

Student Name : Zachary Dunlap

Student number : 1907877

Programme of study : Design Craft (BA)

Module: ADAD5004

Lecturers Name : Julia Lockheart

Word Count : 2283

Through this essay, I will be exploring the meaning of these 3 words; Process, Materials, and Wellbeing in relation to my own personal practice in ceramics and as a maker. As my work has developed through the last two years I have explored multiple ways to make, and what making even means.

Word 1 - Process

I wouldn't define myself simply as a potter or ceramicist. My skillset is broad and varied, spread over many materials and processes of making. Ceramics however has controlled the majority of my focus for a few years now. I have always really liked the name maker, as to me it implies a sort of chameleon of the design world. Someone who, instead of mastering one specific area of craft or design, uses a mastery of the ability to combine multiple materials, skills, or processes to create something of a high level or quality design. So, in a sense the more processes the maker knows the broader the palate or pool of skills to draw from.

One of the processes that I have been drawn to is 3d printing and the use of it within the making crafting world. Using CAD (Computer Assisted Design), the ability to dream up an idea or a design in such a precise way is truly remarkable. Using a flat 2d plane, and vector points to draw your basic shape, you can then pull this shape or extrude, into a 3d object. Before your eyes this sketch or idea that you have just drawn takes on a life of its own, and from there you can continue to manipulate this shape or cut, or add holes etc. You then have a broad choice of materials with which to print from giving varying finishes or qualities that will also dictate the final products use. For example In some of my work I have used a 3d printed stamp that I made by taking a drawing of the branding from a local coffeeshop and plotting vectors around it on a 2d plane to create a copy of the design. That design was then extruded into a 3d object and printed on a small square base. The object was then

used as a stamp for relief work on the front of mugs designed specifically for that coffeeshop. The mugs in question (shown) were created via a pottery wheel which as we know is technology that has been available to humanity since around 3129BC (Scarre, 2005). The combination of these two processes the new meeting the old is to me like kneading a loaf of bread, every so often a sprinkle of new process is discovered by civilisation and its up to the makers of the world to knead that process into the collective dough and produce some new bread. Metaphorically.



Another use of 3d printing in ceramics is by Hammerly ceramics in moulding/casting using CAD (Hammerly Ceramics, 2019). Curt Hammerly uses the same process to draw shapes or design objects, however his choice of printers are resin. These 3d printers use a bath of UV reactive resin and 'flash' each layer slowly pulling the object up from the resin. The result is an extremely smooth finish on the object requiring next to no finishing work. With a super smooth surface this object is ideal for mould making. The object will then be layed flat on a support or base material and a coating of liquid plaster poured around it. Using this process, Hammerly has been able to design a 4 part modular mould for a coffee mug that he can chop and change to create varying effects and styles of mugs. Not to mention the surface patters and designs on each of the quarters of the mould are designed in such a way to catch the glaze perfectly and allow it to 'break' or separate in colour due to varying depths of gaze. This Level of design in ceramics, again is due to our use of old an new technologies together.



Instagram/Hammerlyceramics.com 2021

When it came to firing my work, again my love of process has been apparent as I'm drawn to the process of Crystalline glazing. Crystalline glazing is very similar to glazing and firing a regular Ceramic object in an electric kiln, however what you are trying to achieve is a growth of crystals in the layer of glaze. This is achieved by complex firing schedules that seesaw the kilns temperature back and forth to encourage the crystals to grow (Creber, 2005). This metallic crystallisation was once regarded as a flaw in pottery. Only now with the advent of digital controllers that are highly accurate, and have multiple segments or stages available to be programmed, have we discovered that this once mistake can be used to create beautiful designs. The materials involved are base elements such as copper oxide, manganese, cobalt carbonate and the reaction you're causing is a phase shift. The metal matter is separating and crystallising. Some contemporary artists using this technique are Jose Mariscal Paneque, J.Puzzley, and Brenna Dee ceramics (Kline, 2018).



Instagram/josemariscalpaneque.com 2022



Instagram/jpuzz.com, Jon Puzzoli 2019



Instagram/brennadeeceramics.com Brenna Dee 2019

In my own work I have found the pursuit of this process very difficult as not much information is out there about it. Most makers who can use crystalline glazing don't tend to share recipes or information easily, as a result those who are very good at crystalline glazing have gotten good via countless hours of testing, documentation, and work.

Word 2 - Material

Material with regards to craft, making or art encompass pretty much anything that can be used to create. This can be something refined such as gold or silver and precious stones as seen in this Karl Fritsch work.



[Instagram/Karlfritschrings.com](https://www.instagram.com/Karlfritschrings.com)

Karl Fritsch is a contemporary Jewellery designer making answers to the question “what is jewellery” (CURRENT OBSESSION, 2018).

The chosen material could even be collected refuse as used by Tim Noble and Sue Webster. These two artists live in Shoreditch and regularly collect and material that has been dumped or left out for recycling in order to give it a second lease on life as it were. Their art is centered around shadows and they use the reclaimed material, creating striking scenes such as these two figures in the chair in Dirty white trash (with gulls) (Tate, 2007). Traditional materials such as wood, metals all can and have been used for years to create newer materials are now becoming available to non industry makers such as carbon fibre and resin. Your choice of material as a maker is as important as your process, is it something sustainable or is it something suitable for the purpose you have designed?



Tim Noble and Sue Webster Dirty White Trash (With Gulls) 1998

Clay is one of my favourite materials personally. It has infinite possibilities and can be dug up in your back garden if you want to. Pottery has been alongside humans since 14000 BC (Scarre, 2005), providing functional additions to our lives, and sculptural or decorative works of art and artistry. When I first discovered clay and ceramics, I was tasked with making an object of typography on my foundation year in university, so I made a letter in clay. I was just amazed at how I could take this letter, and twist and manipulate it so easily but create so much impact. Something so simple but for myself it started me on a path of material discovery. This material is everywhere and no two runs of it are alike. Natural found clay in some areas in Japan is almost black and when fired has a chocolate colour. Most of the clay that can be bought by the average maker is varying recipes and combinations of graded materials such as potash feldspar and raw silica, fireclay. These things together can make clay and depending on the recipe can give some variation to the specific properties of the clay. For instance, some clay bodies will have pieces of finely ground pre fired clay material fed back into it. This is called grog and provides stability to the material while its being thrown and allowing less overall shrinkage or warping in the kiln as it has already been fired (Dorling Kindersley Publishing Staff, 2019). Some clays have stains or colourants that affect the overall tone of the clay. Some clays such as Egyptian faience have the glaze mixed into the clay and has to

be fired in a bed of sand due to its liquid nature at elevated temperature (Cooper and Ceramic Review, 2001).

After spending some time gaining material knowledge, I started using a pottery wheel and decided I would like to master it, this is not easy as mastery of any skill can require up to 10,000 hours (Gladwell, 2008). But seeing great potters able to make beautiful forms by throwing made me want to do the same. Different clays feel really very different on the wheel. As you throw the clay is spinning between two layers of slip, allowing the clay to be both solid and fluid at the same time. The more grit or grog in a clay the less smooth it will feel between your hands, however it will be more structurally robust as you create your design.

Word 3 – Wellbeing

Making, for me has deep roots in wellbeing. When I am working, and accessing that part of my brain that problem solves and creates, I find that for days I am calmer and much happier as an individual. During the Global pandemic of 2019-21, I borrowed a pottery wheel from the university I attend. It sat unused until around the third week of the pandemic, when I decided to start learning on it as I was becoming bored and anxious over the situation as it unfolded on the news. I taught myself to use the wheel and rather than making lots of items I was very precious over, I kept next to nothing. That vast majority of what I made was simply swept to one side, recycled, and then wedged back into useable clay for my next day's throwing. During my studying I found a quote "centre the clay, centre the world around you" (Leach, 1954). This quote really spoke to me in terms of what I was doing. To me it describes the moment just before I am about to make the form that I have in my head, when the clay under my hands is perfectly centred and the possibilities of the following moments are endless. It is in this moment that I have found wellness through the pandemic and increasingly bleak nature of the world as it stands in 2022. I began to research into the idea of wellbeing and mental health with regard to craft. I was surprised to find that the area is actually very well researched and the theory of art as therapy for wellbeing proven.

Art therapy has been recognized as having particular value when working with people who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally (Wadeson, 2010) as well as at a kinaesthetic/sensory level. This level of creativity often accesses the preverbal sensory motor stage of cognitive development (Piaget, Elkind and Flavell, 1969). This is the development stage at which as infants we discover using our senses like touch, feel, smell. In "Creative Arts in Counselling and Mental Health" (Neilsen, P.M., King, R.J. and Baker, F.A. 2015), work based around many clients with varying behavioural disorders was documented including a child client named Jack, who when began therapy had signs of physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural problems that were severe enough to warrant a diagnosis of Oppositional defiant disorder, but at the end of therapy it was documented many of the effects had lessened.

When I am teaching new pottery students, I am very mindful of teaching them not to be precious of the things that they make. To allow themselves to make mistakes and to let themselves fail. I feel like as people often we can find ourselves stuck trying to do the very best we can but being unwilling to fail. “Successful people don’t fear failure but understand that it’s necessary to learn and grow from it.” – (Kiyosaki, 2017) I believe that allowing the space for people to make, create and learn can improve wellbeing. I think the use of art and craft and in teaching these skills in such a way that they are accessible to all, not just those who are wealthy or have an abundance of time available is worthwhile and definitely something that I have become passionate about.

The three words I have chosen have led me to look deeper into the processes that I use, and materials I choose as a maker. Marrying new and old processes in my own personal craft is what I believe will drive future generations of makers forward. Using the available technologies to create things that, perhaps 10-15 years ago simply were not possible. In my research I came across a quote by Brene Brown, “We are makers. We move what we are learning from our heads to our hearts through our hands.” (Brown, 2017). I think that in the love of materials and love of process, a love of oneself can be found and nurtured as well. The scope of mental health within craft is huge and in my own future work I plan to look more deeply into the works of Mike White and arts development in community health in general.

The question I have arrived at through my research and this essay is;
How can I drive positive mental wellbeing and make the understanding of process, materials, and craft widely available to others?

Scarre, Christopher. *The Human Past : World Prehistory & the Development of Human Societies*. London, Thames & Hudson, 2015.

Hammerly Ceramics (2019). *Hammerly Ceramics*. [online] Hammerly Ceramics. Available at: <https://www.hammerlyceramics.com/>.

Creber, D. (2005). *Crystalline glazes*. London: A & C Black ; Philadelphia.

Kline, G. (2018). *Amazing glaze : techniques, recipes, finishing, and firing*. Minneapolis, Mn, Usa: Quarto Publishing Group Usa Inc.

CURRENT OBSESSION. (2018). *Karl Fritsch*. [online] Available at: <https://www.current-obsession.com/karl-fritsch/> [Accessed 4 May 2022].

Tate (2007). *The emblem of earthly vanities: Shadows – Tate Etc*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-9-spring-2007/emblem-earthly-vanities>.

Dorling Kindersley Publishing Staff (2019). *Complete Pottery Techniques : Design, Form, Throw, Decorate and More, with Workshops from Professional Makers*. Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Incorporated.

Cooper, E. and Ceramic Review (2001). *Clays and glazes : the ceramic review book of clay bodies and glaze recipes, over 900 recipes from professional potters*. London: Ceramic Review.

Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers : the story of success*. New York: Back Bay Books, Cop.

Leach, B. (1954). *Potter in Japan, 1952-1954*. London Unicorn Press.

Wadeson, H. (2010). *Art psychotherapy*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.

Piaget, J., Elkind, D. and Flavell, J.H. (1969). *Studies in cognitive development : essays in honour of Jean Piaget*. New York: Oxford University Press, , Printing.

Kiyosaki, R.T. (2017). *Rich Dad Poor Dad : With Updates For Today's World--And 9 New Study Session Sections*. Scottsdale, Az: Plata Publishing.

Neilsen, P.M., King, R.J. and Baker, F.A. (2015) *Creative Arts in Counselling and Mental Health, Creative Arts in Counselling and Mental Health*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Brown, B. (2017). *Rising strong : how the ability to reset transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead*. New York: Random House.