

Martin Poppelwell, Nadene Milne Gallery, 2012

Perhaps under the light of a new moon such images will be assured of a hearing among the noisy, disorderly and contradictory space we know as an existence.

It's another early start to a day, my goal of bantling out a statement about the signs of life & signs of death paintings is certainly worth some procrastination. So much so that I choose to wash my hair with this fancy orange shampoo that my partner assures me won't turn my hair into a permed Richard Simmons lookalike, vanity has limits. I have a method though

and after a couple of hours beneath a woolen tea cozy a more beaten up curl emerges. Any credibility in my eyes is a bonus these days.

At least the coffee machine gets the picture, and since I make my own cups, those stripy ones that I sell for peanuts, makes this first drink a pleasure.

The trick to writing about art is to write stuff that is simply good to read.





The amount of text or writing, whatever you want to call it, I have read that has made little or no bearing to the way one responds to an artwork astonishes me. It is not as if I don't read much, I read all the bloody time. I actually simply enjoy the act of reading. Perhaps one would be better to see reading like trawling or seeking some endangered creature. No guarantees but lots of fun & expense on the way. Usually the information that rings a clear note and pitch is not so much straightforward but like any complex equation, it can distill detail into a unified form.

This sounds kind of dull but I think its ballpark right. Whenever writing tries to make a claim that extends beyond the simple and frustrating form that our lives take it can easily tend toward cabbage, and for those from my generation, boiled cabbage.

So to expose my self, my end so to speak, by writing and giving out the way I come to nobble together these blotchy systems, dangling cut and paste hackhand fossil advert fragments. Lists written once in the black ink when they referred to something concrete, now just a few fancy words on the verge of dross, swiped dross, purloined..., and too smart to be biffed. Unknitted together with a loose patterned grid, cascading over itself, clunkity clunk bumpity bump, wibbly wobble..., this is how I see it..., this is how I read it.

Of course I am trying to seduce the viewer, a little. Demand attention. Suggest they get over themselves, to hold on a bit, cut me anything, "rider" this out a smidgen, drop a trouser leg even. Throw me a line..., anyone, focus on the unknown.

Promises promises, a new idea in layouts, shark bait. These works are prepared to stand amongst the maelstrom of life, news, information, culture and crap and emerge as relevant. Relevant for the reason of not trying to put ones 'stoopid' finger on it. They expose that logic isn't logic but is still wonderfully meaningful. There is no irony or cynicism. There are no ongoing lists of superlatives. There isn't any high-end low-end dichotomy. There isn't a damn installation..., it's stuff that is stuffed with stuff. Crammed together & made with love, passion, and any resources I could find handy.

There is a plan and a plan to unsettle the plan. The Signs of Life & Signs of Death paintings look like they have the same stuff going on, yet the title of the works in this case make the readings 'oh so different'...really!

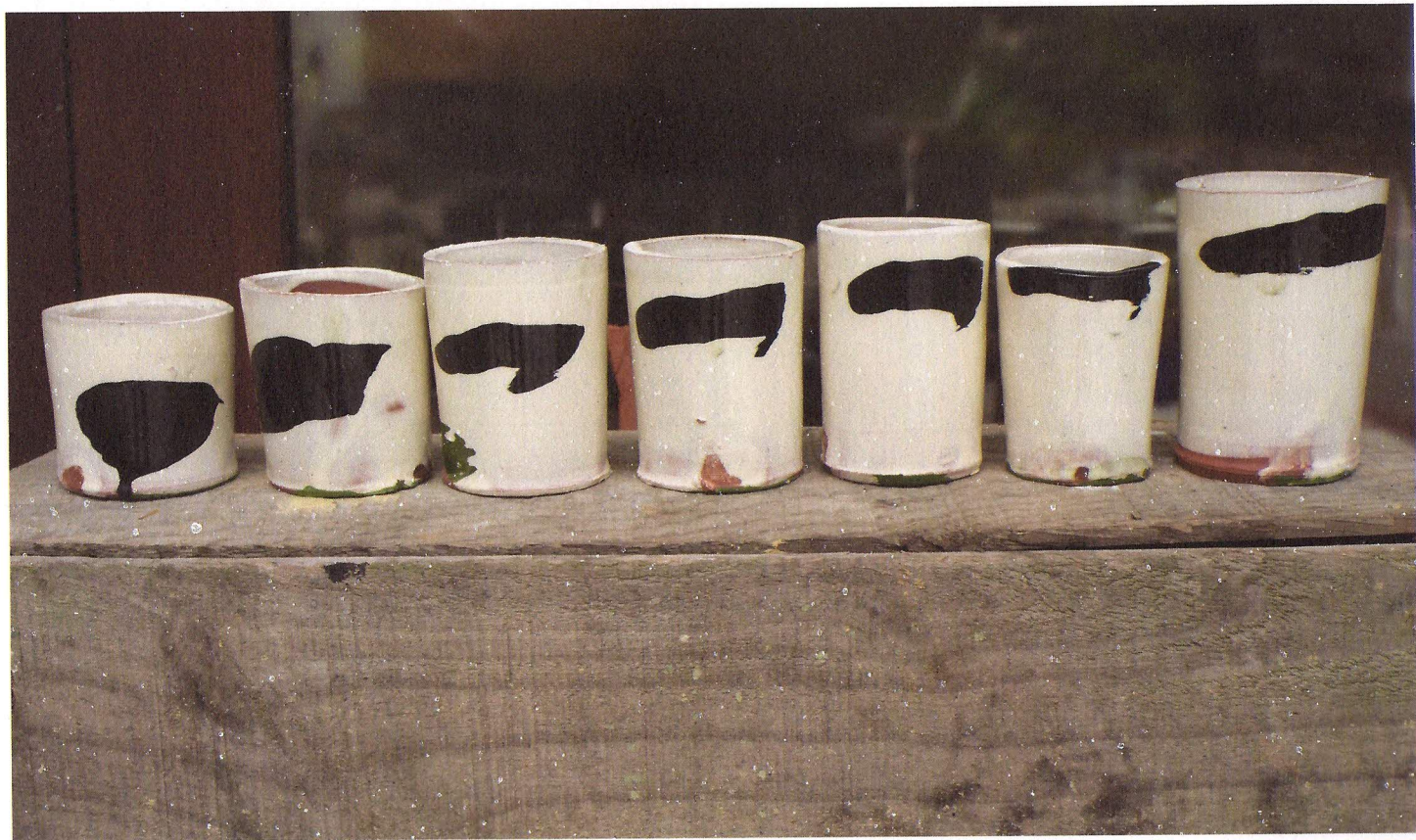
Is it all that easy I wonder in both these passages of painting, for the same stuff to hook into opposite ends of the same spectrum?

In all likelihood, yes..., that's what I am prepared to admit, I just don't know how I ended up with the question.

Having landed foul of the commercial windfall that making pottery can bring, having truly thought I could show up my colleagues by a lust for things to compliment our daily rituals. For thinking that I could turn the swelling throng of consumers away from the likes of Briscoes stores to a totally relevant parochial form of art to stimulate the sensual acts of cooking and drinking and eating. For seriously wanting people to pay me handsomely for going to the bloody effort in the first place, the mystic artist getting real. For going to the trouble of pilfering other peoples work and passing it off as my own to look skilled and taller than I am. All of these things to carry pottery into the "art" conversation and be admitted into the conceptual fold.

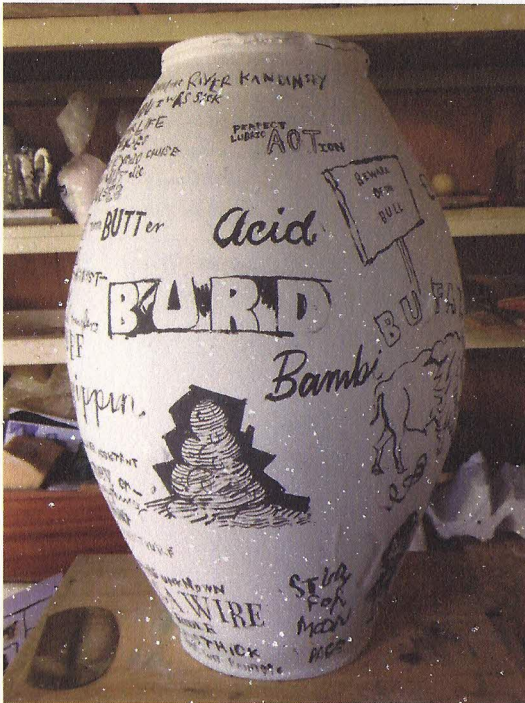
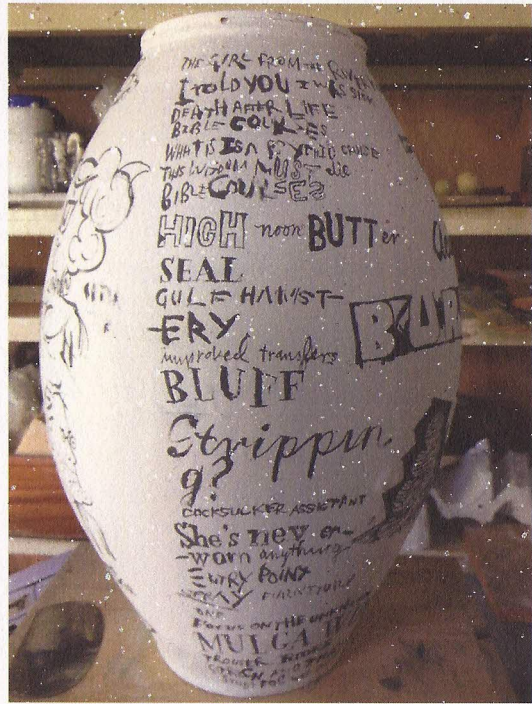
I have tried to use this medium to forward my toothless assertions of radicalism..., for acclaim and success and the trappings..., oh yes..., to the extent of decrying capitalism and showing work in commercial galleries, and then making pottery represent how much of a failure I am.

I swiped it all.



Before determining how much art should infringe on social life let us remember that social life never infringes on art. In fact social life doesn't give a damn about art. Social Life as I see it is like a vast digestive system that chews up whatever finds its way into its mouth. This 'Social Life' could swallow a Botticelli at a gulp with a voraciousness that would surprise everyone but a zoo custodian.

-Boston University Morten Feldman Archive, Neither/Nor, 1969.



Biography

In recent years the artist has been extending his patchwork and grid 'scapes' across drawings, paintings, pottery and textiles. Combining layers of simplicity and complexity, building what could readily be described as 'cognitive diagrams'. The work tends to articulate states of being and places of thought, and are often collisions of beauty and coarse, the broken and the repair, sensual and rough, the blunderingly elegant.

Recent exhibitions

Now What, Black Barn Gallery, Hawkes Bay, 2012
New Work, Melanie Roger Gallery, Auckland, 2012
Collecting Contemporary, Te Papa Tongerewa, Wellington, 2011
Game On, Hastings City Art Gallery, 2011
Song of the Wood, Searjant Gallery, Whanganui, 2010
Tree Programme, Black Barn Gallery, Hawkes Bay, 2010
Apricot, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, 2010

Martin Poppelwell was born in Hawkes Bay in 1969. He studied at Otago University, Dunedin and Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland finishing in 1991. Six years later he undertook a Diploma of Ceramic Design and Production at Whanganui Polytechnic.



