

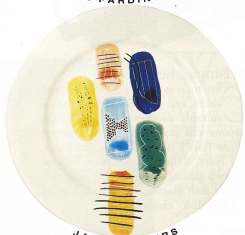
Tactile plates



LUISE FONG



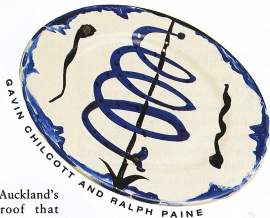
FIONA PARDINGTON



JANE ZUSTERS



CAROLE SHEPHEARD



GAVIN CHILCOTT AND RALPH PAINE

MICHAEL STEPHEN

A recent showing at Auckland's Fisher Gallery is proof that humdrum dinner plates can attract a crowd, even when they don't have any food on them. What the people had come for wasn't sustenance, but appreciation of artistic creativity run wild on "green" (undecorated and unglazed) ceramic forms.

The Fisher Gallery and sponsor Studio Ceramics New Zealand invited artists they felt would get a kick out of adapting their talents to domestic tableware. Everyday objects, including teapots, cups, saucers, and vases, underwent dramatic changes.

Among the graphically arresting pieces on show were plates. The flat, blank surfaces offered the artists qualities they were more used to finding on canvas — lots of room to express imagination.

But plates have one clear advantage over canvas — they don't need framing.

Jane Zusters

Jane Zusters confesses to being a total nut about ceramics.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of turning ordinary, everyday objects into works of art."

Her approach to designing her pieces was cautious.

"I very much wanted to respect the plate. There's so much whiteness exposed," she says.

One of the issues Jane had to contend with was whether to use the rim or the inside of the plate. But her liking for suspense resolved the dilemma.

"I chose to use the inside so that the image comes out as the food is removed. It's an incentive for eating everything on the plate, and many parents can probably identify with that."

Carole Shephard

Text plays an increasingly important role in Carole Shephard's work.

"I read a lot. Sometimes inspiration for my work comes from that. I'm also doing a lot of writing now," she says.

For the Studio Ceramics Dinner Service Show Carole wanted words, boldly emblazoned on a plate, to be at odds with the food destined to rest on it.

"It creates a bit of mystery as you eat," she explains. "I feel words carry stronger evocative messages than images."

Luise Fong

For Malaysian-born Luise Fong the Fisher Gallery's invitation was a chance to explore her own diverse background. Luise's father, who is Chinese, had never forced Chinese culture on his children. Neither did he discourage their interest in it. Now Luise feels ready to explore that heritage and weaves elements into her paintings and ceramic work.

Luise describes her boldly monochromatic piece, which depicts the family name, as a personal graphic. The smoky, matte finish softens an otherwise stark image.

Fiona Pardington

Fiona Pardington chronicles a colourful, much publicised period in New Zealand's recent criminal history with her Donna Matrix tableware. The title is word play on the term dominatrix. Not as gruesome as it looks, the motif is actually an illustration of a mouth clamp lifted from a turn-of-the-century veterinary textbook.

Fiona says she likes to have fun with perversity in her artwork.

"Images like these can be a bit shocking at first but they teach you how accepting human minds can be."

Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine

Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine say they don't remember exactly where the inspiration came from for their joint effort.

"We didn't have any pre-ordained ideas," says Gavin. "We worked on it like it was a bit of paper. Really, it began with a lot of spontaneous doodlings."

It helps that the pair has a long history of working together, and enjoy playing off each other's ideas. What their random jottings have produced this time may either thrill or chill viewers. It all depends on their phobic vulnerability. Snakes are certainly not conventional plate decoration, yet the Chilcott/Paine serpent, rampant between a brace of sperm, is an unthreatening image.

Prices of the pieces vary, from \$38 for a small cup and saucer to around \$1200 for a dinner set. For further information on individual artists and pieces contact the Fisher Gallery, (09) 576-9999.