

bodies within bodies

Cheryl Lucas' perennial jug—her metaphor for the body—re-surfaces and ripples in actual and abstracted forms, explains **Cassandra Fusco**

NEW WORK BY CERAMICIST CHERYL LUCAS, RENOWNED FOR HER JUG VESSELS, SPRINGS FROM HER EARLIER 1994 SOCIAL NARRATIVES AND 1999 CLAY WORKS SERIES but departs from these in several ways. Her current works, less didactic, less inscribed, are more highly abstract and enjoy a common, simplified energy and enquiry, primarily concerned with movement and space—physical, emotional, psychological and other. “There is,” she comments, “a political undercurrent. Ceramics, even in fragments, have always managed to tell us of

peoples' ordinary lives, beliefs and ideologies. It is important, vessels can move us in and out of discussion.”

In these current works Lucas' perennial jug (her metaphor for the body) re-surfaces and ripples in actual and abstracted forms. Perceptions of this central symbol are explored through drawn and actual planar shifts, epitomized by *Summer Jug*. Many of the vessels are re-drawn either internally or externally, alluding not only to physical and perceptual movements, but also to form in relation to space

along the axis of time. To walk around any one of these tall vessels (average 520mm), is to sense not so much calendar time, but something more to do with relativity. *Lemon Fold*, *Sprung Green* and *Moon Jar*, all vessels within vessels, offer this kind of open-ended, contemplative engagement, whereas *Hung Jar* confronts our use of time and materials head on. Graphically inscribed on the far side of this full-bellied vessel, is a plastic 'Trim Milk' container. Lucas makes her point. What, she asks, apart from convenience, does the plastic container, the epitome of change, add to our lives?

Lemon Fold carries several reflections of its own elegant form on its lemon and black body, Jungian and self-regarding. More lyrically abstract, the charcoal body of *Moon Jar* also duplicates its own image and, through reflection, evocatively argues for space and rhythm in our lives. Most appropriately, in an ebbing fluidity, suggestions ripple; the pull of a handle, or tide or shoreline?

This inscription of a body within a body (present in various degrees in all ten vessels) demonstrates Lucas's fascination with form in relation to time and space. Perhaps nowhere is

this physics explored more dramatically, yet legibly related to her earlier work, than in *Sea Scrubbed Jug*. Here is another body within a body, the outline of a simple blue and white jug adrift in Pacific currents. In one aspect, *Sea Scrubbed Jug* shimmers like light caught in a sapphire rock pool; a small clock of tidal time. In another, its columnar form surges with the froth of white sea horses. And yet again the overall proportions are surely drawn from the vertical volcanic hills of Lyttelton where Lucas lives and her own tall frame. “We live, literally and metaphorically, on a fault line,” Lucas comments. “We present ourselves as clean and green to the world but is this the case?”

Vulnerable social and ecological balances inform all of these vessels: they invoke explorations of self-location and questions of directions. Undoubtedly the sculptural planes and preoccupations of these pots are informed by Lucas' experience of drawing—the delineation of form in space—as well as her appreciation of the elemental part played by the vessel in civilisation.

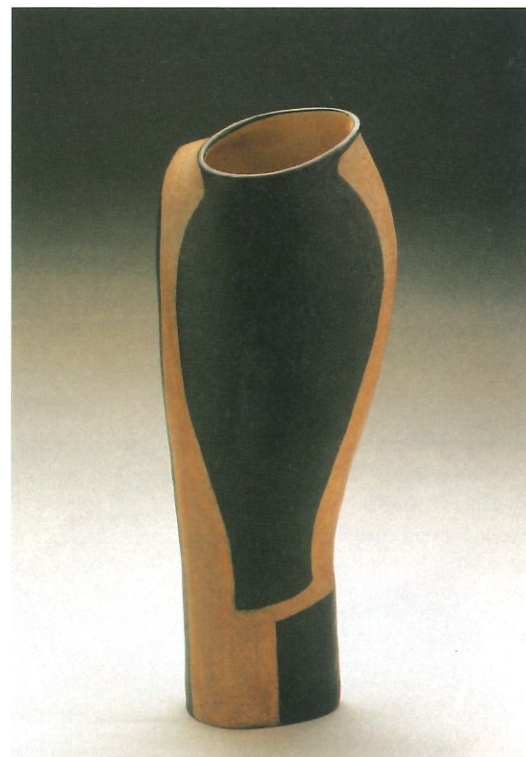
Cheryl Lucas' ceramics were at Campbell Grant Galleries in Christchurch, New Zealand, 2 – 20 October, 2001.

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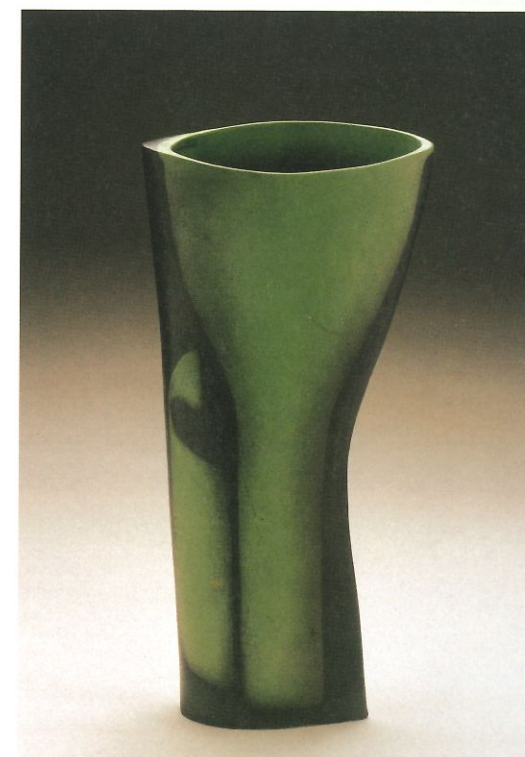
Right: Cheryl Lucas, *Sea Scrubbed Jug*, handbuilt stoneware clay, coloured slips, satin transparent glaze (multifired to 1250° C), 524 (h) x 258 (w) mm.



Far right: Cheryl Lucas, *Hung Jar*, handbuilt stoneware clay, coloured slips, satin transparent glaze (multifired to 1250° C), 560 (h) x 220 (w) mm.



Far left: Cheryl Lucas, *Summer Jug*, handbuilt stoneware clay, coloured slips, satin transparent glaze (multifired to 1250° C), 510 (h) x 170 (w) mm.



Left: Cheryl Lucas, *Sprung Green*, handbuilt stoneware clay, coloured slips, satin transparent glaze (multifired to 1250° C), 563 (h) x 268 (w) mm.