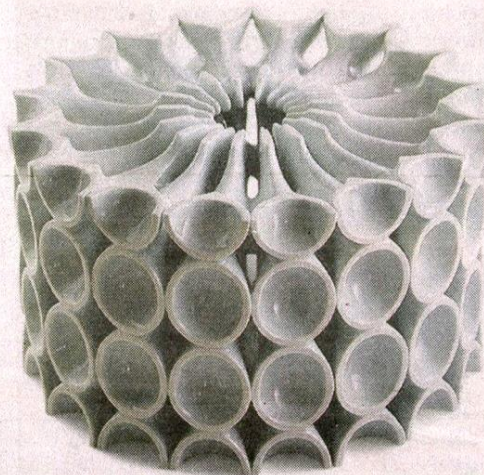


Porcelain artists display distinctive personalities



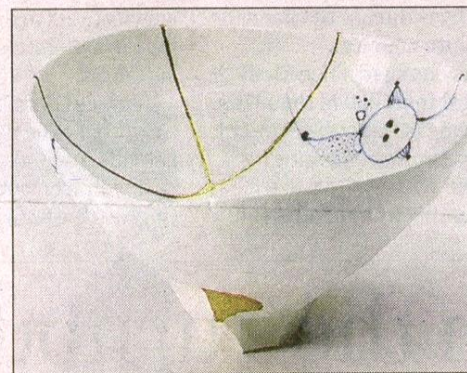
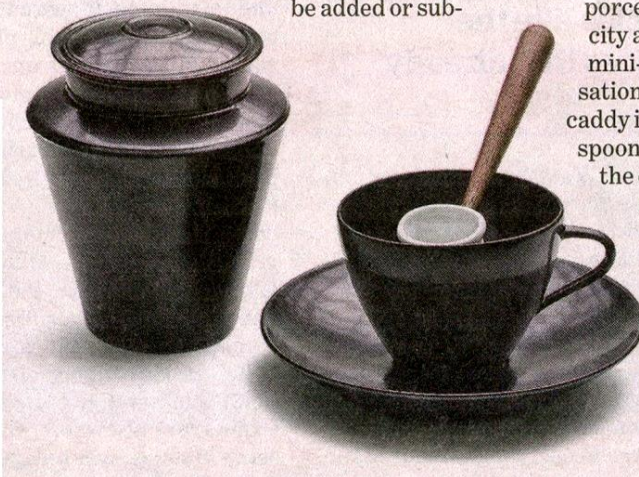
The artists show their styles. Above: Kenji Uranishi's *The first drop IV*. Right: Prue Venables' *Black and white trio*. Top right: Keiko Matsui's *Kintsugi bowl*.

NEW PORCELAIN.

By Keiko Matsui, Kenji Uranishi and Prue Venables. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until May 14.

This exhibition brings together three very different ceramic artists, each with their own artistic personality.

In some ways, the best known of the three is the English-born, Melbourne-educated Prue Venables, who has had a long and distinguished career primarily in Britain and Australia. It is difficult to characterise her particular style of work other than to refer to it as distilled perfection. It is perfection in the classical sense of the word, where form is pared back until a moment is reached when nothing more can be added or sub-



tracted from the piece save to its detriment.

Venables works with functional forms – bowls, teapots, tea caddies, cups and saucers – frequently referencing historic styles.

The hand-thrown porcelain and cast porcelain forms have a grace, simplicity and timelessness. She creates mini-installations, like sacred conversations, so that a lidded black tea caddy is involved with a red metal spoon, or in the *Black and white trio*, the outstanding piece in her display, simple elements are allowed to assert their particular presence and magic. The work is simple, but inspirational.

Keiko Matsui, the youngest of the three, is Japanese-born, Sydney-trained and lives on the Central Coast of NSW. In this exhibition, she references the Japanese tech-

nique of kintsugi, or golden repair, where traditionally broken pottery is treated with lacquer dust with powdered gold, silver or platinum. The idea is that breakages should not be thought of as the destruction of the object leading to it being discarded, but they are part of the object's history and as such the scars are venerated and not disguised.

Her pieces are deliberately quirky, such as the *Arita bowl with Kintsugi IV*, where Arita porcelain is glazed and lacquered and whimsical lines carry traces of gold dust. The sculptural quality of the pieces is even more apparent when you examine the bases of the bowls with their gorgeous strong forms.

Kenji Uranishi is another Japanese-born ceramicist; he trained at the Nara College of Fine Arts and works with an awareness of the Japanese ceramic heritage of the Edo period. He has settled in Queensland. He is a much more cerebral artist than his other two co-exhibitors, and is interested in ideas of repetitive modular forms.

He works with hand-carved moulds that he uses in slip casting and, inspired by the repetitive forms in traditional Japanese wooden architecture as well as the repetitive forms found in nature, he builds quite elaborate and complex compositions.

Pieces such as his *The first drop IV* and his various waterwheels are fascinating, complex and ambitious structures, which are perhaps too preoccupied with concept and structure at the expense of the aesthetic presence of the object.