

# Nature and the modern world collide

## Craft

Kerry-Anne Cousins

**BUILT: contemporary ceramics - Julie Bartholomew, Somchai Charoen. Alterfact (Ben Landau and Lucile Sciallano) and Kenji Uranishi. Beaver Galleries. On until December 12.**

*Built* is an apt title for this exhibition as these five artists all focus on the concept of structure as an organising tool in the creation of their ceramic objects.

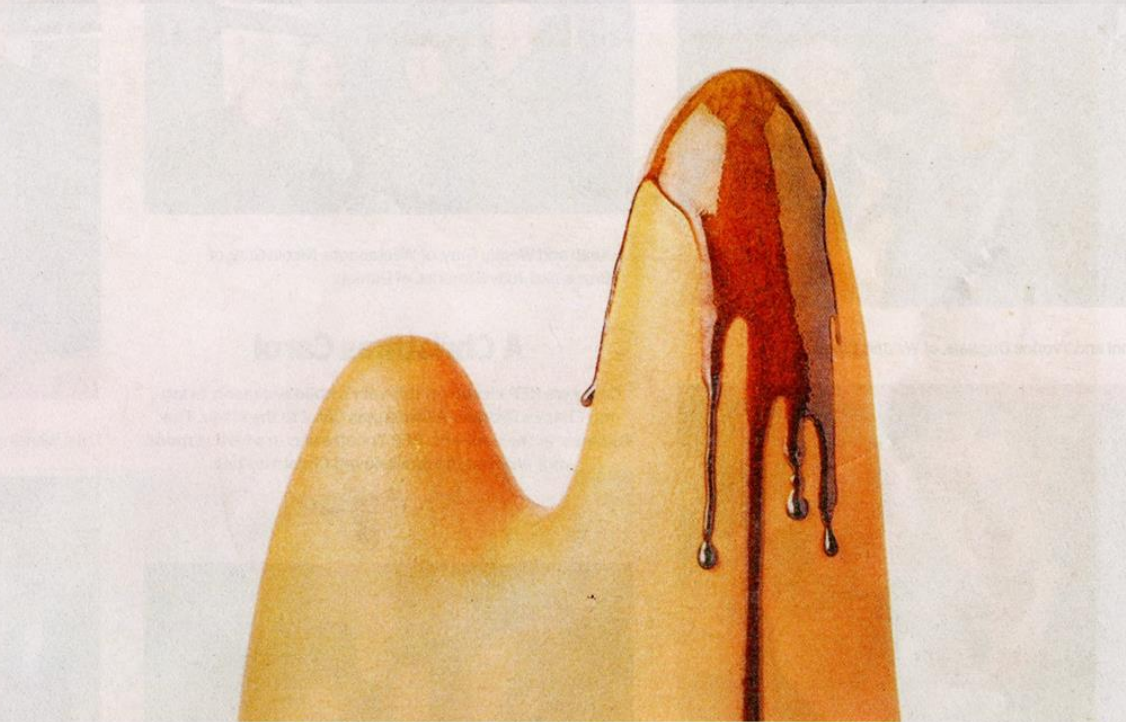
Julie Bartholomew's coil-made earthenware terracotta sculptural works seem initially to be at odds with the other works in the exhibition. I was rather mesmerised by their unusual and strange organic forms decorated with tiny round dotted openings and covered with a thick honey glazed dripped over them.

They evoked for me all sorts of exotic associations. In reality Bartholomew's "Honeycombing" series are based on the complex structured prismatic hives that bees make in the wild. "Honeycombing" series is part of a Habitat project that aims to draw attention to the declining bee population and its potentially devastating effect on the environment.

Kenji Uranishi and Somchai Charoen both use interconnecting components to build up their porcelain forms. These connecting units create positive and negative interior spaces providing rhythmic plays of light across surfaces. This is especially characteristic of Uranishi's ceramics that are suffused with a soft interior light.

Kenji Uranishi was born in Japan and moved to Brisbane in 2004. His work is a delicate balance between his Japanese traditions and aesthetic sensibilities and western influences. This series of works has been inspired by clouds. The artist uses traditional Japanese Edo period glazes to create the soft blues and greens that give the surface of his work an ethereal appearance.

However there is a strong structural component especially in works "Cloud across the sea" nos. iv-vii, where the stacked cubed



Julie Bartholomew, Honeycombing (detail) 7

structures create the effect of architectural forms rather than the transparency of nebulous and constantly changing clouds. The inspirational imagery of clouds gently floats around these works as a poetic idea rather like the clouds it is meant to represent.

Somchai Charoen is a Thai-born artist now working in Sydney. He brings together aspects of his own culture with contemporary social comment. His stacked towers of slip cast porcelain forms ("Growth" series nos. 1-4) are built from round spheres and flowers ornamented with butterflies. They seem reminiscent of the pyramid arrangements of fruit and lotus buds found in Thai temples.

The pastel colours of the porcelain are teamed with glazed areas (underneath the flowers) and more emphatically in the large flower that crowns each edifice with its bright yellow or red stamen, a symbol of the beauty of flowers that survives amidst the enveloping concrete of our cities.

Alterfact is an experimental design studio established by Ben Landau and Lucile Sciallano in 2014. In the "Strip" series they experiment with new technology including 3D printing. Small attractive groups of objects in white and black suggest the forms of machinery or industrial architecture. The marks of this mechanical process in the structuring of the works are clearly visible.

By creating ceramics using technological innovation and inspired by industrial architecture, the artists reference the great changes made to handmade crafts by the industrial revolution. They pose the question what kind of a relationship will be established between technology and craft now and in the future.

*Built* is an intriguing exhibition of work at the Beaver Galleries by five artists that have gathered inspiration from traditional cultures, nature and the contemporary world.

They question the effect of new technology and raise questions of how we need to live today in a more contemplative and sustainable way.