

PLACEMENT

30 May - 5 July 2008



Sarit Cohen



Kaye Pemberton

Objects not only need a physical structure, they also need a context so they can be noticed. Context provides contrast and a place where perception can occur. In this exhibition Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre presents two distinct installations by Sarit Cohen and Kaye Pemberton, that look at the placement of ceramic tableware in a domestic setting. The contrast of these two settings illustrate how an artist employs arrangement; how objects engage with the space around themselves and other objects forming a dialogue of meaning.

The close association that ceramics has with food and ceremony features strongly in

both works. Both artists equate the nourishment of the body with the nourishment of the mind, seeing the ceremony of a meal as the perfect opportunity for contemplation. Their works are akin to silent witnesses, privy to the conversations that take place at the table and appear to hold the memories of gatherings long after the event. Preparation and presentation exists here on two levels; both in the works capacity to hold food and drink and in the preparation and presentation of the installations themselves.

For some ceramicists there is a desire to go beyond mere function. Both Cohen and Pemberton want to appeal to the users of their work. Cohen's work explores the identity, role and relevance of contemporary Jewish culture through ceramic forms adorned with abstracted Hebrew text, and its potential relationship to other cultures. Pemberton aims to celebrate hand making skills in functional ceramics, encouraging the user to reflect upon the creative process whilst they use the works daily in a domestic context. Intention is paramount in the work of both artists where the medium acts as a vehicle to carry additional ideas particularly in regard to aspects of daily life and our ritual interaction with ceramic forms.

Cohen's *Tablet Series* responds to issues that arise from her experience across Australian, Indian, Turkish and Israeli cultures. Drawing on conversations and dialogue her tablet forms carry symbolic Hebrew text that talks of land usage, occupation, ethnic and tribal conflict. In contrast Pemberton's paper covered found furniture provides a context for her work that references

the domestic environment while acknowledging the early Australian aesthetic of making do driven by economy. Her collection, use and placement of contemporary studio ceramics provides a connection between the 'making do' approach of the past and today's respect for handmade quality and design. What becomes evident from these two distinctly different installations is how the use of additional props creates a context that reinforces and amplifies ideas and beliefs.

The move by ceramicists into installation is not surprising given the gathering and collecting tendencies notable in ceramic practice. The process of ceramics could be described as a gathering and repositioning of material and the production of multiple objects that then coalesce into groups of elements. Pairing and arrangements occur as does the natural forming of spaces between these objects. Both Cohen and Pemberton are intrigued by the potential of arrangement that at times can be planned and at other times are serendipitous. At this point ceramic practice draws parallels with painting and, in particular, still lifes. The works in *PLACEMENT* carry an inbuilt history through our association with their function and in doing so they hold alchemic qualities and possibilities for the artists and audiences.

Jas Hugonnet
 April 2008



Image credits: (front top, left to right) **Sarit Cohen**, *For Life (with details)*, 2008, porcelain, oxide, clear glaze; (front bottom, left to right) **Kaye Pemberton**, *oil and vinegar set (with details)*, 2008, reduction and oxidation fired porcelain with murini motifs. (this page, left, top to bottom; right, top to bottom) **Sarit Cohen**, *Strength*, 2008, porcelain, oxide; **Sarit Cohen**, *Shell*, 2008, porcelain, oxide; **Sarit Cohen**, *Moments in time*, 2008, porcelain, oxide; **Kaye Pemberton**, *two cups and saucers*, 2008, reduction and oxidation fired porcelain with murini motifs; **Kaye Pemberton**, *teapot and sugar*, 2008, reduction and oxidation fired porcelain with murini motifs; **Kaye Pemberton**, *oil bottle with two small bowls*, 2008, reduction and oxidation fired porcelain with murini motifs. All Photos: Courtesy of the Artists.