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"Colonial Shino": A case study of cultural importation translation & transaction.

In 1966, the New Zealand potter Len Castle travelled to Japan on a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council fellowship and 'discovered' Shino ware (a glaze first developed in the Mino and Seto areas of Japan during the Momoyama period, 1568-1600). Upon his return, Castle sought to imitate these historical exemplars. By trial and error, he evolved a smoother version, sufficiently sanitized for use in the domestic context. In so doing, he coined the phrase 'Colonial Shino'. Subsequently this term has been used to describe the ethos associated with the effervescent flourishing of the studio pottery movement within New Zealand between the 1950s and 1980s.

This discussion seeks to map the distinctive socio-political and geographic conditions out of which this particular craft practice emerged. For the most part, an understanding of New Zealand cultural production operates within the appropriative paradigms associated with British colonialism and global capitalism. In the absence of indigenous clay traditions, local ceramics had to hitch a ride here on the back of industry, ceramic water pipes, bricks and lavatories. Citation and appropriation were by necessity the hallmark of aesthetic invention.

An understanding of the consequences of New Zealand's diminutive demographics and geo-political distance firstly requires familiarity with the socio-economic conditions of post-war New Zealand society. Once a Dominion of the former British Empire, New Zealand has long been a country of cottage industries and agrarian production: an economy situated on the very edge of global markets, perilously susceptible to tectonic shifts in global geo-politics. This village population is roughly 1/15 the size of the population of Great Britain, yet occupies only a slightly larger land mass. Today sheep outnumber citizens 10 to 1.

During World War II, half the adult male population were called into the armed services and left New Zealand shores to fight in North Africa, Europe and the Pacific arenas. The New Zealand blood spilt in these distant conflicts served to reaffirm and restore British colonial ties and perhaps more questionably, ensured New Zealand's continued access to British markets; in 1965 Britain took over 50% of New Zealand's protein-dominated exports, however by 1989 that figure had reduced to 7%.

The New Zealand male had proved his prowess on the battlefield, but of equal pre-eminence, was continuing to prove it on the rugby field. The social bonds of the nation were forged in weekend matches: club against club; town against country; province against province; 'All Blacks' against 'all-comers'. Historically sporting activities were seen as the great reconciler of social differentiation and Rugby provided an obvious metaphor for pluralist unity. 'Town' and 'country' rubbed shoulders in sectoral harmony. New Zealand was considered just about the ideal place to bring up 'kids' and the post war baby-boom ensured there were many of them. The bricklayer lived in the same street as the lawyer. When taking a few days off at the beach, the neighbours could be relied upon to feed the cat, water the veggies and 'keep an eye on the place'. The house could be left unlocked. Criminal behaviour was considered aberrant, and not endemic within the population. New Zealand society was as tight knit as grandma's crocheted bedcover. Presbyterian

work ethic, frugality, conformity and dour sobriety supported the prevailing ethos of socially cohesive egalitarianism.

By 1960 New Zealand's favourite television celebrity was Bob Hope. Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita and Marlon Brando's The Wild One were banned. 'Pakeha' (the name given to non- Maori New Zealanders) still thought of themselves as living in a little Britain, only with a better climate and unfettered access to beaches. Recent arrivals from the 'home country' rearranged the furniture so it would look even more like where they'd come from. Assisted British immigration did not cease until 1975.

On its belated arrival in New Zealand, 'modernism' had considerable mileage on the clock. As one astute observer would later retort, 'we only ever got to drive it secondhand'[1]. Commandeered by state-sponsored cultural accountants, the utopian lustre of the modern was re-painted as a marriage of 'romanticism' and 'nationalism'. The pursuit of a national canon was implicitly aligned with the post-war production boom, import substitution and trade tariff protectionism. The proprietal hand of the State, suited to demand-led, Keynesian style macro-economics extolled a monolithic conception of culture, nationhood and citizenry.

However, by the 1970s, even this highly regulated, regimented society could no longer suppress the seismic rumblings set to shake the prevailing Nationalism and Romanticism. A new generation, who had grown up with the material security of post war prosperity, was becoming more educated than ever before. 'Numbers of both secondary and tertiary students quadrupled from the late 1940s to 1970 while primary schools doubled.' (Bloomfield 1984: 256). By 1971, an unprecedented 1 in 3 of the population were now participating in formal education. Their experiences and the ever-increasing access New Zealanders were gaining to the world at large were fuelling a rising tide of expectation. Technological advancements were the chief drivers that began to end New Zealand's insularity and isolation. International travel, telecommunications, television and significantly, greater access to imported literature opened New Zealand to increasingly diverse modes of thought and practice. The new generation drove Japanese cars with impunity, a form of transport unthinkable to their parents, whose collective memories of Japanese atrocity during World War II could never countenance such apparent complicity.

In a process of de-colonization and subsequent nascent nationalism, transplanted constructs will often take on a veracity more pervasive than where they originated. New Zealand's geo-political distance and diminutive demographic allows a particular ethos to take persuasive hold over the cultural imagination. Such was the case with the wholesale importation into New Zealand of the Anglo-Oriental ceramic tradition via Bernard Leach's A Potter's Book. A few copies are known to have been in circulation within a few years of its 1940 publication. By 1962, Leach himself had visited, followed by acclaimed Japanese potters, Takeichi Kawai in 1964 and Shoji Hamada in 1965. All were to have a profound influence on the early development of local studio ceramics.

Within the 1970s pottery fraternity the stories of these visitations entered into folklore. Many potters may not have been actually present on these occasions, but would subsequently wax lyrical as if they were. By the 1970s it didn't matter whether you had actually read Leach's book, as one esteemed potter noted, - Why would you need to do that? Enough had talked about it already.[2]

During the 1950s and 1960s, the studio pottery movement had been centred on a small number of feted individuals, whose acclaim appears to grow more prescient with hindsight[3]. These were the significant practitioners inspired by Leachean lore, however, by the end of the 1960s, as widespread participation in pottery 'took-off', this orthodoxy was beginning to be regarded as overly derivative and academic. Local pottery associations were formed throughout the country and drew memberships from across the social spectrum. In 1958 the first issue of New Zealand Potter magazine was published. In 1963, a national association was founded with 100 members, followed in 1965 by the establishment of the New Zealand Society of Potters. New Zealand's first book on pottery: Pottery for Pleasure by Elizabeth Lissaman was published in 1968. Teachers' Training Colleges taught pottery as part of the curriculum in preparation for primary and secondary school art education. All secondary schools built in the 1960s had pottery facilities and kiln sheds, that were sites for countless evening classes, bonding school and community and providing valuable additional income to the school.

As the popularisation of pottery took hold, the call for the indigenisation of New Zealand ceramics became stronger, invariably led by the more experienced practitioners. These potters were respected within the community. Their 'hands-on' sensibility, rugged individualism, self-determinacy, adaptive pragmatism and cottage industry viability was seen as having integrity alongside the dull acceptance and indifference of the machine-made. Live pottery demonstrations, frequently staged as a low-tech type of tourist attraction, induced many audience members to sign up for evening classes. Craft retail shops were represented in every small town the length of the country. Many rural potters sold their wares direct from the kiln. Sunday day-trippers from the cities could purchase direct from the maker and in so doing vicariously experience the 'back to the land' lifestyle and ethos. School Galas and Church Fairs were regular features of rural and urban social schedules. Alongside the cake raffles, trestle tables bore a bounty of inexpensive homemade goods; jams and preserved fruit in Agee jars, homespun woolly jumpers and pompom hats, woven cane 'Ali Baba' baskets, hand-crafted leather belts and purses, and ceramic coffee cups and salt 'pigs'.

New Zealanders with increasing discretionary leisure turned to handicrafts as a means of re-imagining an 'authentic' past and symbolically re-connecting with their pioneering colonial history. By the 1970s, brown(ish), artfully misshapen, dribbly glazed, nature-inspired faux primitivism stood for an aestheticized ideal of national culture. The popular appeal of this 'earthy ware' was confirmed by its ubiquitous emulation by mass manufacturers, like the Temuka and Crown Lynn potteries (the latter producing 3 million items a year at the height of its production).[4] The mediated Anglo-Orientalism of this virtually compulsory state tableware was mis-apprehended by the vast majority of New Zealanders who read it as a culturally distinctive expression of the local.

It was a point of pride, according to folklore, that there were significantly more potters per head of the population during the 1970s, in New Zealand than anywhere else in the western world; rough estimates suggest there were up to 2000 full-time potters in 1978. Many had abandoned previous occupations as teachers, lawyers and tradesmen, to pursue full time pottery; some couldn't believe their luck. Tariffs and import restrictions proffered a tightly regulated market in which to prosper. Demand for handmade pottery clearly out weighed supply. Stories abound of craft retailers pre-ordering consignments of whole kiln-loads sight unseen. Selling domestic ware enabled potters to earn incomes above the average New Zealand wage, and afforded

down time to pursue individual curiosities and follies. Former freezing worker, the mutable potter, Peter Lange, describes the number of wine goblets, casseroles and coffee cups required to sustain his income, and the luxury of producing this quota only in the final week of the month.[5] Consumer preferences did not appear to have much impact on competitive production between potters. For many of them, collegiality and generosity of 'know how' was integral to the way in which 1970s studio ceramics evolved. There was a collective sense amongst the fraternity, that in the space of a few decades they were discovering and condensing knowledge and tradition that in other parts of the world had taken hundreds of years to accrue. Again, Lange: it mattered little what we put out, the market simply took all that we could make.

Richard Parker recounts building his first brick kiln, without detailed instruction. Having seen a few backyard kilns, and armed with more fortitude than knowledge, the acclaimed potter 'gave it a go' in culturally typical 'can do' fashion. After the first firing a structural flaw was detected (the roof was in imminent danger of collapsing), so a column of bricks was swiftly inserted to support the structure. The next firing produced superb results. It was some time later, after seeing photographs of traditional Japanese kilns, that he noted the internal column that acted as a flame divider to improve the heat distribution. Numerous instances are recalled from the 1970s such as this: innovation by fortuitous accident.

There is another important sense in which innovation can be understood in relation to the burgeoning of studio pottery. Within an art-historical model, innovation is recognized and promoted as divergence from normative convention. However, within craft practice, innovation might be more usefully regarded as the perpetual accretion of small instances, constituted from any number of related but distinct factors. This type of process is more accurately described as 'collective learning' than an individual flash of disembodied inspiration.

In the pottery associations that flourished in the 1970s, amateur enthusiasts regularly came into contact with full-time professionals. The insights of the uninitiated provided a constant rejoinder to their more experienced peers. The mutual interactions of these diverse participants increase the possibility of innovation. In this critical sense, innovation can be further understood as a social as much as a technocratic process, and consequently a performance of interactive, incremental learning.

The spontaneous sociability that came from active participation and membership of the 'mud-chuckers' club proved infectious. Pottery associations emerged throughout New Zealand regions. The accessibility, cheapness of abundant raw materials and use of rudimentary technology meant this was a club almost everyone could join. Pottery associations provided a social network where strategic alliances could be forged, traditional roles could be transcended, generation gaps eviscerated and gender stereotypes interrogated. Club membership demanded mutual co-operation, active participation and collaboration; the accessing and processing of raw materials; the building and firing of kilns; the organizing of public displays; and the all-important hosting of social functions.

A form of horizontal interaction and reciprocity was offered in these settings where voluntary participation in collective activities took place alongside the determined pursuit of individual craft practice. Meaningful associations also accrued from vertical interactions. Local pottery associations often hosted weekend workshops where

acclaimed potters from outside the region would be invited to demonstrate. Successful 'club' organizations accrued in time considerable political power. The opportunity to make vertical interactions with wider forces and authorities is worth noting. In 1973, after the government announced its intention to impose a sales tax on individual handmade items, regional associations through The New Zealand Society of Potters successfully lobbied, alongside industry, for this scheme to be abandoned.

In many ways the social efficacy of the 1970s New Zealand studio pottery is analogous to Jane Jacobs' incisive compendium of the anatomy of a city through her close-grained observations of her Greenwich Village neighbourhood, New York in The Death And Life Of Great American Cities: The Failure of Town Planning (1961). Jacobs' basic unit of analysis is the city street, or more particularly the sidewalk. In her view, the cultivation of trust cannot be institutionalized but is a value accrued over time from many casual sidewalk interactions. 'The safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are using and most enjoying the city streets voluntarily and are at least conscious, normally, that they are policing.' (Jacobs 1961: p.46)

Jacobs chastises the discipline of urban planning for imposing an ideal of civic design, without adequately understanding how cities socially function in actuality. She claims cities already have a pre-existing design, chaotic though it may appear. For her, successful urban neighbourhoods are characterized by density, complexity and diversity. 'Successful street neighbourhoods in short, are not discrete units. They are physical, social and economic continuities – small scale to be sure, but small scale in the sense that the length of fibre making a rope are small scale.' (Jacobs 1961:p131)

What Jacobs did in regards to Greenwich village was to propose a model of how a community could effectively operate, self regulate, innovate, motivate, and it was through an appreciation of the conditions provided by geographical proximity. For my purposes, Jacob's city neighbourhoods operate in a way that corresponds to the 'club'. Through voluntary membership it is possible to be on excellent terms with people who are very different from oneself. Regular casual interactions may not in themselves amount to any great significance, but over a period of time these generate a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in times of personal need. The notion of 'social capital' provides a means of theorizing the importance of human networks and strategic alliances. Unlike other usual forms of 'capital', where the more it is consumed the more the stock is depleted, 'social capital' operates in reverse; the more it is exercised the more it accrues.

Club membership provides an intermediary zone between private life and the public reality of work. In this insulated arena, real concerns facing individuals on a day-to-day basis can be rehearsed and played out without the threat of undue consequence. Mutual interactions between club members serve a range of functions; reputations are refined and transmitted through a web of approval, disapproval, gossip and sanction (all the more influential when people know each other). Within the group, information is transformed into practical understandings that facilitate an individual's capacity for action (where people know each other well transaction costs and levels of risk and uncertainty are further reduced). The group offers a template for productive collaboration and a conceptual framework to describe the processes and conditions in which innovation emerges. On a practical level, it is the site of inexpensive childcare, informal marriage guidance counseling and an occasion to exchange recipes for cake and 'home brew' beer.

The flip side of 'club mentality' is factionalism, personal enmity, rivalry, nepotism and cronyism. The insularity of the club may prove a breeding ground for unthinking conformism, messianic adherence to orthodoxy and anti-intellectualism. 1970s New Zealand studio pottery can just as easily be accounted for in these terms. Indeed there were notable occasions in which the club mentality was publically critiqued. In a 1978 issue of New Zealand Potter, renowned potter, John Parker lambasted the state of New Zealand contemporary ceramics in an often-quoted article, 'Eat your Heart out Betty Crocker'. Parker challenged his contemporaries for, 'proliferating their previous successes and retaining [a] high standard of mediocrity.' (Parker 1978: 20) Not content with simply questioning established potters' complacency for pandering to the whims of the consuming public, through reliance on 'tired glaze clichés' that were 'cone ten flattened', he went on to interrogate the Anglo-Oriental ethos. Parker wrote, 'the mystic of the Orient has fallen into disrepute in the . . . humourless hand-made years of parodying naturalism and primitivism.' (Parker 1978: 20).

Such judgments were aimed at the relative artistic merits of what was being produced at the time. My interest is less in the aesthetic worth, than in the socio-political and economic conditions that this practice was embedded within and operationalized by. Invariably wherever discussions of artistic merit are convened, the travel-weary spectre of the fine art/craft debate glides into the picture. Here resides the problem; the literature that attempts to define craft, usually does so along the lines of a discernible set of practices and/or a definable set of attitudes towards materials. Little or no attention is paid to the contexts in which these practices operate. One consequence of the invariable stoush between craft and fine art is the inexplicable co-option of figures like Picasso, Fontana, Arman and Jeff Koons as worthy ceramic practitioners. Possibly there may be some different terms upon which this endless roundtable might proceed.

A trip into the annals of the twentieth century avant-garde may be instructive. It took some decades before the implications of Duchamp's 1917 ceramic urinal, Fountain, were fully integrated within a philosophical account. Following Arthur Danto's claim that, 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld', (Danto 1964: 580) George Dickie formulated his 'institutional theory of art' In essence he proposed that an artwork was such, by virtue of being treated as so, by person(s) belonging to the institution of art.[6]

Given the centrality of 'innovation' within the normative function of art, Dickie reasoned, that defining art in terms of necessary and sufficient attributes, was futile. He perceived the paradox at the heart of avant-garde practice, namely, the making of convention out of the unconventional. According to Dickie, no sooner would a theory proffer a set of discernible characteristics, than an artist would create a work, exhibiting none of these characteristics, therefore, 'transgressive' and likely to be critically proclaimed 'innovative'. If there is no other example Duchamp's Fountain provides — it is at least this.

Dickie also argued that the majority of theories of art fail to dissociate themselves from projects of aesthetic appreciation, and therefore inherently contain prescriptions for what constitutes artistic worth. By implication, the terrain of 'mediocre' art is excluded from consideration. Dickie's institutional theory is useful in so far as it is value-neutral; it proposes a non-evaluative definition of art.

In effect Dickie implies an end to aesthetic philosophy's preoccupation with classificatory definition. Implicitly, he suggests that giving comprehensive account of what art, (read 'craft'), is, namely, how it is operationalized within a social institution, is a job better left to sociologists, cultural anthropologists and political economists.

In defiance of its size, New Zealand has a large number of community organizations. In 2000 there were 21,444 registered incorporated societies and 11,582 registered charitable trusts. Every year, around 3000 organizations are newly incorporated. New Zealanders possess a 'club' mentality and only a small gene pool from which to replenish its membership. We are an island population of 4.2 million people, where all the attributes of a nation-state play out on a 'village' scale, where town gossip becomes the main determinant of cultural worth. By its very size and demographic, New Zealand is a country where too many people know too many people, and this particular reality is all but invisible to New Zealanders themselves.

Within the New Zealand context of, 'I know a mate who knows a mate who can fix that for you', the notion of 'six degrees of separation' roughly translates as two. It is my contention that this economy of scale makes for a qualitatively different setting. New Zealand is light on its feet, adaptable and susceptible to extreme change. Diverse arguments play out in tight physical proximity. The probability of exemplary performance is enhanced by continual exposure. It is a phenomenon aptly described by the aphorism, 'four seasons in one day', the vernacular for the local susceptibility to volatile weather patterns.

Clearly the effervescent flourishing of the studio pottery movement in the 1970s is indistinguishable from the socio-economic conditions that gave rise and succour to it. The consequence was the unleashing of an extraordinarily popular and pervasive craft practice. My view has less to do with the wholesale importation and transmutation of a ubiquitous Anglo-Orientalism, than the ways in which craft practice is sustained and manifest within social networks.

It mattered little to studio potters that their re-articulation of Leach's Anglo-Oriental 'ethical' pot resulted in a deliberate, but paradoxical cultivating of the unaffected. What was important was the 'fit' between Leach's aesthetic approbations and a particular set of cultural mores. A Potter's Book provided a language for bucolic pastoralism, which was longed for as an antidote to 1970s techno-rationalism, oil price phobia, cold war rhetoric and apocalyptic prognoses of nuclear and ecological disaster. However, this 'fit' was a historically contingent moment in time and would only be sustained for a brief period. The mutable winds were about to prevail.

The social cohesion of the 1970s was soon to be radically altered by a restructuring of the form and content of the economy introduced in the 1980s. The watershed moment was 1981. A seemingly innocuous sporting exchange, the Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand pre-empted a transformation of the social order. Not since the 1951 'waterfront strike' had New Zealand witnessed such civil unrest. Thousands of New Zealanders took to the streets in protest. As Geoff Fougere perceived in the months immediately following, the divisiveness, 'cut across families, across neighbourhoods, across social, racial and political boundaries. It failed entirely to conform to the usual map of New Zealand opinion.' (Fougere 1982: 12)

The nationalist fabric was ripped apart. Rugby was no longer the mythical embodiment of society's values. The legions who took to the streets in protest against the tour were to usher in the first post-modern, post-colonial neo-liberal government in 1984. Not for the first time, New Zealand was once again a laboratory rat for social engineering. Rapacious slashing of government welfare spending and the privatizing and deregulating of anything that moved, occurred with such rapidity, that there could be little or no organized opposition or debate.

New Zealand's scale means reformist zeal is not slowed by institutional inertia. Trade unionism, government regulation and industry protectionism and, of course, the welfare state, were now variously attacked as impediments to the effective pursuit of monetarist policy. The euphemistic 'trickle down effect', whereby wealth generated at the affluent end of the market would generate employment at the lower end, was sold to the population. This concept, unthinkable in the previous climate of egalitarianism, was rolled out as piece by piece the national assets were sold off. In reality the affluent did succeed in becoming wealthier, but this was cold comfort to those becoming increasingly impoverished at the other end of the socio-economic spectrum. Implicit in the neo-liberal agenda was a redefinition of the notion of citizenship, emphasizing not the social rights of citizens, but their social obligations.

The culturally disorganizing features of 'post-modern' consumer culture and its attendant sexual and familial revolutions were rendering social cohesion increasingly vulnerable. The nation was buffeted by post-feminist, post-modernist and post-colonial discourses; subject to nuclear false alarms; overwhelmed by consumer awareness of planned obsolescence and the ambiguous flow of mass-media information. A generation's collective understanding of 'self' was in shambles; de-factoed, de-centred, multiple and mobile.

Befitting these times of contingency and uncertainty, interior décor tastes testified to changing temporal/spatial figurations that revealed new professional, familial and recreational patterns. The domestic enclave took on every appearance of being undomesticated; a 'white-on-white-and nothing else' impoverishment masqueraded as the 1980s decorative schema. If a ceramic item were to dress these industrial chic minimalist spaces, it was more likely to be validated under the 'retro' tag. Gone were the table centerpieces of large organic misshapen versions of rustic primitivism ubiquitous in the 1970s.

Without import restrictions and protections, the marketplace was inundated with cheaper hand-made and mass-produced tableware from third world producers. All but a few commercial potters were able to survive this onslaught. Those few that did managed by niche marketing ornamental and decorative ware. The halcyon days of the 1970s were unlikely ever to be repeated. The commercial market for studio pottery was virtually eviscerated, yet interest in and membership of pottery associations remains high to this day.

Social speculation offers no conclusive verdict on how the current neoliberal agenda will ultimately transpire for New Zealand cultural production. However the way in which cultural change of this magnitude occurs within a young, small country means the story has interesting ramifications for cultural contexts in other parts of the world. The intensive manner and accelerated pace of the New Zealand case study has relevance and interest for others who grapple with the likely trajectories of cultural history as a whole.

What I have proposed as a useful set of coordinates for theorizing how craft practice might be sustained in the future is an understanding of the 'club' as a model of 'social capital' in action. If it appears that I am advocating something of a return to the unfashionable notion of a 'guild', then that is correct in so far as a system of this type offers a means of preserving and continuing specialist craft knowledge. The pejorative implications of the term 'guild', suggest a form of gate-keeping particular to institutions that regulate professional services, however such organizations do at least provide an infrastructure that allows for initiation.

Many of the historic conceptions of what might be regarded as skilled craft (the baking of a fine chocolate cake for example), have clearly been superseded by commercialized production, to the extent that essential craft knowledge is increasingly considered the preserve of those with slightly too much time on their hands. Today, leisure rather than livelihood is the main reason participants are induced to pursue craft knowledge and skills. Judging by the legions of adherents, it is likely that there will always be individuals who become inclined to pursue their practice as a full time avocation.

Were we to propose a sustainable future for craft practice, I am suggesting the focus should not entirely consist of what should or should not constitute 'best practice'. Culture has no existence independent of its manifestation within social interactions and therefore the varied social contexts where practice is usefully embedded, require scrutiny. Within the dominant fine art discourse, almost exclusive attention is paid to the central value of creative innovation, understood in terms of divergence from current and accepted convention. Little account or virtue is ascribed to the notion of 'mediocrity'. I have attempted to highlight the social dimension of craft practice and in so doing, reconfigure the normative prescriptions that have prejudiced the consideration of the hobbyist in comparison to the professional practitioner.

At its zenith, the New Zealand studio pottery movement of the 1970s came closer to fulfilling Bernard Leach's blueprint of a Ruskinian inspired cottage industry, possibly more than any place in the world. Not for the first time, a world fad would become a New Zealand fetish. For a period, the moral vision of the authentic country potter achieved a rare and pervasive economic viability. At the same time, nowhere were the contradictions inherent in Leach's proselytizing (the fetishsizing of the anonymous peasant potter) made more apparent.

Yet there are aspects of this narrative to savour. The wholesale participation and economic success at the time, demonstrates what is most conducive about the setting for cultural production that this island nation affords. The closer competing propositions were foisted on one another, the more their adherents were required to rehearse and sharpen their performance and the less the 'indifferent' is tolerated.

Geographical proximity, diversity and compression inadvertently bequeaths its constituents a sense of social agency and efficacy that may be all but invisible to them, yet empowers them with the necessity to cooperate, reciprocate and assume responsibility for one another. Only in terms of the local arena are there conducive grounds in which the stewardship and cultivation of natural and cultural resources can be assured to have some demonstrable and productive effect.

In some sense, all New Zealand cultural production (with the exclusion of indigenous Maori) can be argued as derivative and eclectic. A fortuitous condition, in that, the culture is not unduly subject to the debilitating effects of modernism's enduring

propensity for cultural memory loss. A condition that mitigates anything constructed prior to the nineteenth century as being of little consequence beyond a fascination for antiquity and an occasion for nostalgia. New Zealand's necessity of co-opting and translating cultural practice has never really presented much of an impediment, as I have previously implied. It is not what it consists of, but what you subsequently do with it, that counted.

This theoretically induced amnesia of modernism is particularly hard on the histories and knowledge of 'practice', regulating, that such rich fulsome traditions must necessarily be thought of as little consequence, in the bright imaginings of an emancipated future. Nevertheless modernism's unprecedented and latent anti-historicism bequeaths an extra burden, in the sense that, late-modern cultures are now having to collectively re-imagine and re-construct what their 'past' might have consisted in, and contributed to, as a way of assembling an adequate understanding of current cultural circumstances and usefully assist speculation in what a viable and productive 'future' might entail.

In a world that may only be partially referred to here, as post-industrial, post-national and post-modern, forms of social membership and identity are increasingly provisional and transient. Nonetheless, times of great economic, ecological and cultural uncertainty serve only to heighten the importance that can be given to the face-to-face reality of the local, a tangible and predictable arena in which social difference can dramatically be played out, contested, celebrated or condemned.

If the New Zealand studio pottery movement of the 1970s is to have a lasting legacy, it is unlikely to be the veritable array of somewhat unremarkable, but earnest pots, nor the nostalgic evocations of a pastoral lifestyle. The object lesson it does provide is recognition of that enduring prerogative of the craftsman – the imperative to work it out practically in one's own terms.

Footnotes

1 The 'car' as a metaphor for modernism, was concept often discussed by New Zealand artist Julian Dashper in relationship to his own practice.
2 A comment made in conversation with the author by Richard Parker, July 2009.
3 For a comprehensive historical account of the Anglo-Oriental influence in the development of New Zealand studio pottery, see Elliot, M. and Skinner, D (2009) 'Cone ten down: Studio pottery in New Zealand, 1945 - 1980' Auckland: David Bateman.
4 The phrase 'earthyware' was coined by David Craig. For an extended discussion of Anglo-Oriental aesthetic influence within the New Zealand domestic economy, see Craig, D. (2007) 'Setting a table in the provinces: Domestic economies of ceramics in New Zealand' in Richard Fahey, Philip Clarke (eds.) 'Clay economies' Auckland: Six Point Press.
5 A comment made in conversation with the author by Peter Lange, July 2009.
6 For the latest revised formulation of George Dickie's 'Institutional Theory of Art' see, Dickie, G. (2001) 'Art and Value' Massachusetts: Blackwell

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