stevenheinemann**culture**and**nature**

Contents

Left: ***Has Bean***, 2017 (detail, cat. 68)

Acknowledgements

I have had the good fortune of growing up with amazing parents, Andrew and Eva Heinemann; truly a tough act to follow. To them and my remarkable partner and fellow artist Chung-Im Kim, my profound gratitude.

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Galleries that handle contemporary ceramics have a difficult road in creating and nurturing a previously nonexistent audience. Some of these unsung heroes include dealers Ute Stebich, Suzanne Greenaway, Renate Wunderle, Carla Koch, David Kaye, Lucy Lacoste, Elena Lee, Avra Leodas, Nancy Margolis. Without them I would not have had a career.

And going all the way back to Williams High, props to my old pal Mel Bryan for kicking off a crazy dream.

— Steven Heinemann

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— Gardiner Museum

Right: ***Untitled, 1991*** (detail, cat. 20)

THIS “BEHAVIOUR” OF THE MATERIAL, WHICH DOES NOT SEEK YOUR PERMISSION, ALREADY SUGGESTS TO ME A DANCE OF NATURE AND CULTURE, MIND AND NATURE.

Preface

A retrospective exhibition by a major artist such as Steven Heinemann describes a fascinating journey. The present moment can sometimes appear to be an inevitable evolution from the first works, but just as often, the journey has remarkable twists and turns, unexpected influences, and a *now* that has little resemblance to the *then*. How does an artist get from there to here? The volatility of creation, the varied sources of inspiration, and the path of an artist's life all contribute to a story, especially one that unfolds over decades. Much art is as unexpected for the artist as the viewer; it's part of the tension of creation that keeps the *next* allusive and exciting. It's an excitement difficult to portray in a retrospective but compelling when communicated. While Steven's work is well known to connoisseurs, an exhibition that melds his brilliant work with personality and influences is a wonderful way to engage a wide audience—understanding theory and its subsequent material realization is captivating. In a museum we want to tell these stories, as well as let objects engage the viewer with their own charisma.

I first understood the multi-layered aspects of Steven's work when I was part of a studio tour he gave. Witnessing Steven explain his techniques and experiments beguiled all of us on the tour and helped us appreciate the nuance of his creations. It certainly gave the work additional layers of meaning, a very human sheen that enriched its obvious beauty and technical prowess. As we began discussing Steven's retrospective, I wanted the exhibition, in part, to do what he did to enthrall our tour group: take us into his work by sharing his life, ideas, and a passion that sustains him in a long career, which continues to reveal something new about clay all the time.

— Kelvin Browne
Executive Director and CEO
Gardiner Museum

Pages 6–7: The exterior of Steven Heinemann's Cookstown studio
Left: Objects on display in the studio's loft
Page 10: A work area on the ground floor of the studio

Steven Heinemann: Culture and Nature | Rachel Gotlieb

The ceramic sculptures of Steven Heinemann are astonishing, mysterious enigmas inviting thoughts about being and non-being, the tangible and the intangible. His thirty-five-year practice is deeply rooted in the principles of the 1960s studio craft movement, which prioritizes process, material, and the non-functional object to create autonomous sculpture.[1] Put another way, material and process drive Heinemann's creative content: he focuses on the physical conditions and constraints of making to transform them into new visual perceptions. To paraphrase David Pye, the eminent craft writer and teacher, Heinemann is such a skilled master that he is able to regulate the workmanship of certainty (deliberation) with the free workmanship of risk (chance).[2] Mass, volume, surface, texture, and occasionally imagery are Heinemann's tools to investigate the medium. He employs varying degrees of scale, form, and technique, but since 1981 has mainly utilized mould slip-casting rather than throwing or hand-building. While Heinemann's formalism at times subverts and other times exploits the material to either deny or showcase many of its innate properties, his explorations remain largely within its boundaries and represent a continuation as opposed to a rupture of the ceramics tradition.

Heinemann's clay sculptures, be they open vessels or closed containers, change in appearance from the chunkiness of the organic to the precision of minimalism, depending upon his mode of inquiry. And yet, there is a common thread linking his diverse body of work that extends beyond his studies in the material, and that is nature. Heinemann photographs snowdrifts, patterns in frozen ice and parched earth, and collects leaves, pods, fossils, and other fragments, which guide his thinking about form as well as the pre-cultural and the cultural worlds *(fig. 1)*. His ceramics—sometimes intimate, other times monumental—operate on a metaphorical level, serving as touchstones at once connecting and undermining our interaction with plants, animals, and ancient spirits. His thinking indirectly references the theories of anthropologists Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who employed the culture-nature dichotomy as a method to decipher myths and rituals. Philippe Descola and others have recently argued that the nature-culture binary is arbitrary; instead, nature should be critically examined in culture and vice versa.[3] Heinemann is not too fussed about such theories and, indeed, is relaxed about how his sculptures should be viewed. For this reason he often leaves his pieces untitled or selects names meaningful only to him. However, mostly the nomenclature, as with the objects themselves, evokes nature, enhancing the poetic timelessness of his material investigations.

The Studio

A creation of importance can only be produced when its author isolates himself, it is a child of solitude.[4]

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Heinemann's ceramics come from the quiet and isolated place of his studio. He chooses not to engage in recent discussions pertaining to the post-material, post-disciplinary, and post-museum —in other words, sloppy craft, sub-fabrication, and relational aesthetics.[5] For twenty years, his studio was a windowless basement in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Since 2006 he has worked in the country in a converted horse barn just up the hill from his heritage log-cabin residence, on a ten-acre pastoral site, near Cookstown, Ontario, a sixty-minute drive north of Toronto.

On the first floor of his studio are open shelves filled with countless small and large jars and vials of slips and glazes, vast quantities of test tiles stacked side by side (like vinyl record dust jackets) filed according to their firing temperatures, and countless peg boards holding a vast array of potter's tools *(fig. 2)*. Most striking is the large inventory of his ceramics: vessels, bowls, and containers in all shapes and sizes and in various stages of completion from bisque to glazed work. Pinned on the walls are Heinemann's sketches (drawing to visualize formalistic issues is a critical part of his process), and inspirational objects and images: the foil lid from a yogurt container, a poster of the Spanish Alhambra (which he visited in 2010), or a picture of the American ceramist Bill Daley, his friend and mentor. Despite or because of the volume of potter's paraphernalia, everything is efficiently in its place and space is divided according to function, including

Fig. 1 | Steven Heinemann, *iceandsnow* series, digital photograph

Fig. 2 | Test tiles in the studio

a spraying booth, a slip-casting area, glazing and sanding stations, and a kiln room (with three adjustable-sized electric kilns). A full-size bathtub is adapted into a sink for wet sanding oversize forms, showing that the artist is resourceful and inventive. Upstairs is a storage space for his sixty or so moulds, which span his entire career. There is an elevator for moving these cumbersome and heavy objects between floors. Finally, Heinemann created a private gallery space that he uses for exhibition staging, as does his wife Chung-Im Kim, the noted textile artist.

Process

Adopt the pace of nature:
her secret is patience.[6]

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Disciplined best describes Heinemann's process. Mostly, he is solitary, without the aid of an assistant, because he dislikes delegating (although he has had some intermittent assistance over the years to facilitate production). As the rigorous organization of his studio reveals, he controls each step of the process and thus is the opposite of a spontaneous artist working in chaos. Heinemann states the appeal of clay is its transformation from "dust to its final conclusion."[7] It gives him great satisfaction knowing that the materials arrive raw and unprocessed and leave his studio a finished product. Heinemann is by no means channelling back-to-the-land DIY culture; he would use commercial products if they were responsive to his manipulations, but none are available in the marketplace. Formulating and mixing clays, slips, and glazes rather than purchasing them ready-made (the adjoining shed is packed with bags of raw materials), sculpting his own prototypes in solid clay, which he then slip-casts in plaster moulds, are all part of his regimen. He also photographs some pieces during the different stages of their development, documenting how the clay warps, slumps, and cracks as it dries during the glazing and surface treatment stage. Heinemann freely admits that he is a control freak, and this is critical to facilitate his working on multiple objects at a time. Typically he has numerous works on the go, which he may put aside for a number of reasons often related to unresolved aesthetic issues. One of the challenges of this method is that he sometimes has to wait a long time to fire a work because he needs to fill the kiln with pieces that require the same firing temperature. For similar reasons related to precision and control, he uses electric rather than wood- or gas-fired kilns, which are less consistent. As Heinemann explains, electric kilns are the most common, economical, and practical method of firing because they can be used anywhere and are easy to program.

Heinemann follows the long tradition of potters' notebooks practised by Josiah Wedgwood, Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, Erica Deichmann, and many other serious potters who keep diaries to track

Fig. 3 | One of Steve Heinemann's notebooks

the number of firings and their temperatures *(fig. 3)*, and to reference other material concerns. While Heinemann concedes that he is an old school ceramist, he is also comfortable employing Rhino software and three-dimensional printing to explore form ideas and to develop prototypes and models.

Just as Heinemann is disciplined, he is patient. He explores different formalistic issues in cycles over long periods of time, usually over four or five years. His slow and evolving process is based upon a limited series of shapes, textures, pigments, and imagery. The importance of this repetition is to find the very essence of the ceramic object, as well as to push and expand the innateness of the material to discover new aesthetic perceptions.[8] Because he works privately and for himself rather than specific clients, albeit gallery exhibition deadlines are a reality, he has the freedom to follow his own strategies and questions dictated by process and making rather than external factors. Heinemann notes, "To visually resolve something is a slow process, it means having a conversation with the work, living with it, repeat viewing for weeks and months before doing the next thing." For an artist who likes to complicate simplicity and to endlessly refine, to intuit when a work is finished is not so easy. He admits to culling ceramics if they do not meet his standard, but like many driven artists, he keeps some of his failures for reference because he likes to learn from them.

Early Work

All the works of men which have
been most admired since the beginning
of history have been made by the
workmanship of risk.[9]

— David Pye

Art history and criticism have generally been unkind to ceramics, viewing it as a poor candidate for sculpture. There is a long tradition of Western artists using clay for terracotta models from Gian Lorenzo Bernini to Auguste Rodin, or artists who fashioned clay vessels into whimsical tabletop sculptures like Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall. However, carving on hard marble, wood, or stone—the act of removing material—was often considered a greater skill than modelling, adding, or building with malleable clay.[10] In the postwar era, ceramists Peter Voulkos in California and Hans Coper in London, and American critic Rose Slivka helped to end this stigmatization and elevate ceramics into the discourse of modern art. Slivka famously called this modern turn "the new ceramic presence" in which ceramists treat clay as paint, the pot as canvas, where form and surface are in opposition to each other, and "the validity of the accident is a conscious precept."[11]

Heinemann benefited from these developments, studying in the late 1970s in Canada when ceramic teaching was still in its gestation, and in the following decade in the United States, where it was more established. While pedagogical directions diverged depending upon the institution, Heinemann chose the trajectory of ceramic sculpture for poetic contemplation rather than functional studio pottery for everyday use.

It was in high school in Aurora, Ontario, that Heinemann found his calling thanks to a congenial art class environment, where he also studied photography and painting. He recounts that the art room was fitted with a potter's wheel and a kiln, and he dropped in regularly before and after school; that was when things started to happen for him. Heinemann almost attended York University,

but when he visited the campus with his portfolio in hand for orientation a week before school started, he was surprised to learn that the art department had no ceramics program let alone equipment, his first lesson on the hierarchies between art and craft. He immediately drove to Sheridan College School of Crafts and Design, which had opened in 1967, and showed his work to eminent glass artist Karl Shantz, who, in shorts and sandals, accepted him on the spot. This was 1976, the school was at once informal and in upheaval; the ceramics department in particular was unsettled, changing instructors each of the three years that Heinemann attended.[12] All in all, it was a positive experience, introducing him to a multitude of approaches and people. Heinemann lived with fellow student Neil Forrest, who is now professor of Ceramics at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design University in Halifax, and together they had lively discussions dissecting the direction of studio ceramics. Ruth Gowdy McKinley, the supremely skilled functionalist potter, married to furniture master Donald Lloyd McKinley, was another force; though she did not directly teach, she potted on-site, and influenced Heinemann as a role model for setting high standards and demanding perfection. In Heinemann's last year, a young Bruce Cochrane joined the faculty as its Ceramics head; he taught by demonstrating, and this method of teaching and his passion for studio ceramics would profoundly shape Heinemann's work ethic, as well as the practice of other students he instructed until his retirement in 2010.

In his final year at Sheridan, Heinemann made nothing but bowls thrown on the wheel. He had discovered the work of Hans Coper through books and was profoundly affected by his minimalist ceramic sculptures. Significantly, Heinemann began to alter shape by pinching, piercing, and cutting clay. Working in porcelain, Heinemann eschewed glass-like glazes normally associated with the material and instead applied transparent colours to the wet clay, and then chased the soluble pigments around the pot with water to create emanating rings. The result is quiet, understated treatments of the bowl, which exploit the fundamental opposition between the vertical and horizontal, modest endeavours that are nonetheless universal and consequential. The bowls' intimate scale and sedimentation of colour are not unlike Lucie Rie's delicate spiral pots, which Heinemann was also familiar with at

Fig. 4 | *Untitled*, 1980 (detail, cat. 4)

the time. *Untitled Bowl* from 1980 is particularly evocative of one of Heinemann's small pots eliciting greatness and magnitude *(fig. 4)*. The viewer's eye is drawn deep into the bowl, attracted to the circle of luminous white simulating an abyss surrounded by walls of cloudy blue.

While attending Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri to complete his Bachelor of Fine Art in 1981, Heinemann became frustrated with the limitations of the wheel in his search of new form. He had chosen the program because of Ken Ferguson, director of the Ceramics Department since 1964, a popular figure committed to studio practice and known for encouraging students to find their own voice.[13] In Kansas City, Heinemann found his way, developing a process that he would make his own: solid clay, geometric template, and plaster moulds, a method that would take him through the next thirty-five years to explore endless variations in form. And he discovered it more or less by chance.[14] Playing around with a wire cutter (a tool normally used for separating solid blocks of wet clay), he sliced ribbon-like strips to create a beautiful vortex pattern. Looking to add structure and depth, he grabbed a circular bat (usually attached to the wheel head, which the pot is thrown on), to guide the shape of the form. Admiring the rippling effect, he cast the design in plaster and then made a series in clay with no two alike due to variations in the coloration *(cat. 3, 5)*. This mode of production was unusual at the time because casting was not part of the studio ceramics ethos, since

Fig. 5 | *Mimbres*, 1985 (detail, cat. 6)

Fig. 6 | *Mimbres* bowl, Mogollon culture, New Mexico, 950–1150, ceramic and pigment, The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Edward and Betty Harris, 2004.1134

it was generally dismissed as an industrial process. Heinemann, in fact, later realized that he had inadvertently stumbled upon the industrial technique used in traditional design modelling, for example automobile prototyping in clay shaped around template profiles.

Negatives

Heinemann often names his different bodies of work after the forms they loosely resemble or the processes by which they were made. Following his early bowl studies, *negatives* reflect his fascination with the moulds themselves: their sculptural profiles, the cavities after the models were removed, and the imprints they left behind. The juxtaposition of the amorphous clay exterior with the defined geometric aperture is characteristic of the *negatives* group. They are ungainly, primitive containers that appear to be weathered and altered by time and place. Their scarred surfaces are irregularly marked with mysterious symbols and inorganic elements unrelated to clay, implying that things exist inside and outside the material.

Heinemann began the series in 1983, when he was completing his Master of Fine Arts at Alfred University, New York State College of Ceramics, and in part was referencing the geology and fossils of the surrounding Appalachian Mountains. The large and robust sculptures challenged Heinemann's mould-making expertise, and he honed his skills under Alfred instructor Tom Spleth, who had one of the few practices specializing in casting. Since delicate porcelain is most suitable for smaller sized objects, Heinemann turned to the more accommodating low-fired earthenware. Major developments occurred in this period as he began firing multiple times and introducing sandblasting, an unusual technique that he knew from the work of ceramists such as Robert Turner, a renowned instructor at Alfred who had retired a few years before he came. The advantage of sandblasting, explains Heinemann, is that it absorbs light into a dull surface, but he uses it to erase surfaces and erode the clay itself by removing layers of the applied glazes and slip so that they become integral to the form. By adding and removing slip and pigment in cycles sometimes requiring several firings, he exposed what lies beneath the surface, creating a unique patina that simulates a mysterious narrative steeped in archaeology. This practice of applying and removing layers of slip and glaze continues to be fundamental for Heinemann to this day.

The *negatives* loosely reference the functional because of their pronounced cavities, which are often reinforced by an exaggerated handle or rim. However, in *Mimbres*, a key sculpture in this series exemplifying many of Heinemann's suppositions, the vessel form is undermined *(fig. 5)*. As its title and black-and-white colouring suggest, the sculpture pays tribute to what is known as Mimbres pottery produced in New Mexico between the

Fig. 7 | *Quiessence,* 1992 (detail, cat. 13)

tenth and twelfth centuries, and which Heinemann much admires *(fig. 6)*. Upturned, resting precariously on an external arm, it alludes to shelter. To see the sculpture in its entirety, the viewer must walk around and look underneath to find the focal point: a large dark bull's eye that gives the illusion of depth but is in fact solid. The denial of volume leads Heinemann to his next set of questions prioritizing mass and its incongruent relationship to geometry.

Pods

Heinemann's variations in form happen incrementally, or as he puts it, "change occurs glacially."[15] Between 1987 and 1992, the massing of the packing of clay that encases the templates became his next obsession. Known as the *pods* or *organic forms*, in similar ways to the *negatives* they are at once commanding and mysterious. Whether small or large the contained formations seem ancient but also strangely embryonic, carefully treading between culture/nature and solid/void.

Heinemann started out with small maquette-like sculptures in order to visualize his concept in a scale that required little time investment to resolve formal issues before scaling-up. Standing two metres high, *Quiessence* represents a major work of this group in both size and technical achievement *(fig. 7)*. Clay is susceptible to imploding, slumping, cracking, and other calamities, especially when produced in such magnitude. He was able to successfully work in this monumental size when he was undertaking a residency at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in 1992. There he used the large kiln built by Jun Kaneko, who is acclaimed for his two-metre-tall *Dangos* and his later Easter Island–like ceramic heads. Heinemann's totemic structure rests on the wall, connoting a mummified body or an oversize cocoon. Made from a two-part mould, the visible seams unite each half, adding to its biomorphic quality as well as purposefully indicating the method of construction and assembly.

Constructed Forms and Disks

The ceramist's next material preoccupations began around 1986 and focused on the juncture of separate parts coming together to create one cohesive whole. Named *constructed forms*, they retain the rough-hewn, rock-like exterior surfaces of Heinemann's previous work, and are similarly coded with marks to prompt cryptic ceremonial readings, but the compositions have defined and often geometric structures. Differing in height and shape—stubby or attenuated—they generally comprise one large central form, a hemisphere mounted by two ear-like mounds, and the seams are typically exposed to draw attention to the assembly. Some pieces are free-standing and lean on the wall, while others are bestowed steel pedestals, which Heinemann made himself to provide additional stability; although he acknowledges that their presence may unintentionally elevate their status as museum quality pieces, making them appear superior to his other work *(fig. 8)*.

The most ambitious and culminating sculpture from this series is *Rocking Form*, which he began in 1992 during his residency at European Keramich Workcentrum (EKWC) in Holland *(fig. 9)*. Critical to understanding the supersize free-standing piece is the combination of contrasting elements to separate the geometric from the organic: the smooth metal plate insert (required for stability) defines the rectangular opening and operates in opposition to the thick and uneven smoky white exterior walls.

Deriving from this group is a series, represented here by three vertical rocking disks in which he unites two half-circles to form a

Fig. 8 | *Untitled,* 1988 (detail, cat. 21)

Fig. 9 | *Untitled (Rocking Form)*, 1993 (detail, cat. 16)

spiral *(cat. 20–21)*. Heinemann explains that the largest, at eighty-one centimetres in diameter, took over fourteen years to make, which in part "reflects things being put aside to work on other things but also the reality and problem of only gradually being able to develop and evolve solutions to firing large-scale geometric work, without slumping." What is palpable about this group is not only their crazed red earthenware exterior surface but also the expansiveness of the convex walls. Heinemann identified that if inversed they would make a perfect backdrop for pictorial imagery. This thinking triggered him to leave his questions about form and formlessness and to concentrate on issues related to figurative imagery as a mode to treat the surface within the vessel.

Bowls

Remarkably, in 1993, after more than a ten-year hiatus, Heinemann returned to the bowl form. Many were deliberately large with capacious tub-like interiors. Heinemann explains that they were "the proverbial blank canvas" and had no personality when they first came out of the mould. Until this point, Heinemann generally followed the trajectory of modernism, and Hans Coper in particular. However, for various reasons, including his growing assurance in the medium and his expanding knowledge of its and other artistic traditions, such as Mimbres pottery, he became comfortable employing decoration. Overcoming the modernist bias that ornament was superfluous and false, he heightened the metaphorical and semiotic agency of his objects with his judicious application of motif, such as flowers, interlocking knots, honeycombs, and hearts. By pinpricking and incising the stencils and decals, he forces clay's propensity for hairline cracks to capture and embed the patterns.

Then and Now reveals Heinemann's admiration of Japanese woodcuts, notably the general character of black ink on white paper, which he discovered when he was teaching at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver in 1994 *(fig. 10)*. He bifurcated the bowl with white and a black slip underscoring the symbiotic ties between lightness and darkness. Superimposed is a picture frame featuring a bowl pouring liquid, a whimsical conceit of a bowl within a bowl watering its parched surface. Occasionally, Heinemann inserts his own identity in the work, leaving prominent maker's marks, such as a magnification of his thumbprint in *Playa*, aptly subtitled *Self-Portrait*, or his hands in the small pair of bowls, *aretherenottwelvehoursofdaylight*, to remind us that these objects have a life history and autobiography connected to its maker *(fig. 11, cat. 30)*. The image conjures the adage that a work is well-crafted with head, heart, and hand. Heinemann's use of iconography achieves a delicate balance between stillness and activation, surface and form, and the organic and the mechanical. In addition to the adoption of ornamental motif, Heinemann also expanded his colour palette. Since 2007 he has introduced his brilliant red, orange, and Yves Klein–like blue monochromes.

Fig. 10 | *Then and Now*, 1995 (detail, cat. 22)
Left: Fig. 11 | ***aretherenottwelvehoursofdaylight***, 2009 (detail, cat. 25)

Fig. 12 | *Microbial Field*, 2002 (detail, cat. 34)

Concurrently, Heinemann explored, and still does, small-sized and *double bowls*. Many feature dark black or midnight blue interiors that are finely pitted in white, invoking a radiant constellation of stars *(cat. 39–46)*. Alternatively, thick slip crusts detach like a membrane to denote surface evolving into form. *Double bowls* were, and continue to be, tricky work, Heinemann's high-wire act in which the outer slip-cast form acts as the frame in which the clay for the inner form is pressed *(cat. 31–33)*. He first fires them unglazed fitted inside each other, and then re-fires them after adding slip and pigment. The idea of twinning bowls tightly inside each other came by chance when he was teaching and giving a demonstration on press moulding in 1994 at Emily Carr. He applied wet clay inside the once-fired piece, and it shrank away from the biscuit "mould," as expected, but to his amazement, one form appeared to birth the other, resulting in a perfect echoing relationship. The nesting bowl within a bowl ignited his fascination in the gap or space between the vessels. It also expresses the same thinking as *Then and Now*, albeit as a three-dimensional rather than a two-dimensional iteration, and reflects Heinemann's obsession with the vessel.

At once majestic and universal and humbly utilitarian, the container both captures and occupies space, thus rendering a distinct inside and outside. For Heinemann the bowl is a vessel that at once shapes the void and is shaped by it.[16] In 2002, with *Microbial Field*, Heinemann returned once again to emphasizing the exterior surface *(fig. 12)*. The large egg-shape jar, featuring polished high walls gently blemished with spots and a noticeable central mould seam, has a relatively small opening, indicating how he was transitioning back to the outside form.

Closed, Altered, and Extended Forms

Closed forms are different than Heinemann's open bowls for the obvious reason that they are sealed. Another significant difference is that they better retain their structure. They are cast with an inserted top, which holds the crisp geometric lines of the original model. The concave top is cast flat and slumps (the result of gravity during the drying and firing) into its final state. An example of this is *Kudluk*, a tall oblong-shaped container glazed in cool white *(fig. 13)*. The striking blue lid is pinpricked, making visible lightness through darkness, revealing the void and a deeper cosmology. Completed in 2013, *Kudluk*'s look and technique may appear remote from the wheel-thrown bowls of Heinemann's early career, but it represents a continuation of similar ideas about the vessel being a meditative space that is universal and timeless.

Event Horizon, a large sculptural vessel from 2009, encapsulates Heinemann's contradictory concerns: it is a double vessel but not a bowl within bowl as before. Instead it is a single piece that is both open and closed, the central seam (a signature device of

Fig. 14 | *Event Horizon*, 2009 (detail, cat. 61)

Fig. 15 | *Floralis*, 2005 (detail, cat. 54)
Right: Fig. 13 | *Kudluk*, 2013 (detail, cat. 49)

Heinemann's) not only divides the work but also seems to fold it into two volumes, which simultaneously inflate and deflate *(fig. 14)*. Its all-over atmospheric black-and-white exterior denies a focal point and further plays on the tension between the exterior and the interior.

Altered and extended forms are another important territory of investigation for Heinemann. Still vessels, he stretches and reworks them into pointed or bean-like shapes, which he creates from templates or by warping clay as it dries. Paradoxes and tensions between smooth and rough surfaces, geometric and organic shapes, and light and dark pigments persist. In *Terra Negra* the oval form terminates into a sharp point and contrasts with an impression of a central rectangle, while the distorted curving rim of *Floralis* echoes the petals inscribed at its centre *(fig. 15, cat. 32)*. *Little Dipper*—the name describes its appearance—is a long shaft expanding into a bowl with a thick residual crust evocative of an obsolete utilitarian artifact *(cat. 56)*. *Bougoumou (#2)*, a horn-shaped vessel comprising three burnished segments that are joined separately at either end, similarly conveys a strange and vaguely functional object *(cat. 64)*.

Clearly in Heinemann's circuitous creative journey his fixations often overlap, but reinvention and reconsideration are constant. Among his recent work from 2014 onward, *Wane* and *Blink* re-examine inhaling and exhaling volumes in schematized forms. The former, wall-mounted on a steel shelf, also reveals the sculpture's profile; the silhouette is yet another ongoing source of intrigue and inspiration for the artist. *Blink* is one of Heinemann's first works where he employed three-dimensional modelling for the Styrofoam template to shape the plaster moulds. The work's inflated curvaceous profile reveals the precision and accuracy achieved in the initial computer rendering *(fig. 16)*. *Sway* represents a hybrid object that reflects the artist's perfect synthesis of traditional ceramics and the digital age thinking where unlikely objects are mashed together to create new form. Here, he applied a long corrugated neck (slip-cast from a plaster mould of an industrial pipe) to an upside down vessel. *(cat. 71)* Its cylinder shape is something different for Heinemann, as are the dimpled and pimpled skins and the glossy glazes evidenced in other pieces, which are unveiled in this retrospective exhibition at the Gardiner Museum.

Fig. 16 | *Blink*, 2016 (detail, cat. 66)

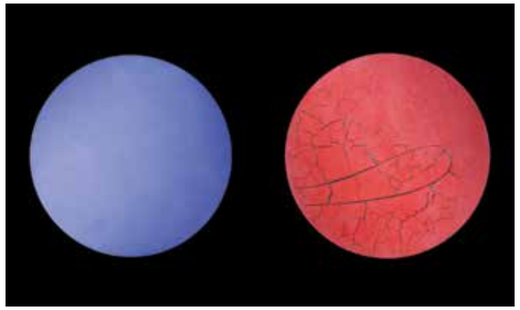


Fig. 17 | *alteredstates2*, 2017

Wonderment

Magical technology is the reverse side of productive technology, and this magical technology consists of representing the technical domain in the enchanted form.[17]

— Alfred Gell

For the exhibition, Heinemann embarked on a new project in a new medium, which he sees as an extension of his practice, and that is to document by time-lapse digital video the organic and ephemeral qualities of a treated clay surface as it dries, warps, and cracks according to chance and calculation. So often ceramists, and Heinemann counts himself in this group, despite their best efforts to control process, are disappointed with the end result and believe the aesthetic high point was at an earlier stage before firing. In *alteredstates,* two projected clay disks highlight the transformation of the material and how it changes seemingly independently of the crafts-maker's hand—the camera lens captures both the stillness and the fluidity of the material: a surface that resembles the ethereal sky evolves into the earthiness of solid terrain *(fig. 17, cat. 24)*. The digital remediation of the traditional medium of ceramics both reduces and reveals the liminal space between production and final object. It records not only Heinemann's culture of making and his extreme skill at preventing or coaxing the laws of nature (the free workmanship of risk), but also his ongoing fascination with the celestial and terrestrial properties of the material.[18] *alteredstates* as a remediation expands the discourse and our engagement with ceramics and ultimately, like Heinemann's ceramic objects themselves, dictates an aesthetic experience.

Anthropologist Alfred Gell famously observed, "The power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody."[19] Heinemann is an alchemist and his technical wonders cast a spell over the viewer. Although they come from a place of specificity related to material and artisanal craft, these traces of making are often hidden in the work rendering them magical and autonomous. It is a truism to state that we currently exist in a constant state of distraction. The permanency and tranquility of Heinemann's sculptures defy the way we live now and invite us to stop, experience, see, feel, and most of all, to wonder about our place in culture and nature.

Dr. Rachel Gotlieb is a ceramic, craft, and design historian who has curated over twenty exhibitions and published extensively on the subject. She is the 2017 Theodore Randall International Chair in Art and Design at Alfred University. Gotlieb is also Adjunct Curator at the Gardiner Museum, and was previously its Chief Curator and Interim Executive Director.

Notes

1. For discussions on the autonomy of the art object within the realm of craft see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. and ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone Press, 1997); Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); and Bruce Metcalf, "Replacing the Myth of Modernism," First published in *American Craft*, February/March 1993, 53, no. 1, accessed March 1, 2017, http://lib.znate.ru/docs/index-53911.html.

2. David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), cited in Glenn Adamson, ed., *The Craft Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 341.

3. See Philippe Descola, "Constructing Natures: Symbolic Ecology and Social Practice," *in Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson (London: Routledge, 1996).

4. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, cited in Rev. James Wood, *Dictionary of Quotations from Ancient and Modern, English and Foreign Sources* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1893), 3.

5. Relational aesthetics emphasize the social interaction between the viewer and the usually ephemeral work. For more on these subjects of post-studio and post-disciplinary practices see Joe Dahn, *New Directions in Ceramics from Spectacle to Trace* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Christie Brown, Julian Stair and Clare Twomey, eds., *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture* (London: Routledge, 2016); Elaine Cheasley Paterson and Susan Surette, eds. *Sloppy Craft, Post-disciplinarity and the Crafts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); and Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002).

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, accessed May 29, 2017, http://www.rwe.org/education/.

7. The author interviewed the artist at the Gardiner Museum on March 19, 2015, and at his studio in Cookstown, Ontario, June 2, 2017, April 13, 2017, June 30, 2016, August 27, 2013, and September 9, 2011. All direct quotes from the artist are drawn from these interviews, unless otherwise noted.

8. For informative articles on Heinemann's practice see Chiho Tokita, "Steven Heinemann: No Ideas But in Material," *Fusion* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 14–19; and Wendy Walgate, "Steven Heinemann," *Contact* no. 99 (Winter 1994/5): 15–20.

9. David Pye, cited in Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 342.

10. Sequoia Miller, *The Ceramic Presence in Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 17.

11. Slivka, of course, was mostly describing the haptic and ruptured totemic mounds of Voulkos, who was tapping into American Abstract Expressionism. Rose Slivka, "The New Ceramic Presence," *Craft Horizons* 21, no. 4 (1961), republished in Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 525–533.

12. For further discussion on Sheridan's early years on Lorne Park Mississauga campus, see Donald McKinley, "The School of Crafts and Design, A Personal Memoir," in James Strecker, ed., *Sheridan: The Cutting Edge in Crafts* (Erin, ON: The Boston Mills Press, 1999).

13. Edward Lebow, *Ken Ferguson* (Kansas City: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1995).

14. Heinemann recounts this discovery in "Steven Heinemann, Catch and Release," *Studio Potter* 42, no. 1 (July 2014): 39–41.

15. Steven Heinemann cited in Katey Schultz, "Steven Heinemann: Proficient Inquiry," *Ceramics Monthly* (January 2017): 35.

16. For a discussion on the vessel and the void duality see Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language Thoughts* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) cited in Adamson, *The Craft Reader,* 406–408.

17. Alfred Gell, "The Enchantment of Technology and the Technology of Enchantment," in Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 479.

18. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). For more discussion on the concept of remediating ceramics, see Amy Gogarty's essay "Greg Payce: Illusion, Remediation, and the Pluriverse" in *Greg Payce: Illusions* (Toronto: Gardiner Museum, 2012).

19. Gell, cited in Adamson, *The Craft Reader*, 468.

Fig. 18 |
Untitled (Disc #2),
2000–2014 (detail)

Steven Heinemann in Context | Janet Koplos

While no artist works uniformly throughout a career, a selection of the works of Steven Heinemann across three decades shows a fascinating consistency. In particular, one can look at an untitled bowl from 1980 and forms from thirty years later and see the same thin walls, fine lips, rounded contours, and sense of weightless volume *(fig. 4, cat. 4)*. These objects seem almost tentative in their existence, except that their narrow linear definition has a lively assurance and seems to be easily realized, with no fussing over the form. The 1980 bowl is probably the most controlled and symmetrical, and, brushed with cobalt, it shows a modest approach to colour that typifies Heinemann's work. He is anything but a polychromist, seldom choosing more than one colour for the exterior and another for the interior, and the hues are usually more muted than that cobalt blue.

There are works that are intermediate in both time and effects: in the mid- and late '80s he cast earthenware in thicker, more irregularly touched configurations. Some look pulled from the earth. But even these show a kinship in form to the thinner, finer works. Heinemann's vessels turn back in on themselves; they are introverted objects even in the exceptional case of *Quiessence*, a 1992 biomorphic sculpture that stands two metres tall and leans against the wall. The work looks, in the distancing view of a photograph, as if it might be aluminum foil that has been squeezed into an elongated mass in the palm of a hand. It has no extensions but, like a mummy, is closed in on itself *(fig. 7, cat. 13)*.

Most of Heinemann's works are vessels, and most, regardless of whether they are bowl or vase forms, have a graceful inward curve. That implies motion, from the swelling of an egg to the spinning of a top to the gathering that would be possible with a scoop-like shape such as *Floralis (#3) (cat. 62)*. Or it might be said to imply withdrawal. To some degree, these quiet forms are private pieces that endure their public display.

How are these distinctive works perceived in an international context? Are they simply unique expressions of a modest persona? Where do they fit in an era that seems more given to decoration, emotion, narrative, bright colour, loosely tactile construction or exacting figurative form?

Obviously, there are always multiple options for clay, a chameleon material, and there are lineages that evade the zigzags of popular taste and resist the superficial pleasures of novelty. It's as if the skin of the ceramics field changes constantly, but underneath is a steady heartbeat of deliberative sensitivity to material and form—a minimal approach within which Heinemann finds his community. There are other ceramists with whom he shares an aesthetic. Some may have influenced him. Some are simply his conceptual siblings who have the same artistic DNA, even when they live in different countries and know nothing of each other.

In the modernist minimal lineage in ceramics, the parents might be Gertrud and Otto Natzler (1908–1971 and 1908–2007, respectively). They were Austrians who fled the Nazis and lived the rest of their lives in the Los Angeles area. They worked collaboratively, with Gertrud throwing and Otto developing and applying glazes. Their works were pottery-size and -shape, for the most part, but not utilitarian. Otto said that people watching Gertrud throw would hold their breath because the work seemed impossibly thin and fine.[1] Otto's glazes were sometimes simple, elevating nuances of the form, but he also created "volcanic" glazes of intimidating tactility. Natzler works concentrate on the character of materials rather than personal or social content. Hans Coper (1920–1981) and Lucie Rie (1902–1995) are often mentioned in tandem. Both European émigrés to Britain, they shared a modernist sensibility. Rie was noted for small-footed bowls of exceptional elegance and refinement. Coper created more sculptural and somewhat larger objects that recall ancient Cycladic sculptures. Coper and Rie shared an inclination toward contained, curtailed, recessive forms, and both were attracted to pale, limestone-like coloration, but Coper's, light or dark, were the more stony surfaces. In these European modernists we can see Heinemann's starting point—as in the 1980 cobalt bowl—and also the kind of finesse he returned to in the 1990s.

David Shaner (1934–2002) was an American ceramist who for a time was resident director of the Archie Bray Foundation and lived on in Montana until his death. Originally a utilitarian potter, he is most celebrated for the sculptural works he created toward the end of his life, which are understood to have a spiritual

Fig. 19 | David Shaner, ***Cirque***, 1997, stoneware
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Daniel Shaner, 2002, 2002-118-1

Fig. 20 | Elsa Rady, ***Ponti***, 1987, porcelain with glaze
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. David Meltzer, M.87.201.1

aspect. Shaner once said, in an artist's statement, that his pots were "about serenity-clarity-simplicity."[2] Among the works are garden sculptures—boulder-like forms with niches, ripples, or full openings into dark interiors *(fig. 19)*. The latter, especially, are apparent masses that begrudgingly yield access to interior volumes, which we see in Heinemann's *negatives* and *pods* of the 1980s.

Richard De Vore (1933–2006) obsessively focused on vase or bowl forms that simultaneously evoked landscape and the body. In a range of earth and skin colours, with forms ranging from broadly splayed to deep and rounded, De Vore concentrated both on irregular details of the rim and on development of the interior base. That might involve crackle patterns that evoke aged and dry skin and also parched clay soil, or, famously, suggestive holes through a series of false bottoms.

By contrast, Elsa Rady's celebrated vessels were inspired by her mother's career as a dancer and were all about suggesting movement. Rady (1943–2011) also made tightly controlled vases with vertical thrust terminating in tiny mouths, but the Los Angeles artist's most noted forms are conical vessels with notched rims that evoke centrifugal force, such as the flowing drapery of a whirling dancer. In their most everted forms they might also suggest rotating propellers *(fig. 20)*. She has limitation of colour in common with Heinemann, and the precise profiles of his rocking forms are kin to her sharp-edged bowls *(fig. 18, cat. 20–21)*.

There are also, of course, living artists whose work relates to Heinemann's. It's interesting that the best known of these come from Holland, England, Japan, and Turkey, so the reductivist aesthetic they share with him is apparently not geographically inspired. That said, however, there may be a geographical justification to two Dutch exemplars. Holland is a manufactured landscape, made possible by dikes and windmill pumps. Perhaps for that reason it has a stellar reputation for clean-lined functional contemporary design from furniture to lighting and tableware. In that environment, the work of Geert Lap (b. 1951) and Wouter Dam (b. 1957) is entirely at home.

Lap's vessel sculptures take a great variety of forms, but what unifies them is precision. He has an inclination toward geometry—cones and cylinders—and even footed bowls and flaring vases have crisp edges and exacting walls that bring to mind that unequivocal mathematical order. Lap works in single colours that distinguish one piece from another without asserting any particular emotional reading. His surfaces are matte and the colours suitably soft. Dam has lately been making sculptures that consist of curling "ribbons" of clay, but looking back to more physically coherent objects he made earlier makes it easier to see how he fits into the modernist/minimalist category. Those might be called very irregular cylinders: usually resting on their sides, they consist of repeated parallel lobes that at some point bump outward, making a tubular attachment that runs perpendicular to the direction

Fig. 21 | Ken Eastman, ***Croft***, 2009, stoneware, oxides, and slips
Collection of the Gardiner Museum, Museum Purchase, C12.22.1

Fig. 22 | Kazuo Takiguchi, ***Untitled***, 1988, stoneware with powdery green glaze © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

of the lobes—which, by the way, may curve inward or outward. The result is not exactly a vessel, because it's open at both ends, but it's a continuous, understandable form. While his surfaces, like Lap's, tend to be matte, he uses a different, broad range of single hues, from dull greys to cerulean. The works of both men have the precision and sensitivity of Heinemann's bowls and his recent closed forms, such as *Kudluk*, 2013 *(fig. 13, cat. 49)*.

The Englishman Ken Eastman (b. 1960) takes the vessel as his subject and starting point for form. His recent works are vertical and open at the top, but they are seldom cylindrical and more often consist of compound, rippling walls that suggest a conflation of flat-bottom paper or cloth bags. The segments are often individually coloured, which emphasize the compound nature of the object. But greyed colours unify the varied hues including blues, greens, and browns. Sometimes parts are joined with a knife-edge seam. There is little sense of weight. The seemingly yielding softness of the walls is contradicted by the discontinuous sharp and usually straight rims of the segments *(fig. 21)*. While Heinemann's works tend to be singular rather than compound, some recent works share with Eastman's work that tension of slumping and precision.

Kazuo Takiguchi (b. 1953) began with jars and vases, probably influenced by having grown up in a Kyoto family that wholesaled ceramics. But his mature work consists of relatively large biomorphic forms shaped from a single thin but dense slab of clay through various techniques of lifting, draping over supports, or working upside down. The swells and crevices of the forms sometimes suggest aspects of the body, but they are essentially abstract and often balance on three points. Each has some sort of top opening, large or small, some looking ripped or exploded, as if from interior air. There is little access to the dark interior, and the exterior is often graphite colour or various stony hues and occasionally a light colour that drastically alters the sober taciturnity of the dark objects *(fig. 22)*. Heinemann's more open, altered bowls, such as *Borealis*, 2012, share the senses of inflation, motion, and secretiveness suggested by Takiguchi *(fig. 23)*.

Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye (b. 1938) was born and educated in Istanbul, but lived for many years in Copenhagen and now lives in Paris. Possibly her work has roots in her birth culture, since it has been compared with certain antique ceramics and also with ancient glass and metalwork. It seems equally related, however, to the clarity of form of contemporary Scandinavian design. Although she has made cylindrical and bullet-shaped vases, her most characteristic form is a full-bellied bowl, raised on a tiny foot. The bowls are made in many widths and depths, seldom shallow. They are impressive in their calibration and control, perfection of contour and appearance of weightlessness, and relate to fine-edged Heinemann works such as *Floralis*, 2005 *(fig. 15, cat. 54)*.

While each of these artists has his or her own voice and only occasionally is there a specifically similar effect—the crackled depths of a Richard De Vore vessel recalls the interiors of some Heinemann's bowls—all these artists embrace the richness of reductiveness. They demonstrate that when bright colour, busy patterns, drawing or other engaging effects are removed, the result is not visual impoverishment but rather the opening of entirely new realms. When a dominant aspect is removed, more subtle ones become apparent. We know, from daily life, that there are times when a whisper commands attention, and that can also happen visually.

There are many more artists working in this vein than the handful cited here. But these few, including Heinemann, are the esteemed international leaders of the pack. They show great skill in the measured shapes, proportions, edges, and other details of the forms, with humble rather than showy craftsmanship. The understated variations pull the viewer in for a close look—almost as if the magnification of vision is increased. When we attend to a line, intuit the sensation of a surface on our skin, kinaesthetically sense the weight, warm to a mottled hue, or breathe with the openness of a vessel, we are using our imaginations as well as sense knowledge to experience and understand the work of Heinemann and his confreres.

Janet Koplos, co-author of *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft* and author of *The Unexpected: Artists' Ceramics of the 20th Century*, is a contributing editor to *Art in America* magazine. She is writing a book on American functional pottery.

Notes

1. Quoted in Peter Clothier, "Otto Natzler," *American Ceramics* 9, no. 1 (1991): 29.

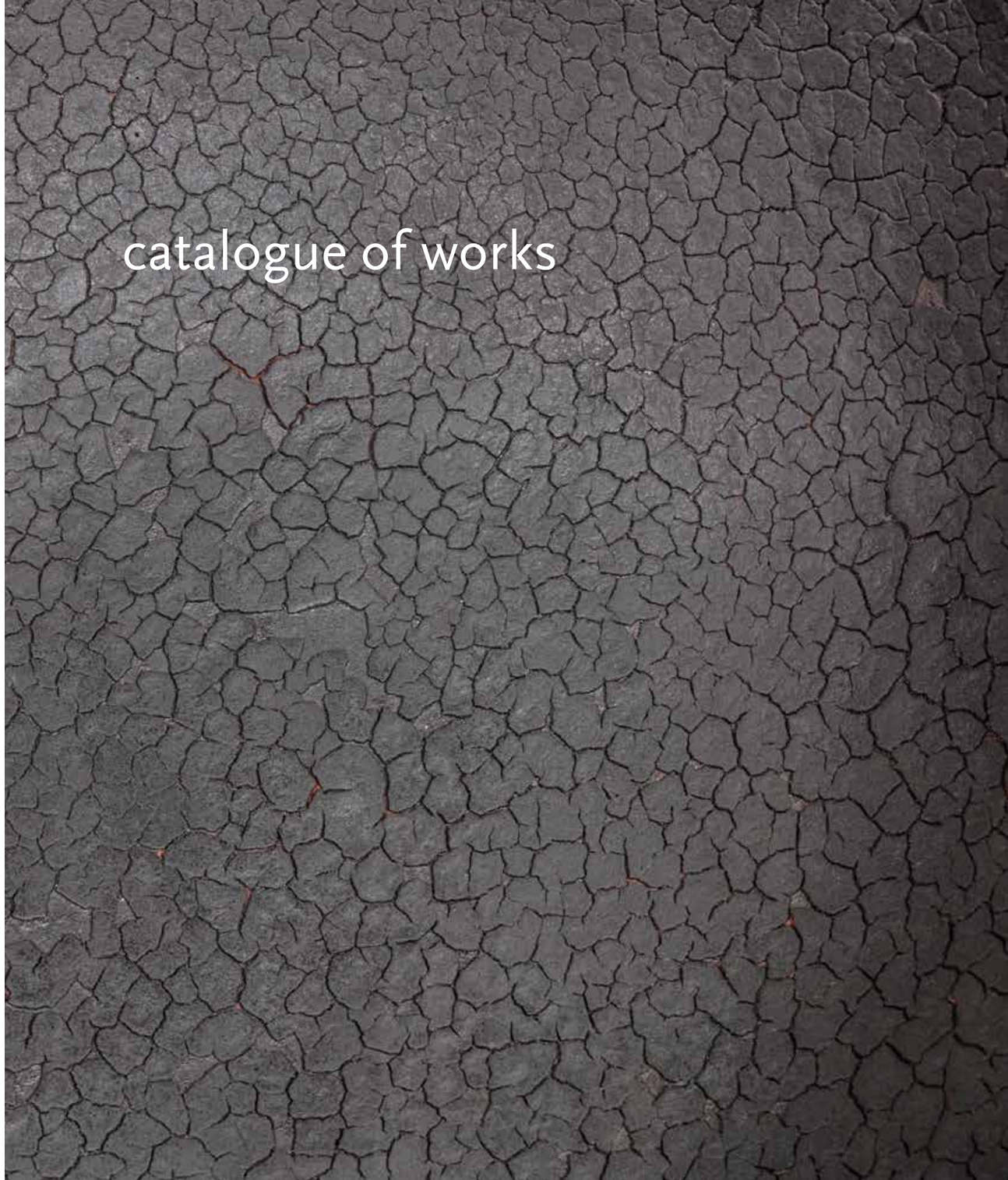
2. Quoted in Peter Held, "Following the Rhythms of Life," in *The Ceramic Art of David Shaner: Following the Rhythms of Life* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2007), 53.

Right: **Fig. 23 | *Borealis*, 2012** (detail, cat. 63)

Pages 30–31: Steven Heinemann, *iceandsnow* series, digital photographs

MAYBE YOU OPEN UP AND BRING
IN CERTAIN VISUAL INGREDIENTS,
CONCEPTS, AND THEN THERE IS
A PERIOD OF TIME TO DISTILL THOSE
AND SORT THEM OUT.

catalogue of works



early work

1
Untitled 1979
Thrown porcelain
11 x 11 x 11 cm
Courtesy of the artist

2
Untitled 1979
Thrown porcelain
20 x 20 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist

3
Untitled 1981
Slip-cast porcelain
15.5 x 28 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum, Gift of Aaron Milrad
in memory of Bella and Joseph Milrad, G98.8.2

4

Untitled 1980
Thrown porcelain
10 x 21.5 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the Art Gallery
of Burlington, 1998.221.0.1

5

Untitled 1981
Slip-cast porcelain
11.5 x 43.5 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum, Gift of Aaron Milrad
in memory of Bella and Joseph Milrad, G98.8.1

negatives and pods

6
Mimbres 1985
Slip-cast earthenware
32 x 114 x 31 cm
Courtesy of the Art Gallery of
Burlington, 1998.032.0.1

7
Untitled 1985
Slip-cast earthenware
67 x 42 x 16 cm
Courtesy of the Art Gallery of
Burlington, 1998.214.0.1

8
Untitled 1984–1994
Pressed earthenware
22.9 x 19 x 58.4 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

9
Untitled 1986
Pressed earthenware
76 x 41 x 16 cm
Courtesy of the artist

10
Untitled 1987
Hand-built earthenware, mixed media
10.2 x 20.3 x 10.2 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Gift of Aaron Milrad in memory of
Bella and Joseph Milrad, G99.6.32

11
Untitled 1991
Pressed earthenware
20.3 x 19.7 x 31.8 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

12
Untitled 1992
Pressed earthenware
34.3 x 66 x 73.7 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
The Raphael Yu Collection, G14.14.26

13

Quiessence 1992
Pressed earthenware
200 x 46 x 39 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
The Raphael Yu Collection, G14.14.28

14

Untitled 1990
Hand-built earthenware, mixed media
8 x 28 x 19 cm
Courtesy of the artist

15

Untitled 1988
Pressed earthenware
20 x 57 x 29 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Gift of Barbara Silverberg, G07.17.2

constructed forms and disks

16
Untitled (Rocking Form) 1993
Pressed earthenware, steel, mixed media
95 x 120 x 37 cm
Courtesy of the artist

17
Untitled 1988
Pressed earthenware
53 x 52 x 18 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

18
Untitled 1991
Pressed earthenware, mixed media
196 x 28 x 43 cm
Courtesy of the artist

19
Untitled 1988 (detail)
Slip-cast earthenware, steel, mixed media
175.5 x 52.5 x 43 cm
Courtesy of Bill and Molly Anne Macdonald

20
Untitled (Disc #1) 2000–2014
Slip-cast earthenware
80 x 80 x 25 cm
Courtesy of the artist

21
Untitled (Disc #3) 1997
Slip-cast earthenware
53 x 52 x 18 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

bowls

22
Then and Now 1995
Slip-cast earthenware
65 x 53 x 27 cm
Courtesy of Kai Chan

23
Untitled 1996
Slip-cast earthenware
29 x 56 x 55 cm
Courtesy of Ute Stebich

24
Untitled 1994
Slip-cast earthenware
30 x 60 x 58 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Gift of Barbara Silverberg, G07.17.3

25

aretherenottwelvehoursofdaylight 2009
Slip-cast earthenware
36 x 27 x 11 cm
Courtesy of Barbara and
Dougal Macdonald

26

Playa (Self-Portrait) 2002
Slip-cast earthenware
32.4 x 90.2 x 76.8 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
The Raphael Yu Collection, G11.6.31

27
Double Floral 2010
Slip-cast earthenware
22 x 65 x 49 cm
Courtesy of the artist

28
Untitled 2015
Slip-cast earthenware
36 x 37 x 17 cm
Private collection

29
Untitled 1995
Slip-cast earthenware, multiple firings
22 x 72 x 43 cm
Courtesy of Kathleen Sahni

30
farawaysoclose 2000
Slip-cast earthenware
49.5 x 73.7 x 38.7 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Purchased with the support of the Canada Council
for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, G01.3.1

31

Husk 1996
Slip-cast and pressed earthenware
25 x 35 x 74 cm
Courtesy of the artist

32

Terra Negra 2000
Slip-cast and pressed earthenware
27 x 55 x 56 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Purchased with the support of the Canada Council
for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, G01.4.1

33

Untitled 2008
Slip-cast earthenware
22.5 × 22.5 × 39 cm
Collection of the Canadian Museum of History,
2006.152.1 a-b

34

Microbial Field 2002
Slip-cast earthenware
65 × 56 × 54 cm
Collection of the Canadian Museum of History,
2002.124.1, S2003-1300

35

Carbon Neutral 2009
Slip-cast earthenware
15.5 × 95 × 55 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Collection of Diana Reitberger, G16.15.6

36 *(left page and below)*
Untitled small bowls 1997–2017
Slip-cast earthenware
Range: 10 x 28 x 16 cm–17 x 32 x 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

37
Untitled 2000
Slip-cast earthenware
10 x 18 x 26 cm
Courtesy of Ute Stebich

38
Geologue 2009
Slip-cast earthenware
10 x 29 x 15 cm
Courtesy of Martin and Barbara Buckspan

39
Geologue 2006
Slip-cast earthenware
10 x 27 x 17 cm
Courtesy of Melinda Mayhall

40
Untitled 2008
Slip-cast earthenware
12 x 28 x 20 cm
Courtesy of Marlene and Mark Wilson

41
Residuum 2012
Slip-cast earthenware
16 x 30 x 29 cm
Sylvie and Simon Blais Collection, Montréal

42
Untitled 2012
Slip-cast earthenware
17 x 31 x 25 cm
Collection of Fran and Ron Shuebrook

43
Untitled 2014
Slip-cast earthenware
15 x 30 x 28 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

44
Untitled 2014
Slip-cast earthenware
11 x 27 x 19 cm
Collection of Rob Dickson

45
Untitled 2013
Slip-cast earthenware
14 x 29 x 26 cm
Courtesy of Debi Perna and Eric Siegrist

46
Untitled 2013
Slip-cast earthenware
29 × 28 × 17 cm
Courtesy of Mary Mackenzie

closed forms

47
D.E.W. 2017
Slip-cast and hand-built earthenware
28 x 64 x 41 cm
Courtesy of the artist

48
Borealis 2012
Slip-cast earthenware
24 x 28 x 85 cm
Sylvie and Simon Blais Collection,
Montréal, 17.17.1

49
Kudluk 2013
Slip-cast earthenware
39 x 55 x 37 cm
Courtesy of the artist

50
Ellesmere 2013
Slip-cast and hand-built earthenware
20 x 38 x 69 cm
Courtesy of the artist

51
Seed 2012
Slip-cast and hand-built earthenware
18 x 31 x 13 cm
Courtesy of the artist

52
Redseed 2013
Slip-cast and hand-built earthenware
19 x 36 x 23 cm
Courtesy of the artist

altered and extended forms

53
Terra Negra 2000
Slip-cast earthenware
36 x 22 x 16 cm
Private Collection

54
Floralis 2005
Slip-cast earthenware, mixed media
32 x 54 x 39 cm
Courtesy of the artist

55
Floralis 2006
Slip-cast earthenware
17 x 65 x 20 cm
Collection of Cheryl Gottselig, QC

56
Little Dipper 2004
Slip-cast earthenware
20 x 73 x 19 cm
Collection of Jacques and Gabrielle Israelievitch

57

Tundra 2016 (detail)
Slip-cast earthenware, steel
192 cm x 42 x 35 cm (with base)
Courtesy of the artist

58

Tundra 2014
Slip-cast earthenware
24 x 68 x 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

59

Betula #2 2003
Slip-cast earthenware
24.8 × 67.3 × 25.4 cm
Collection of the Gardiner Museum,
Collection of Diana Reitberger, G15.9.4

60

Diatom 2008
Slip-cast earthenware
19 x 66 x 24 cm
Private Collection

61
Event Horizon 2009
Slip-cast earthenware
46.4 × 81.3 × 20.3 cm
Collection of Diana Reitberger

62
Floralis (#3) 2006
Slip-cast earthenware
36.8 x 30.5 x 25.4 cm
Collection of Diana Reitberger

63
Borealis 2012
Slip-cast earthenware
72 x 58 x 49 cm
The Raphael Yu Collection

64
Bougoumou (#2) 2013
Slip-cast earthenware, mixed media
23 x 122 x 23 cm
Courtesy of the artist

recent work

65
blackandblue 2015
Slip-cast earthenware, steel, mixed media
26 x 107 x 33 cm (with base)
The Esson & Tucker Collection

66
Blink 2016
Slip-cast earthenware
20 x 69 x 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

67
Slider 2017
Slip-cast and hand-built earthenware
15 x 58 x 22 cm
Courtesy of the artist

68
Has Bean 2017
Slip-cast earthenware
22 x 67 x 22 cm
Courtesy of the artist

69
Thaw 2017
Slip-cast earthenware
121 x 39 x 18 cm
Courtesy of the artist

70
Wane 2014
Slip-cast earthenware, steel
99 x 47 x 32 cm (with base)
Collection of Diana Reitberger

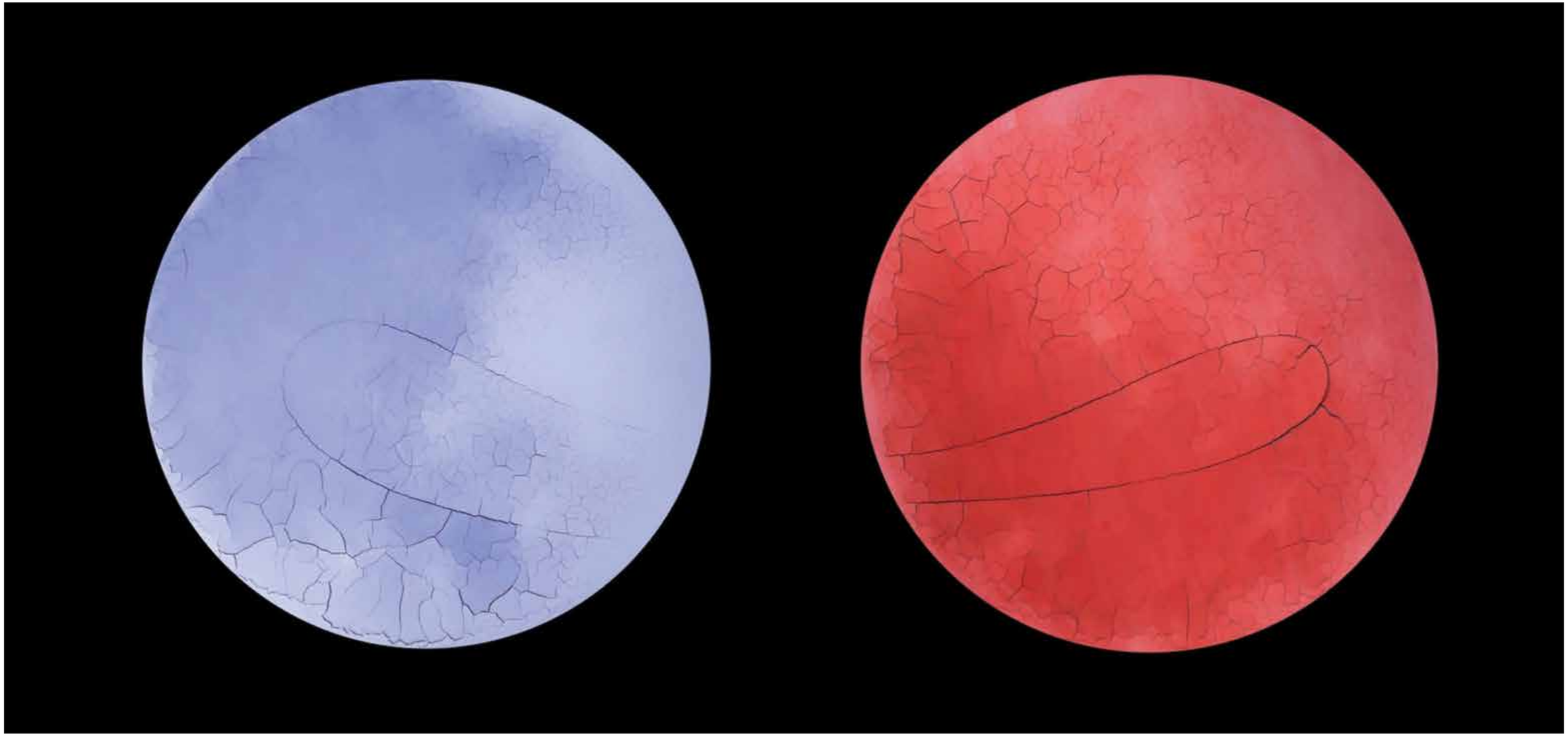
71
Sway 2016
Slip-cast earthenware
91 x 35 x 35 cm
Courtesy of the artist

72
Shy Black 2015
Slip-cast earthenware, steel, mixed media
69 x 32 x 32 cm (with base)
Courtesy of the artist

73
Radarlove 2017 (detail p. 80)
Slip-cast earthenware, mixed media
155 x 37 x 11 cm
Courtesy of the artist

74

alteredstates **2017** (still image)
Video, 4 min, looped
Production: Taimaz Moslemian
Sound: Johan Seaton



In Conversation

Kelvin Browne, Gardiner Museum Executive Director and CEO, in conversation with Steven Heinemann, at his studio in Cookstown, Ontario, April 13, 2017.

When did you become interested in clay and in ceramics?

It was in the early 1970s at Williams High in Aurora, Ontario. We had ceramics, along with everything else, in the art room, including painting and photography. I was doing it all! My first experience with clay was through the basic tutorial on how to throw. While we did all the basics during art class, some of us would congregate in the art room after classes finished at 4:00 p.m. We'd get permission to work late, have the place to ourselves, and that is when things really started moving for me creatively.

CERAMIC HAS UNIQUE POTENTIALS UNMATCHED BY ANY OTHER MEDIUM. FOR ONE THING, THIS MATERIAL IS ENORMOUSLY RESPONSIVE AND RECORDS, ETERNALLY, EVEN THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH.

So you kind of knew there was something special with you and clay fairly early on?

I was drawn to the material for sure. Ceramic has unique potentials unmatched by any other medium. For one thing, this material is enormously responsive and records, eternally, even the slightest touch. That tends to be an initial "hook," as it was for me. But then you learn that there's this aspect of form and surface: the combination of clay and glaze offer potential for both the painter and sculptor, for 2D and 3D, in the same object! Finally, there's transformation outside and beyond the agency of the maker—clay shrinks, warps, slumps, and that's even before it enters the kiln, where it is then fundamentally altered. This "behaviour" of the material, which does not seek your permission, already suggests to me a dance of nature and culture, mind and nature. Then finally, the anticipation of opening a kiln—seeing "what happened" after weeks or perhaps months of buildup—is a high I've never gotten over.

Tell me about your education with clay after your introduction to it in high school?

Because I was doing well academically in school, I was advised that university was a better option than college. My guidance counsellor steered me towards Fine Arts at York University, where I was accepted. It was about a week before classes began and I was there for orientation when I learned that, in fact, they didn't offer ceramics. In shock and stunned amazement I drove from York to Sheridan College with my portfolio, and when I arrived said, "Is anybody around that can look at my portfolio because I think I want to do ceramics." Karl Schantz, the glassblowing instructor, was there. He walks in wearing shorts, sandals, and a T-shirt and says, "What do ya got, kid?" I showed him, and a week later I was studying at Sheridan.

You had a near miss.

It simply didn't occur to me prior to that point that ceramics was something other than art. Again, we did this in the art room in high school, along with everything else. It was one among many "options in art" and I still think of it this way now.

You've never made a distinction between craft and art—quite common then with clay and ceramics, increasingly less so today.

It slowly dawned on me that there were various kinds of divisions and hierarchies with materials. These things I'm still puzzling over. Who or what is served by maintaining them?

Potter, painter, sculptor?

How about "all of the above." Over time you learn that, contrary to the compartmentalizing impulse by which we distinguish things, they more likely exist in a fluid continuum. My work may be ultimately seen as that of a potter, owing to my forty years of "specialization" in this medium, but it's always seemed to me that the act of enclosing space with clay—the potter's stock-in-trade—is a profoundly sculptural one.

Left: Steven Heinemann in his studio, Richmond Hill, 1990

At Sheridan College, 1978

THIS HUMBLE AND ALMOST INCONSEQUENTIAL FORM BECAME UTTERLY ABSORBING, AND I LITERALLY SPENT THE REST OF THAT YEAR MAKING BOWLS.

What artists or educators have had an influence on your work?
When I was in my second year at Sheridan College, I discovered Hans Coper's work through a book on British ceramics—it completely blew my mind. If I had any doubts until then about ceramics as my focus, they were completely erased. I just felt that if clay can do this, this is where I want to be. His work still resonates with me today.

I ultimately studied at three different schools and met and worked with some great people. Among them Ken Ferguson, at Kansas City Art Institute, stands out as perhaps the most gifted educator I encountered. Part football coach, part Zen master, he had a way of reaching people at their core. Most importantly, like Bruce Cochrane, at Sheridan, or Wayne Higby, at Alfred University, he was deeply steeped in his own studio practice and embodied the idea that you could find it too.

Technically, you have invented a lot of processes to get to the aesthetic result you want. You're really a technical pioneer.
The necessity of being resourceful comes with the territory. Ceramics has definite procedures. You make a thing by one of only a few established methods, you bisque it, you glaze it, and you're done. There is a kind of finite quality to this. And some of us who are attracted to the material, we chafe under those limitations. I know I wrestled with these in the beginning as to whether I could really work with such a fixed and limited process.

Slowly, over the years, I've learned that rather than have to adapt myself to this process, I could in some ways adapt the process to one that's closer to how I think. For example, I resolve things slowly and figure out slowly, so I needed to adapt the process to be able to have this longer period of resolution where an object can evolve, fluctuate, be reconsidered, and re-evaluated. In other words, to have a very long conversation instead of a short or limited one.

You seem to have a thing for bowls.
In 1979, the start of my last year at Sheridan College, we were all asked to make work for a fundraising mug and bowl sale. I was going to get this out of the way, and get down to serious business in my thesis year, in which you truly chart your own creative course for the first time. But it was like I sat down at the wheel to work, and never looked up. This humble and almost inconsequential form became utterly absorbing, and I literally spent the rest of that year making bowls. And uncannily, the more I narrowed down the more it would open up in possibility.

Burlington Art Centre, 1989

Richmond Hill house, 1996

Inadvertently and unconsciously, I had found my life's work. And while I depart from it from time to time, it's apparently not for long. Out of that early obsession came an abiding interest in volume and contained space, which has informed everything I've done. It's also connected to my interest in "the meditative image," which you find in things like Tantric art. And like those paintings, they have a function: to gather and transform the attention of the viewer.

A retrospective exhibition allows an artist to review their career. Are some pieces more important than others in this context?
Looking back, I definitely have some pieces that I have a fondness for, let's say, more than others. I can identify certain moments that were key and important where I learned something critical or essential. And I think that's documented in this show. A retrospective is really a history of a person's thought, and any artist who has the benefit of having worked over a long period gets to kind of see the history of their thought process.

There is a certain bubble at any time that you function within, certain principles and ideas, philosophies, and eventually they reach their limit and have to be renegotiated. I would not want to say your ideas run dry, but in a way, those principles need to be reconsidered. Just as you re-evaluate things in life, things that were true for you at a certain time become less true—or perhaps they've outlived their usefulness. The process of reinvention is ongoing, but it reaches a peak at certain points. I can identify maybe two or three periods within this approximately thirty-five-year span where things were more dramatically re-evaluated. What we call a nervous breakdown today!

Your house and studio in Cookstown are beautiful, your country setting is lovely. Has this had an influence on your work?
As far as where I live and how it plays into the work, I'm not really sure there is a direct correlation. Prior to coming here I worked in a basement in suburban Richmond Hill, Ontario, and a lot of the work I was making at that time was also referencing nature and the organic. Yet I was underground in a kind of bunker with no windows or even fresh air—which leads me to think that perhaps you have your own portable universe you occupy, and take wherever you go. As much as we'd like to make this easy relationship between the surroundings out there and what I am doing day-to-day, it's equally something more internal that is animating the creative process.

Steven Heinemann with his partner and fellow artist
Chung-Im Kim in Munich, 2004

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What direction do you see your work moving in now?
You go through the process of distillation and simplification after bringing certain new things into the mix each cycle. Maybe you open up and bring in certain visual ingredients, concepts, and then there is a period of time to distill those and sort them out. And that cycle might be a five- or ten-year period, but I would say this mode of trying to distill and come down to something very essential and basic is a pretty strong, dominant current with me now.

I've really enjoyed my tours of your studio, and everybody that's come here has learned a lot and felt very invigorated by it. Do you enjoy dealing with the public?
It's a cliché to say, but many artists work selfishly, for themselves first and foremost. You, the artist, simply need to see this thing made. That's very primary and really doesn't involve other people because it's a kind of circuit that's happening internally. Then there is a certain point where the work becomes available to the public. You decide it's ready to go out, and at that point there might be another kind of conversation that begins, because you do get feedback on things that were otherwise private and hidden. Sometimes I glean things from this, and people can have more insight into my work than I have. Even though I make the stuff, it often feels more accurate to refer to the work in the third person.

The work seems to want to head in a certain direction, and in that sense you may question your own agency in the process. The work has its own trajectory. People will say things, name things that haven't yet occurred to me. All the energy you function with isn't necessarily a conscious one. It might be very strong, you might have urgency, but engagement of your work, and you, with the public does sharpen self-awareness, and it can be part of the cycle of distillation and reinvention.

Steven Heinemann in his Cookstown studio, 2017

Biography

Canadian ceramic artist Steven Heinemann was born in Toronto in 1957. He currently lives and works near Cookstown, Ontario.

Since completing his MFA at Alfred University in 1983, he has taught widely in Canada and the United States, including at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the Ohio State University, the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, the Ontario College of Art and Design, and Sheridan College. In addition, numerous residencies have taken him from Canada (Banff Centre, 1987) to the United States (Cranbrook Academy, 1992), the Netherlands (the European Ceramic Work Centre, 1992), Hungary (the International Ceramics Studio, 1999), and Korea (JINRO International Ceramic Workshop, 1997), among other places.

Heinemann has had over thirty solo exhibitions since his first at the Ontario Crafts Council in 1982, primarily in Canada, the United States, and Europe. His most recent solo exhibition was at the David Kaye Gallery in Toronto in 2015. His work is in numerous private and public collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the World Ceramic Centre, Icheon; the National Museum of History, Taipei; the Museum of Arts and Design, New York; the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; and the Contemporary Museum, Honolulu.

Canadian awards include the Prix d'Excellence (National Biennial of Ceramics, 1988, 1994) and the Saidye Bronfman Award (1996), Canada's highest recognition of achievement in contemporary craft. He has also received many international awards, including the Bavarian State Prize (Modern Masters, Germany, 2004), the Special Award (World Ceramic Bienniale, Korea, 2004), the Juror's Award (International Ceramics, Japan, 1995), and the Award of Merit (Fletcher Challenge, New Zealand, 1994, 1995).

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