INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

CARNIVAL ESCUE REFLECTIONS
ON THE FOLLY OF THE
HUMAN CONDITION
Front Cover, Hosking, Representative Rockettes, digital cartoon, 2014. Parts of image pixilated due to copyright restrictions.
IN ANIMATE ANIMATIONS

Carnivalesque Reflections on the Folly of the Human Condition

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

Robyn Hosking
BA Fine Art with Distinction

School of Art, College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University, Melbourne
February 2015
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Robyn Hosking
February 2015
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*Back Cover, Hosking, cartoon after Monty Python's The Meaning of Life.*
Supervisors

Principal Supervisor

Kevin White
Associate Professor
Deputy Head International Development
Design and Social Context

Supervisors

Martine Corompt
Lecturer, School of Art
Design and Social Context

Sally Cleary
Lecturer, School of Art
Studio coordinator, Ceramics

Ethics approved: Register Number CHEAN A-2000563-08/11
I find the circus environment to be a fairly consistent theme wherever I work.
I. PROJECT PROPOSAL
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS
Summary

This research project investigates through the experimentation and production of ceramic and mixed-media three dimensional artworks, the carnivalisation of modern popular culture. I have explored idioms of satire, parody and caricature through satirical sculpture, and researched the use of these concepts from early modernity (16th century) to the 21st century.1
Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it ...  

2. Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Russian philosopher and literary critic, saw laughter and mockery as healthy, liberating actions that could alleviate stale cultural conventions (see, e.g., Bakhtin 1981, p. 23). His work on the role of the Carnival in Western culture has greatly influenced my own research.
**Brief Description**

RESEARCH PROJECT has investigated the carnivalisation of modern popular culture, by making a series of satirical ceramic and mixed-media sculptures. This carnivalisation may be defined – in the sense in which I use it here – as those processes which have propelled mainstream popular culture to value novelty above all else, and to promote it, and the ever more extreme images and sensations that accompany it, at the expense of real value. By ‘real value’, I mean recognizable skill, talent or aesthetic qualities, rather than mere notoriety or a willingness to degrade one’s self for a chance at celebrity. I have explored idioms of satire, parody and caricature through the production of making artwork, and investigated the use of these concepts in visual art from early modernity (i.e. the 16th century on) to the 21st century.

In modern Western society, with our ‘anything goes’ attitude, where celebrities are the new objects of worship, and fame at any cost is the Holy Grail, we appear to be less interested in real achievement – activities that have ‘real value’ – and more focused on the commercial exploitation of individuals for their entertainment value. As the psychoanalyst and cultural critic Mikita Brottman argues, modern popular culture has an insatiable appetite and its content “appears as to be a permanent carnivalisation… permanently ephemeral” (Brottman 2005, p. 11), obsessed with novelty, at the expense of real value.

---

3. By ‘popular culture’, I refer to the English language films, television programs, internet sites, videos and memes that comprise the core of cultural discourse for much of the Western world.
However, the carnival has, historically, been a dissenting voice, “celebrat[ing] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order… mark[ing] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 10). In modern society, satire and parody have become the spiritual successors to these carnivals of old; deflating pomposity, duplicity and hypocrisy, and encouraging free inquiry and the questioning of established truth.

For this project, I have investigated the folly, hypocrisy and silliness of modern popular culture, drawing inspiration from topical events, Reality TV and famous personalities (e.g. politicians, celebrities etc.). Since its invention in the 1930s, television has changed us as a society: it educates us, informs us, entertains us and keeps us company. It is so much part of the furniture of our lives that we accept its messages as truths. There is a consumer demand to be entertained, and celebrity culture pervades everything from the news to politics. The self-parody that lies at the core of Reality TV has become so familiar that many followers of mainstream popular culture appear to have accepted it as normal. Modern popular culture is becoming carnivalised, heaping praise and attention on the merely notorious and vacuous, at the expense of real achievement and substance. I have researched modern theory on the cultural impact of Reality TV and popular culture, by examining works like Brottman’s *High Theory/Low Culture*, and the ideas of Andrejevic, and Biressi and Nunn, among others. These theorists share an interest in the cultural effects of Reality TV, the advent of the internet and social networking sites, and the changing face of ‘low’ culture – issues that have informed my research into the increasing ‘carnivalisation’ of popular culture today.

I have focused on the problem of translating the idea of the satirical or animated cartoon into a complex three dimensional form. Cartoon by its very nature is ephemeral and has a broad current appeal. On the
other hand, the interpretation of this idea into a medium, such as ceramic, that is static, time-consuming to make and has the ability to last generations, poses its own problems. I have sought to address these problems through this project.

Just as carnival laughter – the enjoyment of aberrant, unconventional and parodical images – “builds its own world versus the official world” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 88), I have used my Masters degree to develop and examine my own carnivalesque world in which I have commented on social issues and human follies. By engaging the viewer in a playful, light-hearted manner, I have been able to state my views and hopefully encourage the viewer to consider the message despite any pre-conceived ideas they may have held.
While parody, satire and caricature have existed as modes of expression since ancient times, it was the invention of the printing press that shaped the genre into what we recognize today. Prior to movable type printing, “images carved in wood or stone, painted on walls, or shown in the brilliant colours of stained glass, [were] intended as a permanent, unalterable statement about the human condition” (Lucie-Smith 1981, p. 33). Print, which was quick and cheap to produce, had the ability to reach a large audience, yet remain concealed from a disapproving authority (the social, economic and religious establishment), finally allowed art to be “free to comment without inhibition on topical themes” (Lucie-Smith 1981, p. 34).

Satirical cartoons are utterly familiar to us today, and a world without them is hard to conceive. They not only pervade our print culture, educating and amusing us, we also grew up watching them on TV. In the last few decades, with the advent of programs such as The Simpsons and South Park, they are accepted adult entertainment as well. Many successful television programs of recent times have been animated comedies which revel in parodying ‘real world’ events and people. The beauty of such cartoon caricature is that it is easily understood by people across the social and educational spectrum. “To enjoy the printed image one does not even have to be able to read. In this sense caricatures are as universal as music” (Lucie-Smith 1981, pp. 13-14).

5. Edward Lucie-Smith, writer, art-critic and BBC broadcaster.
Review of literature and current practice

Through the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, in particular *Rabelais and His World*, and other key theorists, such as Brottman, Andrejevic and Nunn, I investigated the development of parody and satire as modes of expression, as a means of enriching and contextualizing my visual art project. My key focus has been the exploration of the historical acceptance of the dissenting voice of the carnival, and how this relates to the extraordinary freedom of thought and speech allowed by parody and laughter. This question is just as valid in modern society: satirical cartoons and animations can provide a safety valve, allowing a venting of frustrations at social injustices through laughter. By deploying humour, satirists can disarm political partisans, and are much better able to avoid causing offence, but at the same time can provide genuinely valuable insight. Parody and satire are also afforded a certain amount of protection by law.

My stylistic references and interests extend from the Steam Age to 50s sci-fi, in particular Victorian toys, gadgets and machinery, with their intricate mechanics, metallic finish and ornate decoration. I like to celebrate the lavishly eccentric design of past eras and the sense of possibility it embodied. The ostentatious extravagance of the circus is also of particular interest. The most influential stylistic movement for me is Steam Punk\(^6\) with its mix of old and new, in particular the work of Belgium artist Stephane Halleux. A contemporary sculptor, Halleux uses mixed media such a leather, wood, metal and recycled materials to create a range of quirky ‘Steampunkish’ machines and characters. Highly detailed and beautifully constructed these humorous sculptures inform the visual character of my work.

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\(^6\) Steam Punk came into prominence during the 1980s and early 1990s. The style is a mixture of Victorian steam gadgetry and science fiction. Highly influenced by the writings of Jules Verne and H G Wells, it often features many of the fictional machines described in their novels.
Historical pictorial caricature that influences my approach to satire includes the work of 19th century caricaturists such as Honoré Daumier, William Hogarth and James Gillray. I also draw inspiration from *Punch* and *Mad Magazine*, and more contemporary caricaturists such as David Levine. I admire the timeless quality of this work – the humour is of a kind that though “comprehension by a later generation requires a certain amount of effort” (Hill 1966, p. 18) it is still able to amuse, even if the exact context is not understood. When looking at Daumier’s *The Legislative Belly* 1834 or David Levine’s *Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev* 1972, it is still obvious that the artists did not particularly admire the men depicted, and are commenting on the tendency of power to corrupt. Daumier’s fat and swollen politicians, and Levine’s seedy and duplicitous looking Nixon and Brezhnev, deliver a message that is ageless. I also look to these artists as their work, in my opinion, is a feast for the eyes, transcending mere cartoon. The grotesque beauty of the images, the arresting and absorbing detail of the caricature, is a characteristic I tried to emulate in my own, three-dimensional works. James Gillray also has this ability to captivate and amuse. Unlike other satirists of the day, who used copper plate etching because it was the cheapest means of mass production, Gillray (who as a boy trained as a professional engraver) felt that the art of the engraving was just as important. “For him the greater part of the process often took place on the copper plate itself” (Hill 1966, p. 6). The satirical etchings of James Gillray were praised by John Landseer as being “so luminous, so energetic, so vivid, and so far elevated above the tenour of caricature that they well deserve to be classed with the higher works of art” (Hill 1966, p. 19). By using ‘high art’ techniques in a ‘low art’ genre, I have endeavored to elevate my works beyond mere caricature – much as Gillray did, and just as Daumier and Levine’s works do more than just convey their political opinions, I have come to realize the process, and the aesthetic value of the product, is just as important to me as the message I deliver.

My approach to communication is very similar to that adopted by the contemporary American artist Jeff Koons, who is recognized for his often banal, kitsch, and/or satirical sculptures of larger than life size toys and celebrity culture. Koons explicitly refuses to separate the making of his work from the message he wishes to convey, and uses every nuance and aspect of a work – “any trick” as he puts it (Inboden 2009, p. 26) – to communicate with his audience. Like Koons, I believe in the necessity of the artist “embrac[ing]
the responsibility of communication” (Koons in Inboden 2007, p. 160). And just as Jeff Koons exploits “the relentless flood of media images” in his artworks (Inboden 2009, p. 26), I too use popular culture and media imagery in my sculptures. In my work, as in Koons’, I aim to change the way my audience sees these pop cultural artifacts, so that “[t]he everyday motifs lose their banality ... acquiring instead an innocence in whose glow we find them all the more attractive the more familiar they are to us” (Inboden 2009, p. 28). And, like Koons, my work involves the deployment of the innocent, the incongruous and the seemingly banal, as a means of communicating with the viewer in less threatening and more persuasive terms. For example, my work often makes use of children’s toys. Toys serve a number of purposes: because of their mixture of innocence and sophistication, and the way they “mirror the world” (Mangual 2006, p. 152), toys are tools by which we attempt to grasp, understand and re-enact otherwise adult roles and adult narratives. They also disarm, charm and amuse the viewer, sidestepping immediate reactions to usually threatening subject matter. Toys present a simplified, more direct discussion of adult concepts and ideas, but at a remove, which helps to dispel preconceptions. Indeed, for an adult viewer, the stuff of childhood in art – toys, animation, child protagonists – “evoking[s] the memory of an idyllic past, a time of simplicity, safety, certitude, curiosity, adventure, and pleasure” (Keller 2009, p. 191).

However I am uncomfortable with the almost exact replication and reproduction of other people’s designs sometimes adopted by Koons. Even though parody and satire are allowed a certain amount of leeway in regards to copyright with the Fair Use claim, I feel as a satirist it is a very fine line between justifiable use of someone else’s intellectual property and outright appropriation. I tend to agree with the New York court’s ruling in the case of Rogers v Koons that “If an infringement of copyrightable expression could be justified as fair use solely on the basis of the infringer’s claim to a higher or different artistic use – without insuring public awareness of the original work – there would be no practicable boundary to the fair use defence” (Kattwinkel 2014). Whether I have managed to remain on the right side of this line is difficult for me to objectively judge. I do however agree with Koons’ sentiments when he states that “[t]he artist has to have a dialogue with the media… because the media defines reality” (Koons in Inboden 2009, p. 28).
“Political communication and popular culture are now [so] thoroughly integrated and intertwined” (Jones 2010, p. 13), that for me to ignore what is happening in the mass and social media would be foolhardy. Like Koons, whose “work will use everything that it can to communicate” (Koons in Inboden 2009, p. 26), I use my medium to incorporate references to topical events and pop cultural memes. In the context of today’s ‘infotainment industry’, where the news cycles – and the attention spans – have never been shorter, I need to ensure what I say is recognisable and easily understood by the viewer.

Contemporary Australian artist Penny Byrne also uses toy-like imagery in her works, but rather than seeking to reassure, Byrne uses these techniques to stimulate a shocking disjunct in the mind of the viewer – between the colourful and cute images of her ceramic works, and their disturbing, politically-charged content. Our work has a similar aesthetic; it is highly detailed and we both use ceramic figures to comment on social and political issues. However our processes, and I believe our motives, are fundamentally different. Byrne purchases ceramic figurines and reworks them to produce her biting observations while I make mine from scratch. This process is so much a part of what I do, and is so long and involved that I cannot dismiss it and treat it as incidental. We seem to approach our subject matter from a highly different perspective as well. Byrne deals with serious highbrow issues on a global scale while I tend to seek out the absurd and comic in my own back-yard. By using adult versions of toys (such as figurines) and transforming them with her great technical skill and keen eye for satire, Byrne manages to make a powerful statement. The titles Byrne then gives these works are just as important as the work itself. It transforms them from the kitsch to the political. Who cannot read How Much Can a Polar Bear?, without at once smiling at the wit while also being deeply saddened by the inherent truth of the message? Byrne, an art restorer and lawyer, has stated that her works aim to make “people think.....to educate them” (Walton 2008, p. 21). I, on the other hand, have no such ambitions. My aim is to highlight the ridiculous in the form of a visual gag to raise a few eyebrows and hopefully amuse in the process.

In many ways I relate more to the work of two-dimensional satirists like Trey Parker and Matt Stone, rather than Koons or Byrne. Koons has come to invest his works with seemingly messianic properties
– profound communication, with life-changing effects, arising from the seemingly simple and incongruous. As Koons himself states, “I think the work is based on and tries to function in the form of religion – not as religion itself, but within what religion tries to do for individuals, so that they can flourish in life” (Koons in Inboden 2009, p. 26). However, due to my own ambivalence about so many questions of social and political importance, the messages in my works tend to be less certain, more cynical and more inclined to ask a question without providing an answer. Unlike Byrne, I am not trying to educate anyone, just entertain and maybe raise a few eyebrows as well as questions. By acknowledging uncertainty, and pointing out that neither side is unambiguously correct, I hope to disarm, and to encourage the viewer to take a step back from prejudice and preconceived opinion.

Like Parker and Stone, I believe my role is to engage with the viewer, to highlight absurdity, pomposity and hypocrisy, and to share the ironies and jokes inherent in so much human activity. The creators of South Park use child protagonists to re-examine seemingly rational adult positions, and often leave the audience laughing at the positions on both sides of an argument. Much like Parker and Stone, “what [I] say… is not anything new” – rather, I seek to remind people that “it’s okay to be someone in the middle, laughing at both of them” (Stratyner & Keller 2009, p. 7). As Hutcheon notes, “It is the process of negotiating the post modern contradictions that is brought to the fore [in parody], not any satisfactorily completed and closed product that results from their resolution” (Hutcheon in Armstrong 2009, p. 82). Similarly I do not aim to offer any solutions or absolute truths, I just aim to question and stir the pot, so to speak.

The Chinese Cynical Realists are a group of artists who I identify with. This group is the third generation born since the Cultural Revolution, and they have come to realize that their life experiences have been radically different from that of their parents. These artists are, “constantly making fun of themselves, teasing the serious and displaying an irreverent attitude towards the boring, nonessential and foolish fragments of our social lives” (Xianting 1994, p. 6). I relate to the artist (painter and sculptor) Yue Min Jun who believes that in this media-driven society “reality is getting further and further away from us” and
he is seeking a “new reality, an absolute reality that belongs only to [him]” (Yue 1994, p. 11). All of Yue’s work depicts the same laughing character (loosely based on his own face) which represent “a symbolic icon of the mass produced” (Xianting 1994, p. 6). He hopes that his laughing character will be seen everywhere because “[l]aughter is a moment when our mind refuses to reason” (Yue 1994, p. 11). Like Yue I want to amuse people and hopefully make them laugh. I also am creating my own reality, my own parallel universe, and I hope my characters will one day become as recognizable as Yue’s laughing man.

Other caricaturists and satirists that inspire my work include Tex Avery, one of the creators of Looney Tunes, which in its own seemingly innocent way poked fun at contemporary social mores. I am most interested in the alternate worlds created by artists like Yue, Avery and Parker/Stone, populated by familiar figures and relying on traditional symbolism to help frame the joke. Just as English caricaturists of the early eighteenth century made use of emblem books, publications of the time of “visual representations of certain abstract ideas or qualities such as charity or matrimony” (Lucie-Smith, p. 52),7 these modern day social commentators employ similar symbols and tropes. In order to ridicule a work, the parodist must recall it to the minds of his audience (Editorial 1984, p. 1395). Satire and parody are imitation with a twist, the twist being the punch-line. To get the most effect from my artworks, I want to employ the techniques used by these great cartoonists, and incorporate familiar objects and symbols and identifiable issues to help make my point about the carnivalisation of modern culture. I want to create my own parallel universe, populating it with familiar in-jokes, fictional organisations and companies (much like ACME in the Looney Tunes cartoons), and use it to hold a mirror up to society, revealing (amongst parodical distortions) truths about human nature and our increasingly vacuous cultural discourse.

7. One such book, used as a source by many English caricaturists, was Cesare Ripa’s Iconologica – it remained a popular reference work for more than two centuries, first published in Rome in 1593, and then reprinted in England in 1709: Lucie-Smith, p. 52. The work contained analyses of symbols – a sort of visual code for the representation of themes, persons and groups in society.
**Proposed Project**

My project incorporated a series of inter-related satirical ceramic sculptures, featuring caricatured images of public figures engaging with each other and with the viewer. I wanted to make these images in ceramics, to give them greater gravitas, granting them a sense of permanence, of delicacy, and of artistic merit that elevates the works above the traditional, fundamentally ephemeral, place of caricature and satire. By using this material and other ‘fine art’ techniques such as enamel and metal-work, I hope to subvert traditional conceptions of the place of satire and parody – as disposable, ephemeral works.

To research these idioms and modes of expression, I looked at the history and development of parody, caricature and satire, paying particular attention to their ‘low’ or popular cultural expressions, as opposed to ‘high’ or ironic humour. Therefore I focused on cartoon and animation (traditionally ‘low’ cultural modes of expression), trying to understand why they have been regarded as such, and charted their development and cultural impact.

Bibliographic research comprised reading theorists in books and online journals that examine the role that the carnival historically has played in allowing a free and open discourse on political and social issues, in conjunction with satire and parody in cartoon form, in modernity. I also looked at theorists that deal with the difference between high theory and low culture, such as Brottman, and incorporated both aspects into my work, so that it can be enjoyed and understood on many levels.
Main objective

My objective was to investigate themes of the folly, the hypocrisy and the double-speak of public life. By creating a series of three-dimensional cartoon sculptures in ceramic, I hoped to produce a multi-layered representation of the absurdities and petty idiocies of political and cultural discourse – commenting on the interaction between the carnivalisation of our cultural experiences, and the increasingly debased character of political debate.

Aims

Through 3D figurative narrative I have aimed to:

- produce humorous sculptural representations commenting on social and political issues and human follies by employing the processes of mould-making and slip casting in ceramic
- incorporate highbrow irony and the lowbrow visual gags into my sculptures
- investigate the evolution of the idioms of parody, satire and caricature and research the means by which these fundamentally two-dimensional techniques can be applied to sculpture
- refine my construction techniques and develop new processes including mixed media, in order to overcome the limitations posed by materials and subject matter

8. The trick was to balance these two opposite ends of the spectrum, and create something that will be taken seriously by some, and enjoyed superficially by others.
Research Questions

My research questions were:

- How can two-dimensional satirical or animated cartoons (which by their very nature must be ephemeral) be translated into the enduring medium of three-dimensional ceramics?

- How can subjects of socio and/or political relevance (such as politicians) be incorporated into multi-layered ceramic works which cross the boundaries of irony and social commentary?

- How can ceramic processes such as mould making and slip casting, traditionally used for commercial mass production of functional ware and ornaments, be used to make one-off art works which situate themselves within contemporary art practice?

- How can I raise the status of lowbrow humour, into a highbrow art form through the use of materials and process?
Rationale

My contribution to the field has been to investigate one of the chief aims of the satirist – to engage with the political and cultural issues of the day – and to express them through ceramic sculptures.

The rapid change in technology over the past six decades has altered traditional views on public values and ethics. We no longer see ability, character and integrity as the main criteria for determining the figures we choose to make famous. Rather, celebrity is no longer a by-product of success in a chosen field, but a form of success in its own right. Our society has become so obsessed with celebrity, and the instant gratification of the entertainment industry and the media, that our insatiable appetite for news and celebrity gossip has created a market for sensationalism. News as entertainment is streamed to us twenty four hours a day via text messaging, the internet and our televisions. Thus our culture has become a Bakhtinian carnival in which world events – great natural disasters, wars, political debates – are orchestrated like pantomimes, and everything is reduced to a quick sound-bite.

Popular culture has become a “realm of fantasy offering the promise of escape, possibility and personal triumph” (Giroux 1998, p. 45).9 The problem is the incredible lengths to which people are willing to go to buy into the dream, and to emulate their new idols. Adults inject their faces with botulinum toxin in order to maintain the illusion of youth and the “bodies and body parts of young girls are used to market desires and sell commodities” (Giroux 1998, p. 46). Television has markedly changed our behaviours, and our perceptions of what is acceptable, robbing children of their innocence while infantilizing many adults: “the very character of television – its fast-paced format, sound-byte worldview, information overload, and narrative organization – undermine[s] the very possibility for children to engage in critical thinking, [and]

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9. Henry Giroux, cultural critic, has written on a plethora of subjects, including the ‘adultification’ of children for profit by the private sector.
its content works to expel images of the child from its programming by both ‘adultifying’ the child and promoting the rise of the ‘childfied’ adult” (Giroux 1998, p. 31). The concepts of notoriety and respect have become confused. Being ‘known’ is the Holy Grail, and the substance of ‘why’, the idea of real achievement, has been lost in the process. Our political leaders update the masses on Twitter, and political discourse has become an exercise in spin and information management. Unable to distinguish reality from Reality TV, and war from Family Feud, many ordinary people now seem to passively accept TV truths.

The traditional role of the satirist and caricaturist has been “enlightening and correcting”, to expose follies and vices and to convince as many people as possible that “society as it stands is inferior to what it should be” (Weisgerber 1973, pp. 159-160),10 and I believe that this has never been more important. Unless we as a society are called to account – through the exposure and discussion of serious problems in our cultural direction, whether by artists, theorists or members of the general public – unless we shine a light on the extent to which the truth has been debased by our cultural preoccupation with ‘newstainment’ and the cult of celebrity, then the value of honest inquiry and open debate will be lost, leaving us open to the passive acceptance of TV truths.

Why have I made these works in ceramics? If they are burlesques, cartoons, caricatures, why not use media that, historically, have been preferred for these genres? Indeed, why not make the sculptures in more durable substances, like metal or silicon rubber? Perhaps it is because making these comedic pieces in ceramic elevates them from lowbrow to highbrow art, changing them from mass-produced kitsch or toys to ‘precious’ works. It gives them a delicacy and preciousness, like a museum piece. Moreover, it conveys it a sense of permanence, and a greater sense of craftsmanship and of worth. The juxtaposition between the

10. Jean Weisgerber, French cultural critic and literary scholar, has written on the use of satire and irony as modes of expression
subject matter, and the materials and techniques used in its expression, also appeals to me, as it highlights the traditionally ephemeral preserve of satire and parody.

Indeed, the fact that ceramic works have considerable longevity also makes me more aware of the permanency of artistic statements, the inability of the artist to retract, edit, sanitise or alter their position after the fact of creation and exhibition, heightening the need for care in choosing how and with what visual idioms I express my views, and ultimately causing me to re-examine and affirm my own beliefs.
Unable to distinguish reality from reality. TV and war from family feed, many ordinary people now seem to passively accept TV truths.
Methods

In practice and theoretical

As I drew inspiration for my work from current affairs and popular culture I monitored news and current affairs programs, news-as-entertainment channels, reality television shows and everyday life to keep myself abreast of popular trends and recognizable symbols and tropes. As I wanted my work to be understood on many levels I could not be obscure in my content or joke, I needed to remain current with hot topics, new fads and beliefs, and accepted norms of behaviour.

Caricature traditionally lends itself best to print or film as the topicality which is inherent in good satire, means speed of production is an important aspect in getting the message delivered while it is still relevant. Ceramics however, is unavoidably slow to produce, making it virtually impossible to comment on current affairs. The process of creating one of my three-dimensional caricatures takes months, from initial conception to the finished product, while traditional caricaturists and cartoonists work to a daily or weekly schedule. The joke has already been made many times by the time my work is finished, making it seem like a stale joke, rather than cutting-edge commentary. Therefore I needed to find issues or character traits in public figures which have sufficient longevity to provide the best chance for future viewers to understand the caricature’s humour. It is intrinsic aesthetic value that has guaranteed the survival of the extant satirical works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As was noted in the early nineteenth century by a contemporary: “pictorial satires, like candles, contain the wicks which will consume them”, and often lose nuance, meaning and value as time goes by (Hill 1966, p. 18). I hope that my sculptures will have the aesthetic merit of the work of such great caricaturists as Daumier, Hogarth and Gillray, to survive even after the context of the joke has been forgotten or remind us of the ridiculous frivolity of seemingly serious (political) issues.
Historical research focused on the history and development of parody, caricature and satire, paying particular attention to the genre of cartoon and animation as we understand them today. I looked closely at the alternate worlds created by these artists that look familiar enough to be understood and recognizable, but different enough to make a point and crack a joke.

**Process**

My process was mainly one of problem-solving. Finding a topic with sufficient merit to warrant spending the time and effort involved in commenting on it, and finding an issue with sufficient longevity that, once the work was made, it would still be relevant, was the first problem I confronted. I then needed to find a way of translating the point I wanted to make into a three-dimensional, silent and static object. These three-dimensional objects not only needed to be well constructed and possessing enough artistic merit so as not to be dismissed as low culture kitsch, but also needed to deliver a message in a user-friendly and amusing way. It is very important to me that my work can be understood on many levels, so I spent a lot of time trying to make the point obvious without destroying the integrity of the object as a work of art. This process involved research into clichés and memes, so that the content of my sculptures, and the symbols and tropes used in expressing the content, were so familiar that they were understood instinctually by the viewer. I could not be obscure or overly esoteric as the joke or the point would be lost, and all decisions were open to revision.

On a practical level the processes I employed were very complex and intricate. In the course of my research, I explored and expanded on these complexities by learning from each piece I made and applying the new knowledge to the next piece.
Some of the technical processes I employed were: mould making – some moulds are up to 14 pieces; slip casting in stoneware and porcelain clays; handbuilding; ceramic decals – which requires Photoshop skills; ceramic lustre application; multiple firings; metal work and enameling; sewing and embroidering; and assembling the final pieces. I also collected tools and components so I could find better ways of constructing and joining. I collected different glues to experiment with, to see which were easier to use and gave a stronger and less visible bond. I collected paints and enamels and experimented with different applications. I collected fabrics and wires and tubing so as to expand my palette of visual effects. But mostly I liked to think I collected knowledge that allowed me to grow as an artist, as I am a firm believer that only through a sound skills base can you go on to create anything of true merit.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

Image 12. Media Montage–Gillard Years: (a) Novak 2012; (b) Huffington Post 2013; (c) Wallace 2014; (d) Vexnews 2013; (e) Jones, B J 2012; (f) Davidson 2014; (g) Owens 2013; (h) Sheehan 2013. (Author and periodical citations are fully documented in the Bibliography.)
THE BEGINNING of my research project into the carnivalisation of modern popular culture, I had envisioned I would take a much broader approach than the one that eventually transpired. Initially I intended to investigate the folly, hypocrisy and silliness of contemporary social mores, by drawing inspiration from topical events, Reality TV and famous personalities such as celebrities, sportsmen and politicians. But in the end – whether I now consider it to have been a gift or a curse – the Gillard government came into being. The rest, as we say, is history. To say I became totally fixated with the Gillard years is to put it mildly. Parliament became Reality TV at its best and worst. Who needed the highly orchestrated intrigue and drama of *The Real Housewives of Orange County* when we had our own favourite redhead hamming it up for the camera every night on the news? There was sex, drugs, prostitutes, backstabbing, infighting, leadership battles and so many changes of allegiance that it made my head spin. There were more public denials of guilt than the Essendon Football Club, and promises were made and broken by all the major protagonists so frequently it became hard to decipher whose side anyone was on.
Thanks to the carnival Australian politics had become I had all the ingredients I required to create my 3D cartoon strip: Julia the heroine, savagely attacked for her gender; Tony the budgie-smuggling misogynist sporting a six pack; and Dick Dastardly Kevin lurking and smirking at the edge of every frame. This very public soap opera aired out Australia’s dirty laundry, using every media and social networking resource available. The work I created was driven in equal parts by enrage at their behaviour while simultaneously being titillated by the vaudevillian farce of it all.
17. Brown High Dive Show, Porter County Fair.


My original intention had been to create a group of parodic works linked by their distinctive style – a three-dimensional ceramic cartoon – but totally separate in their content. Yet the body of work that I finally created for my Masters, Canberra Capers: The Gillard Years, grew slowly out of an awareness that while each sculpture is made to stand alone, together they formed a more powerful story. So through the process of slip casting I created a 3D cartoon strip, featuring caricatured images of politicians interacting with each other and with the viewer. Sporting arenas, the circus and Hollywood blockbusters were employed as metaphors for the societal-gladiatorial rings in which MPs such as Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott would compete for their survival. By placing our favourite politicians in bizarre and ridiculous scenarios that borrowed heavily from popular culture, I aimed to highlight the interaction between the carnivalisation of our cultural experiences, and the increasingly debased character of political debate – expressed within the precious fragility of ceramic sculpture.
At the outset I had also considered it important that each sculpture be a stand-alone metaphor for what I was trying to express; that every individual figure had to be a part of and complementary to the whole sculpture in order to create a work with artistic merit and beauty. However as the work progressed I began to consider myself a cartoonist who, incapable of drawing in 2D, has learnt to draw using the process of slip casting in 3D. I realised what I really wanted to do was create a snapshot in time, to give the impression that my characters are alive and had been behaving badly long before the moment you were seeing them and would continue to misbehave long after you had gone. So while earlier pieces such as The Wing Walker (an ironic metaphor for the lack of trust between Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd) has (I hope) artistic integrity and the preciousness associated with highbrow art, I felt I was constrained by worrying about these very things. So in later works I decided to place less emphasis on creating an art object and concentrate instead on drawing a cartoon frame with three dimensional objects. Also, by introducing the use of base boards I was able to set the boundaries of the cartoon frame, create a scene and give my characters a stable and secure platform. This subtle shift in thinking and making afforded me the freedom to start creating more complicated scenarios and gave my characters carte blanche to misbehave. A Three Ringed Circus: Federal Fiasco and Faceless Forces Foil Rudd’s Return, being perfect examples of this.
26. Elmer Fudd, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck in *Rabbit Season*, *Looney Tunes* series, Chuck Jones, Tex Avery *et al* (creators), 1940s onwards.

Image
Inspiration

I drew inspiration from Federal Parliament but stylistically I looked to great cartoonists and animators such as Looney Tunes’ Tex Avery. Avery created a “realm of nonsense” within which he “managed to draw his audience” (Place-Verghnes 2006, p. 172). Similarly, I designed this 3D narrative to draw people into my “realm of the absurd” (Place-Verghnes 2006, p. 181), a satirical, burlesque sideshow that documents the contemporary politics of the Gillard years. As Jean Weisgerber states: “It is something of a paradox that reason should be reached through unreason, but such roundabout ways are precisely characteristic of satire” (Weisgerber 1973, p. 162). My characters are deliberately ludicrous. Their Canberra is a bizarre figment of my imagination: frozen in a moment to the observer, but alive, fluid and running amok to me. As the real events in Canberra spiralled out of control my characters became more preposterous, in an endeavour to mirror and exaggerate this descent into madness. And just as “[t]he caricaturist combines incongruous elements successfully by frequent use of allegory, and in this sense (allegory addressed to a mass public)” (Lucie-Smith 1981, p. 19), I went to great lengths to ensure my use of metaphors was obvious, everyday and easily recognisable. This vaudevillian comic strip was also intended to appeal to adults on an intellectual level as well as appeal “to the child that refused to grow up in each spectator” (Ferreri in Place-Verghnes 2006, pp. 176-177).
Just as a South Park character is instantly recognisable, it was important to me that the creatures that inhabited my cartoon universe had a signature look. My characters are identical – their faces applied in the form of a ceramic decal the only thing differentiating them. All except for Julia, whose pointy Madonna inspired breasts distinguish and isolate her from the pack, exaggerated intentionally in order to highlight how her gender was used to question, explain and define her every decision in office.

The rest of the figures however are deliberately interchangeable, a metaphor for politics and politicians in general, where the faces and policies might change but ultimately everything else seems to stay the same.

The group that has influenced my work, that I strive to be included in, and who I have consciously tried to emulate, is that of the cartoonist and the animator. Artists such as Looney Tunes’ Tex Avery, South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone and the wonderfully irreverent Larry Pickering whose wicked political calendars informed my childhood. My goals are rather low-brow and pedestrian, I simply want my work to celebrate a sense of the ridiculous and to highlight the absurd, and, as cartoonist John Spooner has said, to “make you look at an idea in a way you are not used to” (Spooner 2004).
II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

PUTTING IT ALL DOWN ON PAPER (and Photoshop)

Image

Overleaf
41. Federal Fisticuffs, Concept Drawing 2, detail.
42. Federal Fisticuffs, Concept Drawing 1, 2011.
43. Policy Peloton, Concept Drawing 1, 2011.
44. Duel 2013, Concept Drawing 1, 2012 (finished art, pp. 86-87).
II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT
LUSTRE FIRING
The magic of liquid metals.
Problem Solving

Every ceramic component of my sculptures required at least four firings: bisque, glaze, decal then lustre. Often the copper lustre failed and I would be forced to do a fifth firing, this created an incredible amount of extra work but I felt the effort was worth it.

My intention was always to craft highly ornate and detailed pieces reminiscent of the Victorian carnival, so having glittering metallic surfaces was something I felt was essential. Ceramics is a fickle medium, so overcoming the myriad technical problems associated with creating the work was something I have taken great pride in. Most of the issues have been solved in small increments – learning by doing – while with the more persistent ones I taught myself how to compensate or disguise. Like the old conjuror’s trick, I have cultivated the art of smoke and mirrors, diverting the eye from any issues I could not control.

My greatest difficulty actually was keeping abreast of the rapid changes in the ALP, especially towards its final spectacular downfall. The constant political flux of 2013 highlighted the dilemma inherent in my art practice: how do I respond to current issues in a medium that is so slow to produce? My answer was to try to pick topics that had longevity, and try to anticipate what was going to happen. Both solutions had their problems.

*In I Love Julia: Australia’s Wackiest Sitcom* and *Duel 2013*, I thought I had found the perfect iconic classics to highlight my protagonist’s mad behaviour. Transforming Julia and Tony to Lucy and Ricky from *I Love Lucy* – that wonderful 50s sitcom, chock full of gender clichés – I believed would showcase how farcical and formulaic their behaviour had become. Having Kevin cut Julia’s oxygen and hydraulic cables, while Tony and Julia battled for political life and death, within the metaphor of the Spielberg classic *Duel*, I assumed was a stroke of genius. The only problem was that I never took into consideration Gen Y’s lack of knowledge of anything not currently featured on YouTube, Instagram or Twitter.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

Mind mapping the mind boggling permutations associated with Prime Ministerial machinations.
With the works *The Sound of Defeat* and *A Canberra Chorus Line*, I learnt the hard way that nothing in federal politics is a given – even the Prime Minister’s job – even a few months out from the election! I had to have these pieces made in time for the election results as I knew they would seem stale very quickly, so I took a gamble on Julia Gillard’s government losing the election and made them early. I never for a moment entertained the belief that Kevin Rudd would regain the job of Prime Minister and because of that oversight I had to remake parts of both pieces to fit with the new ALP line-up. It did however teach me to be creative in re-purposing some of the old characters in *Don’t Call Us, We’ll Call You*.

In the turbulent death throes of the Gillard government I learned to be flexible and think on my feet. Federal politics disintegrated into a surreal version of *Survivor* and while I thank them all for supplying me with such enthralling material, I hope we don’t see a rerun on our screens again.

*Image 50, left.* Hosking, Mind-mapping the mind boggling permutations associated with Prime Ministerial machinations, digital cartoon, 2014: four different versions of *A Canberra Chorus Line*, three different versions of *The Sound of Defeat* and *Don’t Call Us, We’ll Call You.*

*Image 51, above.* Hosking, *The Sound of Defeat, Concept Drawing*, February 2013, showing a premature hypothesis of coming events by including Simon Crean (far left of row). Crean proved to be dismissed, irrelevant and gone by the time the art was made.
CRAZII CAKES
HONG KONG 1990's ONWARDS

INANIMATE ANIMATIONS
Process: how my skills and style evolved

Coming from a cake decorating background my work is imbued with the theatrics and the spectacle reminiscent of the wedding cake. By creating tangible objects, highly ornate and crafted I have tried to redress what I see as an imbalance in current fine-art thinking which seems to privilege the idea over the skill. To me, and in my work, they co-exist, each as necessary and important as the other. The extravagant excess of decorated cakes, familiar and associated with celebration, is perhaps the ultimate art and general public interface. I wanted to emulate that joyous response with my ceramic creations, to have people look and wonder and to ask: “How was it made?”
Layered and highly detailed, cake decorating taught me many skills. Working in such unstable and fragile mediums as cake and icing I learnt to think of the support systems first, all the things you can’t see but without which nothing is possible. Through practice I can now visualise the various layers of my work and solve most of the construction issues in my head before I even start. This is essential when working with such an unforgiving medium as ceramic where things are literally set in stone once it is fired.

*Image 57, left. The Wing Walker, 2011, test samples and construction (finished art, pp. 66-67).*

*Image 58, above. Pollie Popularity Poll construction (finished art, pp. 82).*
Other than a few decorative flourishes my finished work is usually exactly as I conceptualised it. As the primary function of this work was to be descriptive, to tell a gag and deliver the punch line in an obvious method, I rarely deviated from the plan. I was writer, stage designer and director all rolled into one. My characters had a show to put on and I saw it as my responsibility to ensure they were able to do so.

Images  Hosking, A Three Ringed Circus: Federal Fiasco, 2013

59. Concept Drawing.
60-61. Finished details.
   (More details and finished art, pp. 84-85).
Creating the Campaign Cadillac


Image 63, right. Making Bad Dog: modelling the master out of sculpey and found objects; creating the mould; slip casting and then hand altering the casting to create the urinating dog; firing the dog (finished art, pp. 98-99).
In order to create the many varied slip cast shapes that my sculptures are comprised of I have had to build up an extensive collection of moulds. This has necessitated many hours of sourcing the appropriate shapes and then teaching myself to make some very complex moulds of them. When the correct shape could not be found I have learnt to adapt by amalgamating castings from many different moulds to achieve the required outcome.
Image 64, above. Comic construction: (a) & (b) making Julia for *I Love Julia: Australia's Wackiest Sitcom* 2013 (finished art, p. 83); (c) & (d) making the fun fair popularity tester for *Pollie Popularity* Poll 2012 (finished art, p. 82); (e) set building and roadworks for *Slippery When Wet* 2012 (finished art, pp. 80-81).

Image 65, right. 3d Printing.

As my original figures were quite small in stature I had them enlarged to three times their size in a 3D printer. This was the only way I could ensure they would be exact replicas. I underestimated how large this would be and they proved to be problematic to slip cast and support during firing, so I then had them printed double the original size. This size was perfect. Large enough to work as a stand-alone figure but still small enough not to have too many technical issues in the making. The versatility afforded by playing with scale and incorporating all three sizes of the figurines also enabled me to be more creative with the 3D cartoons I created. The work Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged, a spoof on Gulliver’s Travels (itself a spoof on eighteenth century politics), being a perfect example of this.


Project Development: Reprise

To sum up, during the development phase of my project, I:

- found in the political turmoil of the Gillard government the perfect material to shape into an absurdist 3D comic strip
- discovered my artistic ancestry in modern expressions of parody, the grotesque and the carnivalesque, namely comic books and animated cartoons
- transferred skills learnt in cake decorating to solve technical problems of structure and substructure in ceramics
- solved narrative problems caused by the fast-moving, topsy-turvy events of 2013 by predicting alternative scenarios for work in progress
- exploited the potential of new technologies, such as the opportunities of playing with scale in 3D printing
- came to an understanding of my process as analogous to aspects of theatre and cinema, with story-telling, pre-visualisation and set-building all vital components.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS


INANIMATE ANIMATIONS


Quoted from *This Is It*, Bugs Bunny’s theme song.
Coming from a cake decorating background my work is imbued with the theatrics and the spectacle reminiscent of the wedding cake. p. 51.

THE WING WALKER
2011. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, fine silver, found objects & mixed media, 52 H x 42 cm Ø
By placing our favourite politicians in bizarre and ridiculous scenarios that borrowed heavily from popular culture, I aimed to highlight the interaction between the carnivalisation of our cultural experiences, and the increasingly debased character of political debate. p. 33.
III. PROJECT OUTCOMES

76-78. **DODGEN DISCOURSE**

2011. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, solar panel, LED lighting, found objects & mixed media, 30 H x 95 W x 60cm D
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS
POLLIE DOLLIES IN Blue and Green Should Never be Seen Without a Colour In-Between

2011. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey & mixed media, 31 H x 42 W x 13cm D
80, 81. **THE BODYGUARD**

2012. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey & mixed media 24 H x 16 W x 16cm D
RUDD’S TRAVAILS
Backbenched, Bound and Gagged
2012. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media, 16.5 H x 79 W x 45cm D
FACELESS FORCES
FOIL RUDD’S RETURN
2012. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media, 32.5 H x 79 W x 59cm D
III. PROJECT OUTCOMES
SLIPPERY WHEN WET

2012. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, found objects & mixed media, 21 H x 60 W x 70 cm D
The work I created was driven in equal parts by engagement at their behaviour while simultaneously being titillated by the vaudevillian farce of it all. p. 31.
POLLIE POPULARITY POLL

2012. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media, 64 H x 70 W x 50 cm D
Transforming Julia and Tony to Lucy and Ricky from *I Love Lucy* - that wonderful 50s sitcom, chock full of gender clichés - I believed would showcase how farcical and formulaic their behaviour had become.

p. 47.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

94-96. **A THREE-RING CIRCUS**

Federal Fiasco

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, resin, gold and silver leaf, found objects, & mixed media

62 H x 61.5 W x 59 cm D
III. PROJECT OUTCOMES
DUEL 2013

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, found objects & mixed media
18 H x 18 W x 110 cm D
III. PROJECT OUTCOMES
JUDICIOUS JUGGLING

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media, 24 H x 30 W x 16 cm D
SERIOUSLY OVER CARBONATED

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media
34 H x 16 W x 16 cm D

III. PROJECT OUTCOMES
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

DONT CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU
2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey & mixed media
28 H x 30 W x 16 cm D
By creating tangible objects, highly ornate and crafted, I have tried to redress what I see as an imbalance in current fine art thinking which seems to privilege the idea over the skill. p. 51.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

THE SOUND
OF DEFEAT

SO LONG FAREWELL
AUFWIDERSHEN
GOODBYE
THE SOUND OF DEFEAT

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres & mixed media, 45 H x 60 W x 16 cm D
My greatest difficulty actually was keeping abreast of the rapid changes in the ALP, especially towards its final spectacular downfall. The constant political flux of 2013 highlighted the dilemma inherent in my art practice: how do I respond to current issues in a medium that is so slow to produce? p. 47
III. PROJECT OUTCOMES

**POLLIE IS CRACKERS - TWEETING INCESSANTLY**

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, gold leaf & mixed media, 38 H x 16 W x 16 cm D
A CANBERRA CHORUS LINE
2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey, found objects & mixed media, 47 H x 58.5 W x 49 cm D
I was writer, stage designer and director all rolled into one. My characters had a show to put on and I saw it as my responsibility to ensure they were able to do so. p. 55.
BAD DOG WINS THE MICTURATING CONTEST

2013. Stoneware & porcelain slip, decals, lustres, resin & mixed media
15.5 H x 18 W x 18 cm D
My goals are rather low-brow and pedestrian, I simply want my work to celebrate a sense of the ridiculous and to highlight the Absurd. p. 39.

“That’s all Folks” quoted from the signature ending of the Looney Tunes series.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS


Parts of image pixilated due to copyright restrictions.
**Education**

Current Master of Arts, Research, RMIT University, Melbourne.

2010 Bachelor of Fine Arts with Distinction, Ceramics, RMIT University.

**Employment**

2014 Bialik College, Hawthorn, Victoria  
Artist in Residence.

2012 RMIT University  
Technician mould making elective.

Bialik College  
Visiting artist, Year 11 art mould making classes.

2011 RMIT University: Be Inspired Festival, demonstrated ceramic mould making techniques.

2010 RMIT University, Teaching ceramics to Foundation students.

2007 Kew High School  
Demonstrated ceramic hand-building techniques.

2002 Box Hill TAFE  
Taught night classes in hand-building and mosaics.

1991-1995 Crazii Cakes  
Initiated and maintained a successful cake decorating business in Hong Kong. Conducted cake decorating classes from own business.
**Awards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Award Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Manningham Ceramic Art Award, Finalist</td>
<td>Doncaster, Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Deakin University Contemporary Small Sculpture Award: finalist</td>
<td>Deakin University, Burwood, Victoria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize: finalist</td>
<td>Woollahra Council Chambers, NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Award: Short listed for Emerging Australian Artist Category</td>
<td>Shepparton, Victoria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gold Coast International Ceramic Art Award: finalist</td>
<td>Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flanagan Art Prize: finalist</td>
<td>Ballarat, Victoria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sofitel Melbourne Exhibition in a Public Space Award</td>
<td>Fresh Graduate Exhibition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northcote Pottery Supplies Award</td>
<td>Exhibition and launch event Pan Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siemens Fine Art Scholarship: shortlisted</td>
<td>RMIT Gallery, RMIT University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clayworks Award for Excellence</td>
<td>RMIT Gallery, RMIT University.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collections


2010  FuLe International Ceramic Museums, Fuping Pottery Art Village
      Fuping  China.

Solo Exhibitions

2013  Federal Follies
      c3 Contemporary Art Space
      Abbotsford, Victoria.

      Canberra Capers
      Anita Traverso Gallery
      Richmond, Victoria.

2011-2012  Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, Capital City Carnival
            Melbourne, Victoria.

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Image 118, above. Federal Follies, c3 Contemporary Art Space 2013, section of.

“If politics is life imitating satire, then the first draft must be written by the cartoonist. Robyn Hosking has taken the craft to the third dimension with her brilliant account of the Gillard Years. writtenandaauthorisedbygeorgemegalogenis”

George Megalogenis
Journalist, political commentator & author
From the Catalogue
Curated Group Exhibitions

2014  Azimuth, School of Art Gallery, RMIT University.

2013  Just Add Heat, First Site Gallery, RMIT University.
Manningham Ceramic Art Award, Doncaster, Victoria.
The Flanagan Art Exhibition, St Patricks College, Ballarat, Victoria.
Linden Post Card Show, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, St Kilda, Victoria.

2012  Deakin University Contemporary Small Sculpture Award
Deakin University, Burwood, Victoria.
Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize
Woollahra Council Chambers, NSW.
Graduate Exhibition, Australian Ceramics Triennale
Queen's Theatre, Adelaide, South Australia.
Gold Coast International Ceramic Art Award
Gold Coast City Gallery, Gold Coast Queensland.
The Flanagan Art Exhibition
St Patricks College, Ballarat, Victoria.
At_Salon, Anita Traverso Gallery
Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria.

2011  Wondernamel, First Site Gallery, RMIT University.
Close to Hand, School of Art Gallery, RMIT University.
Exploration Eleven, Emerging Artists Exhibition
Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.
Manningham Ceramic Art Award, Doncaster, Victoria.
2010

Fresh! Graduate Exhibition, Craft Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria.
Ergon Energy Award, Rockhampton Art Gallery, Rockhampton, Queensland.
Siemens Fine Art Scholarship Exhibition, RMIT Gallery, RMIT University.
Ceramics, RMIT Graduate Exhibition, Carbon Black Gallery, Prahran, Victoria.
ICMEA Emerging Artists Competition, Fuping, China.
Pan Gallery Ceramic Art Award 2010, Brunswick East, Victoria.
Pat Emery Award 2010, Post Office Gallery, Ballarat, Victoria.
Clunes Ceramic Award 2010, Clunes, Victoria.

2009

Small Works Show, Brunswick Street Gallery, Brunswick, Victoria.

*Image 120. Invite for *At_Salon*, Anita Traverso Gallery 2012.*
Art Blart sums up 2012

Out of the nine artists [exhibited] it was the hilarious work of Robyn Hosking that was the standout for me. While guffaw inducing one couldn’t help but be entranced by these waggish, chimerical creations and wonder at their technical brilliance. Every detail, every nuance is meticulously observed and the sculptures are beautifully made (mostly using glazed ceramics). Every observation on contemporary politics, war and beauty regimes is concisely conceptualised and executed with panache and humour. For example, in the work *Dodgem Discourse* (2011) Senator Bob Brown, leader of the Australian Greens, is the only diver figure not to be in his dodgem car while everyone else is bashing into each other, having got out to push his car because the solar power has failed. What you cannot see in the photograph is that the lights atop the dodgem poles flash on and off on every other car except his! While Julia Gillard’s car is emblazoned with the number 1 on its side, another gem is that the number plates say “Question Time” referring to question time in Parliament, but also a double entendre as the viewer questions the supposed wisdom of our elected officials.

My favourite has to be *The Wing Walker* (2011) as an irate Julia Gillard tries to get rid of Kevin Rudd once and for all, even poking him with a stick to push him off the edge of the biplane. Balanced on a slowly revolving turntable with the world at its centre, this political merry-go-round is panacea for the soul for people sick of politicians. This is brilliant political satire. The planes are all ends up and even when Julia thinks she has got rid of Kevin there he is, hanging on for dear life from the undercarriage of one of the planes. Priceless ... These whimsical manifestations deal with serious, life changing and challenging issues with purpose, feeling and a wicked sense of humour. I really enjoyed this art (and joy is the correct word) because it takes real world issues, melds fantasy and pointed observation and reflects it back, as the artist observes, in a funfair’s distorted mirror. Magic!

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11. Bunyan’s original article (*Art Blart*, 17 March 2012) reviewed Hosking along with eight other artists exhibiting at Anita Traverso Gallery.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

Sofitel Melbourne On Collins in association with Craft Victoria take great pleasure in inviting you to Capital City Carnival a ceramic and mixed media installation by Robyn Hosking, winner of the Craft Victoria / Sofitel Melbourne On Collins Fresh! Award 2010.
**Reviews, cont.**

2011  

**Written works & Artist Talks by Robyn Hosking**

2013  
Artist’s Talk, Manningham Ceramic Art Award, Doncaster, Victoria.

2012  
Artist’s Talk, Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Council Chambers, NSW.

2013  
‘Through a funfair’s distorted mirror’, artist’s statement, in *Canberra Capers* catalogue.

**Publications referencing Robyn Hosking’s work**

2014  
*Bialik College 5774*, 2014 Year Book, Bialik College.

2013  
Lark Crafts (author), *500 Prints on Clay – An Inspiring Collection of Image Transfer Work*.

2012  
‘How to Fashion a Political View’, *Leader*, 2 October.

*Australian Ceramic Award Catalogue*, Shepparton Art Museum.


Sally Cleary, ‘Hybrid Practice: A (brave?) and exciting new craft world’, *The Journal of Australian Ceramics*, July.

2011  
*2012 Degree and Diploma Guide*, RMIT University.

*Succeed in the World of Art*, promotional brochure, RMIT University.

*Are You a Visual Thinker?* promotional poster, RMIT University.

*Image 122, left*. Sofitel/Craft Victoria invite (see pp. 103, 104).
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My work sends up and parodies the status quo as though we are glimpsing it through a funfair’s distorted mirror.

From Artist’s Statement in *Canberra Capers* Catalogue (see p. 113).
Over 50, female and unemployed in this job market! You take whatever work you can get.

WHERE IS MY WORK placed within contemporary art practice? This question still remains unanswered. My work is ceramic, but does not adhere to traditional functional ceramic form, that of the vessel. And despite the multitude of techniques and media amalgamated in my sculptures the focus continually returns to the clay and therefore by inference the work becomes craft. My work is a cartoon – comical, political, satirical – but it is not drawn. Visually it resembles toys, but it is not for children. The materials I employ – porcelain, fine silver, gold and silver leaf and lustres – are precious, and the mediums and the techniques I use are traditionally the preserve of more ‘highbrow’ or ‘high art’ works, but the cartoon format is considered lowbrow. It is deliberately uncomplicated in the message it conveys but highly complex in its construction. It is lowbrow cartoon caricature that cannot be cheaply or rapidly produced and its very delicacy and preciousness dictate that it must remain within the confines of the highbrow gallery-museum environment in order to be seen. My work seems to defy any neat artistic classification. As I outlined above, the processes involved in creating a piece are an order of magnitude more time-consuming than traditional, pen-and-ink caricature and the work has the ability to last generations. Yet the subject matter and tone of the work is, like political caricature and cartoon, ephemeral – the further away from the event, the less immediate and relevant its message seems. Perhaps this places my body of work in a unique, and somewhat lonely, position vis-à-vis the community of practice. But as, “[t]he caricaturist, in fact, is the servant of an idea far more than any other kind of visual artist”, I feel I was somewhat “set free from the demands of artistic decorum” (Lucie-Smith 1981,
p. 19). The message I wished to convey was always paramount, therefore trying to conform to any current perceived artistic conventions in order for my work to be more commercial or easily pigeon-holed was something I never really considered.

I hope, to some small degree, the body of work I have completed for my Masters, which dissects the highs and lows of Julia Gillard’s term as our first female Prime Minister – a very significant time for Australia politically and historically – can serve as a historical document. “To the historian, cartoons represent a priceless primary source of information about the fleeting modes and mores of the passing generations – they offer the ‘unofficial’ attitudes and reactions of ordinary folk” (Geipel 1972, p. 10). Furthermore “great cartoon fuses memorable art and idea – each reinforcing the other” (Hess and Kaplan 1968, p. 22), as evidenced in the satirical etchings of James Gillray which were considered to “cover [t]his calling from a trade into an art” (Hill 1966, p. 20), where the “hard boundary could never again be drawn between the ‘higher works’ and graphic satire” (Hill 1966, p. 20). Like Gillray, I too have endeavoured to balance both workmanship and idea equally; sacrificing neither to the other in the making of my cartoon sculptures. Thus hopefully, by trying to create something with enough artistic merit that it will be preserved for its aesthetic qualities alone, it may stimulate viewers to try to understand the joke – perhaps lending it relevance long after the joke and the context in which it was told has been forgotten by most people.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

STARRING
In order of importance.

Julia Gillard
Kevin Rudd
Tony Abbott
Bob Brown

CO-STARRING
In alphabetical order.

Wayne Swan
Anthony Albanese
Julie Bishop
Greg Combet

Stephen Conroy
Simon Crean
Peter Garrett
Joe Hockey
Tanya Plibersek

Bill Shorten
Peter Slipper
Craig Thomson
Unnamed AFP Officer
Andrew Wilkie

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‘How to Fashion a Political View’ 2012, Leader newspaper, 2 October.


Megalogenis, G 2013, statement on Robyn Hosking’s work, in *Canberra Capers* catalogue, Melbourne.


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Formal Image List


INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

image


II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT


45. Examples of the before and after of firing lustres; photos: Hosking.


image

50. Hosking, *Mind-mapping the mind boggling permutations associated with Prime Ministerial machinations*, digital cartoon, 2014: four different versions of *A Canberra Chorus Line*, three different versions of *The Sound of Defeat* and *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You*.


56. Hosking, *Wellcome Grocery Basket*, 60th birthday cake for the CEO of Wellcome Supermarkets, Hong Kong, 1990s; photo: Hosking.


63. Making *Bad Dog*: modelling the master out of sculpey and found objects; creating the mould; slip casting and then hand altering the casting to create the urinating dog; firing the dog; photos: Hosking.
INANIMATE ANIMATIONS

III. PROJECT OUTCOMES


74. Hosking, The Wing Walker, detail
75. *The Wing Walker*, 2011, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, fine silver, found objects and mixed media, 52 H x 42 cm Ø.

76. Hosking, *Dodgem Discourse*, 2011, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, solar panel, led lighting, found objects and mixed media, 30 H x 95 W x 60cm D.

77. *Dodgem Discourse*, detail.

78. *Dodgem Discourse*, detail.

79. Hosking, *Pollie Dollies in “Blue and Green Should Never be Seen Without a Colour In-between”*, 2011, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey and mixed media, 31 H x 42 W x 13cm D.

80. Hosking, *The Bodyguard*, 2012, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey and mixed media 24 H x 16 W x 16cm D.


82. Hosking, *Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged*, 2012, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 16.5 H x 79 W x 45cm D.

83. *Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged*, detail

84. *Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged*, detail

85. *Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged*, detail

86. *Rudd’s Travails: Backbenched, Bound and Gagged*, detail

87. Hosking, *Faceless Forces Foil Rudd’s Return*, 2012, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 32.5 H x 79 W x 59cm D.

88. *Faceless Forces Foil Rudd’s Return*, detail.
89. Hosking, *Slippery When Wet*, 2012, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, found objects and mixed media, 21 H x 60 W x 70 cm D.

90. *Slippery When Wet*, detail.

91. *Slippery When Wet*, detail

92. Hosking, *Pollie Popularity Poll*, 2012, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 64 H x 70 W x 50 cm D.

93. Hosking, *I Love Julia: Australia’s Wackiest Sitcom*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey, found objects, and mixed media, 28 H x 27 W x 16 cm D.

94. Hosking, *A Three Ringed Circus: Federal Fiasco*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, resin, gold and silver leaf, found objects, and mixed media, 62 H x 61.5 W x 59 cm D.

95. *A Three Ringed Circus: Federal Fiasco*, detail

96. *A Three Ringed Circus: Federal Fiasco*, detail

97. Hosking, *Duel 2013*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, found objects and mixed media, 18 H x 18 W x 110 cm D.


100. *Judicious Juggling*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 24 H x 30 W x 16 cm D.

101. Hosking, *Seriously Over Carbonated*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 34 H x 16 W x 16 cm D.

102. *Seriously Over Carbonated*, detail
103. Hosking, *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey and mixed media, 28 H x 30 W x 16 cm D.

104. *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You*, detail.

105. *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You*, detail

106. Hosking, *The Sound Of Defeat*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres and mixed media, 45 H x 60 W x 16 cm D.


108. Hosking, *A Canberra Chorus Line? – If Rudd had Won*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey, found objects, and mixed media, 47 H x 58.5 W x 49 cm D.


110. *Pollie Is Crackers - Tweeting Incessantly*, detail

111. Hosking, *A Canberra Chorus Line*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, sculpey, found objects, and mixed media, 47 H x 58.5 W x 49 cm D.


113. Hosking, *Bad Dog Wins the Micturating Contest*, 2013, stoneware and porcelain slip, decals, lustres, resin and mixed media, 15.5 H x 18 W x 18 cm D.

114. *Bad Dog Wins the Micturating Contest*, detail.

**IV. PROJECT IN CAREER CONTEXT**


118. Federal Follies solo exhibition, c3 Contemporary Art Space, Abbotsford, Victoria, 2013; photo: Hosking.


120. Invite for At_Salon curated group exhibition, Anita Traverso Gallery, Richmond, Victoria, 2012.

121. Screenshot, Marcus Bunyan, Art Blart, 2 January 2013. See Bibliography under Bunyan for full documentation.

122. Sofitel/Craft Victoria invite.

V. PROJECT REFLECTIONS


DOCUMENTATION


To enjoy the printed image one does not even have to be able to read. In this sense caricatures are as universal as music.

Edward Lucie-Smith 1981, pp. 13-14

Photo credits for Robyn Hosking’s finished work

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Images: 19-25, 31-34, 47, 49, 50, 54, 60-61, 66, 74-114;
the finished art frames in the grids on pp. 62, 63 and 64;
and all images on catalogues and invites.

Parts of images pixilated due to copyright restrictions:


I AM WOMAN

OH YES, I AM WISE
BUT IT'S WISDOM BORN OF PAIN
YES, I'VE PAID THE PRICE
BUT LOOK HOW MUCH I'VE GAINED
IF I HAVE TO, I CAN FACE ANYTHING
I AM STRONG
I AM INVINCIBLE

I AM WOMAN
The producers would like to thank all the fish who have taken part in this film. We hope that other fish will follow the example of those who have participated, so that, in future, fish all over the world will live together in harmony and understanding, and put aside their petty differences, cease pursuing and eating each other and live a brighter, better future for all fish, and those who love them.