



telopea

Editor : Irene Manion

Issue 5 March 2022



EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the fifth issue of *Telopea*. We have had so many local and world events impacting our lives since the start of 2022. The rapid spread of the Omicron variant, the war in Ukraine and now, most recently, the extraordinary scenes of flooding on the east coast of Australia, which have unsettled all of us. There have been many posts on social media revealing inundated studios that look impossibly damaged and the story of the flood damage to Lismore art gallery, whose entire collection appears to have been destroyed in the flood was an additional shock. All of us have been impacted in some way.

The strength and resilience of the human spirit, however, always amazes and inspires me.

Our first feature is about our illustrious ambassador the multi-talented Claudia Chan Shaw. We have loved having her presenting videos at the opening of our last two online exhibitions and being able to feature Claudia in *Telopea*, gives us all an insight into the formidable number of roles she plays. Her incredible sculptures and banners created for the Lunar New Year celebrations are so full of fun and energy and humour. We are so lucky to have her as our ambassador, and please enjoy reading more about Claudia's other roles and interests in this feature.

Lyn Pavey creates textiles that evoke various landscapes and conjure up memories and reflections through her intuitive and sophisticated juxtapositions of colour and texture. Recycled materials are crocheted into 3-dimensional wall panels that carry our eyes across their undulating soft surfaces and remind us of tree lines and plant and rock forms in the landscape.

Philadelphia artist Leah Kaplan's porcelain ceramic forms bear a vague resemblance to the soft textile work of Lyn Pavey. However, despite superficial similarities the techniques of construction could not be more dissimilar.

Her handbuilt porcelain undulating ceramic forms appear to be made of soft materials, however, they are actually highly fired ceramic forms that capture dancing light over their surfaces and appear to freeze movement and energy.

Finally we have a page of items that were part of the Tiger Tiger online exhibition which took place during the Lunar New Year.

Past issues of *Telopea* can now be accessed and downloaded from the Craftnsw website.

I hope these pages transport you away from the depressing series of events we have experienced so far in 2022.

Ed.

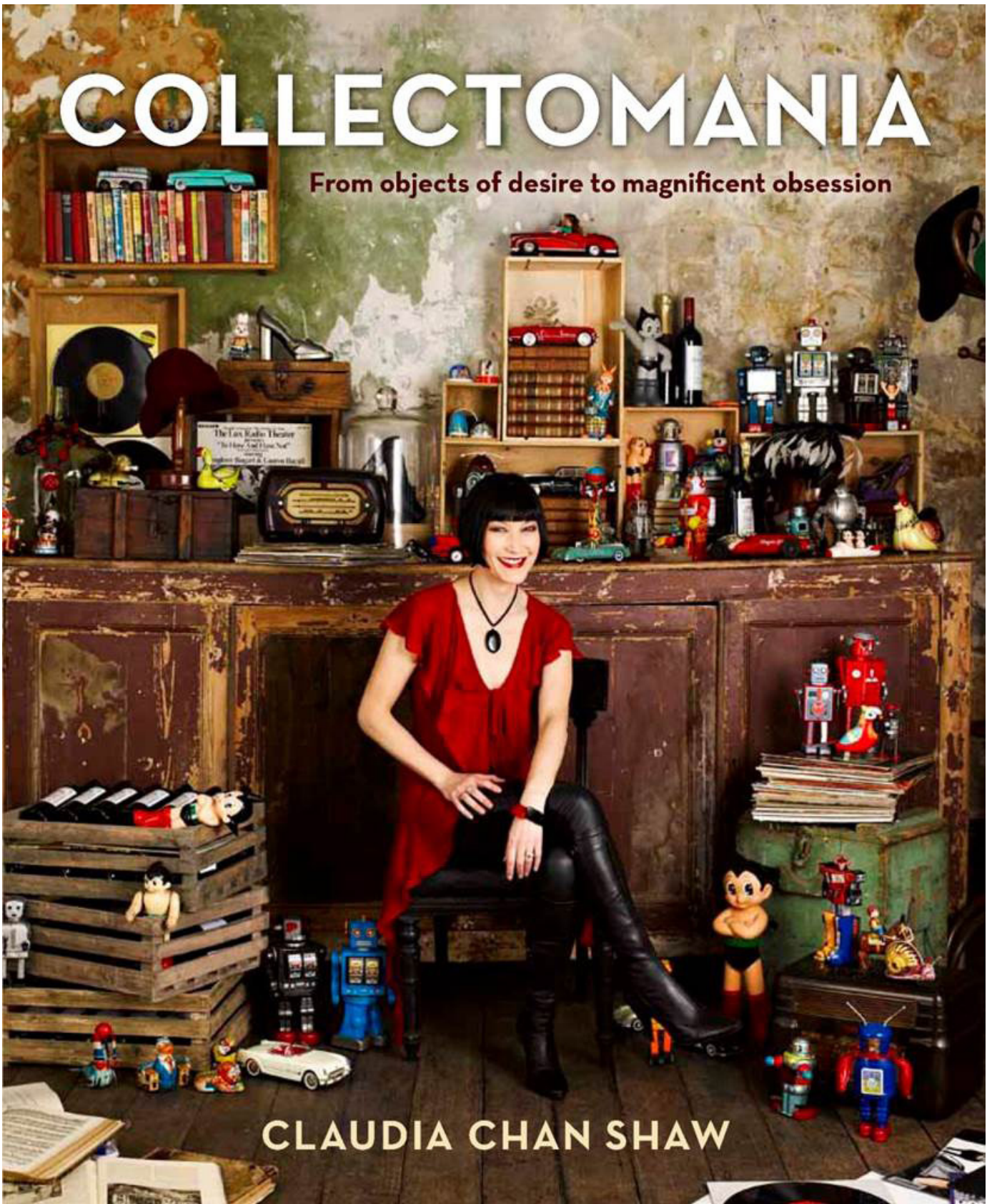
All photos in this edition have been printed with the permission of the feature artists: Claudia Chan Shaw, Lyn Pavey and Leah Kaplan.

Cover image:

Claudia Chan Shaw
with her Robo Rat for Sydney Lunar Festival 2020

COLLECTOMANIA

From objects of desire to magnificent obsession



CLAUDIA CHAN SHAW

The cover of the book Claudia Chan Shaw wrote on collecting in 2012



Top: 2016 Sydney Chinese New Year Festival *Tai Chi Bunnies*
Above left: *Ratobats* Lunar New Year, World Square 2020
Above Right *The Ratobats - The Showoff* Lunar New Year, World Square 2020

CLAUDIA CHAN SHAW

CRAFTNSW AMBASSADOR

1. You are the ambassador of the society of Arts and Crafts NSW. Can you describe aspects of your role and your reasons for wishing to support this society so generously?

I am honoured to be a Craft NSW ambassador and am delighted to wave the Arts and Crafts NSW flag, speaking at exhibition openings (real or virtual), or providing an opportunity to spread the word via my radio program, Arts Friday on Eastside Radio. I think that growing up surrounded by beautiful handmade objects, created by my mother Vivian Chan Shaw, and working in our fashion business where every item is made by hand, gave me a great understanding of not only original pieces, but the processes and dedication involved. Creating by hand is the purest of pursuits and I'm proud to be associated with such a vital and talented group.

2. It is well known that you were a partner with your mother working on the Vivian Chan Shaw fashion design label. Can you share some of the experiences involved in this partnership and how it came about.

I wear quite a few hats; my creative career spans art and design, photography, curating, television and radio presenting, arts commentary, public speaking, and collecting. I studied for a BA in Visual Communications Design at Sydney College of the Arts, concentrating on graphic design, photography and film. At the time I thought that I'd like to have a career in the television industry. I had deliberately steered away from the fashion design degree at SCA as I had grown up

with fashion.

My mother Vivian Chan Shaw is an internationally acclaimed fashion designer who started her eponymous label in 1972, with a boutique in the Royal Arcade, under the Sydney Hilton. The label is renowned for its exquisite handmade knitwear and jewellery. The designs are represented in the permanent collection of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. I had worked with Vivian since I was eleven, working in our boutique after school and during school holidays. When I was 19, and still completing my degree, Vivian and I travelled to the USA to establish an export market for the Vivian Chan Shaw label. We secured a New York agent to represent the label and sold all over the USA including iconic American stores Bonwit Teller, Neiman Marcus, I Magnin, Nordstrom and independent boutiques in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. On graduation, I joined the business as a partner, co-designer, and marketing director and in 1986 we opened the Vivian Chan Shaw flagship store in the Queen Victoria Building. Vivian and I had tremendous adventures working together. All of the designs are one-off, hand loomed knits, and we established a wonderful following for the label, selling around Australia and exporting not only to the US, but to the UK, New Zealand, Switzerland and Germany. For us, the exciting aspect was that the Vivian Chan Shaw label was entirely hand made in Australia.

From Vivian's early elaborate pieces made in fabric, to the evolution of the artisan hand loomed knit garments, where the boundaries of craft and fashion



Above: *Step Right Up*
 from Claudia Chan Shaw
 exhibition *Obscuriosity*
 Above right: *Third Drawer
 Down* from the Cabinet of
 Curiosities at the exhibition
Obscuriosity
 Right: *Madonna* from
 exhibition *Obscuriosity*
 Far right: *Stick Men* by
 Claudia Chan Shaw
 exhibition *Poster Boy*
 below: *Evensong* from
Obscuriosity



are blurred, the Vivian Chan Shaw label has a distinctive design signature, where knitwear is explored with unprecedented depth and sophistication.

We closed the QVB salon after 28 years there, and release pieces from the Vivian Chan Shaw archive on our website.

3.Can you tell us a little about your involvement in the Chinese Lunar New Year event in Sydney? The light sculptures for the Chinese New Year that you have designed and co-designed have captured the imagination of the public.

I was the curator of the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival (2016 – 2018), the largest celebration of the Lunar New Year outside China.

We worked with leading Asian Australian artists to create the Lunar Lanterns, 12 enormous light sculptures representing the animals of the Chinese zodiac. This was a tremendously fun project and the designs were mind blowing!

I designed an installation for the Festival - fourteen 3m high illuminated rabbits practicing Tai Chi. One of these giant rabbits now lives on my front porch!

I curated the Lunar New Year at World Square, Sydney, and conceived art installations -the Three (not so) Little Pigs for the Year of the Pig (2019) and designed The Ratobats, eight acrobat Rat sculptures for the Year of the Rat (2020), and The Warrior Ox in 2021.

One of my favourite projects was designing the hero illuminated art installation for the Year of the Rat 2020 for the Sydney Lunar Festival. Nine 2.8m high golden animatronic Robot Rats standing on a whopping 8m tall tower of rotating cogs. It was huge!

And for the Year of the Tiger (2022) I designed Tiger banners for the Sydney Lunar Festival. It was such a hoot to see

the banners flapping in the breeze, from Martin Place to the QVB.

4. We all remember you as the co-presenter of Australia's most successful antique show, *Collectors*, which for me was a must watch each week. How did you get involved in antique collecting and become a presenter in this unique series for Australia.

I have always collected. I started collecting Humphrey Bogart memorabilia when I was twelve and switched the focus of my collecting to clockwork tin toys and wind up and battery operated robots. I blame this obsession on watching too much TV as a kid! I fell in love with the Robot from the TV show *Lost in Space*. The toy collecting led to an appearance on the ABC's popular long running program *Collectors*. Not long after, I was asked to audition for the role of a presenter on the show at the end of 2009. I joined the *Collectors* team as one of the panel of experts and became co-host of the show in 2010. *Collectors* opened up a whole other world. As a result, I wrote *Collectomania – From objects of desire to magnificent obsession*, and from there I ended up on the public speaking circuit. My topics range from collecting, to fashion through the ages, design, art history, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Chinese heritage, and travel. I'm currently working on a new TV series... coming soon...!

5.You have also exhibited your own artwork work in galleries. Can you provide us with a few examples of your work? What have been the main influences on the creation of your exhibition pieces, and how much has your interest in antiques and collectibles played a part in the creation of these works.

I am a photo artist, and created



Above: Vivian Chan Shaw design in Grazia magazine
 Above right: Vivian Chan Shaw hand loomed knit Luxor two piece.
 Below: Vivian Chan Shaw hand loomed knit pleat detail.



a series called Poster Boy, which was exhibited as part of the Head On Photo Festival in 2016. Poster Boy is a continuing and evolving photographic series exploring my fascination with the beauty to be found in urban detritus. Every day a poster is pasted to a street wall. Anonymous hands strip the posters away or paste over them, leaving only a weathered and tattered visual hint of what came before. It is the surviving, accidental abstract abbreviation, the fragments and patterns that this urban detritus creates that is central to the series, which was photographed in the streets of Paris, Barcelona, Sydney, and Melbourne. I held a solo exhibition *Obscuriosity* at Art Atrium gallery in 2018. For *Obscuriosity*, I created a cabinet of curiosities, and photographed treasures from my personal collection. The intimate photographs invite

the viewer's own interpretation of their meaning and history. A wind-up tin bird offers its evensong from a tree; seahorses swim through an imagined underwater world. Childhood memories combined with the intrigue of the obscure are explored. But like any memory, sometimes the real and the imaginary blur and that is where fantasy takes over.

My love of the past and other eras has led to my role as a cultural tour leader for The Art Gallery Society NSW in association with Renaissance Tours. I lead the Art Deco to Art Now tour series. Since 2015, I have taken Art Deco lovers to Shanghai, Hong Kong, Miami and Cuba, New York and Wellington. When COVID curtailed our travelling the focus turned closer to home with Art Deco Sydney and Art Deco Potts Point tours.



Above: Vivian Chan Shaw knitted applique with jade beads

above right: Vivian and Claudia Chan Shaw



Claudia Chan Shaw has just been interviewed by Sarah Kanowski in the ABC podcast series *Conversations*. It expands on her story here and is a 'must listen'

You can catch the 'Conversations' podcasts at this link: [https://www.abc.](https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/past-programs/?month=2022-02)

[net.au/radio/programs/conversations/past-programs/?month=2022-02](https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/past-programs/?month=2022-02)



Top: Lyn Pavey *Below the Cnopy*, wool fabric, wool yarn
Left: Lyn Pavey *Tree Lines*, wool fabric, wool yarn



LYN PAVEY

IMAGINED LANDSCAPES

Artist Lyn Pavey's work resonates with the viewer. Her textile constructions conjure memories of the landscape. Lyn employs the traditional technique of crochet, but carries it to new levels through incorporating recycled materials and working dimensionally.



trust my ability who have commission large works for their homes.

Q1. How long have you been working in the medium of textiles and what opportunities, qualifications, circumstances, and/ or choices enable you to start working in this area?

One of earliest recollections of textile creativity was as a pre-schooler, sitting in the corner of a room where my mother taught sewing to primary school students. Not such a successful recollection as I 'chain stitched' my work to my skirt. Chain stitch is one of the hardest embroideries to unpick so I was mortified by the need to wear my work home, literally! My mother and grandmother were constantly sewing, knitting and crocheting so for me it was a part of everyday life. Spending three hours a day travelling to school provided ample time to crochet, creating granny square blankets for amusement and also to stay warm. From school, I pursued studies in Clothing Technology, leading to a twenty year career in fashion, industrial and workwear clothing and bridal garments, very diverse areas. In subsequent studies as a horticulturalist my passion for colour, texture, design and nature ensued. As my parental duties lessened in the last five years additional time has allowed for a progression into textile art. I am also fortunate to have clients who believe and

Q 2. Your textile work conjures memories of landscapes and your titles inform us of your landscape inspirations. Describe your approach to

creating your textile art and how this technique has evolved?

What I love about crochet is the continuity, the connective thread. When I look at landscapes I want to hear their untold stories. The conceptual approach to my landscape piece is the beginning, the grain of sand, the seed deposited in the damp rainforest earth, the polyps free flowing before they rest, from where they actualise in such magnificent landforms. The materials I use have their own untold stories, intangible histories. Some solid, steady, strong and enduring. Others fragile, transient and hopeful. The connective thread, reflective of the character material, binds and build the form and textile work. My technique of crocheting around a core materials has evolved as commissioned floor art works have increased in size, the largest 4m sq, requiring a more sturdy construction. The concept of these commission works are based on the clients lifestyle and or profession, again require new processes to achieve my desired result. Moving onto wall art has allowed for new dimensional scope.

Q3. Which piece(s) most accurately exemplify what you are currently striving to achieve in your work? Describe it/them. Explain why this work is significant in your



Top and Above: Lyn Pavey, *Golden Stones*, wool fabric and alpaca yarn.
This piece is based on the sandstone formations around Sydney's foreshore.



Paper, cotton and wood. This earlier piece explores the fragility of the Australian bush from the devastation of fire.

development as an artist?

One of my earlier landscape pieces explored the fragility of the Australian bush to the devastation of fire. Created in two parts, beginning when road tripping through the blackened Blue Mountains and continuing when I was holidaying on Kangaroo Island as it was burning. This work, of paper, cotton and wood is detailed, delicate but hopeful. Not all charcoal and ash, potential for regrowth with hints of surviving greenery and seeds of the bush remaining to regenerate. As we know this will take many years and nature has a strength we should reflect upon.

A more recent work 'Tree Lines,' (See page 10) was an experience of chance evolution.

I had a concept plan. It was a mind image of trees, how they grow in lines of their ideal climate of light, shade, moisture and nutrition at the same elevation level. I had seen this vision many times, loving the swarming context of colour and equal need. As this piece progress I felt it became the recollection of my childhood farm in Central West NSW. But those lines were not flat! Long slow undulations of eucalypts on the hillocks with the next tree line of confers in the cooler valleys. Like the landscape I adapted. As an interesting note the materials for this work actually came from the home it eventually depicted.

Q 4. Sourcing recycled materials is an integral part of your process. How do you go about sourcing these materials and then working with them to translate your ideas?

Fortunately friends, family and fellow crafters know I am continuously on the hunt for material to use in my textile art, they act as great 'scouts' or gift me with items they no longer require. Residential 'council collection' are a surprising cache of materials.

When commission works require specific colours I will either hunt in opportunity stores, being mindful of the usability of the material in its current state or hand dyed.

My studio cupboards bulge with my stash of materials. I am a hoarder, therefore constantly reorganise to make space. During this reshuffle, often new creative thoughts develop from the disarray of materials prior to composure as colour,

then texture drive my creative process.

Q 5. Explain the balance between 'concept' vs 'skill' in the production of your work.

My textile works always start with a concept which is roughly sketched, usually in several variations, following research of personal photos, delving into memories and past experiences plus previous textile ideas. Depending on the type of textile art and function requirements I plan the display and hanging fixtures, I have learnt from experience if this not included in the preliminary process it can be problematic as the last step. This may all sound stifling to the creativeness but a work in progress is non-stop learning curve to achieve the concept and with each new work I push personal boundaries to continually develop and explore my textile possibilities. Skills evolved over time to provide a core to the creative process, but also promote a feeling of confidence to venture into unfamiliar techniques and combinations of materials.



Lyn Pavey, *Red Rock Siblings* wool fabric, wool yarn

LEAH KAPLAN

PORCELAIN HANDBUILT CERAMIC VESSELS.



Crewel Onda,

The whiteness, plasticity and translucency of porcelain hold an enduring allure for me. Its transformation from malleable material to vitrified form always awes and surprises me.



Top: Leah Kaplan, *Crewel Bolero*, porcelain
Left: Leah Kaplan *Shibori Folded Knot*, porcelain
Above: Leah Kaplan, *Woodgrain Pisa*, porcelain



Leah Kaplan's porcelain forms often belie their materiality. They appear to be soft and malleable in form like textiles, yet they are frozen forms that once fired in a kiln, transform into hard brittle forms that freeze the appearance of soft, draping, slouching forms. They capture light and allow it to dance across the undulating surfaces.

Of the different clay bodies artists use, the most difficult to work with is porcelain. It requires the highest temperature to fire, has a translucency when fired and because it is bone to white, the plasticity offered by the element of red iron oxide in other clay types is absent. Hence, because of this lack of plasticity, it is extremely difficult to hand build with porcelain. Leah Kaplan has shown extraordinary skill in her massive hand built constructions in this recalcitrant medium.

What do you love most about working in clay?

Clay feels full of endless possibilities and surprises. A lot of my work is a conversation with the material: I have an idea in my head, but then as part of executing it, I encounter something unexpected — and way more interesting — which takes me in an entirely new direction.

And I love that clay is totally reusable and recyclable – at least up until the point it is fired. It allows for lots of risk-taking and experimentation. If I don't like something, I can just toss it in the bucket, reclaim it and start over again.

Your pieces are so incredibly delicate and intricate... have you always adopted this style or has it evolved through the years? Can you tell me a little about how your style has evolved...

I have worked in a lot of studios over the years. My vessels and style changed based on the equipment and materials available to me. The one consistent thread is that I have always been a hand-builder.

About five years ago, I started using porcelain exclusively. I fell in love with its whiteness and smoothness. Digging your fingers into porcelain is a really pleasing tactile experience. Over time, I started exploiting porcelain's translucent properties, which meant working thinner and thinner. I also began exploring porcelain's textural potential. So one discovery led to another — and another.

At the same time, I started to simplify and strip away anything extraneous. I stopped using glaze and colorants — except for the occasional clear glaze on the interiors of my vessels. This focus allowed me an even deeper dive into porcelain's materiality.

Where do you draw inspiration?

I am a huge walker, covering as much as 60 miles in a week, most of it spent cross-crossing Philadelphia between my home and my studio.

On my walks, I often stop to take photographs. The subject matter is wildly eclectic — from gravestones to mushroom gills. Some of this inspirational fodder finds its way into my work. I think this exercise in paying attention also puts me in the right mindset for creating when I get to my studio. Whether I am taking pictures or admiring a work of art, I find myself drawn to the same themes: movement, textured surfaces, light and shadow. I take some heart in that consistency. I don't know the "why" of it. I just let the forces of attraction exert their gravitational pull, which, if I think about it, is the same reason I make things.

What is the process when creating one of your pieces? How long does one piece generally take you to make?

I employ a lot of different techniques in my practice. Some work takes several days to complete. These vessels evolve slowly, through accrual. Others can take just a few hours. And still others can be fairly quick and almost gestural — but I may go through several iterations before arriving at something that feels "right."

I enjoy toggling between handbuilding techniques that are more meditative and gradual, and methods that require quicker bursts of intensity. Each approach has its virtues. I don't think I could ever work just one way or the other.

Do you think your environment and where you live has an influence on your work? How?

Absolutely. I am fortunate to be part of a large creative community through The Clay Studio, a Philadelphia nonprofit dedicated to all things clay — from classes to residencies to juried shows. I don't think I would be where I am today without The Clay Studio. It is a very collaborative, supportive environment — no matter your level of expertise. Workshops and communal studio space allowed me to bootstrap my way to a solo art practice. The Clay Studio has supported and spun out a lot of nationally and internationally acclaimed ceramicists, so I could envision a path

forward as a fledgling artist.

Also, Philadelphia is a maker-friendly town with a long history of craftsmanship in wood, fiber, glass and metalwork — in addition to clay. So, it is an all-around great place to be an artist.

What do you love most about what you do?

Discovering something new — that moment of epiphany — is a total endorphin rush. That is what keeps me working day in and day out. It is a very addictive feeling — you just want more and more of it.



Leah Kaplan, *Folded Knots*, porcelain

TIGER TIGER

SOME EXAMPLES OF THEMED WORK FROM THE RECENT ONLINE EXHIBITION



Top Left: Marlies Benjamin - Lamp
Tiger Pattern Decoupage Pendant
Top Right: Jo Ann Hopkins, Marquetry
Tiger Box.
Middle left: Joy Dodd
Tiger Scarf, woven in Tussah silk.
Middle right: Sue Fraser
Tea Blossom Tiger, equine sculpture.
Bottom left: Liz Gemmell, *Tiger Eyes* neckpiece. Hand embroidered
Bottom right: Carolyn Cabena
Narnia, devore velvet shawl.



The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW trading as craftnsw

Founded 1906

Incorporated 1929

ABN: 55 000 022 195

Patron: Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO

Ambassador: Claudia Chan Shaw



<https://www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au/>



facebook.com/craftnsw/



<https://www.instagram.com/craftnsw/>



gallery@artsandcraftsnsw