

Invitation

Sense 17 May – 9 June 2001

An exhibition of ceramic objects by Jane Sawyer
to be opened by Janet Mansfield OAM,
ceramic artist and editor-publisher of
Ceramics Art and Perception

Opening 6 pm Thursday 17 May 2001
Artist floortalk at 5.30 pm
Exhibition closes Saturday 9 June

Craft Victoria

114 Gertrude Street
Fitzroy Vic 3065
Phone (03) 9417 3111
Web www.craftvic.asn.au
Hours 10–5 Tuesday–Friday, 12–5 Saturday

Images

Cover: *Pillow Series #5* 4.5 x 9 x 9.5 cm

Inside detail: *Pillow Series #2* (detail) 24.5 x 18 x 18.5 cm

All pieces: red earthenware, cream slip and transparent glaze

Acknowledgements

Jane Sawyer wishes to thank Chris Marks, Shane and Jane Kent, Janet Mansfield, Prue Venables, Mount Prior Vineyard, Terence Bogue and the staff at Craft Victoria for their generous support.

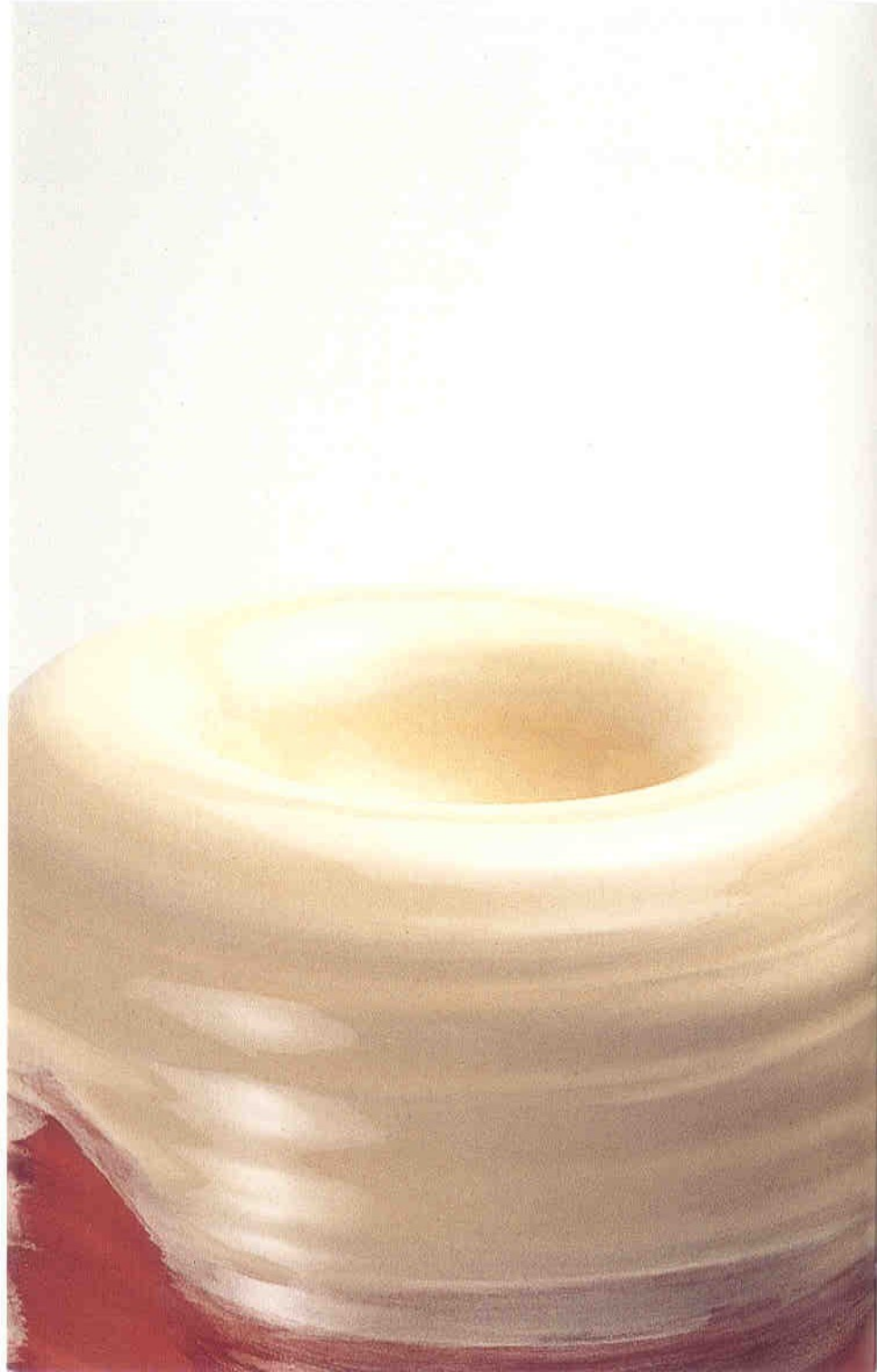
Photography by Terence Bogue

Catalogue by Millon Ideas

s e n s e



J a n e S a w y e r



Sense – An Intimate Response

Intimacy implies a close and knowing relationship. The bond between partners of any kind and especially between an artist and her work is firm by the depth of passion, commitment and respect developed over time. Sawyer's intimacy with her materials is like an affair of the heart and the flesh. In her hands, the clay is not there to be fashioned but is a collaborative partner and mentor. The demands of the artist are guided by the response of the material.

Sense presents the results of this intense exchange. The three series, *Gesture*, *Fluid* and *Pillow*, demonstrate the nature of this evolutionary process as one experience suggests the next variation. Whether pulled by one finger into a miniature form, interrupted and re-made, inverted or made whole and massaged, the common elements are the red earthenware clay and slip.

Reading the red clay as the body, the overlay of translucent white slip becomes a delicate skin or a sensuous fabric. The markings of this surface alerts the observer to its fragile nature, like a membrane recalling the closeness of contact, describing the brushing, bruising, scratching or caressing of the artist at her work.

The final layer, the highly glossy glaze, acts as the tough outer clothing, a glassy shield, simultaneously exposing and protecting the intimate moments of the artist and her materials, her *other* body.

The transparency of the glaze alludes to the wetness inherent in Sawyer's process. Working with a very wet, soft clay, she negates the traditional notion of mastery of materials, and opts for a process where the gesture of making



determines the final form and this is imprinted in the surface. Expectations alter as the two engage in a fluid partnership toward making a work concerned with revealing the experience.

Evaporation and extreme heat transform the soft pliable body. Vulnerability is exchanged for certainty, and the subject of the artist's attention becomes the object. Frozen by fire, it holds the memory of the wetness in its form, historical and disconcerting.

Traditional notions of control are questioned and old aesthetics challenged. The initial awkwardness of the object disappears as the eye becomes accustomed to and accepts the differences, realising how much the established discipline is linked to predetermined outcomes, replication and matching sets. Sawyer's method promotes individuality, singularity and risk. A considered response is required as this aesthetic is the antithesis of an accepted notion of beauty and design.

Sawyer chooses her materials and processes carefully so that each stage of manufacture can bring the private and personal act of making closer to public view. Once the firing of the work shifts it to a state of unalterable fixity, it becomes an object among many others ready for the exchange of possession.

As possession passes from one to another, from artist to collector, the now remnant gestures are there to be decoded, observed. The one holding must feel for this history in the surface, scan the object for its secrets, read the markings and scarrings with familiarity and knowing to understand the moment of creation and the form of invention.

The hand that made is there for the hand that holds. Comparative assessments arise as one hand, finger, matches or fails, misses. The coldness of the surface warms, takes the warmth from the holder, responds to the touch. The sensuous imagination can then see the markings not as static archaeological recordings but as moments of pleasure. Being drawn in to share this experience and to partake in an act of permissible voyeurism, the holder can feel and *sense* the act of creation. To see only the finished object is to deny, ignore or reject this process.

Sawyer's works are like a diary where each work, each mark and gesture is an entry or detail of the physicality and expression of intimacy. *Sense* invites a discerning eye and a measured touch to respond to the sensitivities in the structure and surface, as the memories held here disclose secrets, innovative and passionate.

Chris Marks 2001

(adapted from *Artist to Artist* 2000)

Biographical Details

Jane Sawyer graduated from Victoria College of Education with a Bachelor of Education (Art) in 1981 and is currently undertaking a Master of Fine Art (ceramics) by Research at RMIT University.

Her professional experience includes traineeships with Andrew Halford at Kinka Pottery, Sydney (1982-85) and Shussai-Gama in Shimane, Japan (1985-87) and private practice in Scotland (1987-89) and Melbourne (1990-present).

Recent group exhibitions include *The Snake in the Garden: Contemporary Slipware* (currently touring UK), *Surface* Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne, 2000, *pick-up* (2000) and *The Gift* (1998) Craft Victoria, Melbourne, *The Body: Codes and Creators*, Metrol, Melbourne, 1998, *The Sidney Myer International Ceramics Awards* 1998, and *Sentinel: Survey of Australian Ceramics*, Manly Art Gallery, NSW 1996.

Solo exhibitions have been held at the Shussai-Gama Gallery (Japan, 1987), Quercus Gallery (Edinburgh, 1989), The Kusa Gallery (Osaka, 1996) and the Ichibata Gallery (Izumo, Japan, 1996).

Jane received an Australia Council grant in 1983-84 and the Contemporary Clay '99 Award.

Her work is represented in private and public collections in Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and Australia.

Recent publications include *Making Sense*, S and J Kent, *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, Issue 43 (Mar 2001) pp52-55; *Dancing with the Unknown – a diary*, J. Sawyer, *Pottery in Australia*, Vol 39 no 1, pp8-11; *Slipware: Contemporary Approaches*, V&M Eden, Craftsman House Australia, A&C Black, London 1999.



Left
Fluid Series #1 (detail) 10 x 12 x 8.5 cm

Far left
Gesture Series #1 (detail)
five pieces, each piece 2 – 3.5 cm