

THE SUTER ART GALLERY
TE ARATOI O WHAKATŪ
SUTER EDUCATION SERVICES

Designing in Clay

Extension Art Programme

Teaching Kit 2011



Ann Verdcourt, *Pierre Matisse*, 2007
Ceramic, slips and oxide stains.
Collection of the artist.

Unit Developed and Compiled by Esther McNaughton, *Suter Educator*
with support from *Te Manawa Museum, Gallery, Science Centre*



Education services and programmes at The Suter are supported by the Ministry of Education under the Learning Experiences Outside of the Classroom (LEOTC) funding.

Contents:

Introduction	Page 3
About the Exhibition	Page 3
Previsit Information	Page 4
Outline of Lessons	Page 5
Post Visit Suggestions	Page 6
Learning Intentions	Page 7
Related Achievement Objectives	Page 8
How the Key Competencies Relate to This Unit of Work	Page 9
Guidelines for Students	Page 11
About Ann Verdcourt	Page 12
Images from the Exhibition	Page 13
Ann's Inspiration	Page 21

Introduction:

This exhibition is a fun and engaging introduction to ceramic work and is divided into 3 sections.

- **Conversations with artists:** Where you will find works inspired by paintings by famous artists such as Picasso and Matisse. Two dimensional works are transformed into 3D ceramic pieces.
- **Still Life:** Where the composition and arrangement of the pieces takes precedence over the individual objects.
- **Play:** Here you will find imagination at play through a selection of toys and everyday found objects.

About the Exhibition:

Ann Verdcourt is among New Zealand's most innovative and dedicated ceramic artists. Ann brings a keen interest and knowledge of art history and a strong sense of playfulness to her work, creating ceramic sculptures that breathe three dimensional life into imagery from the world of painting, and still life groupings that celebrate the aesthetic value of the ordinary.

Exhibition developed in collaboration with the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, Whanganui.

Previsit Information:

- Please find attached *Suter Guidelines*. It is very helpful if students understand the requirements of working in The Suter setting before they arrive.
- On arrival please seat the students outside The Suter in the courtyard areaway and the educator will join you there. If wet please wait quietly in The Suter's lobby.
- It is very helpful if the students are wearing name labels.
- If you are driving there is generally good long term parking by Riverside Pool which is very close to the Suter. Please take the walkway between the pool and Halifax Vet to get to Bridge St and The Suter.
- Don't forget to bring your camera / video camera to record students at work in the gallery. There are usually wonderful photo opportunities during visits and this enables you to revisit aspects of the trip with the class later on back at school, as well as providing excellent images for your class blog.

Brief Suter Unit Outline: (Please note this is subject to variation according to the needs of the group)

- Welcome: Suter guidelines.
- Introduction to Verdcourt's exhibition: Introduction to Ann Verdcourt, background information etc. In groups students rotate through the 3 different areas:

1. Conversations with Artists

Students match the artists' pictures to the ceramic sculptures. Looking for any changes, and taking time to see if the title of the painting differs to the sculpture.

2. Still Life

Students work as a group to arrange a selection of objects, similar to what is seen in Ann's work. They are working with the idea of composition. Encourage them to try 3 different compositions, exploring ideas such as grouping according to colour, shape, size, space etc. They sketch the composition they agree on. If time allows they can compare pictures of Morandi to the still life.

3. Play

Students explore this area by finding and ticking off objects/sculptures and sketching their favourite piece.

Responding to Art: For the duration of the programme students will develop sculptures in clay which reinterpret New Zealand paintings. Focus is on starting with basic shapes to then building up to detail and refined shape.

Session One: Students look through a selection of images to choose a character that appeals to them. Students spend time explaining why, and developing an identity and story for their character.

Coiling: Students learn technique of coiling and start to build their interpretation of the painting. By the end of Session One students should have the rough form modeled.

Session Two: Refinement. Students' work should be leather hard and ready to add details to and to smooth the surface.

Session Three: Painting of figures. Colour mixing, colour theory, use of contrast. Complete artwork.

- Conclusion:

Introduction of our character to the group. Discussion of finished pieces. Critiquing.

Follow Up Activities:

- Research the ceramic work of local potters. The following website for the Nelson Potters Association is a good place to start: <http://www.nelsonpotters.co.nz/home>
- Continue to explore approaches to using clay.
- Explore more works by famous artists, or other two dimensional images and think of new ways to turn them into 3D sculptures, using wire, Paper Mache etc.

Resources:

Books:

A New Zealand Potter's dictionary: Techniques and materials for the South Pacific
Barry Brickell
Reed Methuen, 1985

The Kids 'N' Clay ceramics book: handbuilding and wheel-throwing projects from the Kids 'N' Clay Pottery Studio
Created by Kevin Nierman; Written by Elaine Arima
Tricycle Press, 2000

Making ceramic Sculpture: techniques, projects, inspirations
Raul Acero
Lark Books, 2001

Coiling
Michael Hardy
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006

NATIONAL LIBRARY SCHOOLS' SERVICE

For books, videos and CD ROMs:

Website: <http://www.natlib.govt.nz>

Telephone: 0800 171717 Fax: 0800 907000

Online request form: <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/cis-online-request>

Learning Intentions:

Visual Art:

- Students will develop knowledge about the arts in public settings by visiting **The Suter** and learning about its history and significance in our region, and by viewing artworks on display. **UC**
- Explore and develop approaches to hand building sculptures in clay, in particular coiling. **PK**
- Investigate and develop three dimensional visual interpretations of portraits by well known New Zealand artists, in response to observing Ann Verdcourt's interpretations of well known international artists. **DI**
- Develop a character based on a portrait by a well known New Zealand artist. **DI**
- In groups share ideas, feelings, and stories associated the characters developed during the unit. Students will critique their work and that of others. Additionally students will share their ideas about Ann Verdcourt's artwork on display at The Suter. **CI**

The Following Achievement Objectives are related to The Suter visit. Please highlight the ones that are relevant to your class programme:

The Visual Arts

Level 3

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore some art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas

- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Describe the ideas their own and others' objects and images communicate.

Level Four:

Level 4

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore and use art-making conventions applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas

- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Explore and describe ways in which meanings can be communicated and interpreted in their own and others' work.

Key Competencies Are Relevant to This Unit of Work in the Following Ways:

Thinking

“Thinking is about using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas. These processes can be applied to purposes such as developing understanding, making decisions, shaping actions, or constructing knowledge. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of this competency.

Students who are competent thinkers and problem-solvers actively seek, use, and create knowledge. They reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuitions, ask questions, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

At The Suter students use artworks as foci to piece together ideas and consider concepts of wide and varied importance. They are able to think creatively and expansively as they consider the many possibilities which emerge in the world of visual arts. They use critical thinking to test the strength of their ideas and those of others in relation to visual art and the concepts explored by the artists who created the artworks on display. To create understandings in response to visual art one must use problem solving strategies referring to one’s own experience, the information provided in the gallery in a variety of means and through the artworks themselves.

Using language, symbols, and texts

“Using language, symbols, and texts is about working with and making meaning of the codes in which knowledge is expressed. Languages and symbols are systems for representing and communicating information, experiences, and ideas. People use languages and symbols to produce texts of all kinds: written, oral/aural, and visual; informative and imaginative; informal and formal; mathematical, scientific, and technological.

Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, number, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people’s understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They confidently use ICT (including, where appropriate, assistive technologies) to access and provide information and to communicate with others.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Language is a key focus during a Suter visit. Art is about communicating ideas and artworks are often referred to as texts.. As well as students decoding meanings in artworks using the conventions of art which are in themselves a language, they are constantly discussing ideas in small groups. Additionally, the stimulus of the artworks and ideas presented enable an excellent opportunity for the development of vocabulary and language use.

Managing self

“This competency is associated with self-motivation, a “can-do” attitude, and with students seeing themselves as capable learners. It is integral to self-assessment. Students who manage themselves are enterprising, resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They establish personal goals, make plans,

manage projects, and set high standards. They have strategies for meeting challenges. They know when to lead, when to follow, and when and how to act independently.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

At The Suter students are required to come into a novel learning situation and confidently manage to perform the necessary tasks to view and gain meaning from the artworks and to create artworks in response to the exhibitions. Additionally they need to act appropriately for the setting, understand and following particular requirements of the setting.

Relating to others

“Relating to others is about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas.

Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate. By working effectively together, they can come up with new approaches, ideas, and ways of thinking.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Suter Education sessions rely in large part on small group learning. This involves students in developing ideas as part of a group, discussing, developing, querying and testing ideas. The significance of artworks is different to different viewers and so discussing varying viewpoints is integral to learning about visual art.

Participating and contributing

“This competency is about being actively involved in communities. Communities include family, whānau, and school and those based, for example, on a common interest or culture. They may be drawn together for purposes such as learning, work, celebration, or recreation. They may be local, national, or global. This competency includes a capacity to contribute appropriately as a group member, to make connections with others, and to create opportunities for others in the group.

Students who participate and contribute in communities have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts. They understand the importance of balancing rights, roles, and responsibilities and of contributing to the quality and sustainability of social, cultural, physical, and economic environments.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Suter sessions welcome the participation of adult helpers who often, as well as supporting students in their learning, are themselves in the role of learner alongside school students in their care. As mentioned above, group learning is integral to Suter learning and the aim is to provide a positive family learning environment.

Guidelines for Students:



Welcome, Kia Ora!

Thank you for visiting The Suter.

An opportunity to *remember, experience, dream...*

When looking at the artworks, please remember that they are fragile and require care and respect. Here are some guidelines we ask you to follow.

- **USE YOUR EYES NOT YOUR HANDS**

Dirt and sweat from hands can be deposited onto a surface and can damage the artwork.

- **DON'T POINT**

When using a pen or pencil a misjudgement could lead to damage to the artwork

- **USE ONLY PENCILS**

When recording information please ensure that only pencil is used as it is possible to remove pencil from artwork, but not ink.

- **USE A CLIPBOARD instead of LEANING OR RESTING ON THE Wall next to an artwork**

It's a good idea to be sitting or standing away from the artwork when writing or drawing.

- **LEAVE BAGS, BACKPACKS, LARGE FOLDERS at RECEPTION**

Take care if you are carrying something as damage could be caused by this object hitting an artwork.

- **MOVE SENSIBLY AND QUIETLY AROUND ARTWORKS**

You could injure yourself or damage an artwork

The artworks are cared for by The Suter for everyone in Nelson and Tasman. They take a great deal of time and expense to repair, so please take care and respect the special nature of The Suter spaces as you walk around.

Thank you for helping to take care of the artworks.

Esther McNaughton Suter Educator

ceramics: ANN VERDCOURT

a survey

30 years of work by Dannevirke ceramic artist Ann Verdcourt has been brought together for the first time in this fascinating new exhibition *Ceramics: Ann Verdcourt – A Survey*. The exhibition looks at her work through three themes that have occupied Verdcourt throughout her career; conversations with artists, still life, and play.

Born in Luton, England in 1934, hats and World War Two featured strongly in Ann Verdcourt's childhood and the influence of both can still be seen now, many years later, threaded through her ceramic work. Combined with these early influences is the rigour of seven years of study at Luton and Hornsey Schools of Art, an intense interest in art history, and the dislocation of living and working in provincial New Zealand, where London's Victoria and Albert Museum is a distant dream.

Verdcourt's grandfather was a hatter for the Paris opera and Luton, where the family moved before Verdcourt's birth, was a centre for hat making. Disembodied heads, an interpretation perhaps of her grandfather's hat blocks stored in the attic, echo through her practice and hats, particularly those with a sculptural form, also feature prominently.

At the outbreak of war, Verdcourt's father and brother dug an air raid shelter in the back garden and the family's nights were soon all spent in there. Lighting came from candles and Verdcourt found the wax provided an ideal modelling medium. Families of figures soon emerged from the shelter and inside the house, plates, mugs and bowls were piled up to create safe havens for her brother's lead tigers. This early fascination with groups and sight lines continues to be a preoccupation in Verdcourt's work, particularly in her still life groupings.

Her father's art books were also a constant source of entertainment, though a desire to see the back of the painting when the page was turned was a source of frustration. As an adult, Verdcourt brings these works off the page and completes them in clay, inviting viewers to see what she imagines the reverse side of the painting to be. Verdcourt first "met clay and loved it" at Hornsey School of Art, though the freedom of approach she now enjoys was severely limited by the rigorous curriculum. At Hornsey clay was seen as a medium for sculpture, not for the domestic ware that was so prevalent in New Zealand on her arrival here in 1965 with husband John Lawrence, also highly trained and talented in working with ceramics.

While studying at art school in England, Verdcourt had the enviable opportunity to travel to Paris, seeing exhibitions of new work by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso who were both then still alive. This close connection with European art history resonates in Verdcourt's work. It is this body of work that she turned to, after her children were grown and she had renewed her commitment to making, in the absence of suitable models for portraits. And so Verdcourt describes her work as "about being European", yet considers herself to be a New Zealand potter as, had she remained in England, her work would likely have been considerably different to the work we see in this new survey exhibition at The Suter.

Images from the Show:



Ann Verdcourt, *Crowded Bathroom*, 2007. Ceramic and painted wooden bases. Collection of the artist.



Ann Verdcourt, *Pierre Matisse*, 2007, Ceramic, slips and oxide stains. Collection of the artist.



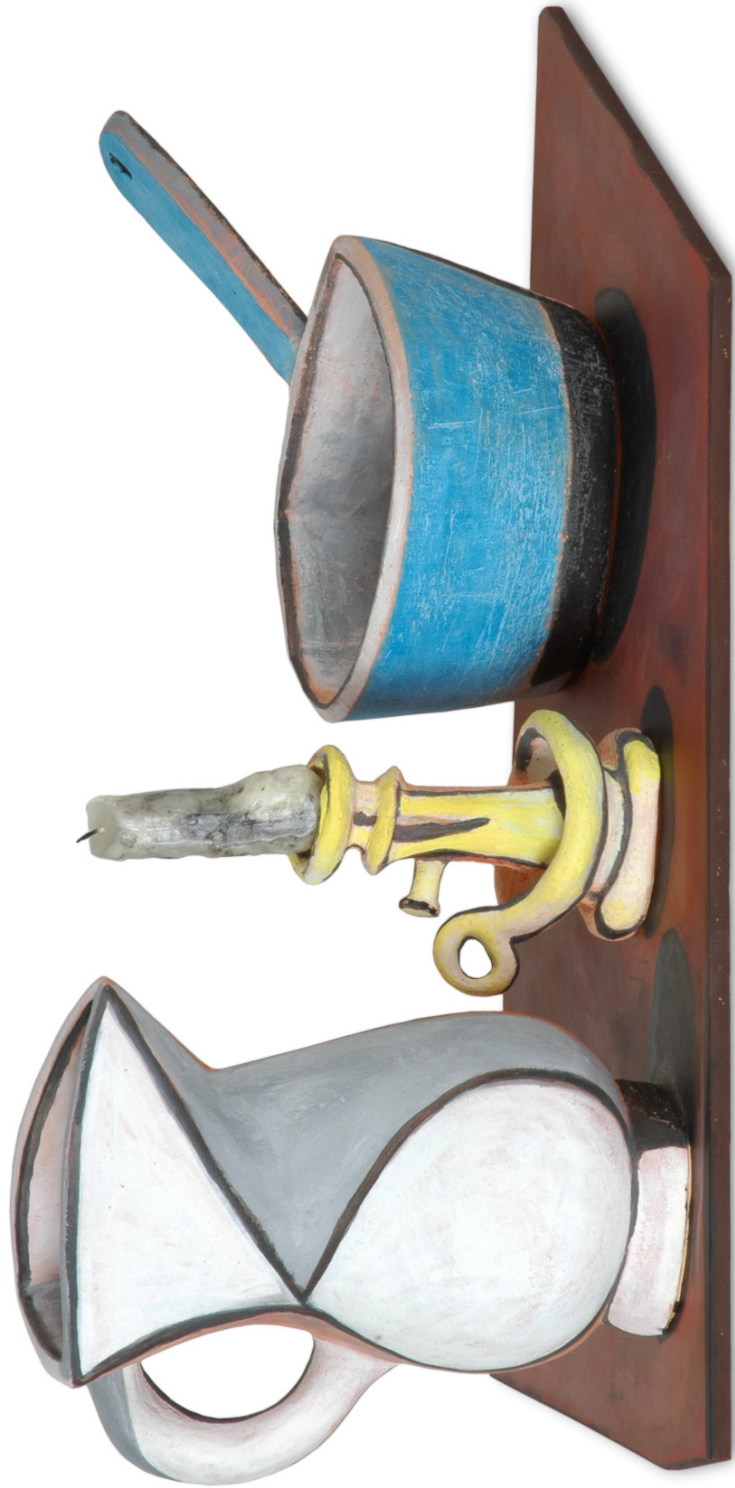
Ann Verdcourt, *Play*, 2003. Grogged paper clay, colour slips, stains and oxides. Collection of TheNewDowse.



Ann Verdcourt, *Portrait of Jeanne Hébuterne*, 1996. Ceramic. Massey University Art Collection, Palmerston North.



Ann Verdcourt, *Glimpse, fox coloured bottle*, 1997. Ceramic, with colour in body. Collection of the artist.



Ann Verdcourt, *Homage to Picasso*, 1980. Earthenware, found baker's tile, paint and wax candle. Collection of Te Manawa Art Society Inc., reproduced courtesy of Te Manawa Museums Trust.



Ann Verdcourt, *Pear on a plate*, 1985. Stoneware and black stain. Collection of Te Manawa Museums Trust, Waldegrave Collection.



Ann Verdcourt, *Woman*, William de Kooning, 2002. Stoneware, slips and stains.

Ann Verdcourt's inspiration:

Ann was inspired to make three dimensional representations of famous artworks like the ones below. You can see images of the ceramic interpretations in the examples above.



Pablo Picasso, *Still life with saucepan*, 1945



William de Kooning, *Woman*



Henri Matisse, *Portrait of Pierre Matisse*, 1909



Amedeo Modigliani, *Portrait of Jeanne Hébuterne*, 1919