaped units (which, as detailed in Chapter One, p.22. became round

with handling), hence the large ball of clay I was holding throughout the performance. For the hour long duration of this piece I stood motionless, in contrast to *Parent Rock 1* which comprised a series of meditative postures whereby I changed the shape of my body in accordance with the attitude and character of the onsite granite. Clad in diving apparatus and holding the 'Ball' of clay - as though I had just emerged with it from the water, *Lakeside Statue* signified three interrelated themes; the submerged history of Decoy, as a former Ball Clay pit, the working methods used to extract the clay and the pits modern day re-incarnation as a lake for water sports and home to aquatic life.

Parent Rock 1 is however, more direct. It strips clay back to its granite source and signifies the geological powers of transformation which have taken place on Dartmoor.

Material Engagement

The significant difference between *Lakeside Statue* and *Parent Rock 1* is that of clay type. As experienced, the materiality of these clays have differing traits and characteristics. Within the context of *Parent Rock 1*, China Clay carried a soft delicate, nature - it was less sticky and adhesive than the Ball Clay. In its dried state, it brushed off as a light powder, whereas the Ball Clay, being stickier, held its grip.

In *Parent Rock 1*, liquid China Clay was applied to my head and entire body, giving the external effect that I was made from clay. My experiencing of the material was influenced by the conditions and manner in which it was applied. The predominant factor in this piece was that I applied the clay as a ritualised part of the event - an initiation which symbolised the alchemical transformation

from one material state to another; namely a living body into clay. This in turn was reflective of the geological transformation from granite to China Clay. The clay was applied directly onto my skin - there was no barrier and this served to mask my identity but heighten my femininity and sensory awareness.

Lakeside Statue is similar to *Parent Rock 1* in that my body was covered with clay. However, in this piece, Ball Clay existed as an independent material (detached from its granite source) and unlike *Parent Rock 1*, where material was placed directly onto my skin, it was applied on top of my wetsuit and diving apparatus in *Lakeside Statue*.

A further difference was that unlike *Parent Rock 1*, where my hands were free from objects, in *Lakeside Statue* I held a ball of clay throughout the event. Due to the wetsuit, which formed a barrier between myself and the clay, the same degree of intimacy was not felt in *Lakeside Statue* as in *Parent Rock 1*. My awareness instead, was influenced by the heaviness of the clay-coated suit and the clay ball, which was a continual presence throughout the event. I felt weighed down - my discomfort seemed to emulate the hard labour needed to work the original pit. However, this association was secondary to my prime intention which, above all else, was to honour the clay.

In *Parent Rock 1*, I was naked and unencumbered by such apparatus. My experiencing of the clay was influenced not by its physical weight but by my changing bodily relationship with the granite. Whilst lying down, the clay which at that point was still relatively wet, felt soft and yielding. Stretching upwards in response to its towering mass, the drying clay tightened against my skin. As the clay shrank a hardened outer coating was formed - I felt cocooned; a

sensation which promptly broke, as I changed position and the clay cracked apart.

In *Lakeside Statue* I was less conscious of the ground beneath and around me and more focused inwardly, on the clay ball and my task of holding it. This observation highlights how the presence of a clay object or entity can change the perspective of ones' own concentration. In *Lakeside Statue* the clay ball was held close to my body, as an object it was independent of me and yet, in the controlled context of the performance it was entirely dependent on me to hold it. Since the piece involved wearing a facemask and breathing through a snorkel, respiration was also restricted and whilst this was necessary in order to express the submerged depths of the former clay pit I was standing beside, it also served as an encumbrance and increased the feeling of weightiness.

These obstructions prevented a fully integrated connection from occurring between myself and the clay. When a piece of clay fell off my hand in *Lakeside Statue* a patch of fabric was exposed. In contrast, clay which was shed from my body in *Parent Rock 1*, revealed glimpses of bare skin. When reviewing documentation of *Lakeside Statue*, the sight of the fabric made me feel self-conscious and uncomfortable; it felt fraudulent. I consequently dismissed those images which exposed the fabric. By contrast, the bare skin exposed in *Parent Rock 1* revealed a material and bodily truth which I sought to develop in future projects.

Comparative Approaches

Similarly to *Lakeside Statue*, where the clay was applied on top of my wetsuit, clothed figures likewise featured in JJ McCracken's *Living Sculptures*



Fig 41-42 JJ McCracken, *Living Sculptures* (2008/2009)

(2008/2009).¹⁸⁶ As stated by R. Stevie Jones, this work incorporates 'performers carrying out specific acts while their bodies and all surrounding objects are coated entirely in a rich, soft, tan or ochre ... clay - including the walls, floor and the three-foot-tall spheres on top of which performers stand.'¹⁸⁷ In contrast to the solitary, static nature of *Lakeside Statue*, JJ McCracken's piece comprises a series of five vignettes in which methodical acts, such as counting incoming/outgoing visitors on an abacus, are performed by robed women (Fig 41). In addition to this first action other, equally timeless, tasks included rolling balls of clay and dropping them into water to dissolve (Fig 42).¹⁸⁸ Through analysis, it becomes apparent that whilst both *Lakeside Statue* and *Living Sculptures* incorporate forms of meditative practice, *Lakeside Statue*, in its stillness, is physically robust and stoic, whilst *Living Sculptures* is quietly cathartic in its on-going application of non-progressive tasks. Unlike *Lakeside Statue* and *Parent Rock 1*, McCracken's work takes place in a gallery space, and whilst the clay is, as indicated by Jones, locally sourced, the work is disconnected from the original material source.¹⁸⁹

For McCracken, clay functions as a material through which individuals can be masked and un-conclusive actions held in a junction between form and formlessness. The work is not concerned with clay as a substance, rather it utilises the unstable nature of clay in a series of un-resolving activities.¹⁹⁰ By contrast, the purpose of *Lakeside Statue* is to affirm the existence and social utilisation of clay at its source locality.

Parent Rock 1 is also concerned with source and substance and in this respect bears similarities to Charles Simonds' *Birth* (discussed in Chapter Four, pp.56-58.). Like Simonds, I use my naked body to explore raw materiality. Similarly the works take place at a site of material origins.¹⁹¹ However, whilst Simonds focuses solely on the act of his own birth, my work is concerned with the emergence and continuing relationship between the China Clay and its parental granite. As a consequence my piece draws three separate entities together; my body, the China Clay and the granite. This is in contrast to Simonds' two part relationship between his body and the clay. In Simonds' piece, the material origins of the clay are presupposed (as in *Lakeside Statue*) however, in *Parent Rock 1* the inherent nature of the clay is stripped right back to its igneous roots. These comparisons reveal in my work a greater intention to understand and express clay's geological context.

Public Presence

Parent Rock 1 was a non-public event - the only person who witnessed the work in its entirety was the camera operator. This was also the case for *Recovering Drowned Clay* and *Clay Launch* (discussed in the previous chapter). In all these instances members of the public (or dive community in the case of *Recovering Drowned Clay*), were present at the time of the event but there was no

dedicated onsite audience. Due to its offshore locality, *Recovering Drowned Clay* required more resources and assistance. Elements of the event were therefore witnessed by several people, although their role was of facilitation and safety rather than observation as in the case of an audience.

This was in contrast to *Lakeside Statue*, which was a public event in a popular country park and staged on a Saturday afternoon in June to ensure an audience of all ages. The event was the only public performance out of the four site-specific pieces. It was not advertised - instead it was experienced as a chance encounter: visitors just happened to be walking past at the time of the event (Fig 43-44). For impact, the piece was sited at a highly visible place which would attract the attention of visitors on their walk around the Lake. Since audience reactions were to be recorded on film, camera placement was critical. It was vital that equipment did not obstruct the scene or inhibit visitors from coming close to me. Intrigue regarding my uncertain status and materiality led some audience members to reach out and touch me, one of whom flinched instantly away on contact with the wet clay. Others were agitated by my presence one man pushed me and the abrupt pressure of his hand against my torso made me wobble.

A couple sitting in front of me were debating whether I was 'real or not'. Through my diving suit I heard elements of their conversation, the woman was strong in her belief that I was a 'statue', whilst her companion insistent, that I was not a statue but 'a person dressed up as one'.

As evidenced in the above examples, my unexpected clay form jolting the visual and tactile senses of visitors who were intrigued by the textural qualities of



Fig 43-44 *Lakeside Statue* (video stills), Decoy Newton Abbot (2010)

the clay. Such attention was not given to the glimpses of clay which are evident in the lake banks and subsidiary streams. These experiences taught me that in order for clay to gain recognition and enhanced status, it is necessary to have an intervening element through which that attention can be given. In this case that element was my body. By taking clay from the ground and putting it on my body, a focusing device had been created - visitors now took notice of the clay. At this stage I was presenting the clay - holding it up to be seen. Only later did a more reciprocal relationship between the clay and myself develop.

In *Lakeside Statue* I was accessible to visitors. Passers-by were free to come-up close and examine me from all angles. I was also within pushing distance of the lake. This all created tension which was not present in *Parent Rock 1*. This piece was more formalised, bearing a distinct framing of time and place which brought with it a sense of responsibility. Under the eye of the audience I could not waver; I had to remain steadfast. I drew energy from their presence and grew internally stronger as I heard the sound of their footsteps coming towards

me. The presence of an audience served to increase my resolve which in turn, charged the work with a potency that I had not felt in *Parent Rock 1*. By analysing the differences between *Parent Rock 1* and *Lakeside Statue* it becomes apparent that whilst *Parent Rock 1*, in its stripped down nakedness, engendered a deep physical and emotional connection with material. In *Lakeside Statue* the presence of a live audience induced edge and criticality; qualities which I found artistically empowering and life-affirming.

From Non-Public to Public

In the previous section, I discussed the experiential differences between a non-public event and a public event. These forms of expression were drawn together and presented simultaneously at the opening of *Manifestations of Place*, Scott Building, Plymouth University (2012).¹⁹² In this group research exhibition still imagery documenting my non-public event *Parent Rock 1* (Appendix 2.4), was shown in union with a public event relating to the same theme, *Parent Rock 2* (Appendix 2.5). Set within a corridor space, the focal point of my work was a life size print of my clay-covered body hung ceiling to floor, within a tight alcove. During the performance I walked slowly along the corridor, my naked body covered - as it had been on Dartmoor - with liquid China Clay (Fig 45-47). I became a living, breathing manifestation of the photographically captured clay figure, which was hanging on the wall. Onlookers were visibly stunned.

I was overcome by the urge to carry-out this live intervention only an hour before the opening and it changed the dynamics of the wall-based pieces. The clay - previously presented in a representational, image-based capacity

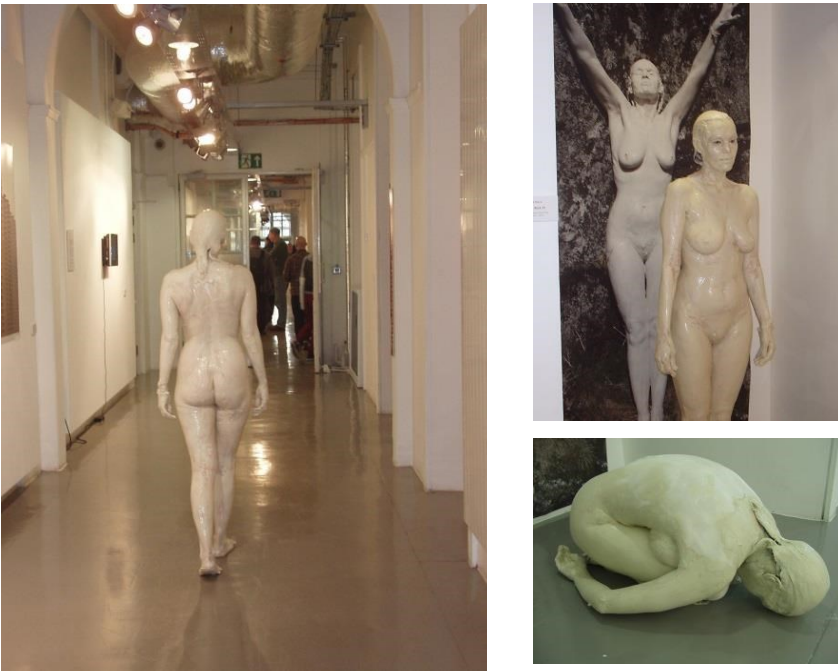


Fig 45-47 *Parent Rock 2*, Scott Building, Plymouth University (2012)

only - now took on a physical presence. My body gave life and form to the white clay as I paused in front of the life-sized photograph, and rolled gradually down into a fetal position.

In terms of site and materiality of site, a new layer of meaning was created through this live action. When viewing the photograph alone, the major focal point was the site-specific relationship between the China Clay (in the form of my clay-covered body) and the granite as its parent rock. Now, with the presence of my clay-covered body in front of it, the emphasis shifted. The photograph was now only viewable within the living context of my white boulder-like clay form.

Audience Experience

As noted above, members of the audience were stunned by my clay-covered presence in the corridor. As with *Lakeside Statue*, the piece was not advertised. There was however, an invited audience since the work was performed at the opening of the research exhibition. Unlike *Lakeside Statue* this audience was art-based, unlike the casual walkers and families who ventured upon *Lakeside Statue*. Despite this difference both audiences shared similarities: In both cases there were questions as to whether I was 'real or not?' Such questions were initiated by my stillness. I held my body in static postures both in *Lakeside Statue*, where I stood on the water's edge for an hour and in the corridor piece, where I remained curled up in front of the life-sized image until the clay on my body had dried.

In both pieces I was, on several occasions, referred to as 'it', owing to my uncertain status. Was I 'a person or an object?' This reaction was unexpected in *Parent Rock 2*, because I had walked the length of the corridor in full view of audience members and left a tracery of white footprints behind me. Those that had witnessed this action (and were thus aware of my humanness) voiced their unease during the static phase, of viewing me as if I was 'an object'. Other visitors - those who arrived during the static phase believed me to be an object and it was only upon closer inspection that uncertainty arose. As this static phase progressed I became aware of a growing crowd of onlookers, waiting to see whether I moved or not, and what would happen to the clay if I did, indeed, alter my posture.

Effectiveness in Terms of Clay Appreciation

In both *Lakeside Statue* and *Parent Rock 2* audiences were drawn to the visceral qualities of the clay as it appeared on my body. These qualities would have gone unnoticed had the clay been left in situ. As noted previously (p.94.), clay is visible in the subsidiary streams which feed the lake but is rarely noticed by visitors. By coating my body and standing on a platform, the Ball Clay literally 'stood out' against its lakeside environment. The material nature of the piece was recognised by visitors who chose to leave the lakeside path and come closer. They were intrigued by the clay and their curiosity was intensified by my ambiguous status. This was also the case in *Parent Rock 2*, visitors took more notice of the clay because of its possible live-ness. This was evidenced in conversations. Whilst curled-up in the alcove, I heard viewers talking about the texture of the clay and then whether I was 'real' or not. These concerns swung back and forth.

In terms of received responses, *Parent Rock 2* was more successful because it comprised an arts audience, whose reflections were more thoughtfully considered. This was in contrast to *Lakeside statue* where people responded spontaneously and on occasions aggressively. However, the responses were honest and showed me that as a methodology, live sculpture (as carried out in *Lakeside Statue* and *Parent Rock 2*) is successful in bringing acknowledgement and recognition to clay. It also taught me that by coating my body with clay rather than recovering and releasing the clay as had been the case in previous works, a deeper sensory connection with the material was attained.



Fig 48-50 *Parent Rock 1*, Dartmoor (2010)

Chapter Seven

Forms of Documentation

In this final *In-breath* chapter I investigate the methods which have helped to distinguish *Parent Rock 1&2* as the most significant of *the In-breath* projects.

These methods included video and still photography.

The initial point of discussion is my on-site relationship to the camera. This is followed by the editing and selection process and responses to the exhibited material. I make comparisons between my own documentary methods and that of Ana Mendieta. I thereafter consider how a live intervention carried out in front of the exhibited photographs, extended the meaning of the work.

Finally I assess the effectiveness of these documentary forms in terms of clay appreciation.

My On-Site Relationship to the Camera

Parent Rock 1 (Fig 48-50) was enacted privately, and since I did not have to consider an on-site audience, camera positioning was determined solely according to my own requirements.

The work was staged in the sense that the site and positioning of my body against the outcropping granite was planned, as was the act of covering myself with China Clay. I did not, however rehearse the action but instead negotiated my way through this transformative process. The resulting documentation consequently records an intuitive process, whereby my movements are guided by my bodily responses. In this respect it reflects what critic Philip Auslander refers to as the 'traditional' way in which 'performance art and its documentation is conceived ... [whereby] the documentation of the performance event provides both a record of it through which it can be reconstructed ... and evidence that it actually occurred.'¹⁹³

This is in contrast to those works where the 'performances were staged solely to be photographed or filmed and had no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events.'¹⁹⁴ Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* (1960) and the work of Cindy Sherman are examples of this approach.^{195/196}

Whilst covering my body with China Clay, I became immersed in the process of transformation. The time and space granted by the running video camera, which was operated by assistant, M Balmforth according to my instructions, provided a sanctuary in which this could occur, a dedicated timeslot protected from outside disturbance and interruption. I functioned only in the moment, and whilst I was aware of the camera, at that time I was



Fig 51 Ana Mendieta, *Burial Pyramid*, (video still) (1974)
 Fig 52 *Parent Rock 1* (video still), Dartmoor (2010)

unconcerned about the resulting documentation. This state of immersion whereby the sensory experience is of prime importance, is evident in the work of Charles Simonds and Ana Mendieta, who (as discussed in Chapter Four pp.56-58 & 65-66) carried out non-public rituals connected with earth. In Mendieta's *Burial Pyramid* (1974) (which I viewed at the *Deep Roots* exhibition, Peninsula Arts, Plymouth 2016) for example, the artist, buried beneath a pile of rocks, was literally cut off from the camera and embedded within the site.¹⁹⁷ With no on-site audience to witness the event, Mendieta 'used film as a means of sharing her work.'¹⁹⁸ This is also the case with *Parent Rock 1*. Had there been no documentation, the work would have existed only in my memory and would not have had a public output. For both myself and Mendieta, the camera thereby formalises the event and defines it as a work which can be viewed by others. As observed by Auslander:

No documented piece is performed solely as an end in itself: the performance is always at one level raw material for documentation, the final product through which it will be circulated and with which it will inevitably become identified.¹⁹⁹

In regard to framing, a significant difference exists between my work and Mendieta's. As seen in Fig 51-52 Mendieta's film is shot from a distance, whilst

mine is close up, with only my head and shoulders contained in the frame. These variants reflect our differing concerns. Mendieta's aim was to embed herself in the landscape, whilst mine was to transform my body by placing earth material (specifically China Clay), directly onto my skin. It follows therefore, that Mendieta's documentation should include more of the surrounding environment than my own work, which by contrast, prioritises clay and my body to which it is applied. In comparing my own sites-specific documentation against that of Mendieta, a clearer understanding of my own relationship between performance and documentation becomes evident. Primarily that an honest record of the event, emphasising the material qualities of clay is of prime importance.

In the initial stages of *Parent Rock 1*, filming was carried out from a single reference point (though some zooming in and out did occur). This was also the case for Mendieta's films which, as described by writer Megan Heuer, 'mostly employ a single shot, containing only Mendieta's body and the immediate material surrounding her figure.'²⁰⁰ Once filming of my on-site transformation was complete, the dynamics between myself and the camera altered. In an intuitive process of exploration, I moved around the site followed by a photographer who recorded the static positioning of my body via a series of still images.

These approaches developed quite naturally according to logic: moving image was used to capture movement, whilst still images were used to record static postures. It was only later, during the editing process that I began to derive still images from the video footage.

The Editing and Selection Process

The purpose of my initial video sequence was to record the raw, tactile process of transformation. In order to retain this sense of rawness, editing was kept to a minimum. These qualities are also evident in Mendieta's documentation, as discussed by Raquel Cecilia Mendieta (Mendieta's Niece, who is responsible for the digital mastering of her Aunt's films).²⁰¹ In a lecture at NSU Art Museum Port Lauderdale (2016), she stated that her aim, in restoring films for exhibition, is to clarify the tonal earthy qualities present in the original super 8 film and eradicate damage.²⁰² By restoring such aspects of the film Raquel Mendieta honoured the original concerns and intention of the artist, and communicated these intentions to a contemporary audience.

In contrast to my initial video sequence, which captured an unfolding sequence of transformation, the still images acted as statements. My criteria when selecting still images for the research exhibition *Manifestations of Place* (2013) (previously discussed in Chapter Six p.95-97.), were that they depict a representation of the event that was true according to my memory.²⁰³ My overriding on-site feelings were that of material connectivity, emergence and power. Upon viewing the documentation, the image with my arms outstretched evoked these feelings most profoundly. However I am also aware that part of this memory is constructed by the visual documentation itself and, as stated by Professor Liz Wells, photographs 'contribute to perpetuating myths and memories associated with place.'²⁰⁴ I agree with this statement - when viewing the selected image there was a resurgence of my onsite feelings which perpetuated my memory of the event. However in this case the memory was



Fig 53 Ana Mendieta, *Tree of Life* (1977)

Fig 54 Ana Mendieta, *Image from Yagul* (1973)

not enough, I felt compelled to reconnect more directly, hence the live performance.

Writer Amelia Jones asserts that performance is dependent 'on documentation to attain symbolic status within the realm of culture.'²⁰⁵ In other words, performance, as a transitory art form, cannot rely on the memory of the audience/witness to attain widespread recognition. It needs a defining image (or alternative type of record) to be created and used as a means of identification.

The familiar photographs of Mendieta's *Siluetas*, *Tree of Life* (1977) and *Image from Yagul* (1973) (Fig 53-54) where her body is concealed by vegetation, support this statement. Through successive reproduction of the same image within multiple contexts, works such as these, eventually take on an 'iconic

status'. In terms of my own documentation, the image with my outstretched arms (Fig 50) belongs to this same category, whilst other images - those where I am lying down or in a seated position (Fig 48-49) fulfilled a secondary role.

Responses to the Exhibited Documentation

When blown up to life-size proportions the selected image was transformed from a straightforward document to an object in its own right. Don Slater has claimed 'that photography ultimately replaces the reality it documents and becomes part of the real world.'²⁰⁶ To an unknowing audience, the exhibited work appeared complete; for me however, it offered further potential. My site-specific experience on Dartmoor had fulfilled a need to connect with site and origins, and the resulting images were evocative of this. However, I craved a live audience with whom I could impart a fresh layer of meaning and share a living moment in time.

To gain a deeper understanding as to why, in the case of *Parent Rock 1*, I felt compelled to carry out a further work, again, it is useful to explore the site-specific works of Mendieta, particularly the emotional circumstances surrounding their making and documentation.

Comparisons between Mendieta's Circumstances and my Own

When Mendieta viewed documentation of her work, feelings of longing were identified, a quality which Mendieta is said to have 'liked'.²⁰⁷ This is understandable given the personal history from which her art emerged - that of exile and dislocation. Embedding herself with earth and stones evoked a symbolic return to her place of birth. As observed by Jane Blocker, 'Mendieta's

documentary works function something like snapshots of the lost country to which one may never return.¹²⁰⁸

When viewing the life-size photograph of *Parent Rock 1*, I also experienced a strong emotional response. Unlike Mendieta however, it was not a longing for origins. Instead, the image urged me to create a further layer of existence - one that acknowledged my beginnings whilst establishing a new position of independence within a more public domain.

To understand these differences more clearly, it is necessary to establish what is meant by the word 'origins'. In the case of Mendieta, 'origins' equate to the land in which she was born - her heritage, a place from which she was cast away. In contrast my 'origins' are metaphorical. I am in empathy with the clay. It therefore follows that when I refer to 'origins' I am referring to the granite from which China Clay was formed. Unlike Mendieta, my origins were easily accessible - there were no restrictions, I travelled to Dartmoor and stood freely upon the granite. In comparing my circumstances against those of Mendieta's my reasons for carrying out *Parent Rock 2* becomes clearer; namely that, having satisfied my search for origins, I was ready to grow beyond the site-specific or source experience and relate to the clay more intimately.

In terms of physicality, the visual impact of the life-size image and spatial qualities, defined by its positioning in the alcove, acted as a transmitter of energy. Had the print been smaller and presented more formally *Parent Rock 2* may not have happened. If it had been framed for example, it would have appeared fixed and unalterable. However, the surface of the print was raw and exposed; its physical qualities invited a physical response.

The impromptu nature of the live performance made planning impossible. In contrast to *Parent Rock 1* the documentation process was comparatively haphazard. Where previously the camera had functioned as a means of setting the pace and registering my actions, in this live situation such precisions fell away. I was oblivious to any photographic activity taking place. A point and shoot camera was used by exhibition visitor M Balmforth, who though familiar with my work having assisted me on previous occasions, had no prior warning of my intentions and consequently arrived at the exhibition unprepared.

A sense of opening and expansion occurred during the event. Both physically and symbolically, I moved beyond the documentary images on display. My movements up the stairs and through the corridor, which included a period of stillness in front of the life-size image, placed my site-specific work within a wider environmental and social context. During this piece I acknowledged my relationship to site, whilst moving beyond the limits of its now two-dimensional representation.

How the Live Intervention Extended my Practice

By carrying out a live intervention in front of the exhibited documentation of a previous piece (and in response to it), this work extends the bounds of other *In-breath* projects where viewing was carried out solely through the reproduced image. In both *Recovering Drowned Clay* and *Clay Launch*, for example, the output comprised video and extracted stills. This was also the case with *Lakeside Statue*, although in this instance documentation included responses from the on-site audience.

By framing and reframing my clay-covered body within two different environments, as was the case in *Parent Rock 1&2*, the work retained a lived-in element. The resulting images which document, first my site-specific initiation with the clay and then my involvement within a public space, equate to human memories, carried sequentially through life. In this respect the work can be described similarly to Eikoh Hosoe's photographic series *A Private Landscape* (1971), whereby 'the final work is less a single performance than the layering of multiple facets of the story.'²⁰⁹

Effectiveness in Terms of Clay Appreciation

Through this layering technique clay was revealed to be a fluid, changeable substance. This was appreciated by the audience who were intrigued by its consistency and spent time comparing the photographic representation of the clay with its physical substance. Some audience members were surprised by the whiteness, they recognised clay to be either grey or red (as is generally the case when it is processed and in bagged form). This aspect of the clay's character was emphasised in the documentary photograph, where the clay's whiteness appeared in contrast to the dark grey granite.

In this respect the work succeeded in broadening visitor's perception of clay. Where previously, they had imagined clay to occur in two tonal varieties, it was now being experienced as a white elemental substance which was vividly alive and (by way of the documentary method of presentation) historically rooted within the natural environment.

Summary of *In-breath*

Through acts of commemoration *Clay Launch* and *Recovering Drowned Clay* were successful in affirming the material existence of clay. However, both works lacked the material connectivity I craved. This was particularly evident in *Clay Launch*, where I felt alienated by the manufactured nature of the clay-coated paper and rigid 'noodle' forms. My disdain for these 'pre-formed versions of clay' caused me to re-evaluate and subsequently abandon plans to make the recovered clay into a commemorative medallion.

These contrasting plans, first to form the recovered clay - then to leave it alone, indicate two things. On the one hand, an awareness of the clay's malleable nature and urge to demonstrate those qualities, and on the other, an overwhelming desire to retain the clays original form - as recovered from the shipwreck. In my decision to leave the clay raw and untouched, I honoured its material existence but consequentially, failed to demonstrate its malleable and metamorphic capabilities.

At Decoy Lake, I affirmed the underlying existence of Ball Clay by coating it on my body and embracing it in my arms. This method proved successful in drawing passing visitors and alerting them to the sites clay heritage. However, it did not satisfy my need for material connectivity, owing to the wetsuit, which acted as a barrier.

In contrast *Parent Rock 1&2* where clay and skin were in direct contact, allowed me to be open and responsive to the clay's metamorphic tendencies whilst at the same time paying tribute to site and source.

In contrast to *Recovering Drowned Clay*, where I was unwilling to disturb the clay's natural form, in *Parent Rock* the identity of the clay was less specific, this resulting in a less guarded approach. I discovered that by placing wet clay onto my body, a natural process of change took place, which contrary to previous concerns, did not compromise the nature of the clay, but instead enlivened it.

These durational experiences led to a significant research finding: that performance reflects the undefinable and transformative nature of clay and in this respect it provides an influential medium through which the changeable characteristics of clay can be explored.

In terms of success *Parent Rock 1&2* acknowledged both the material existence of clay and crucially its metamorphic properties, which had not been demonstrated in *Recovering Drowned Clay* or *Clay Launch*.

PART THREE: *Out-breath*

Introduction to *Out-breath*

'Life is lived between two breaths - your first inhalation and your last exhalation.'²¹⁰

Stig Avall Steverinsen, author and freediver

The purpose of the *Out-breath* series, comprised of four body-specific pieces, was to remove site-specific concerns by staging the performances in neutral spaces, and thus allowing the material qualities of clay to take precedence. The series of works involved sinking parts of my body into wet clay and masking my senses, as well as coating my skin in clay.

I used a range of practices to prepare myself for this series of works. These included grounding exercises, yoga and conscious breathing techniques. Stillness and bodily awareness were developed, as was my ability to breathe in restricted and confined conditions (this being a requirement of one *Out-breath* piece). These methods helped me to remain calm and centred during the *Out-breath* pieces, which at times were physically and mentally challenging.

In structure the *Out-breath* phase mirrors the *In-breath* phase, since it is split into three chapters. However, unlike the *In-breath* phase, which signifies a drawing in of knowledge and energy, this phase is characterised by a period of release and withdrawal. The work becomes more immersive, intimate and breath-orientated.

In Chapter Eight, *Repetition and Immersion*, the benefits and effects of carrying out a live action on multiple occasions is explored. The process of repetition

and familiarity enabled me to drop into an increasingly immersive state.

Different venues and viewing conditions provoked differing responses within the audience and these responses correspondingly affected my immersive experience.

Chapter Nine, *Conditions of Unease* explores how live practice can provoke feelings of unease and discomfort among viewers, which I consider to be important and valid responses to performance work. Due to its confrontational nature, such feelings were present amongst those who viewed my *Out-breath* works, and these are discussed and analysed.

In Chapter Ten, *Traces and Remains*, I question the significance of a residual clay trace deposited on the floor at the end of my final *Out-breath* work. Although unplanned and accidental this impression of my feet in clay became symbolic in that it marked the end of my lived-in experience and brought closure to this phase of my practice.

All three chapters are drawn together in a summary which clarifies the findings of this section and relates them back to those in PART TWO.



Fig 55 *Conscious Clay*, Birdwood House, Totnes (2013)

Chapter Eight

Repetition and Immersion

Conscious Clay (2012-2013) (Fig 55; Appendix 2.6) was performed at three venues: a community centre, a public gallery and Plymouth University. The conditions of each venue differed in terms of context, duration and audience.

In this chapter I compare the experiences encountered at each venue, both from my own perspective and that of viewers. Specific focus is given to the public gallery, where the work was repeated four times. This enabled me to assess the benefits and accumulative effects of repeating the live performance several times. I thereafter discuss the audience experience and how effective the work was at transforming the viewers' attitude towards clay.

Venue One: Meadowbrook Community Centre, Dartington

In *Conscious Clay*, I created a space in which I was able to experience the world from the perspective of the clay. From an outsider's view point, all that could be seen was a roughly formed clay head, positioned on a white plinth. In reality however, the plinth was large enough to conceal a chair in which I sat for the duration of the event, which ranged from 20 minutes to two hours depending on venue and circumstances (<https://vimeo.com/269154401>).

The initial one hour piece at Meadowbrook Community Centre took place within the context of *Behind the Mask*, an evening exhibition of underwater film and photography. Those members of the audience who were familiar with my work, suspected I was inside the plinth. The effect of having my head plastered in China Clay and body confined within a small space (the hole was only big enough for my neck) were at first disorientating. I was isolated from the world around me. With a face mask covering my eyes and a snorkel restricting my breathing my sensory perception altered. I had placed myself in a position of vulnerability. Some members of the audience tried to provoke a response - first by knocking on the plinth and then threatening to pour water down my snorkel. Whilst these interactions tested my ability to remain calm and hold my nerve, their remarks also alerted me to the only outward sign that I was a living being; as a result of my restricted breathing, a small pool of saliva had evidently collected on the plinth beneath the mouthpiece of my snorkel. This observation was, quickly followed by a suggestion to 'block up my snorkel'.

Conscious Clay can be compared with Marina Abramovics's *Rhythm 0* (1974), where the artist stood totally passive for six hours while members of the audience were allowed to 'do whatever they wanted with or to her.'²¹¹ In

Conscious Clay, I did not, like Abramovic, invite audience participation.

However, as witnessed at Meadowbrook, the conditions of my confinement made me vulnerable to the attention of more self-assertive members of the audience. My only defence appeared to be the wet clay, which, when touched, made visitors flinch and retract their fingers, as if the seemingly static object in front of them, was alive after all. This reaction supports the fact that clay as a tactile material bears a living quality.

At the end of *Rhythm 0*, Abramovic witnessed a similar response when she stopped being passive and started being herself, 'I stood up and started walking towards the audience, everyone ran away to escape an actual confrontation.'²¹²

Venue Two: Birdwood House, Totnes

Whilst my previous audience comprised primarily underwater filmmakers and photographers, the exhibition at Birdwood House, 28 January to 2 February 2013 (which contained the same range of exhibits) was open to the general public (Fig 56-57) Where previously, I had felt goaded by the audience's persistent attention, at Birdwood House, where visitors were more reserved and less aggressive, feelings of isolation predominated. I was, as New York editor Erin Whitney describes it, forced to 'face... [my] aloneness'²¹³

The first of three performances took place at the private view, whilst the remaining two occurred during the days which followed. When I was not performing, a clay covered mannequin head took my place. This enabled me to view the work, from the outside, as though I was a member of the audience.



Fig 56-57 *Conscious Clay*, Birdwood House, Totnes (2013)

Whilst inhabiting the plinth on the opening night, I became aware of voices. As time progressed and numbers increased, the voices grew louder, merging into a continuous drone which was heavily oppressive. At times I felt panicky, as though I were being suffocated by a thick layer of sediment. I had experienced these feelings, to a lesser extent, at Meadowbrook but there any rising panic was rapidly quashed by the persistent attention of the audience. At Birdwood House however, there were extended periods where I no longer seemed to exist, I became invisible to the audience; I was operating on an entirely separate plane which was insular and disconnected from the drone of their collective voices.

During the *In-breath* phase of my practice more direct methods of engagement had been explored. In *Recovering Drowned Clay*, for example, I was the seeker, purposefully moving towards my goal; but in this project there was no striving, I stopped, I sat still.

In effect, I was the substance lying in wait as the audience walked around me

unknowingly. I became the clay itself; this embodied state of existence would not have been possible without the accumulation of previous experience. In *Recovering Drowned Clay* my journey to the sunken hold had left me with a profound sense of knowing, which I was able to tap into during *Conscious Clay*.

Although my hearing was impeded I could still hear comments of visitors as they drew towards me. In comparison to the wall-based photographic works, which were an on-going source of discussion I, as an exhibit, did not generate such attention. When asked by an exhibition organiser 'what do you think of the clay head?' one woman responded 'pretty crude - not my type of thing at all'. The fact that I was, in my immersive clay state, largely ignored by visitors, echoed the usual disregard given to clay. My mind turned inwards and my consciousness merged with the clay.

In terms of sensory deprivation and its resulting consequences on the mind and body, *Conscious Clay* bears similarities to Abramovic's 2014 piece *Generator* (Fig 58-59), which asked participants to enter a room with their eyes masked and wearing noise cancelling headphones.²¹⁴ As New York Arts critic Ken Johnson stated in response to the work:

To be blindfolded and artificially deafened in a brightly lit space is analogous to the typically human experience of being embedded in a reality whose depth, breadth and general nature exceeds most people's ability to know and comprehend.²¹⁵

Through my self-imposed confinement, I had accessed a deeper sense of consciousness. With my limbs and torso concealed within the plinth, I no longer needed to be conscious of my body as a distinct human form instead I could sink uninhibitedly into a formless clay entity.



Fig 58-59 Marina Abramovic, *Generator*, Sean Kelly Gallery (2014)

The use of confinement as a means of intensifying experience was used by Joseph Beuys in *I like America and America likes me* (1974), where he spent three days caged in a gallery with a wild coyote. As Beuys later explained, 'I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote.'²¹⁶ As an artist I relate to this statement; inside the plinth I was cut off from the outside world resulting in a stark, at times frightening experience.

Release from Confinement

To have your blindfold and headphones removed, and the actuality of your situation revealed, is like being spiritually enlightened. You're like the prisoner who escapes Plato's cave and discovers that what he had thought was real was only the shadow of the really real.²¹⁷

The above quote by Ken Johnson, applies both to my own experiences as a performer - breaking free from my confinement, and to my audience who were 'blind' to my living presence within the plinth. This was the case for journalist Lincoln Shaw, who arrived to report on the exhibition and was persuaded by exhibition organisers to stay and witness my 'release'.²¹⁸ Shaw, like other



Figs 60-61 *Conscious Clay*, Birdwood House, Totnes (2013)

members of the audience, was unaware of my confined presence. He was amused and intrigued by the claim, but unwilling to accept it as truth. However, he did stay on, and like other visitors was astonished to see my human face behind the clay mask (Fig 60-61).

My Experience as a Performer

My state of consciousness depended on the audience and various circumstances. At Meadowbrook, I was interrogated by a persistent audience and needed to be on my guard, whilst at Birdwood House the intense isolation enabled me to sink into an immersive state. My sensory awareness deepened as I accepted the varying conditions which each performance offered. At Birdwood House, where audience numbers fluctuated from one performance to another, I perceived the variable influx of visitors as sedimentary layers. Busy periods laid down heavy sediments, whilst quieter interludes enveloped me with soft, finer sediment.

Whilst performing *Conscious Clay* at Birdwood House I entered another kind of

reality; one in which my humanness 'de-formed' into clay. This was the moment I first identified myself as the clay.

This shift of awareness led to a re-naming of the piece. In the preparation stages and at Meadowbrook I referred to the piece as *Inner Vision*. However, this working title became inaccurate. Firstly because it emphasised an internalised, purely visual process, when in reality my awareness and sensations were closely related to my surroundings. Secondly because it did not prioritise the clay - the material with which I now identified myself with and from whose perspective I now responded.

Venue Three: Plymouth University

This shortened version was performed within the context of a research presentation and so audience members were more attentive and committed to staying with the piece. On entering the space they initially considered me a sculptural object; until touched. Then the wetness of the clay shook that perception and replaced it with my living presence.

During the 20 minute event audience members could reflect on my confined status whilst viewing video footage of the piece as it had been performed at previous venues. This method of presentation (where responses of a previous audience are shown to the present audience) was appropriate within the context of a research presentation, since it helped to define and clarify my experiences. However, it also prevented me from sinking into a deeply immersive state.

In this respect, the live sculpture at this third venue acted as a means of reflection, via which I could gain feedback from an arts audience, which had not been the case at previous venues. Audience perceptions were altered - first when they realised I was inside the plinth, then when the possible implications of my confinement became apparent, i.e., that I might suffocate. As evident during feedback, there were fears for my safety, viewers who were familiar with my previous work wondered where this piece would lead to next, and the real possibility that I might 'die during a work'.

The Audience Experience

In *Conscious Clay* my existence as a recognisable human form was reduced to a head. Unless visitors knew, or were told that there was a person inside the plinth, there was no way of telling. The only outward sign of my existence was a small pool of saliva, pointed out by a member of the audience at Meadowbrook but which generally went unnoticed.

My release from the plinth was greeted with shock and amazement. Visitors had witnessed the transformation of, what appeared to them to be, a roughly formed clay head into a living breathing person. Previously uninterested, visitors were now alert and eager to engage. This created a surge of energy within the gallery. Those who had previously used visual means of accessing the work now engaged a range of senses. They reflected on the circumstances of my confinement and were intrigued by the materiality of the clay.

As visitors witnessed my release and voiced their surprise, knowledge of my performance grew. This was markedly apparent on the last day of the

exhibition, when visitors, many of whom were sceptical, tried to assess whether I really was in the plinth.

Effectiveness in Terms of Clay Appreciation

By repeating the performance several times under differing conditions I observed a wide range of responses. My main observation was that when audience members had no knowledge of my confined presence, they barely looked at the clay head - It was of little interest. Unlike previous works e.g. *Lakeside Statue*, where my whole body was viewable and open to examination, in *Conscious Clay* my form was concealed. A plinth is associated with the display of objects and this was how they viewed the head - as an object.

However, when they knew of my presence - their entire attitude was transformed. They were mesmerised by my act of concealment and fascinated by the China Clay which they had previously ignored or dismissed. At Birdwood House this type of response occurred again and again with each performance and taught me, more than any of my previous works, that my living presence within the clay enhanced the material status of the clay.

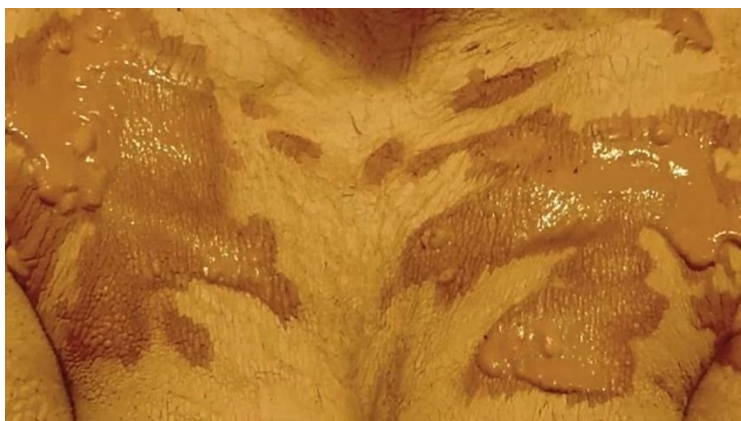
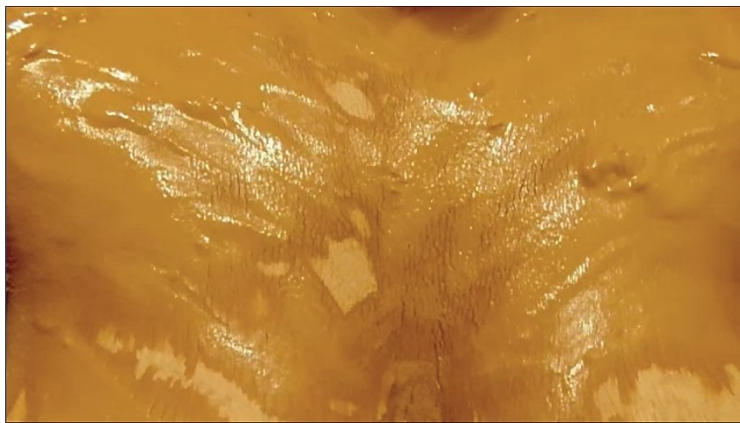
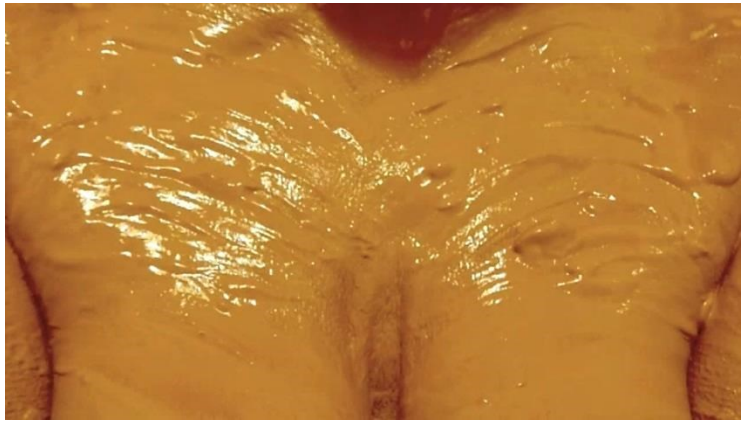


Fig 62-64 *Clay Bellows 1* (2015)

Chapter Nine

Conditions of Unease

This chapter considers how performance, as a live medium can provoke feelings of unease and discomfort in audience members and why, within my own performance-led practice, I view such responses as important and valid.

The emotional response is initially explored through a comparison of two works: *The Living Figurine* (2012) (Appendix 2.7), which received positive feedback and *Clay Bellows 2* (2015) (Appendix 2.11) which, in contrast, provoked feelings of discomfort. I examine the conditions surrounding *Clay Bellows 2*, and identify those aspects of the work which caused unease. Finally I clarify why these responses are justifiable considering the significance and embedded meaning within the piece.

The Emotional Response

'I am only interested in the ideas that become obsessive and make me feel uneasy. The ideas that I'm afraid of.'²¹⁹

Marina Abramovic, performance artist

The *Out-breath* practices have, at times, caused unease in some audience members, particularly during those performances where my breathing is deeply energised and loud. The introduction of my breath (Fig 62-64) as a predominant characteristic in these later works signifies a deepening union between myself and the clay (<http://vimeo.com/270596397>). All non-essential elements are discarded, and I attune my senses solely to the clay. In this respect I am vulnerable and exposed. This in turn affects the dynamic between myself and the audience. The atmosphere becomes uncomfortable, particularly if, the audience feels restricted and confined within the performance space.

Historically, performance art has, states art historian RoseLee Goldberg, been 'a medium that challenges and violates borders between basic disciplines and genders, between private and public, and between everyday life and art.'²²⁰

The intensity of such encounters inevitably provokes feelings of unease. As stated by art critic Jennifer Doyle 'emotion can make our experience of art harder, but it also makes that experience more interesting.'²²¹

In terms of my own practice, particularly the *Out-breath* work, I recognise emotional discomfort to be an inevitable response to my work. I also acknowledge that the context and conditions of the work can alter the degree to which discomfort is felt. As stated by Doyle, 'emotions are profoundly inter-subjective. They do not happen inside the individual but in relation to others.'²²² 'Emotion', critic Sarah Ahmed argues, 'is not simply something 'I' or 'we' have.

Rather it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces and boundaries are made.'²²³

Contrasting Conditions and Responses

As an initial means of exploring audience responses, I draw on two contrasting pieces, *The Living Figurine* (2012) (Fig 65), was considered by viewers to be an aesthetically and emotionally uplifting experience (performed at University College Falmouth), whilst *Clay Bellows 2* (2015) (Fig 66), caused discomfort amongst audience members (performed at Plymouth University).

I did not use China Clay or Ball Clay for *The Living Figurine*, instead generic clay dug from a field near my home was utilised. In this respect I do not consider the piece to be part of the official *In-breath/Out-breath* work. It was developed in response to a conference call and in the context of this thesis it provides a means of comparing opposing contexts and audience responses.



Fig 65 *The Living Figurine*, The Orchard, University College Falmouth (2012)
Fig 66 *Clay Bellows 2*, Scott Building Plymouth University (2015)

As a project *The Living Figurine* explored the material and gestural nature of ancient clay figurines through the movement of my clay covered body.²²⁴ It comprised seven unfolding postures, the aesthetic qualities of each posture coupled with the bucolic surroundings (the work took place in an orchard setting), evidently made *The Living Figurine* an uplifting experience for audience members. During feedback, viewers responded joyfully. They were enchanted by the vitality of my movements and earthy presence within the orchard. One visitor described it as 'the most memorable moment of the conference'. From my own perspective however, the representational nature of my postures, prevented a direct relationship between myself and the clay.

In contrast, *Clay Bellow 2* focused on the clay itself and how it behaves in relationship to my breathing. Like *Parent Rock 1&2*, (discussed in Chapter Six & Seven) *Clay Bellows* consisted of two parts. The first took place privately and involved consciously connected breathing for over an hour until wet Ball Clay applied to my chest had dried. With the progression of time cracks appeared in the clay, the patternation of which were determined by the movement of my chest as it expanded and contracted in accordance with my breath.

Clay Bellows 2 subsequently took place in front of an audience. After stepping my bare feet into a vessel of liquid Ball Clay, a monitor playing elements of *Clay Bellows 1*, was held against my chest.

Unlike *Clay Bellows 2* and other *Out-breath* projects, where I drew upon the sensations within my own body, in *The Living Figurine* I responded to a pre-existent image created by humankind - that of a clay figurine. Although more accessible to the audience, the choreographed movements in *The Living*

Figurine seemed superficial in comparison to the immersive breathing techniques which took place in *Clay Bellows 2*. In *Clay Bellows 2*, I closed my eyes. By contrast they were open during most of *The Living Figurine* and my expression was physically expansive. Furthermore the midday sun provided warmth and brightness. This is in contrast to *Clay Bellows 2* which took place in a neutral characterless space, which in comparison to the orchard felt cold and unwelcoming.

After *Clay Bellows 2*, I received feedback stating that several audience members felt 'uncomfortable'. Evidently they found the unknown nature of the work hard to endure. Comments included, that they felt confined, unable to move, and did not know 'how long it was going to go on for'.

Similar responses were expressed after *Clay Being* (2013) (Fig 67 Appendix 2.8; <https://vimeo.com/269155316>) and *Blinded by Clay* (2013) (Fig 68 Appendix 2.9; <https://vimeo.com/269156844>). Again these pieces were body specific, both involved masking and, in so doing, heightened my senses.

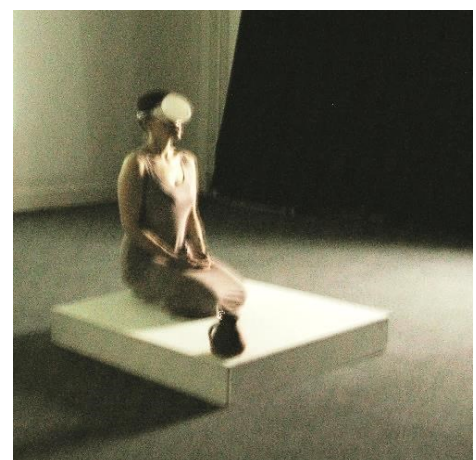
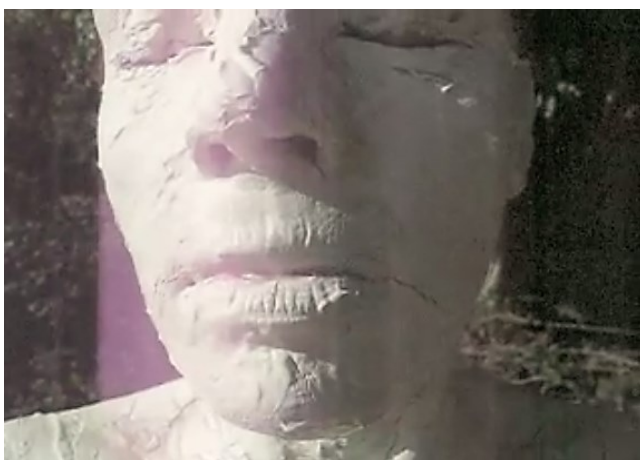


Fig 67 *Clay Being* (video still), Scott Building, Plymouth University (2013)
Fig 68 *Blinded by Clay*, Scott Building, Plymouth University (2013)

In this case I received audience feedback directly after the event.

Those who viewed the work were afraid for my safety. In *Blinded by Clay* I masked my eyes with clay and in *Clay Being*, which was shown as an accompanying video projection, my body shook and breathing become pronounced. This created an overwhelming sense of tension. I considered these works to be rites of passage, a moving from one state of being to another. From the audiences perspective I evidently appeared to be struggling which they found unsettling.

Goldsberg describes performance art as 'a permissive open ended medium with endless variables executed by artists [who are] determined to take their art directly to the public. For this reason its base has always been anarchic.'²²⁵ As an artist, I attest to this statement. For me, performance reflects the undefinable and transformative nature of clay, a factor which has determined my use of the medium.

Clay Bellows 1, which (as discussed previously) was carried out alone in private, would not have been complete without a live follow-up event (*Clay Bellows 2*) and audience to witness the event (Fig 69-70).

Clay Bellows; Conditions and Responses

Goldsberg's assertion that performance is an 'open ended medium with endless variables' explains the unease felt by audience members viewing *Clay Bellows 2*, particularly as they were not expecting to be confronted with a live art piece.

Clay Bellows 2 was shown within the context of a PhD research event, where

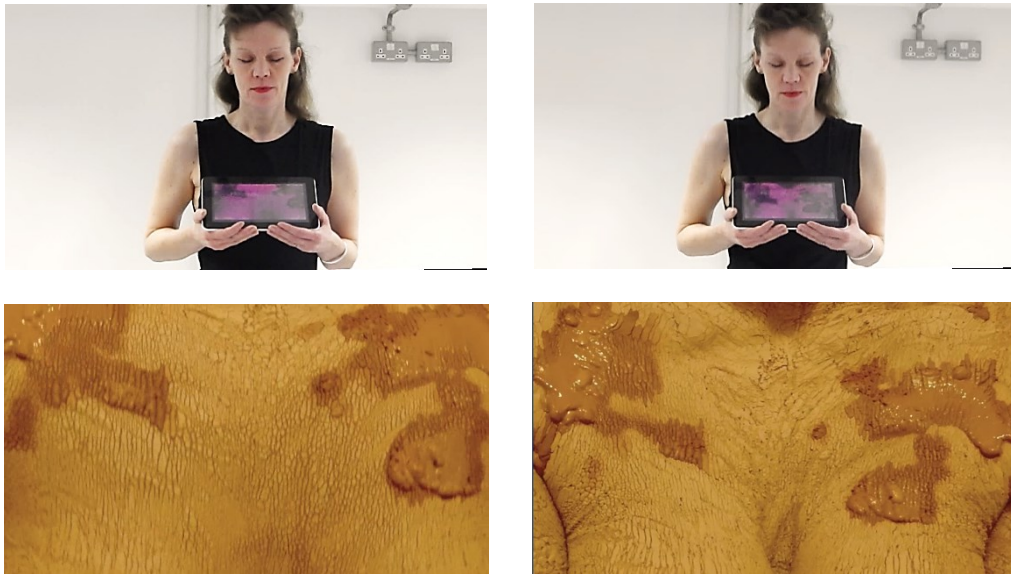


Fig 69-70 *Clay Bellows 2* (2015) from left: Inhalation, Exhalation

other candidates, predominantly photographers, presented their work as a visual sequence of slides. Initially, I intended the piece to be comparatively low-key, as a sampler rather than a completed work. However, I now consider the work to be a significant part of my thesis (as will be discussed in Chapter Ten).

In accordance with the allocated time slot, I scheduled the piece to last ten minutes, and performed the work in a white neutral space, adjacent to the main presentation area. I expected audience members to move around the space. However when I began the performance I was disappointed to see people sitting in front of me where they remained static for the entire event. This experience taught me that such details need to be made explicit before the event otherwise people can get stuck in one position and may become embarrassed to move.

During the previous PhD presentations, audience members had sat down and

this was how they behaved during my presentation too. Had I given instructions prior to the event, inviting people to move around the space during the performance, the audience would have known what was expected from them, perhaps felt relaxed enough to explore. Additionally the audience was larger than I had expected, consequently the room felt tighter and exacerbated any feelings of constraint within those who were present.

In addition to these spatial concerns, technical issues also affected the viewing experience. The relatively cheap notepad, which displayed the changing patternation of clay against my skin, distorted the colour of the clay. A discrepancy therefore existed between the clay on the screen, which appeared purple/pink, and the clay I was standing in.

I was aware of these issues prior to the performance. However (as experiments had concluded), my only other option was to use an iPad which, although tonally accurate, was difficult to operate under performance conditions because of its sensitivity to touch (if I accidentally brushed against the screen for example, the entire image would alter).

A straightforward technical solution to this colour discrepancy (which I considered and subsequently rejected), would have been to project the work onto a white screen or wall. However, this would have placed the work within a video installation category rather than live performance, which was vital to my lived-in experiencing of the material.

Although these colour discrepancies were not questioned by audience members (possibly because they could not view the screen properly), I

nevertheless felt I had let the clay down and compromised its true nature. This response highlights the potential problems of representing a tactile material through computerised media. It also highlights how a living event is changed through its reproduction, as Peggy Phelan stated in 1993:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: when it does so, it becomes something other than performance.²²⁶

Parent Rock 2; Conditions and Responses

Though initially 'shocking' for audience members feedback for *Parent Rock 2* (previously discussed in PART TWO: *In-breath*), did not cause the same degree of discomfort as *Clay Bellows 2* and other *Out-breath* works. Taking place in a corridor, amongst the work of other artists, conditions were naturally more open and less intense. Members of the audience were already viewing the exhibits when I entered the space. They were not required to change their behaviour in any way. My existence in the space, was additional to the work on display. This being in contrast to those works (e.g. *Blinded by Clay*) performed in a dedicated space, where sole attention was on myself as the performer.

In contrast to *Parent Rock 2*, such pieces were more direct, more confrontational. In *Parent Rock 2* I curled up on the floor, presenting viewers with a submissive non-threatening posture. In stature the audience were taller than me, they looked down at me and were able to move around the space at will. In comparison to other works, I was quietly contained within the alcove and crucially, did not appear to be struggling (Fig 71-73).

As noted by writer and academic Tracy Fahey, 'The use of the human body as



Fig 71-73 *Parent Rock 2*, Scott Building, Plymouth University (2012)

canvas brings an intense physical and emotional proximity to [any] ... piece.'²²⁷
This was true of *Parent Rock 2* - my live presence transformed both the photographic piece under which I lay and the dynamics of the exhibition space. However, unlike the *Out-breath* works it did not cause distress amongst viewers.

To some extent this was because of the fluidity of the piece, my movement through the corridor and the tracery of footprints left behind, prevented feelings of tension and confinement rising within the audience. However, I would also argue that whilst fluidity and openness was appropriate for this particular piece, there are also instances when firm direction and control are necessary.

Rebirth (2005) (Oxford Brookes University), was performed in a small enclosed room which felt like an incubator. Once audience members had entered the space the door was shut by an assistant and was not opened until the piece had finished. During this time the audience witnessed my naked body rising slowly from a block of wet grey clay - my movements in time with my breathing. I drew energy from the audience presence, the consistency of their attention

held me mindfully present in my actions. In turn, the audience felt - first my vulnerability and then my strength as I stood upright in the clay. One member of the audience commented that she was 'worried' for me and wanted to cover me up. Another viewer - struck by my bodily presence in the clay, said I had 'chosen clay to be ... [my] mother'.

As Fahey asserts, performance is by nature a transgressive act. 'It blurs the boundaries between artwork and artist. This creates an interesting tension between self and other and, indeed arguably explores the notion of self as other.'²²⁸

In my case this 'other' is the clay. As explained previously (pp.122-123), my perceptions of myself changed during *Conscious Clay*; I became 'the substance lying in wait... I became the clay itself'.

The Significance of Clay Bellows 2 and its Associated Responses

Live performance, as evidenced, can induce a range of emotions from discomfort and fear to joy and enlightenment. These feelings are dependent on the content, circumstances and general disposition of the people involved.

In *Rebirth* a strict constraint was placed on viewers. These restrictions were not applicable for *Clay Bellows 2*, which explored clay in terms of its lifespan - its gradual transition from wet to dry energised by my breath. For some audience members this auditory component was disconcerting. As human beings we are generally unaware of our body's efforts to breathe. However, in *Clay Bellows 1&2* I used my breath as a means of integrating with the clay - of living in unity with the clay.

Throughout the event my breathing was consistently loud, the laboured nature of its sound, engulfed the space. As Fahey has stated:

Bodily traumas that are witnessed via performance art... constitute an intimate link with the audience that arises from the shock of witnessing these transgressive acts. The body of the artist exposed in this way - a body normally only viewed by a partner, doctor or close family member - creates intimacy, giving the individual spectator an intimate connection with the artist.²²⁹

In this statement Fahey refers to works such as Marina Abramovic and Ulay's *Breathing In/Breathing Out* (1977). In this piece, (which focuses on the reciprocal exchange of breaths) pain is taken to the limit as carbon dioxide fills the lungs causing unconsciousness.

Unlike Abramovic and Ulay, whose work focused on their human relationship, my intention was to integrate my body with my material. In *Clay Bellows 1*, I breathed in unity with the clay as it dried and cracked against my skin. This process was recalled publicly in *Clay Bellows 2* when a recording of the event was presented via a screen held to my chest. My supposed struggle, as interpreted by the audience, and uncertainty regarding how long the piece was going to last reflects the sometimes uncomfortable and unknown quality of life itself.

In this respect the audience response is understandable. Reflections on death and perceived mortality were present in this piece and, although unknown to me at the time, the attendees of this last work witnessed what was to be the final out-breath.



Fig 74-75 *Clay Bellows 2, Trace* (2015)

Chapter Ten

Traces and Remains

At the end of *Clay Bellows 2* (Appendix 1.11), a clay trace was deposited on the floor (Fig 74-75). This was also the case in *Parent Rock 2* (Appendix 1.5). In this chapter I assess the nature and significance of these residual marks.

Initially I discuss the occurrence of trace. This is followed by an investigation into the making process where I compare my traces with those made by Marina Abramovic and Holly Hanessian. I explore the fragile and vulnerable nature of my traces and my instinctual need to preserve them. Finally, I determine the significance of these material remains within my wider living practice.

The Occurrence of Trace

A clay trace was deposited on the floor at the end of *Clay Bellows 2*. The clay's consistency - wet and slippery - was reflected in the roughness of the trace, my two feet unified in a single clay splodge, whilst the clay inside the bucket bore two distinct holes where my feet had been (Fig 76-77).

As stated by writer Tracy Warr 'The imprint or trace is redolent with memory, absence and the artist's inner life, setting up a contrast between the body's physical manifestation and the spiritual or unconscious.'²³⁰ In order to recognise how this statement relates to my own practice, it is helpful to break it into two parts.

Warr's first point is that trace relates to memory - it evidences and reminds us of a lived in moment which has now come to an end. In the case of *Clay Bellows 2*, that memory is (in simple terms) of me stepping out of the clay. Warr's second point emphasises how trace can challenge our perceptions by displaying 'the absence of the real body'.²³¹ In *Clay Bellows 2* for example, the clay residue of my feet on the floor also displayed the absence of my physical body and in so doing, raised questions regarding mortality and existence.

The Witnessing of Trace

The clay trace relating to *Clay Bellows 2* was witnessed by myself and those members of the audience who lingered after the performance. In contrast to those who left promptly, these viewers had an opportunity to reflect upon the residual nature of the trace in relationship to my performed action.

It emerged during informal discussions that these visitors were intrigued by the



Fig 76-77 *Clay Bellows 2, Trace* (2015)

transference of the clay from my feet to the floor and recognised the sculptural quality of the traces left behind. With this in mind, I will now return to Warr's earlier statement that 'trace is redolent with memory' (p.146.) and investigate to whom this 'memory' belongs.

Considering *Clay Bellows 2* was a live event, the most obvious answer to this question is that it belongs to the audience, since they experienced the event directly, as it was being carried out. However, another memory exists as well, the one belonging to my 'clay-inhabited self' - i.e. the self which exists in relationship to the clay during an immersive experience.

In the case of *Clay Bellows 2*, two perspectives of memory can therefore be identified, one belonging to the audience who witnessed its making, and another belonging to myself as the subject of the work.

In addition to *Clay Bellows 2*, bodily clay traces were also characteristic of *Parent Rock 2*, although in that piece the traces did not carry the same feeling of completion because at that time, I was in the *In-breath* phase, experiencing

growth and expansion. This is in contrast to *Clay Bellows 2*, which, as an *Out-breath* project, marked the approaching closure of my practice.

The Making Process

The traces deposited in *Clay Bellows 2* and *Parent Rock 2* were incidental to the main action and were not planned. As a concept, they only came into being when I got up and moved away. I was surprised by their presence, as was the audience, some of whom responded with intrigue.

The accidental nature of these traces contrasts with those in *Mirrors for Departure*, Marina Abramovic (1994), where clay was used as a deliberate means of recording facial features (Fig 78).²³² In this case Abramovic's usual performance-led approach is replaced by a more object-orientated focus and although there exists documentation of Abramovic pressing a participant's face into the clay, the studio/workshop setting in which it takes place implies a 'work in progress', rather than a formalised performance (Fig 79).²³³

Abramovic's trace-making process therefore takes place before and in preparation for public exhibition, rather than at the end of the viewing experience, as was the case in *Clay Bellows 2*.

Abramovic's completed installation (which I viewed in 1995 at Oxford Museum of Modern Art, now Modern Art Oxford), comprised a series of clay mirrors, each one bearing a sunken imprint of a face.²³⁴ In relationship to the traces created during *Clay Bellows 2* these facial imprints correspond, not to the print of my feet on the floor, but to the two residual holes left in the clay-filled bucket.

By comparing Abramovic's traces against my own, differing forms and making

methods are identified. This helps to establish the meaning and significance of my own trace. Abramovic's trace comprises two key elements: the human face and the clay into which it is pressed. However, my own making process incorporates three elements: my human body, the clay in which I stood and lastly the clay trace of my feet on the floor. This last component, which is absent in Abramovic's work, signifies the conjoined existence between myself and the clay and in this respect carries prime symbolic meaning.

Unlike *Clay Bellows 2*, Abramovic's clay mirrors are participatory. Symbolic meaning therefore exists most predominantly when the mirrors are on public exhibition and participants are consciously engaged in the work.

Holly Hanessian *Touch in Real Time*, (previously discussed in Chapter Four p.60.) also used clay as a means of recording bodily impressions, specifically handshakes, which she produced by placing a piece of wet clay between the hands of participants.²³⁵



Fig 78 Marina Abramovic, *Mirrors for Departure* (1994)
Fig 79 Marina Abramovic, *Making a Mirror* (1994)

Like *Mirrors for Departure*, which was exhibited as a series of wall-mounted pieces (Fig 80), Hanessian's traces were also made with the intention of public display (Fig 81).²³⁶ This is in opposition to my unintentional approach to trace, which resulted 'from' public exhibition, rather than being made 'for' public exhibition.

The trace deposited at the end of *Clay Bellows 2* existed as a residual marking on the floor, whereas Abramovic and Hussein's clay traces were hung and presented formally. Abramovic's mirrors were 'designed as platforms for participation of the viewer' and like her other transitional objects were 'not considered to be complete until the public had physically engaged with it.'²³⁷ As curator Chrissie Illis observed 'the clay mirrors are metaphors for a particular state of mind halfway towards transformation, they have a ghostly appearance, almost like death masks.'²³⁸

Abramovic's clay mirrors, like my clay footprint record an action. However, these actions and their resultant traces bear differing meanings and purposes. Abramovic's mirrors were, from the outset, intended to provide a deep contemplative experience for viewers, one in which the viewer could engage directly with the embedded trace for as long as he or she likes. By contrast my own trace was incidental to the main action, and therefore went unnoticed and unrecognised by some audience members.

As an artist I did not foresee the occurrence of the trace, nor the potential significance it would hold. Unlike Abramovic's piece, my trace was a surprise - it had no prior purpose. Its meaning only came in to being at the time of its making, at which point it became a symbolic element of my practice.



Fig 80 Marina Abramovic, *Mirrors for Departure* (1994)

Fig 81 Holly Hanessian, *Touch in Real Time* (2012)

Considering the differing circumstances in which these traces were made, it follows that the works also differ in terms of permanence. Abramovic's and Hanessian's traces are, like mine, ephemeral, since they signify an 'absent body', and yet they also have a fixed physical presence. The iron frames which contain Abramovic's clay 'mirrors', are solid and weighty, whilst Hanessian's clay handshakes are rendered hard and impermeable through the firing process.²³⁹ By exploring the work of these artists, I highlight the distinct qualities of my own clay traces which are temporary and unfixed.

Fragility and vulnerability

The trace deposited during *Parent Rock 2* (Fig 82-83) took the form of a skeletal like imprint of my curled up body and a faint tracery of footprints along the corridor. Unlike *Clay Bellows 2*, this trace became part of the on-going exhibition, viewed with and in relationship to the life sized image. Owing to its delicacy and positioning on the floor, the trace was vulnerable to accidental removal and obliteration. This was recognised soon after my live intervention when I noticed visitors had unknowingly eradicated the clay footprints with their



Fig 82-83 *Parent Rock 2, Trace* (2012)

own movements. I thereafter made efforts to preserve the remaining skeletal like trace by defining it (via exhibition labelling) as part of the exhibition. This response was my first indication that the clay in this trace form was valuable and meaningful enough to preserve.

In addition to providing a record of my movements, the presence of the trace provided a means of personal reflection. When (shortly after the performance) I saw the skeletal-like trace for the first time, it had dried to a pale powdery substance which had loosened its grip from the floor. The desiccated clay and contemplative mood it induced, was reminiscent of the atmosphere created in Zhen Chen's *Purification Room* 2000 (Fig 84).²⁴⁰ Zhen's quietly somber installation, which I viewed at Tate Liverpool, 2004 and was subsequently shown at the Hayward Gallery in 2012, consists of a room in which all the objects are completely covered and encrusted with pale clay. It's as though the room has been frozen in time, as if some unknown event has brought the world to an end. In this case clay becomes a material through which objects are



Fig 84 Zhen Chen, *Purification Room* (2000)

preserved, petrified or frozen until perhaps a future age. The artist himself has stated that the clay represents 'the source from which objects come, but also the place they return to after having circulated in society', additionally he suggests that the clay is there to 'purify the objects after their use; for sublimating a latent spirit; and for provoking a new destiny at the fatal end of these objects.'²⁴¹

When considering Zhens work it is relevant to observe that this particular piece was made the year the artist died. Zhen, who had been ill for 20 years, believed that the world and the body are implicitly linked. As indicated by his widow Xu Min, Zhen wanted to heal both himself and the world around him.²⁴² In his clay filled *Purification Room* Zhen creates a place of silent contemplation which nurtures both the acceptance of death and the belief that life will one day resume. Clay is the levelling substance where life and death become one.

By recalling the qualities observed in Zhen's work a deeper understanding of

my own dried clay traces is attained. Zhen appropriately refers to his work, as a 'monochrome tomb'.²⁴³ As observed in my own practice, clay turns pale as it dries. It's ability to change shape diminishes and it becomes brittle - as though the life has been sucked out of it. This loss of colour and vitality is consequential to the practice of Charles Simonds (discussed in Chapter Four pp.56-58 & 65. and Chapter Six p.92.) whose emotional engagement with his work is 'most profound when the clay is moist and wet, this for him is when the clay is most alive, [his involvement correspondingly] diminishes as the clay dries, hardens, and ceases in his mind to grow.'²⁴⁴

In material and form Zhen's clay-encrusted objects and my clay traces are reminiscent of fossilised remains. Zhen's *Purification Room* presents a record of societal objects and environment, whilst my traces record bodily movement and human existence. This analogy is particularly relevant to *Clay Bellows 2*, which marked the closure of my practice - the deposited trace recording my final action as I stepped out of the wet slippery clay.

Unlike *Parent Rock 2*, I witnessed the resultant trace of *Clay Bellows 2* change from wet to dry, its colour slowly dissipate from vivid ochre to pale buff and its surface become flat and opaque. Within the context of my research, this was the first time I had witnessed the clay drying out as an external material, disconnected from my body. The clay had previously been attached to my body and behaved in relation to my body. As the clay dried and tightened against my skin my body reacted to the clay and vice versa. In *Clay Bellows 1* for example, the movements of my breath affected the shrinkage and patterning of the clay as it dried out. This shrinkage in turn affected my breathing as the clay tightened across my chest.

Seeing the trace deposited on the floor in front of me, induced what could be termed an 'out-of-body' experience, 'an experience in which you feel as if you have left your own body and can see it from the outside...'245 However, in my case, it was not my flesh and blood body which I had disassociated from but my 'clay-inhabited body'. From this vantage point, my perspective changed. I saw the isolated clay trace as an ending, a stepping away from.

I had previously experienced out-of-body sensations during *Conscious Clay* which, as discussed in Chapter Eight, I repeated several times at Birdwood House. These sensations occurred each time I finished performing and my living body was replaced by a clay covered mannequin. This was an intentional act. I stepped away from the performance site so that I could view the work as though I were a member of the audience. Furthermore the job of the clay mannequin was to replicate, rather than provide a literal impression of my body, as was the case in *Clay Bellows 2*. Consequently, the out of body sensations experienced during *Conscious Clay* did not carry the same implications or significance as those experienced at the end of *Clay Bellows 2* which, by contrast, signalled a definitive ending.

Memories, Meanings and Remains

Within the bounds of my research, *Parent Rock 2* and *Clay Bellows 2* are the only works which resulted in clay traces. They are also the only two works which comprise layering, whereby documentation of a previous piece is situated within the context of the live performance. As an artist, the inclusion of these embedded memories resulted in a deeply immersive experience, which in textural content was richer than other pieces.

For the *In-breath* project *Parent Rock 2*, my site-specific piece on Dartmoor which explored the granite origins of China Clay, provided the first layer of experience. The resulting documentation provided a further layer, this was subsequently overlaid by a live action which took place in front of the documentation.

Clay Bellows 2 in contrast, focused on Ball Clay. Unlike *Parent Rock 2*, which was concerned initially with site, this second work (which occurred during the *Out-breath* phase) focused intently on the body. *Clay Bellows 1*, which explored clay in relation to my breath provided the first layer. The resulting film provided a further layer. Finally the live presentation, where the film was played via a monitor held against my chest, provided a third layer.

In both *Parent Rock 2* and *Clay Bellows 2*, these sequential layering of experiences were further extended by the clay traces, which signified the end of my lived-in experience. After *Parent Rock 2*, I collected the clay remains and placed them in a glass vessel for 'safekeeping' (Fig 85). This was an instinctive act, it was only in retrospect - after completing *Clay Bellows 2*, that I realised the significance of this action. In this preserved state, the clay existed as a material memory, synonymous with the ashes of departed being. I similarly collected the traces from *Clay Bellows 2* thus bringing the work to a close (Fig 86).

Together these glass vessels and their enclosed material acknowledge and bear witness to the lived-in experience. The first vessel contains China Clay and pertains to the *In-breath* phase of my practice. The second contains fragments of Ball Clay and pertains to the *Out-breath* phase.

These designations are symbolic. As discussed in Chapter One (p.18-19.), China Clay is the pure, whitest form of clay and in this respect pertains metaphorically to the *In-breath* as a prime material and initiator of life. In contrast, Ball Clay's ochreous colouring denotes the accumulative elements which have been collected on life's journey. In this respect Ball Clay equates more readily with the *Out-breath* where release and deposition finally takes place.



Fig 85-86 Material Remains, China Clay & Ball Clay (2016)

Summary of *Out-breath*

The self-imposed confinement which characterised *Conscious Clay* altered my perceptions, my status changed - I became the clay. This experience evidences how bodily immersion (or an intense engagement with material), can result in a complete personal transformation. In the works that followed, particularly *Clay Being* and *Clay Bellows 1*, a two-way process can be identified, whereby the clay responded to the movements of my body and my body responded to the presence of the clay.

This co-existent state of being is different from the relationship experienced in *Recovering Drowned Clay*, where my fear of destroying the clay's natural character held both myself and the clay in suspension (the metamorphic properties of the clay could not be realised, nor could my desire to relate to the clay on a sensory level.)

Clay recovered from *SS Zaanstroom* carries its own history, to which I am linked. However, we did not share a co-joined existence as in later works. Despite this concession, *Recovering Drowned Clay* was influential to these later pieces. The hostile conditions and restricted breathing heightened my awareness of mortality - which proved to be a central theme of my concluding works. At the same time the static lump of recovered China Clay provided an emblem of potentiality, from which I could deliver a more embodied practice.

In clay creation narratives, the inanimate clay figure needed an external source of energy to imbue it with life. In Genesis, God breathed into the nostrils of man and gave him life. Whilst in Greek mythology Pandora was bought to

life by the four winds. Within the context of my performance practice, and in particular *Clay Being*, (which is most evocative of these mythologies), this energy source came from both myself and the clay.

By observing the nature of my living practice and comparing it with clay creation mythologies it becomes evident that in such narratives, the significance of the clay ends with the initiation of life - when clay becomes flesh. By contrast my living practice embodies further transformations. As discussed in Chapter Nine, it was found that the clay's drying process - whereby wet clay shrinks against the skin of the body - can be equated with the ageing process and is therefore reflective of a lifespan.

This finding adds weight to my concluding chapter, where I define my position as artist researcher and state my contribution to knowledge.

Conclusion

'I am the Clay'

Lu La Buzz, artist researcher

Prior to this research, clay as a material existed outside myself - as a source for exploration, and about which I created work. This study has transformed that perception, the increasingly immersive nature of my practice enabling me to step inside the clay, and live symbiotically with this material.

This outcome was unexpected. My original aim was to investigate how arts practice can enhance the status of raw clay. I set out to challenge historical perceptions of this material and in the process gathered insights which I could not have predicted - that my experiential performances were a process of 'clay becoming' - I ultimately became the clay.

The core knowledge deduced from this research is that embodied performance transforms connectivity between artist and clay and produces a unified incarnation of both elements. The insights which testify this claim emerged during the performance-led activities themselves, and continue to exist both as a 'material knowing' in the fragmentary clay remains and within myself as the artist.

In creation mythology clay is a metaphor for life. In my performance practice the metaphor becomes an unexpected reality.

The writing of this thesis offered a means of contextualising my practice. It also provided a means of resolving uncertainties, filtering non-essential elements

and distilling the essence of my own material relationship to clay. As a means of clarifying my assertion that embodied performance produces a unified incarnation of artist and clay, I will now identify the two experiences which define and encapsulate my lived-in experience.

Conscious Clay initiated the transformation of my identity. Cocooned beneath a clay-covered mask, 'I entered another kind of reality; one in which my humanness 'de-formed' into clay. This was [As declared on p.126.] the moment I first identified myself as the clay.'

I was equally surprised by the out-of-body experience which engulfed me at the end - following *Clay Bellows 2*. As detailed in Chapter Ten (pp.155-156.) the empty clay trace which remained on the floor in front of me acted both as an amplification of life, and as a register of death.

This last encounter allowed the significance of previous works to fully emerge. The uncertain potential present in *Clay Being* could now be read as growth and expansion. From the confines of a plinth, I now stood upright with energy and vigour. Meanwhile, the handheld monitor in *Clay Bellows 2* (which I felt compelled to play, despite its known technical limitations) carried - within the recorded sequence - an ancestral echoing and foretoken of death.

The metaphorical structuring of the *In-breath Out-breath* phase (which was implemented after *Parent Rock 2*) imbued my project with rigour and certainty. In life, there cannot be an *Out-breath* without a preceding *In-breath* to lead the way. By the same token, my transformed state of consciousness would not have been possible without the site-specifically grounded, *In-breath* phase.

By attending to the raw nature of clay, appreciation grows - as does status. I witnessed this shift in myself, 25 years ago on discovering the *Keuper Marl* clay (p.xxv.), and in audience members during this research. Those who had previously assumed clay to be either grey or red were mesmerised by the tonal and textural transformation which occurred during my live practices.

The unfamiliar nature of the mutable clay and their own physical proximity to it, forced those watching to re-evaluate previously held beliefs and assume a more expansive regard for clay. As voiced by Professor Jem Southam 'Lu La has completely transformed my understanding of clay.'²⁴⁶

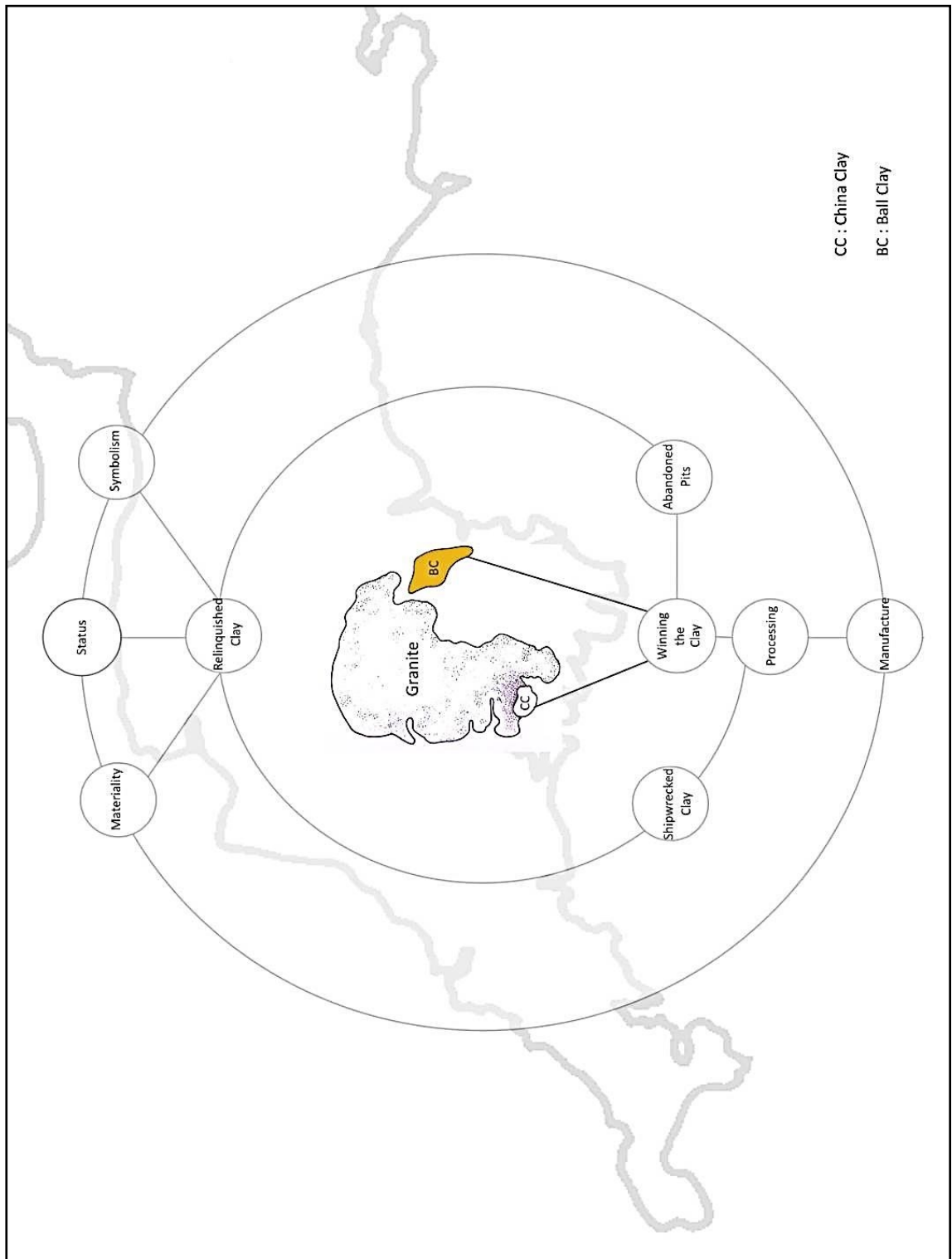
In terms of arts practice, this shift evidences how performance, as a transitory medium, counters the conventional assumption that clay is an object-orientated material which must be fired.

As a researcher my ability to move through and beyond my own aims and objectives - to celebrate the unforeseen - proved powerful. What I had once considered to be the ultimate status enhancing act - to recover lost and forsaken clay from the sea bed - proved later to be merely a medium through which a more poignant outcome could be delivered.

Appendices

Appendix 1.1

Clay Thought Diagram



Clay Thought Diagram

Accompany notes to the 'Clay Thought Diagram' (see opposite), which details individual research elements and how they fit together. The diagram's central core depicts the granite outcrop of Dartmoor and its associated clay deposits.

Granite

As the parent rock of China Clay and Ball Clay, granite lies at the centre of the diagram.

China Clay

Classified as primary clay because it has formed in situ, China Clay is located within the granite on the southwest edge of the outcrop.

Ball Clay

Classified as a secondary clay, Ball Clay has, due to weathering and erosion, been washed away from its parent rock and lies to the east of the outcrop.

Winning the Clay

In industries such as ceramics and paper manufacturing, China Clay is valued for its whiteness, whilst Ball Clay for its plasticity, these attributes have led to three centuries of quarrying, the resulting material being used both in Britain and abroad.

Refinement

After extraction the clay is screened for impurities and shredded to produce a uniform consistency.

Manufacture

Following refinement, clay is transported worldwide for the manufacture of ceramic tableware, sanitary ware, paper, rubber, cosmetics etc.

Symbolism / Materiality

During refinement and manufacture characteristics usually associated with clay (heaviness, tackiness, cohesiveness) are transformed and the resulting product can no longer be thought of solely as clay. These manufactured products consequently take on new material and symbolic values.

Shipwrecked Clay

In the course of overseas transportation a proportion of clay has been lost to shipwreck.

Disused Clay

Due to local variations in quality, certain sites have been abandoned because the clay is considered inferior and unsuitable for extraction.

Relinquished Clay

For the purposes of the diagram, shipwrecked and disused clays are collectively referred to as Relinquished Clay, a term differentiating from that of the Processed.

Status

These two opposing groups (Processed Clay and Relinquished Clay) differ in status according to the material and symbolic values they possess.

Appendix 1.2

Conversation with Clare Twomey

On 9 Mar 2014, at 19:50, InstantPro Contact Form wrote:

Dear InstantPro User,
Information has been left for you via the "Contact" page of your InstantPro website (<http://www.claretwomey.com>).
Lu La Buzz
lula.buzz@plymouth.ac.uk
07931410420

Hello Clare,

I am in the process of writing up my PhD thesis at Plymouth University (the title being States and Status of Clay) and have a query about *Consciousness/Conscience*. Are the tiles unfired? I have always assumed they are but just wanted to check with you before I commit to writing this in my thesis. I really admire your work and would be very grateful for an answer.

Best wishes,

Lu La

Kind regards,
The Freeola Team.

12/16/2016 Re: InstantPro Contact: <http://www.claretwomey.com> - Contact - Lu La Buzz
Re: InstantPro Contact: <http://www.claretwomey.com> - Contact

Clare Twomey <mail@claretwomey.com>
Tue 11/03/2014 07:20
To:Lu La Buzz <lula.buzz@plymouth.ac.uk>;
1 attachments (92 KB)
Call for Papers Ceramics in the Expanded Field. (2).doc;

Dear Lu La

Thanks for your email.

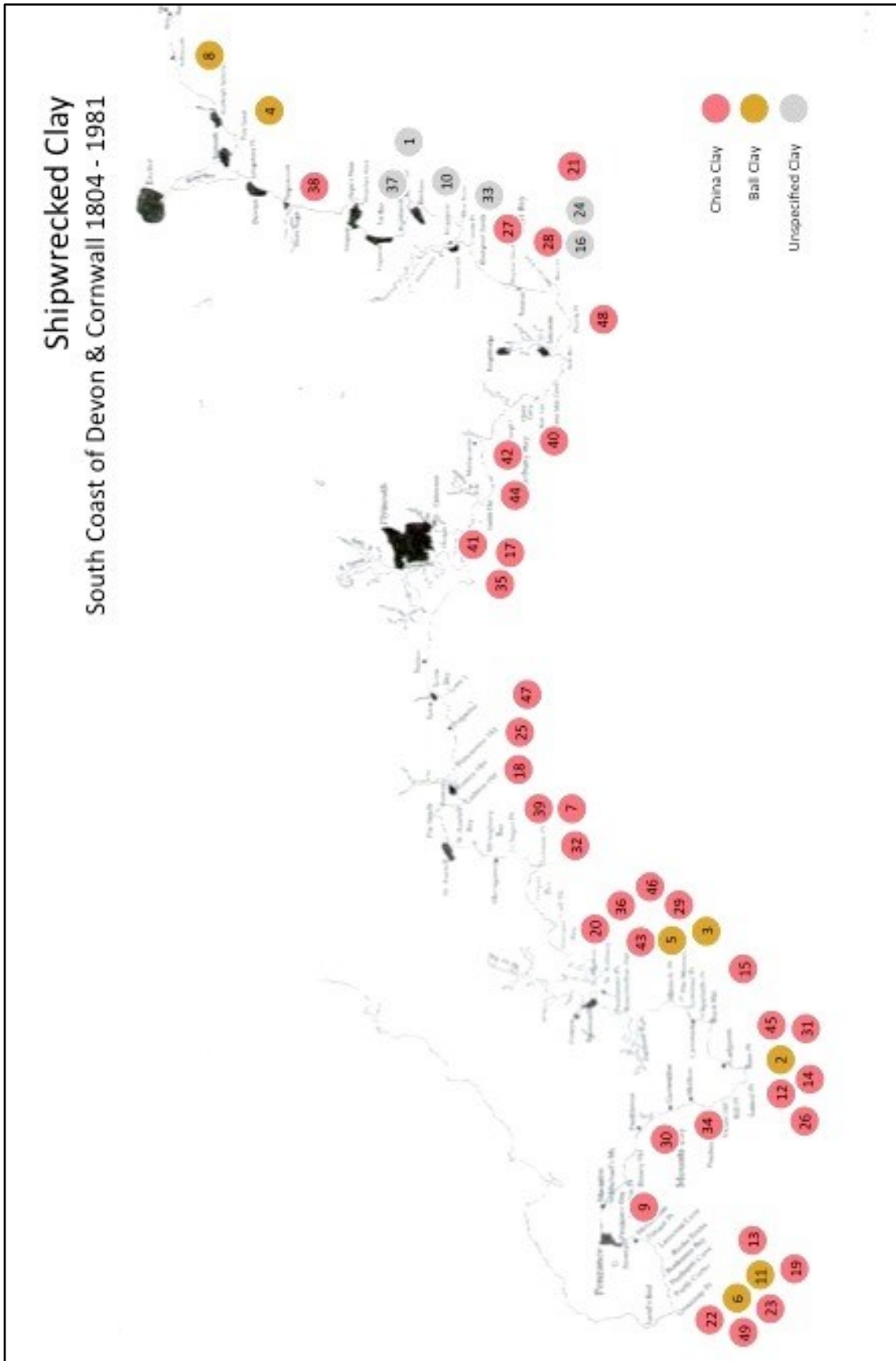
The tiles are fired to the first stage of cristobalite change, about 540/500 degrees so that they are none carcinogenic. This was tested by Royal Crown Derby so that the tiles could safely be placed in the gallery environment.
Good luck with your PhD thesis.

Have you seen our call for papers below???

Clare Twomey mail@claretwomey.com

Appendix 1.3

Shipwrecked Clay (see listing overleaf)



Map Reference	Devon/ Cornwall	Chronological Order	Name of Ship	Day/Month	Year	Type of Clay	Port/Probable Clay Type
1	Devon	1.	Nelly	30/11/	1804	Unspecified	PD: Poole -Ball Clay
2	Cornwall	1.	(Unidentified)	22/08/	1809	Ball Clay	
3	Cornwall	2.	Island	16/01/	1813	Ball Clay	
4	Devon	2.	Moon	20/02/	1817	Ball Clay	
5	Cornwall	3.	Mary & Susan	07/02/	1831	Ball Clay	
6	Cornwall	4.	Jane	19/05/	1837	Ball Clay	
7	Cornwall	5.	Mary	23/05/	1849	China Clay	
8	Devon	3.	Jane Eliza	15/01/	1851	Ball Clay	
9	Cornwall	6.	Adelle	23/11/	1855	China Clay	
10	Devon	4.	Britannia	10/01/	1866	Unspecified	PD: Poole - Ball Clay
11	Cornwall	7.	Alpha	24/05/	1868	Ball Clay	
12	Cornwall	8.	Hope	14/10/	1868	China Clay	
13	Cornwall	9.	Fanny	22/08/	1868	China Clay	
14	Cornwall	10.	Ann & Catherine	09/12/	1872	China Clay	
15	Cornwall	11.	Commerce	08/11/	1877	China Clay	
16	Devon	5.	Pinus Senior	27/02/	1878	Unspecified	PD: Flushing - China Clay
17	Devon	6.	John Pardew	10/11/	1878	China Clay	
18	Cornwall	12.	Cecile Caroline	03/03/	1881	China Clay	
19	Cornwall	13.	Matthew Wignall	06/12/	1882	China Clay	
20	Cornwall	14.	Eolith	07/12/	1882	China Clay	
21	Devon	7.	Soud	12/01/	1885	China Clay	
22	Cornwall	15.	Margaret Jane	14/01/	1885	China Clay	
23	Cornwall	16.	St Athens	13/04/	1886	China Clay	
24	Devon	8.	Tays and Tess Packet	06/06/	1886	Unspecified	PD: Teignmouth - Ball Clay
25	Cornwall	17.	Gitana	27/04/	1888	China Clay	
26	Cornwall	18.	Peard	22/05/	1890	China Clay	
27	Devon	9.	Lizzie Ellen	09/03/	1891	China Clay	
28	Devon	10.	Lunedale	09/03/	1891	China Clay	
29	Cornwall	19.	Dryad	30/11/	1894	China Clay	
30	Cornwall	20.	Ann & Mary	18/08/	1897	China Clay	
31	Cornwall	21.	Camellia	28/09/	1897	China Clay	
32	Cornwall	22.	Lizzie May	22/03/	1898	China Clay	
33	Devon	11.	Leritia	30/04/	1898	Unspecified	PD: Poole - Ball Clay
34	Cornwall	23.	Trente Mouzin	01/03/	1900	China Clay	
35	Devon	12.	J. Martin	08/06/	1901	China Clay	
36	Cornwall	24.	Louise Ernst	12/12/	1901	China Clay	
37	Devon	13.	Thistle	09/10/	1902	Unspecified	PD: Teignmouth -Ball Clay
38	Devon	14.	Eliza Bain	00/11/	1902	China Clay	
39	Cornwall	25.	Margaret	26/01/	1903	China Clay	
40	Devon	15.	Andre Marie	29/07/	1904	China Clay	
41	Devon	16.	Silver Spray	30/12/	1905	China Clay	
42	Devon	17.	Crossowen	07/05/	1908	China Clay	
43	Cornwall	26.	Ames	07/12/	1911	China Clay	
44	Devon	18.	Tasmania	04/11/	1918	China Clay	
45	Cornwall	27.	Horn	30/10/	1928	China Clay	
46	Cornwall	28.	Mourne	21/09/	1933	China Clay	
47	Cornwall	29.	Orchis	30/11/	1935	China Clay	
48	Devon	19.	Heye-P	17/12/	1979	China Clay	
49	Cornwall	30.	Mark	17/12/	1981	China Clay	

Appendix 1.4

Conversation with Worthing Divers

From: Lu La Buzz [mailto:lula.buzz@plymouth.ac.uk] Sent: 05 July 2011 11:09
To: divers@worthingbsac.co.uk
Subject: Zaanstroom

Dear Worthing Divers,

I'm a member of Totnes Sub-Aqua Club and am looking to dive the Zaanstroom as part of my university studies. Tony Clarke recommended that I get in touch with you since he belonged to your club and dived with you when he lived in Sussex. He mentioned Darren McDonagh might be able to help me as TSAC helped your club on your trip to Devon a few years ago.

I have seen on your dive diary on the website that you are planning to dive the Zaanstroom on Sunday 4th September, would it be possible to come along?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Lu La

From: Darren McDonagh [darren.mcdonagh@ntlworld.com] Sent: 05 July 2011 13:13
To: Lu La Buzz
Cc: 'Worthing Divers'; 'Mick Stevens'; 'Roger Clarke'
Subject: RE: Zaanstroom

Hi Lu La

You're more than welcome to come along and join us as a guest. The Zaanstroom is quite a good wreck to dive as she sits upright and is fairly intact. I've attached a couple of pictures a club member took a few years back (the viz isn't always that good!)

The cost of a dive to guests is normally £20, but I'm sure we can charge you the normal club rate of £15 as you're a friend of Tony's.

I take it you're a Sports Diver or above, as depending on tide the depth will be around 30 / 32 m. What's the interest in the wreck...is there any information we can help with?

Anyway, my contact details are below, keep in touch leading up to the dive and we'll keep you posted on the conditions, and let me know if there is anything else I can help you with.

Regards

Darren

01903 203648
07834 321753

From: Lu La Buzz [mailto:lula.buzz@plymouth.ac.uk] Sent: 13 July 2011 15:59
To: Darren McDonagh
Subject: RE: Zaanstroom

Hi Darren,

Sorry I didn't get back sooner but I have been on a research trip - brilliant, thank you for the pictures. I read in Divernet that the hold of the vessel was half filled with visible chunks of clay. Do you know if the rock shapes in the first picture are the clay cargo it was carrying? As it's the 100 anniversary since the Zaanstroom sank in 1911 I aim to recover a small sample for my research at

University of Plymouth, which looks into the history of shipwrecked clay.

Coming along with you on the 4th September sounds great. I've almost completed my Sports Diver and aim to finish it in the next couple of weeks so I can build up depth during August.

My buddy and I are looking forward to it.

Best wishes,

Lu La

From: Darren McDonagh [darren.mcdonagh@ntlworld.com] Sent: 13 July 2011 16:08
To: Lu La Buzz
Subject: RE: Zaanstroom

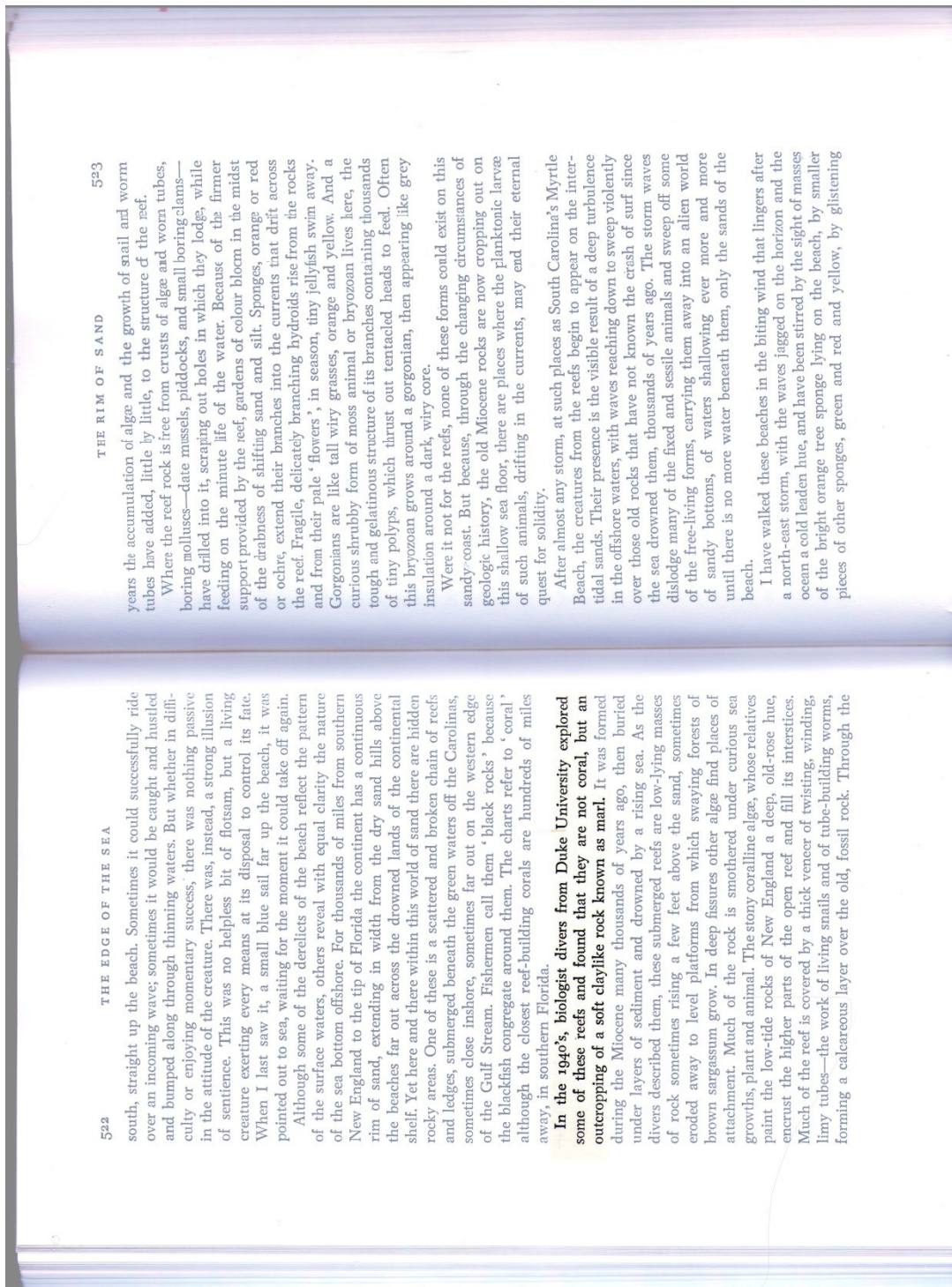
Yep.....the hold is still full of clay.

Regards

Darren

Appendix 1.5

Quote from Rachel Carson's *The Edge of the Sea*



Appendix 1.6

Conversation with Nick Rands

On 2 May 2015, at 11:07, "Lu La Buzz" <lula.buzz@plymouth.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Nick Rands,

As a PhD Arts Researcher at Plymouth University, I'm writing to you in relation to you 1998/99 piece *Earthly Spheres*, which I viewed at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham. My research area is raw clay, in particular the retrieval and presentation of clay/earth material as a method of arts practice.

Since *Earthly Spheres* is relevant to this subject and would thus provide a valued point of reference within my thesis, I'd be grateful if you would provide further information as detailed below.

Were sites pinpointed and visited specifically to collect material or did you collect material in a more spontaneous manner, as and when encountered?

Was there a specific order in which the collection of material took place?

What was the locality range? I recall that site names had been written on the gallery wall. Please could you indicate the range and extent of these sites. E.g. was material collected from specific areas of Brazil and the UK or were sites more widespread globally?

Many thanks for assisting me with this information.

Best wishes,
Lu La

From: Nick Rands [ndrands@gmail.com] Sent: 03 May 2015 19:26

Dear Lu La,

Gosh, that's a long time ago! But they still exist, and in two versions. There's a Brazilian one as well which you may have seen on the website. Plus, you might be interested in the works related to *Square* in Rio Grande do Sul, which also involved retrieval of earth, for the Mercosul Biennial in 2011.

Anyway, to answer your specific questions:

The material for *Earthly Spheres* was collected more or less at random, although a substantial amount was collected in Norfolk, as a large part of the work was made as part of a residency at Warehouse artist studios in Norwich in 1998.

No specific order

Locality ranged widely. Although quite a lot was from Norfolk, as I mentioned. I think at that time, I was just picking up mud wherever I happened to be. So there's stuff from several places in Brazil, and possibly even Zimbabwe and California, the Isle of Wight, Northumberland etc. There's a little booklet/catalogue of the piece from Norwich, which lists the places. I have to look it out when I get back to Porto Alegre next week.

In terms of the later works related to *A Square* in Rio Grande do Sul, the work was collected at specifically identified predetermined sites in Rio Grande do Sul. There should be more information about that work, and link to a video documentation in the website.

I hope that's some help.

Regards
Nick Rands

Appendix 1.7

Making a Ball

Clay Day 2009, Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot



Making a Ball was a participatory event which took place at Decoy Lake in summer 2009. It investigated the origins of the name Ball Clay. Historically this term derives from the method of digging the clay into cube shaped lumps. With successive handling the corners of the clay cube gradually became rounded. Working at the site of the old clay pit, collectively, we evoked this process bypassing a clay cube from person-to-person and witnessing its gradual transformation into a ball.

Appendix 2.1

Clay Launch

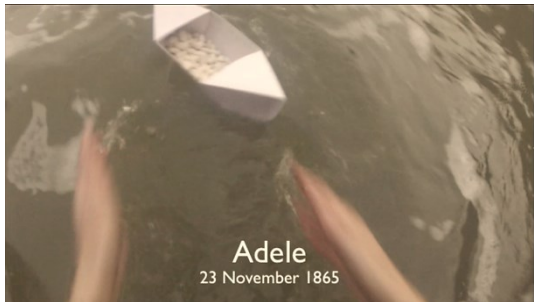
Throughout 2012

Charlestown, Former China Clay Port, Cornwall

Over the period of one year, six small boats, made from China Clay paper and holding a cargo of China Clay 'noodles', were launched into the sea at Charlestown. This former port was a major exporter of China Clay during the 19th and 20th century. The project, which involved carrying each boat to the water's edge via a narrow slipway, commemorated those vessels which departed Charlestown and were later reported to have foundered. Each of the six boats was launched on the anniversary date of their sinking. The camera attached to my head enabled me to capture footage of the boat and its clay contents from above.



Above: Carrying one of the six boats down the slipway
Below: Clay cargo in the form of China Clay 'noodles'



Above: Launching the six boats (Stills from video)

Appendix 2.2

Recovering Drowned Clay

4 September 2011

The wreck of *SS Zaanstroom*

9 miles off the coast of Littlehampton, West Sussex

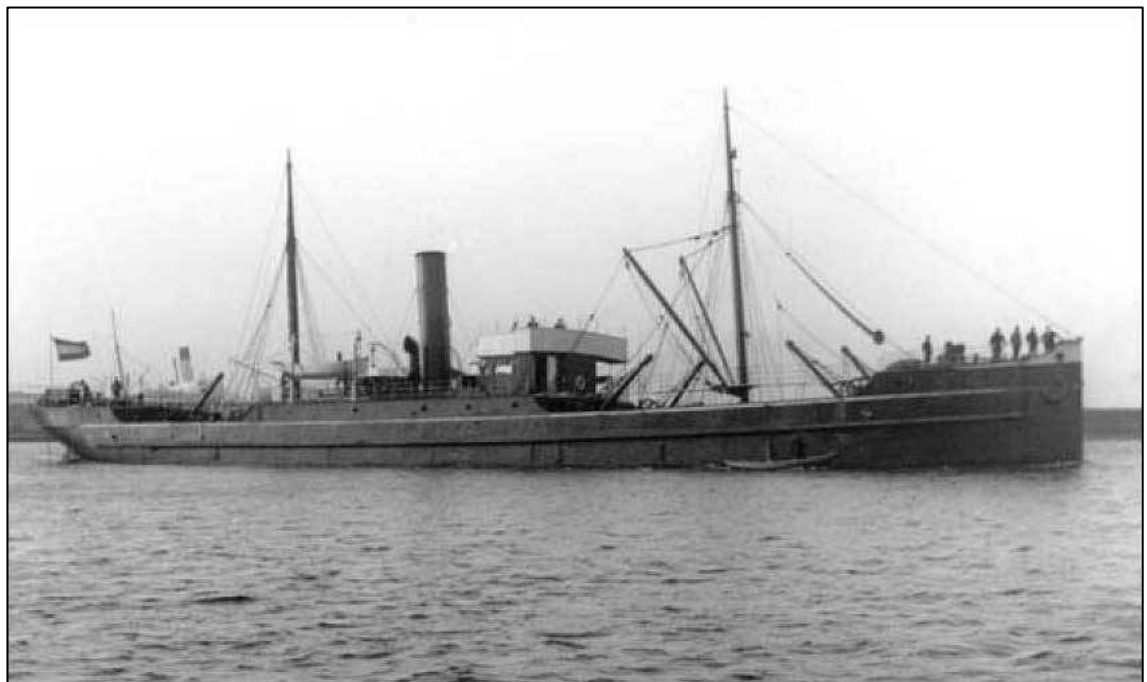
In this commemorative project, I recovered a sample of China Clay from the hold of *SS Zaanstroom*. This Dutch clay carrier sank one hundred years earlier, on its homebound journey from Fowey to Amsterdam. With only a cylinder of air to sustain me I had just 40 minutes to reach the seabed and find the clay. The search was traumatic - in dark murky waters 28 meters beneath the surface, I scaled the rusty framework and deck trying to locate the hold. My hands - protected from cold in thick gloves - lead the way. Finally, with only minutes of air left in my cylinder, I felt a void open up beneath me. As I dropped inside softness could be felt under foot, reaching down I scooped the clay up in my hand and lifted it to the surface.



Above: China Clay recovered from *SS Zaanstroom*
Opposite: The descent and recovery process



Dutch Steamship 'ZAA NSTROOM'	
Built:	1895 by Huygens & Van Gelder, Amsterdam, Holland
Construction:	1 deck, lower deck, forehold in iron and steel Single screw
Yard No:	159
Official No:	Unknown
Signal Code:	Q.C.V.S.
G.T.:	899
N.T.:	544
D.W.T.:	
Dimensions:	214.7 x 32.2 x 16.6ft.
Engines:	Triple expansion 108 N.H.P. 160lbs. by Ned. Fed. V. Wrk. & Spoor Amsterdam, Holland.
Owners at time of loss:	Holland Steamboat Co, Amsterdam
Managers at time of loss:	
Captains on record:	P. Ralishock
Cargo at time of loss:	China Clay
Voyage:	Fowey to Amsterdam
Home Port:	Amsterdam, Holland
Details of Loss	
Steamship 'Zaanstroom' left Fowey on the 21st December 1911 bound for Amsterdam with a cargo of china clay, but due to a leak in her hull near the propeller shaft she foundered 2½ miles ENE of the Owers Light Ship at 7.45 p.m. the same day. One crew member was reported missing. The Captain and eight crew were landed at Ryde by the vessel 'Westdale' of Liverpool.	
Position 50 39 07N 00 36 54W	
Dive Details	
18th August 1979	
The wreck sits upright with a list to port. The wheelhouse which is amidships has collapsed into the hull of the ship which shows signs of thinning ships plating in places along its length.	
The wreck has been bought by Newham Sub Aqua Club who would have to be consulted before diving is carried out.	
Note: The bell of the 'Zaanstroom' is in the possession of the above mentioned club.	



Above Left: *SS Zaanstroom* site details
Salsbury, John. *Sussex Shipwrecks: A personal view*. Shoreham: West Press publishing 1984.

Above Right: Map showing boat journey to site
Divernet. Web. 19 October 2016.

Below: *SS Zaanstroom*
Wreck Site. Web. 19 October 2016.

Appendix 2.3

Lakeside Statue

10 June 2010

Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot, Devon

Throughout this hour long performance, I stood motionless on the banks of Decoy Lake (former Ball Clay pit), as an audience of passer's by stopped to look at me. Wearing a thick covering of Ball Clay over diving apparatus and holding a 'Ball' of clay, as though I had just emerged with it from the lake waters, this static performance, signified three interrelated themes; the submerged history of Decoy, as a former 'Ball Clay' pit, the working methods used to extract the clay and the pits modern day re-incarnation as a lake for water sports and home to aquatic life.



Above: Close-up images of *Lakeside Statue*
Below: Audience responses (Still from video)



Above: Map showing Decoy Country Park and Lake Teignbridge. Web. 19 October 2016.

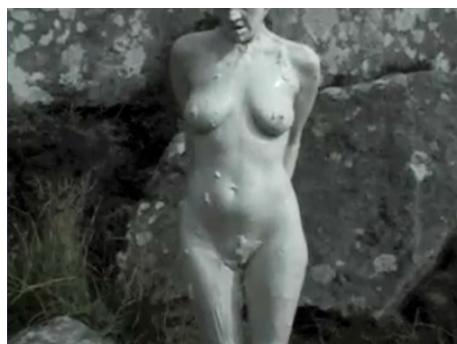
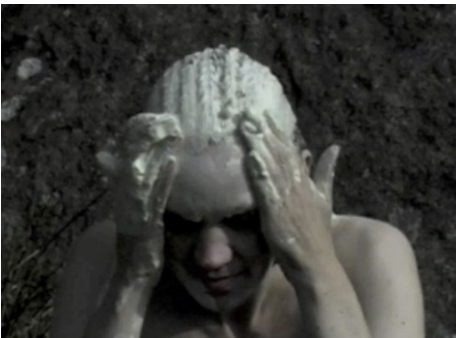
Below: Lakeside Statue (Still from video)

Appendix 2.4

Parent Rock 1

2 October 2010
Dartmoor, Devon

Set amongst an outcrop of dark granite, this private ritual involved covering my body with liquid China Clay and moving through a series of static postures, each one determined by the shape and attitude of the rock. By embracing the granite site-specifically, I re-affirmed the material relationship between China Clay and the parental rock from which it was born.



Above: Coating my body with China Clay (Stills from video)



Above: Static postures

Appendix 2.5

Parent Rock 2

14 March 2012

Manifestations of Place, PhD Research Exhibition
2nd Floor Corridor, Scott Building, Plymouth University

Whilst unsuspecting visitors chatted and viewed photographic exhibits, I covered my body with China Clay and entered the exhibition space. Slowly I walked down the corridor as shocked visitors turned their heads in astonishment. I paused in front of a life sized image of myself, taken during my private ritual on Dartmoor. Gradually I knelt down and lowered my head to the floor. Here I remained, silently still until the wet clay dried and cracked away from my body. At which point I stood up, walked the remaining length of the corridor and departed through the exit.



Above: *Parent Rock 2*, pacing the corridor and arriving at the life size image



Above: Curled-up in the alcove and the remaining body trace



Above: Material Remains (*Parent Rock 2*)

Appendix 2.6

Conscious Clay

12 December 2012
Meadowbrook, Dartington, Totnes

28 & 30 January & 1 February 2013
Birdwood House, Totnes

1 May 2013
Scott Building, University of Plymouth

With my seated body enclosed within a wooden plinth I remained silently confined with only my head protruding from the rigid box-like form. Donning a diving mask hood and snorkel, all of which were coated with thick white China Clay, I appeared, from an audience perspective, as a roughly formed sculpture, positioned on a white plinth. With my eyes covered, breathing obscured and body confined, I was reliant on my sense of hearing as a means of connecting with the outside world.



Above: *Conscious Clay*, Birdwood House, Totnes



Above: The clay head as it appeared to visitors, being released, and following one of the performances at Birdwood House.

Appendix 2.7

The Living Figurine

1 September 2012
University College Falmouth, Cornwall

This project was additional to the eight performance-led pieces which comprise this research. It was made in response to a conference call and has proved useful within this thesis as a means of understanding other works.

In a secluded orchard setting, I performed a series of seven postures each one evoking a prehistoric clay rendition of the human form. These ancient figurines, unearthed from localities around the world, each bear the cultural beliefs and characteristics of their maker. As the performance progressed and I moved from one position to another the wet clay covering my body gradually dried and cracked away, thus introducing another layer of transformation. In this presentation metaphor becomes reality, as the actions of my clay covered body bring these tiny symbolic artefacts to life.



Above: Performing three of the seven postures



Above: Following the event one intrigued member of the audience reached out to touch my clay-covered face (stills from video).

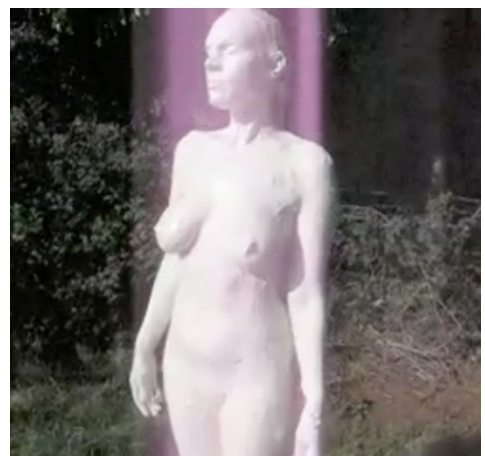
Appendix 2.8

Clay Being

7 October 2013

Private outdoor space

In the timespan of an hour, my identity and human sensibilities were recast as I experienced the world through a coating of heavy China Clay. As the wind and cold air permeated my clay exterior, I shivered and my breathing quickened. With the progression of time, my clay coating gradually hardened to form a rigid shell which simultaneously constrained me and provided a protective layer against the elements.



Above Left: Photographic still

Above Right and below: Stills from video



Above: Stills from video

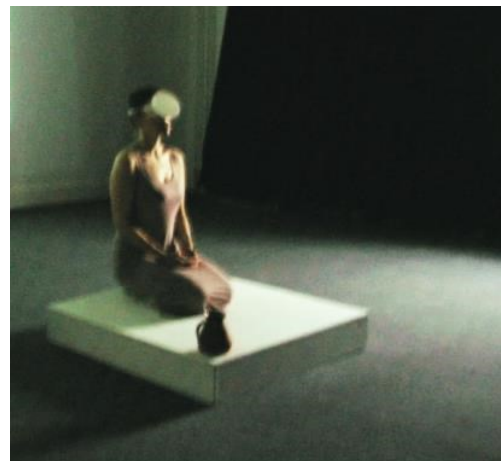
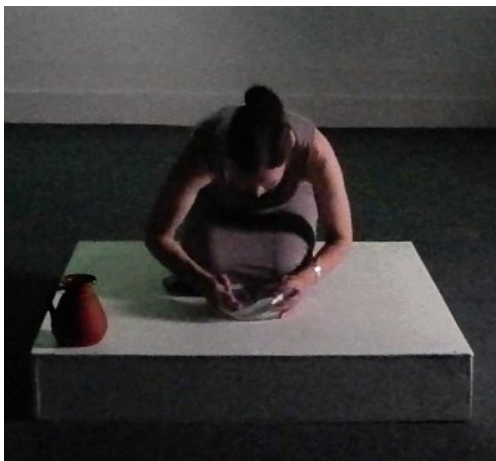
Appendix 2.9

Blinded by Clay

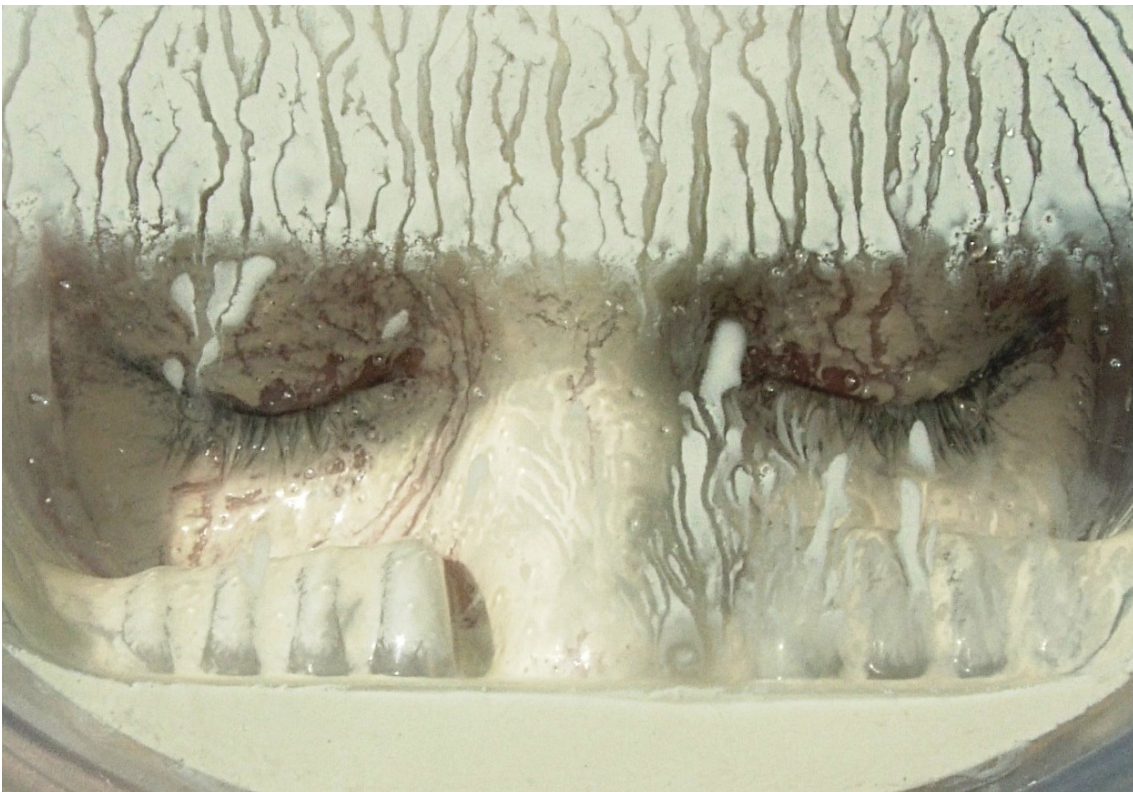
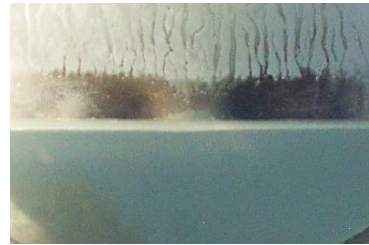
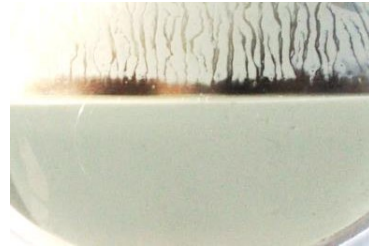
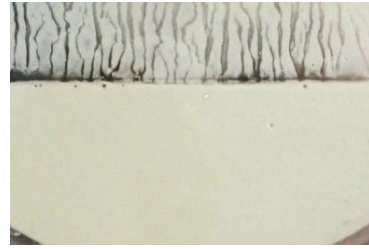
27 November 2013

Scott Building, Plymouth University

During this live performance, sight was replaced by a sensation, as I sunk my eyes and nose into a diving mask of liquid China Clay. As I secured the strap over my head the clay filled mask stuck to my skin, I lifted my head and little by little, released a trickle of clay from the mask. As the clay dribbled down my face, the level within the mask (which was visible to audience members) gradually lowered to reveal my eyes. When the mask was completely empty I gradually opened my eyes and took off the mask.



Above: Filling the mask with China Clay and concealing my eyes (stills from video)



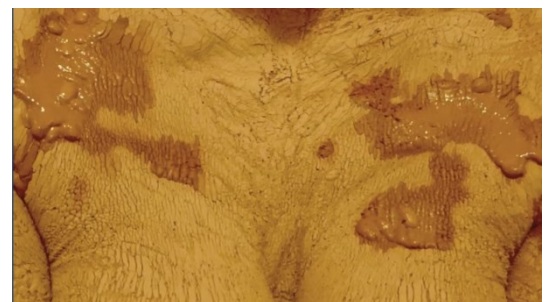
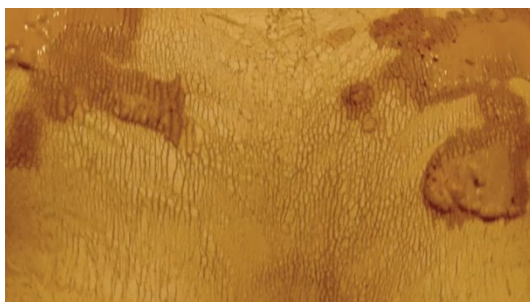
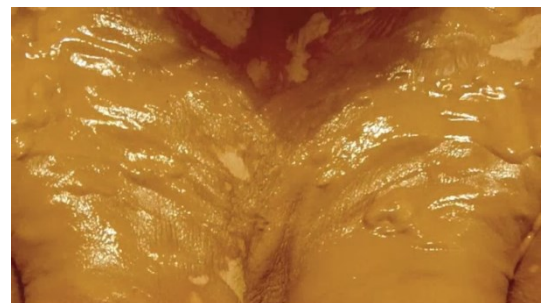
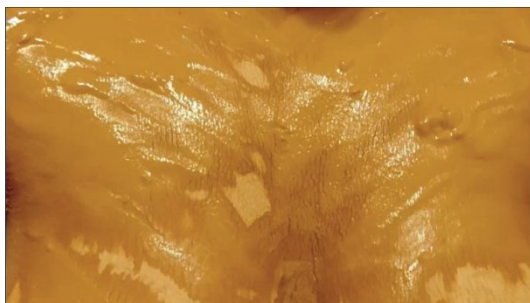
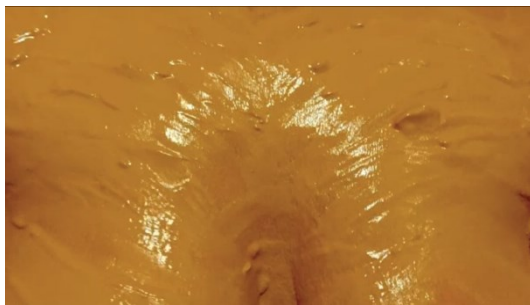
Above: As the China Clay was released from the mask my eyes were gradually exposed

Appendix 2.10

Clay Bellows 1

16 November 2015
Private indoor space

After applying liquid Ball Clay to my torso I carried out consciously connected breathing for over an hour until the wet clay, applied to my skin, had dried out. During this process clay and breath became interdependent as a drying pattern nation of cracks, determined by the movement of my expanding chest, appeared in the clay.



Above: (Stills from video)



Inhalation (still from video)



Exhalation (still from video)

Appendix 2.11

Clay Bellows 2

9 December 2015

Scott Building, Plymouth University

After the audience had assembled, I stepped my bare feet into a vessel of liquid Ball Clay. Once immersed and in position, a small handheld monitor was placed in front of my chest. I lowered my head and for the next 10 minutes, recorded breathing and images of my clay covered chest proceeded to play on the monitor (extracts from *Clay Bellows 1*). I remained - silently immersed in the rhythmic sounds of my own breath - until the film ended. Whereupon, I stepped out of the clay and carefully placed my now slippery feet back onto the gallery floor.



Clockwise: Stepping into the clay, holding the monitor, and finally my clay-covered feet positioned back on the floor.



Above: Clay trace (*Clay Bellows 2*)



Above: Material remains (*Clay Bellows 2*)

Endnotes and Bibliography

Endnotes

List of Figures

¹ This thesis follows the Plymouth Humanities style of referencing as detailed in University Libguides www.Plymouth.libguides.com/c.php?g=103881 [2nd June 2017]

² During *The Living Figurine* and *Clay Bellows 2* audience members took photographs on a casual anonymous basis - some of which are included in this thesis.

Preface

³ Land/Water and the Visual Arts research group, Plymouth University consists of artists, writers and curators who embrace a diversity of creative and critical practices. As a research group it operates as a forum for interrogation of nature and culture, aesthetics and representation. www.landwater-research.co.uk/

⁴ 'The Edge of the Sea' was one of a trilogy of books in the following publication: Carson, Rachel. 'The Sea'. London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1964. p.522.

Introduction

⁵ Clarification of the word 'metaphor': In 'Metaphors We Live By' by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson it is argued that 'Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life not just in language but in thought and action.' (p.3. Lakoff and Johnson 2003 - originally published in 1980). This is the sense in which I use the word metaphor within my thesis. This usage is evidenced in my development of the *In-breath Out-breath*, which 'reflects the cultural associations of clay as a metaphor for life.' These metaphorical associations influenced my performances to become more distinctly focused on clay and human mortality, the subject of clay creation myths. This corresponds to Lakoff and Johnson's suggestion that 'metaphor may thus be a guide for future action... [which] in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent.' (p.156. Lakoff and Johnson 2003).

⁶ In the early stages of my research I studied phenomenology (specifically the theories of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty). By reading these theories and reflecting on my own experiential practice (particularly *Recovering Drowned Clay*, where scuba diving was necessary), I developed the concept of the *In-breath* and *Out-breath*. In the context of my research, phenomenology therefore acted as a starting point - a position from which my own conceptual framework could be developed.

PART ONE: Clay Status

Chapter One, Materiality

⁷ Thurlow, Charles. 'China Clay from Cornwall and Devon; The Modern China Clay Industry'. St Austell, Cornwall: Cornish Hillside Publications, 2005 (fourth revised edition), p.4.

⁸ Thurlow, 2005, p.4.

In this geological context 'pure' (superlative, purest) means uncontaminated by foreign bodies.

⁹ The seven clay mineral groups are as follows: Kaolin, Illite, Smectite, Chlorite, Vermiculite, Mixed layer group (consists of all five groups above), Lath-form.

Knishinsky, Ran. 'The Clay Cure; Natural Healing from the Earth'. Vermont: Healing Arts Press, 1998, p.28.

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¹³ Staubach, Staubach. 'Clay, The History and Evolution of Humankind's Most Primal Element'. New York: Berkley Books, 2005, p.xi.

¹⁴ Anon 'What is Ball Clay?' [Online] www.clayheritage.org/pages/whatisballclay.htm [25th June 2013] and Anon 'Clay Definitions' [Online] www.finedictionary.com/clay.html [25 June 2014]

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¹⁷ Clay tasting session led by Michael Carson took place at Preston Manor Ball Clay Works, Newton Abbot on 11th August, 2009

¹⁸ The Ball Clay Heritage Society, 2003, p.8.

¹⁹ Rolt L.T.C. 'The Potters' Field, A History of the South Devon Ball Clay Industry' Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974, pp. 37-38.

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- ²³ de Waal, 2004, p.39.
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- ³⁰ Staubach, 2005, p.105.
- ³¹ Staubach, 2005, p.113.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p.113.
- ³³ Staubach, 2005, p.119.
- ³⁴ Staubach, 2005, p.123.
- ³⁵ Sustainability artist and facilitator Carol Clifton designed and managed the construction of this building as a community project, on her land in Rattery, Totnes, Devon.
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- ³⁸ Groom, 2004, p.15.
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- ⁴⁰ I visited the heritage centre on many occasions and there was no evidence of clay displayed within the cargo collection
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Chapter Two, Myth and Symbolism

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- ⁶⁹ Anon. 'Aboriginal Ceremonies from Northern Australia' [Online] www.ozoutback.com.au/Australia/abcerna/index.html [19th January 2014]
- ⁷⁰ Radimilahy, Chantel. 'Sacred sites of Madagascar' in Carmichael, David L. Hubert, Jane. Reeves, Brian. Schanche, Audhild. (Eds), *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, Oxford: Routledge, 1994. p.86.
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- 31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This images head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 his legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of the clay.
- ⁷⁴ Anon. 'Daniel 2:33' [Online] www.biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/2-33.htm [24th June 2017]
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Chapter Three, Arts Practice, Objects and Installation

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- ⁸⁰ Johnson, 1970, p.37.
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- ⁸³ Johnson, 1970, p.39.
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- ⁸⁸ de Waal, 2004, p.50.
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⁹⁴ Groom, 2004, p.21.

At this point it is relevant to acknowledge Georges Bataille's concept of formless (L'informe 1929, re-introduced by Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois in 1996), and to explore how Sekine's *Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay* relates to these themes. As detailed on the Tate's website (www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/formlessness) 'Formlessness is a concept, first introduced by French writer-philosopher Georges Bataille, who argued that art should be brought 'down in the world' from its elevated status to its base materialism - and that this debased state should be celebrated as a tool for creativity.' Sekine's piece demonstrates this concept: he presents a vast lump of clay which (to use Bataille's words), is 'foreign to ideal human aspirations', and in-so-being, acts as an unknown force from which chaos could prevail.

(www.newmaterialistcartographies.wikispaces.com/Base+Materialism)

Phases of Nothingness-Oil Clay provides an effective means of exploring Bataille's concept of formless. However his ideas are in opposition to my own. Bataille purposefully brings things down to a state of Base Materialism - deconstructs in order to create, whereas my approach is more direct and positive - I create from and with source. For this reason I have (in the context of this research) decided not to explore this concept in further detail.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.21.

⁹⁶ Can be viewed on Vimeo: 'The Dirt of Love', Roger Hiorns, Mark Titchner & Gary Webb, 2002. vimeo.com/57946882 [7th December 2014]

⁹⁷ Groom, 2004, p.21.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.21.

⁹⁹ When I visited the exhibition in August, it became apparent that the clay had changed from images taken at an earlier date.

¹⁰⁰ de Waal, 2003, p.188.

¹⁰¹ Host, 1991-1997 [Online] www.antonygormley.com/projects/item-view/id/265 [4th December 2014]

¹⁰² de Waal, 2003, pp.187-188.

¹⁰³ Groom, 2004, p.15.

¹⁰⁴ Gormley, Antony. 'Field, 1989-2003' [Online] www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/245 [12th November 2014]

¹⁰⁵ de Waal, 2004, p.39.

¹⁰⁶ Anon. 'Antony Gormley: Field' [Online] www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/.../antony-gormley-field [14th December 2014]

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¹⁰⁹ Anon. Antony Gormley: Some of the Facts [Online] www.tate.org.uk/file/antony-gormley-teachers-pack [14th December 2014]

¹¹⁰ As quoted in the exhibitions accompanying Arts Council catalogue:

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¹¹² Groom, 2004, p.23.

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¹¹⁷ Kasper, Joe. Folkestone Triennial: Artist Andy Goldsworthy speaks ahead of event [Online] www.folkestoneherald.co.uk/Folkestone-Triennial-Artist-Andy-Goldsworthy/story-22762663-detail/story.html#ixzz3LFk3NebU [14th December 2014]

¹¹⁸ As stated in an email from Clare Twomey dated 11th March 2014 (see Appendix 1.2)

¹¹⁹ Güner, Fisun. Time, Weather, Place: Folkestone Triennial 2014 [Online] www.theartsdesk.com ›

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¹²³ Fudge, Jane. 'The Clay Grows Tall: The world of Charles Simonds', Denver Art Museum, 1999. p.1.

¹²⁴ Simonds, Charles, 'Brief Interview with Charles Simonds' [Online] [www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi?\\$tapedetail?CHARLESSIM](http://www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi?$tapedetail?CHARLESSIM) [20th July 2010]

¹²⁵ Harkness, Allan. 'Charles Simonds /Clay/Abandonment', 2004. p5. [Online] rgu.ac.uk/subj/ats/teachingweb/studies/content/clay... [21st February 2015]

¹²⁶. As detailed on p.32. of exhibition catalogue:

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¹²⁷ Anon. 'Charles Simonds: An Interview Blumenthal/Horsfield' [Online] www.vdb.org/titles/charles-simonds-interview [22nd February 2015]

¹²⁸ Interview with Daniel Abadie on p. 7. of the exhibition catalogue Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. (1977). *Charles Simonds: Terminos* held at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, Jun 11 - Jul 17, 1977 [Exhibition catalogue]

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¹³⁹ McCracken, J.J. 'Hunger, Philadelphia' [Online] www.jjmccracken.com/performance-installation/hunger/statement [16th January 2015]

¹⁴⁰ Hanessian, Holly. 'Touch in Real Time'. [Online] www.hollyhanessian.com/projects/touch-in-real-time/ [23th January 2014]

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¹⁴² Giles, Ian. 'Interview with Ian Giles on Clay Meditation [A brief history of time]' [Online] www.kettleyardonline.co.uk/interview-with-ian-giles-on-clay-meditation-a-brief-history-of-time/ [22nd January 2011]

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¹⁵¹ Howard, Nichole. 'A Swap: Keep the tradition, Change the Material' [Online] www.avisaforgardening.blogspot.com/.../oil-spills-toxic-waste-overflowing-lan... [19th October 2014]

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¹⁶² Viso, 2004. p.167.

¹⁶³ Joan Marter interview 1st February 1985, as detailed by Viso p.257.

PART TWO: *In-breath*

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¹⁶⁵ Grammatikopoulou, Christina. 'Remembering the air: Luce Irigaray's ontology of breath'. [Online] www.interartive.org/2014/05/irigaray-air/ [12th July 2015]

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- ¹⁷⁴ Prior to this PhD research, I had imagined recovering naturally occurring clay from the seabed (as was the case with Carson's clay). However, whilst studying China Clay and its related industry I realised that some of the exported clay had been lost to shipwreck and was still underwater.
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- ¹⁷⁶ Email conversation with Nick Rands. Information requested 2nd May 2015 / received 4th May 2015 www.nickrands.com/Nick_Rands/ABOUT_CONTACT.html
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- ¹⁹⁰ Capps, Kriston. 'J.J. McCracken: Living Sculpture' *Art Voices* Issue 8 October (2008). I viewed this article online as follows: [Online] www.jjmccracken.com/artistInfo/jjmccrac/biblio/10.pdf?2104 [30th August 2015]
- ¹⁹¹ Simonds' clay pit is located in New Jersey
- ¹⁹² 'Manifestations of Place', Wednesday 14th March to Friday 23rd March 2012, 2nd Floor Corridor Scott Building

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PART THREE: Out-breath

Introduction to Out-breath

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²²⁷ Fahey, Tracey. 'A Taste for the Transgressive; Pushing Body Limits in Contemporary Performance Art'. [Online] www.journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/artcile/viewartcile/781 [12th February 2016]

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²³¹ Warr, 2012, p.162.

²³² Abramovic, Marina. 'Objects Performance Video Sound', Oxford, Museum of Modern Art Oxford. 1995, pp.31-32, 114-115.

²³³ Abramovic, 1995, p.31.

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Conclusion

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