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FOCUS: CERAMICS
IS COLLECTED
CLAY DYNASTY
STURT TURNS 80
BERN EMMERICHS
VENTING KILNS
SINK SLUDGE

FOCUS: CERAMICS IS COLLECTED



Cassy McArthur, collecting, 2021

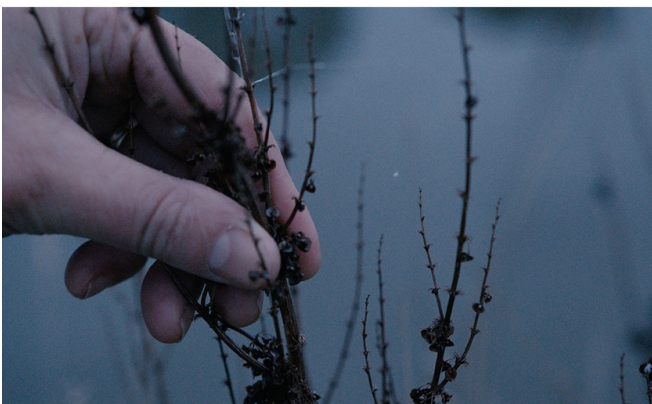
ECHO OF THE LANDSCAPE

by Cassy McArthur

For as long as I can remember, the natural landscape has been a constant source of wonder. It has fed my curiosity and invigorated me, providing space for fascination, contemplation and renewal.

Wandering and collecting has always been with me, so too my interest in the geological landscape. As a child I would sit atop granite boulders on my grandparents' property near the Grampians, looking out at the landscape – observing, thinking, wondering. Often I would wander the paddocks collecting little treasures, happy and free. My drive to collect was carried into my visual art studies at uni. With a focus on materiality, I deconstructed found objects to create new artworks, redefining the language of the object. Uni was a period of searching and discovery. Through my studies and from foundations laid as a child, compelled by the “what if?” question and deep introspection, I arrived at my current art practice.

Cassy McArthur, collecting and in the studio, 2021; photos: Josh Waddell, Far Flung Films
images commissioned by City of Ballarat, UNESCO Creative City





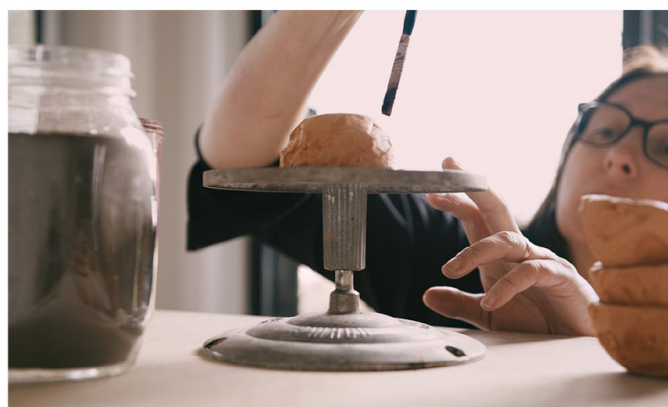
Cassy McArthur, scoria cone, 2021

As a ceramic artist, I draw on the immersive experience of my place within the natural landscape and translate observations, sensations and memories into objects designed to sit within the lived interior. With my studio situated on Wadawurrung Country in the Western Plains of South West Victoria I am surrounded by a scoria cone-dotted landscape of basalt and volcanic ash clay. This geological landscape inspires my current work, as do the vast seasonal changes that occur within it. Through curiosity and keen observation, I find myself drawn to the smallest of details, shifting between intense focus and an awareness of my place within the space. Every detail has the potential to open the door to something personally profound.

With materiality at the core of my practice, process and collecting are integral. Hand-collected clays, sand, shale, rock, stones, seeds, nuts, bark, wood, and, at times, bone and ash are used to create my pieces. Discarded ferric remnants are collected and incorporated into various works. Collected materials may be used for mark-marking and forming, embedded within the surface and body of my pieces, or processed for slips and glazes. Old objects rummaged from farm sheds also find their way into the studio for use as tools, moulds and support structures.

Collected clay, and Cassy McArthur glazing in the studio, 2021

Photos: Josh Waddell, Far Flung Films; images commissioned by City of Ballarat, UNESCO Creative City



FOCUS: CERAMICS IS COLLECTED



Cassy McArthur, small object grouping, 2021, handbuilt, wild clays, collected materials, mid-fired; photo: artist

The clays used are solely collected wild clays. The unpredictable nature and physical characteristics of these clays – particularly when exposed to different processes – drive my passion in this area. Clays are worked with and juxtaposed freely, encouraging variation and movement. My approach differs from many who work with clay: I am not concerned with consistency or what constitutes an ideal clay, for it is the nature of the found material that echoes the landscape from which it came.

By translating nuances of the geological landscape into pieces designed to fit within the lived interior, I aim to form a bridge of connectedness between the human lived experience and the natural environment. I hope for my work to sit with quiet strength, a landscape within its form evoking contemplation.

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Cassy McArthur, grouping, 2021, handbuilt, wild clays and collected materials, mid-fired; photo: artist

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Cover: **Carlene Thompson**, *Kalaya Ngura (Emu Country)*, 3 vases, 2020, stoneware sgraffito decoration, h.33cm, w.20cm, d.20cm, Pukatja, APY Lands / Adelaide SA
Photo: Stuart Humphreys; *Clay Dynasty*, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW; opened October 2021

Carlene Thompson is a senior artist and senior woman in the Ernabella community. At various times she has sat on the board of the Ernabella Art Centre and was the Chair for several years. Ernabella Arts is in Pukatja Community, at the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges in the far north west of South Australia.