

A vertical line of various soil and rock samples is arranged on a brown, textured background. The samples include a large dark brown rock at the top, followed by several white and light-colored rocks, a large yellowish-brown rock, and a variety of smaller rocks and soil particles in shades of brown, tan, and white. The text "shifting ground" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with "education resource" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

# shifting ground

education resource



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

## acknowledgements

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122 Gerler Road, Hendra, QLD 4011  
P: 07 3059 9740  
E: [information@magsq.com.au](mailto:information@magsq.com.au)  
W: [www.magsq.com.au](http://www.magsq.com.au)

This Education Resource has been written by Larissa Warren.  
Larissa received First Nations guidance from Wangerriburra Elder, Aunty Ruby Sims and Kombumerri Elder, Uncle John Graham.

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For more information on the national tour of the exhibition tour, *Shifting Ground*, and to view the film with Curator, Larissa Warren, visit the M&G QLD website:  
<https://magsq.com.au/touring-exhibitions/shifting-ground/>

*Shifting Ground* is a touring exhibition curated by Larissa Warren and presented in partnership with Scenic Rim Regional Council and Museums & Galleries Queensland. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program.

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# Shifting Ground – from the curator

**We stand on shifting ground – of clay, of memory, of community. And from it, we shape something enduring.**

*Shifting Ground* brings together the work of 12 contemporary ceramic artists from across Australia in conversation about the geological, historical, and legacy of Tamborine Mountain's early women potters. The exhibition explores how clay, as both material and metaphor, can carry stories across time, connecting past makers with present day artists. By sharing locally sourced clays, material research, and community stories, this project invites reflection on resilience, place-based practice, and the unseen labour of creative women in regional Australia.

In 2018, I relocated my family and ceramics practice to Tamborine Mountain, a semi-rural community in Queensland's Scenic Rim. Tamborine Mountain itself is steeped in geological significance. Formed 22 million years ago by volcanic eruptions, its basalt-rich soils have yielded unique clay deposits found across the escarpments. Students of the Harvey School (1916-1950s) once used these clays, which gained admiration even from Wedgwood for needing no additives to fire. Artists such as Vi Eyre and Frances Carnegie praised its texture and responsiveness.

I soon learned of the Mountain's quiet but powerful history of women potters Joyce and Isobel Morris, Doris Aagaard, Frances Carnegie, among others, who began working with local clays here from the 1940s. By the 1950s–70s, Tamborine Mountain supported a small but compelling creative community. Women like Aagaard, Carnegie, Rhoda Rushbrook and Barbara Laws transformed sheds and homes into workshops, studios, and galleries. Together they formed the Tamborine Mountain Creative Arts (TMCA) group in 1975, an inclusive space for sharing skills, child-minding, stories, and support. Their story of independence and creativity helped shape the foundation of what became a strong women-led artistic culture.

When the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns began, my studio practice was interrupted by homeschooling, cancellations, and uncertainty. I turned to research – archival and oral histories into these early potters, their lives, and the local materials they used. This exploration evolved into *Wild Women Wild Clay*; supported by Regional Arts Development Funding, the project wove together geology, personal storytelling, clay testing, and my own creative making. I created a group chat with 11 Australian ceramic artists, inviting them to engage with Tamborine clays and the stories of these women. These artists, situated across the country received clay samples, and in return responded through their own creative processes. The works in this exhibition reflect not just individual styles, but a collective resonance with place, history, and geological memory.



Larissa's children help dig a clay deposit, 2020  
Courtesy of Larissa Warren.





Larissa Warren in her studio, Tamborine Mountain.  
Courtesy of Larissa Warren.

This exhibition is both a tribute and a continuation. It honours the women whose creativity shaped the Mountain's artistic identity, and the contemporary artists who, through shared clay and conversation, continue to keep those connections alive.

I was incredibly fortunate to be mentored by Glenn R. Cooke (1946-2025) during 2018-2025. Glenn's commitment to Queensland decorative arts and his knowledge of post-war Queensland potters informed much of my background research.<sup>1</sup>

I wish to thank Wangerriburra Elder Aunty Ruby Sims, who shared beautiful stories about this Mountain that holds significant importance to women.

**Larissa Warren**  
Curator

By sharing locally sourced clays, material research, and community stories, this project invites reflection on resilience, place-based practice, and the unseen labour of creative women in regional Australia.

<sup>1</sup>Byrne, Dianne, Glenn R. Cooke, Sheila Gould, and Timothy Roberts, *With Heart & Hand: Art Pottery in Queensland 1900-1950* (Griffith University Art Museum, 2018).

## teachers notes

This Education Resource has been developed to support upper primary and secondary students in engaging with the exhibition *Shifting Ground*, curated by Larissa Warren. The exhibition invites students to explore the intersection of art, geology, history, and community through the lens of contemporary ceramic practice.

The exhibition reflects on the powerful role of place-based practice, and the resilience, ingenuity, and creativity of regional women makers; both past and present.

Students will engage with the techniques and approaches of contemporary ceramic artists who responded to locally sourced clay and historical research shared by the curator. These responses include a variety of materials, media, and visual storytelling strategies, opening up rich learning opportunities across the curriculum.

Through this Education Resource, students are encouraged to:

- Explore the geological, historical, and social narratives of Tamborine Mountain and their own landscapes.
- Investigate how artists use locally-sourced materials to convey place-based stories
- Experiment with materials and techniques to develop their own artworks
- Respond to visual art using appropriate arts language and personal interpretation

Teachers are invited to select activities that align with their students' interests, year level, and curriculum needs. Many activities are open-ended and can be extended into broader units of inquiry around environment, history, or contemporary art practice. The resource also lends itself to cross-curricular exploration with Humanities, English, and Science.

A Glossary of Terms is included and specific to the *Shifting Ground* exhibition. For broader visual arts terminology, teachers should refer to the [Australian Curriculum: The Arts: Visual Arts glossary \(Version 8.4\)](#).

To support learning, the resource includes:

- Artist works, process imagery and statements
- Photographs documenting material processes and clay testing
- Archival materials and the curator's research images
- QR codes and hyperlinks to relevant resources

Before visiting the exhibition, it is highly recommended that teachers watch the recorded interview featuring Larissa Warren discussing the exhibition with their students. Viewing the film will offer valuable insights and context, enhancing the students' experience and engagement with the exhibition's themes and content. <https://magsq.com.au/touring-exhibitions/shifting-ground/>

This resource encourages students to reflect on how art can be both personal and communal, how materials carry stories, and how creative practice can connect us to land, culture, and each other.



## first nations perspectives

For Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, living in harmony with the land and maintaining sustainable practices has been a way of life for at least 50,000 years. Country is central to identity, culture, and wellbeing. It is a living entity rich in spiritual and cultural significance where ancestral beings are believed to have shaped the landscapes, waterways, and lore that have guided how people live and relate to one another and the natural world. These ancestral spirits continue to reside in the land, sky, and waters, with all living things deeply connected through this continuous presence.

Traditional practices are guided by a profound sense of responsibility, respect, and care for Country. This includes sustainable and considered approaches to using natural materials where nothing is taken without purpose or ceremony, and the balance of the environment is always prioritised.

In line with these values, curator and artist Larissa Warren approaches the sourcing of local clays with deep respect for the land and its Traditional Custodians. When developing a project that involves harvesting clay, she consults with Elders and community members to understand the cultural significance of the sites and materials she encounters. Only small amounts of clay are collected. This process reflects an ongoing respect for Country and acknowledges the enduring custodianship of First Nations peoples.

### **Country/Place:**

*Refers to the land to which Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples belong, where the spiritual essence of their ancestors remains in the landscape, the sky, and the waters.*

### **Traditional Custodian/Owner:**

*Refers to the First Nations people of a Country or Place. Knowledge is passed down through generations, and Elders, along with the most senior knowledge holders, are typically regarded as the rightful holders of this title. The term ‘custodian’ highlights the significant responsibility that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to care for their Country/Place, as opposed to viewing the land and waters as personal property.<sup>2</sup>*

Authentic opportunities are best supported through engagement with representatives from the Country in which your learning environment is situated. For further information, consider reaching out to the following sources:

**NSW:** Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) or Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)  
<https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au>

**QLD:** Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee (QIECC)  
<https://www.yraca.org.au>

**WA:** Department of Education, Shaping the Future  
<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/aboriginal-advisory-body>

**SA:** Department of Education, South Australia, Aboriginal Education Strategy  
<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/department/strategies-and-plans/aboriginal-education-strategy-2019-2029>

**TAS:** The Orb  
<https://www.theorb.tas.gov.au>

**VIC:** The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association  
<https://www.vaeai.org.au>

**NT:** Department of Education NT  
<https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/indigenous-education-strategy>

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives>

# australian national curriculum links

## Visual Arts | Geography | Civics | Economics & Business | Design & Technologies | Science

### VISUAL ARTS

#### Years 3 & 4

Explore where, why and how visual arts are created and/or presented across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts. (AC9AVA4E01)

#### Years 5 & 6

Experiment with, document and reflect on ways to use a range of visual conventions, visual arts processes, and materials. (AC9AVA6D01)

#### Years 7 & 8

Investigate ways that visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials are manipulated to represent ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in artworks created across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts. (AC9AVA8E01)

#### Years 9 & 10

Investigate the ways that artists across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts develop personal expression in their visual arts practice to represent, communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning. (AC9AVA10E01)

### HASS

#### Years 4-5

Sustainable use and management of renewable and non-renewable resources, including the custodial responsibility First Nations Australians have for Country/Place. (AC9HS4K06)

Types of resources, including natural, human and capital, and how they satisfy needs and wants. (AC9HS5K08)

How citizens (members of communities) with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal. (AC9HS5K07)

### SCIENCE

Earth and Space Sciences “Sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks contain minerals and are formed by processes that occur over a variety of timescales.” (ACSSU153)

### DESIGN & TECHNOLOGIES

#### Years 3-4

Examine design and technologies occupations and factors including sustainability that impact on the design of products, services and environments to meet community needs. (AC9TDE4K01)

#### Years 5-6

Investigate needs or opportunities for designing, and the materials, components, tools, equipment and processes needed to create designed solutions. (AC9TDE6P01)

#### Years 7 & 8

Analyse how people in design and technologies occupations consider ethical and sustainability factors to design and produce products, services and environments. (AC9TDE8K01)

#### Years 9-10

Generate, develop and test design ideas, processes and solutions, and communicate these using appropriate technical terms and graphical representation techniques. (ACTDEP049)

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Year 7

The cultural connectedness of people to places and how this influences their identity, sense of belonging and perceptions of a place, in particular the cultural connectedness of First Nations Australians to Country/Place. (AC9HG7K07)

#### Year 8

Geomorphological processes that produce different landscapes and significant landforms. (AC9HG8K01)

#### Year 10

First Nations Australians' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia. (AC9HG10K03)



## glossary

**Bisque fire** or biscuit firing refers to the first firing process of bone-dry clay without glaze. When heated, the clay undergoes a chemical change, transforming it into a harder, more durable state. The colour can also sometimes change in this process.

**Bone dry** is a term used to describe clay pieces, known as greenware, that have been air dried as much as possible before going through the first firing in a kiln. This can take several days or even weeks, depending on the size of the piece.

**Burnish** is a term used to describe the process of rubbing or polishing a surface to make it shiny or lustrous.

**Coiling** is a hand-building technique that involves rolling long, thin, sausage-like forms of even thicknesses from clay. The coils are coiled around the outer edge of a base and then, on top of each other, and moving upwards in a circular direction to form a pot. Each new coiled row is attached to the previous one using a slight pinching pressure.

A **Cone** is a tool used when firing clay to monitor the temperature of a kiln over a period of time. Cones are attributed different numbers that reference different low, medium and high temperatures. Like an ice-cube, they dissolve at different temperatures, acting a bit like a thermometer or gauge for the artists.

**Encaustic** is a Greek word that means to 'heat' or 'burn in'. It is a technique that involves using heated beeswax that has coloured pigments added to it. When this is applied to ceramics, the wax melts in the firing process, creating different effects.

**Firing** involves subjecting clay objects to high temperatures within a kiln, causing the clay particles to fuse together. Firing causes chemical and physical changes in the clay, transforming it into a durable, solid form.

**Functional Pottery** refers to ceramic items made for people to use and can include vases, tiles, pots, cups, plates, bowls and other tableware. Non-functional pottery/ceramics can be abstract or sculptural forms that do not serve a functional purpose.

**Glaze** is a liquid coating applied to ceramics for decoration and/or to make a vessel waterproof. Glazes are made from powdered minerals and can come in a multitude of colours. Glaze bonds to the clay at high temperatures, and depending on a glaze's chemical composition, can produce different colours and effects when fired at different temperatures or when oxygen is added or reduced in the firing process.

**Greenware** is a term to describe unfired clay pieces.

**Hand-built** refers to pottery or sculptures created by shaping clay using hand-building techniques such as pinch, coil, or slab construction, rather than using a potter's wheel.

**Incising** is a decorative technique that involves carving into the clay.

A **Kiln** is an essential piece of equipment in the production of pottery and ceramics. Kilns are high-temperature ovens that can reach and maintain specific temperatures so that raw clay can be transformed into durable ceramic pieces.

**Kintsugi** is a traditional Japanese technique of meticulously repairing cracked or broken ceramics using lacquer dusted with gold, silver or other metal powder. It leaves a metallic seam where the cracks were healed and can enhance the beauty of the object.

**Leather-hard** is a term that refers to clay that has partially dried or hardened to feel like leather. In this state, the clay can be decorated with slip, carved or trimmed.

**Native/wild clays** are natural clays sourced from local environments, often found a metre under the top layer of organic matter/soils. Unlike commercially processed clay, which is collected from mining pits, local clay can be unpredictable, contain impurities and possess unique colour and texture.

**Oral history** is the practice of collecting and preserving personal accounts, stories, and experiences through spoken narratives, often passed down through generations.

**Oxidation firing** is a technique where oxygen is able to react with the clay and glazes at high temperatures in the firing process, causing the materials to reach their most oxidised state, resulting in strong, bright colours. Scientifically, oxidation occurs when a reactant loses electrons during the chemical reaction.

**Plastic state** refers to clay's properties when it is soft and pliable and can easily be manipulated and moulded while holding its shape and not cracking.

**Pinching** is a hand-building technique to make pots or vessels by rolling a ball of clay, creating an indentation in the top using your thumb, and then gradually pinching the walls of the clay using your thumb and fingers with one hand, while rotating the ball of clay in the other.

**Raku** is a Japanese firing technique that involves removing ceramics from a kiln while hot, and transferring them to a container, such as a metal rubbish bin, containing combustible materials like wood shavings or newspaper. Once these materials catch fire, the container is sealed, reducing the oxygen and creating earthy, smoky and lustrous effects.

**Raw-firing** or **raw-glazing** is a technique where the bisque firing process is skipped and a ceramics piece is only fired once. Glazes are applied directly to the bone-dry wares.

**Reduction firing** is a technique where the amount of oxygen entering the kiln in the firing process is reduced. The reduction of oxygen affects the clay and glaze chemically and can result in more earthy, muted tones or increased metallic lustre on copper or iron glazes. Scientifically, reduction occurs when a reactant gains electrons during the chemical reaction.

A **Shield Volcano** is a large, broad, and gently sloping volcano formed by the eruption of low-viscosity basalt lava that flows easily over wide areas. Mount Tamborine was formed around 20 million years ago by eruptions of basalt lava and ash from the Tweed Shield Volcano, with erosion shaping its current structure.

**Sgraffito** is a term used to describe scratching through one surface to reveal a layer below.

**Slip** is a liquid clay, sometimes referred to as a 'slurry', which consists of finely ground clay mixed with water to form a smooth, pourable consistency. It can be used for joining pieces of clay together, glazing and casting.

**Slumping** is a technique where clay slabs are draped over a surface or mould to create a vessel or curved shape.

**Stoneware** is a durable ceramic made from clay fired at high temperatures (1,100°C–1,300°C), known for its strength, heat retention, and suitability for functional pottery, with its appearance varying based on the clay's mineral composition.

**Stratigraphy** is a branch of geology that deals with the study of rock layers (strata) and their sequence in the Earth's crust. Stratigraphy focuses on understanding the order, distribution, and age of rock layers, which helps scientists interpret Earth's history and the processes that have shaped it over time.

**Terracotta** is a sandy clay that is yellow, green, or red in its plastic state and contains high iron, which causes it to fire to deep red, purple, or brown. It is durable yet porous, making it ideal for flowerpots, tiles, and decorative pieces.

**Terra sigillata** is an ultrarefined clay slip that, when applied to unfired clay surfaces (bone-dry wares), can be polished to give a soft sheen or gloss. It can also be used for underglazes.

**Wheel-thrown pottery** is the process of shaping clay on a rotating wheel (electric or foot-powered) using tools and hands to create symmetrical forms such as bowls, mugs, plates, and vases.



## Exhibition Artists

Pie Bolton (VIC), Veronica Cay (QLD), Vicki Grima (NSW), Stephanie James-Manttán (SA), Nicolette Johnson (QLD), Yen Yen Lo (VIC), Jackie Masters (WA), Pru Morrison (QLD), Julie Pennington (ACT), Ulrica Trulsson (QLD), Larissa Warren (QLD), and Sarah Zalewski (QLD)

## Tamborine Mountain Clays

The clays used by the artists in this exhibition were sustainably sourced from Tamborine Mountain in consultation with the Traditional Custodians of the land. They are named after locations that inspired their collection. The names of these clays are frequently referenced by the artists throughout this Resource:

- Alice
- Eagles Close
- Eva
- Hillside
- Lucille
- Mountain Mix
- Poplars
- Red Retreat
- School
- Tamborine Oxenford
- Wild Retreat

## exhibition themes

Exhibition artists and their works have been grouped to align with exhibition themes.

### Precious Collections

The smallest things are often the most treasured. Within this theme, we examine our connection to these modest objects and how we assign value to scarce resources that create them.

Vicki Grima – the natural world captured

Ulrica Trulsson – small and precious

Veronica Cay – inventiveness and resilience

### Shared Spaces

In this section, we examine the role of artists in capturing the stories, relationships, and memories tied to a particular place. Our sense of well-being, connection, and belonging is often closely tied to our physical surroundings and the communities we create.

Stephanie James-Manttán – the cottage craft movement of the 1950s-60s

Larissa Warren – forming art communities, sharing skills

Sarah Zalewski – contemporary First Nations perspectives and archaeology

### Earth Matters

Tamborine Mountain's unique geology is shaped by the remnants of a collapsed shield volcano, with layers of volcanic rock and sediment revealing millions of years of tectonic and erosional processes. This dynamic history has created diverse landforms, from ancient basalt cliffs to rich, fertile soils that support lush rainforests and diverse ecosystems. Artists in this section explore these natural wonders.

Pie Bolton – Mountain landscapes and their unique geology

Jackie Masters – understanding clay properties and fusing of materials

Yen Yen Lo – native animals and their habitats

### A Potters Journey

The process of creating ceramic artworks takes time, commitment, and patience. In this section, we celebrate the unique skills and artistic personalities each artist brings to their craft.

Pru Morrison – objects and symbolism

Nicolette Johnson – wood firing, dedication and time to create

Julie Pennington – artistic personality



# precious collections

The smallest things are often the most treasured. Within this theme, students will examine our connection to these modest objects and how we assign value to scarce resources that create them.



## Vicki Grima

Location: Botany, NSW

'I learned of these natural Tamborine Mountain clays when Larissa Warren submitted her research to me as Editor of *The Journal of Australian Ceramics*. The local Tamborine Mountain women potters in the 1940s were tenacious and inventive as they lived a creative life using local materials. Larissa later invited me to make work with these local clays.

My work is inspired by local coastal landscapes where I take photos and collect shells, pebbles and worn sticks. The diversely-coloured clay bodies enabled me to build up rich surfaces on my work by overlaying and scraping back layers. The boulder forms and brooches are inspired by the strata lines in the cliffs, the weathered rock pools and the local flora.'

**Vicki Grima**, artist statement



Vicki Grima with her lidded vessels at Botany Bay. Photographs courtesy of artist.

Top: Artwork title: *Lidded Vessel 1, 2, 3*, 2022

Material: Eagles close, Red Retreat and Hillside clays

Firing: Oxidation, cone 6

Individual dimensions: (left to right) 8 x 6.5 x 6.5cm, 10 x 7.5 x 7.5cm, 9 x 7 x 7cm

Top right: Artwork title: *Brooches (detail)*, 2023

Material: Eagles Close, Red Retreat and Hillside clays

Firing: Oxidation, cone 6

Individual dimensions: 5 x 5 x 2 cm (variable)





## Ulrica Trulsson

Location: Brisbane, QLD

‘Receiving my sample bags of clays collected by hand from the Mountain, I threw these small, lidded boxes on the wheel. I used a thick application of wild clay slip with my fingers moving through it to create the surfaces. When drying and shrinking, the slip created added textures and cracks, followed by the beautiful colours revealed in the firing. I kept to a very small scale with my precious morsels of clay. Handling the pots at ‘bone dry’ required a gentle touch as they seemed to want to return to a wild state and crumble. I kept most of the clay bare, except for the thinnest layer of glaze to help fuse the fragile surfaces in the firing.’

**Ulrica Trulsson**, artist statement



Artwork title: *Textured Wild Clay*  
*Small Boxes (5)*, 2023  
 Material: Eagles Close clay, School clay slip, Eva and Alice clays and slips  
 Firing: Oxidation, cone 9 1260°C, and reduction, cone 10 1300°C  
 Individual dimensions (left to right):  
 7.5 x 5 (diameter) cm, 5.5 x 5 (diameter) cm,  
 8 x 6.5 (diameter) cm, 6.5 x 7 (diameter) cm,  
 7.5 x 5 (diameter) cm



These images show the transformation of the plastic clay forms to finished, fired ceramic works. Note the contrasting colours and surface qualities achieved as a result of the firing process.



Left: Trimmed canisters. Right: Trimmed canisters coated with slip and fired.



Left: Ulrica Trulsson trimming her usual-sized artwork on the pottery wheel.  
 Centre: Ulrica's *Shifting Ground* artwork on the wheel (for scale comparison), freshly painted with slip.  
 Right: Final artwork after a reduction firing to 1300°C.  
 Photographs courtesy of the artist.

**Discussion: Examine the challenges artists like Vicki Grima and Ulrica Trulsson face when creating artwork on a smaller scale.**



In class, have the students discuss the impact of scale on the perception and experience of art. Students are invited to consider the following questions:

- Q. How might a viewer's experience differ when viewing something small that requires close examination versus a large artwork that they can stand back from?
- Q. How does this intimacy affect the emotional connection to the artwork?
- Q. What is the difference between the terms 'size' and 'scale'?

**Discussion: Examine what makes something precious.**



Ask the students to consider items that are precious to them and discuss their reasoning. Is it precious because of its value, because it is rare, or because it holds special meaning?

**Discussion: In class, discuss what makes Tamborine Mountain clays unique and precious. Encourage the students to consider:**



- the geographical and geological significance of where the clays were collected.
- the names attributed to the different clays by curator and artist, Larissa Warren. Reflect on the knowledge she gained, and the friendships made through researching the women Tamborine Mountain potters of the 1940s–70s and harvesting these clays.



## Veronica Cay

Location:  
Buderim, QLD

'*memory housing* – was inspired by the women's inventiveness and resilience. Tamborine Mountain c. 1940–1960 would have been a very remote community with limited access to many resources. I have used the four different clays – two as inlays and two as decorative slips – to echo the way fabrics would have been pieced together for new clothes or mending old ones. When resources are scarce, everything is precious and re-used.'

**Veronica Cay**, artist statement

Artwork title: *memory housing*, 2021  
Material: Keane's white raku, Poplars, Mountain Mix clays inlayed into the surface, Red Retreat and Hillside terra sigillata/slips, Japanese tissue transfer, finished with hot wax (encaustic) and cold wax  
Firing: Oxidation, 1160°C  
Dimensions: 51 x 36 x 13cm  
Photograph courtesy of the artist.





Sewing kit from the 1950s, used for repairing clothes, gloves and hats. Display at the Tamborine Mountain Heritage Centre. Photograph by Trevor Worden.

## Recycled Clay Patchwork – making activity

Explore the concept of reuse and resourcefulness in clay, inspired by the idea of patchwork and mending, as seen in Veronica Cay's artwork, *memory housing*, 2021.



### Materials:

- 4 different types of clay (or different coloured clays if you can't access multiple types)
- Clay tools (rolling pins, knives, sculpting tools)
- A small piece of fabric or textile for texture imprints (optional)

### Task:

1. Introduce students to Veronica Cay's artist statement, explaining how the artist uses four different clays to represent the idea of mending and piecing things together, much like fabric patchwork. Discuss how, in times of scarcity, people creatively reuse materials to repair or make something new.
2. Provide students with four different types of clay (or coloured clays) to represent the idea of mending and patching. Ask students to roll out each type of clay into a flat slab approximately 1cm thick.





3. The students will use one of these slabs as a base, and the others can be cut or torn into various shapes and sizes, like patchwork fabric pieces. Arrange the 'patchwork' pieces on the base slab, as illustrated below.



4. Once the students are happy with their compositions, instruct them to use a rolling pin to press the 'patchwork' pieces to the main slab, forming a flat surface. Students can paint oxides, slips or underglazes onto the surface to enhance the design, or for added texture, students can press fabric or natural objects into the clay, mimicking how fabric would be sewn into a patchwork quilt.



5. By combining these pieces to form a small clay object (e.g., a dish, small sculpture, or abstract piece) the students are using contrasting materials in layers, much like fabric would be stitched together. The finished piece should visually represent the idea of reuse and mending.
6. Once finished, place two holes at the top for hanging, and leave to dry in preparation for firing.



Photographs courtesy of Larissa Warren.

## Discussion

After the activity, have students reflect on how the use of different materials or textures can tell a story about resourcefulness. How do the contrasting clays in the patchwork relate to the way people during the 1940s-60s might have reused materials to create something both functional and beautiful?



# shared spaces

In this section, students will examine the role of artists in capturing the stories, relationships, and memories tied to a particular place. Our sense of well-being, connection, and belonging is often closely tied to our physical surroundings and the communities we create.



## Stephanie James-Manttan

Location: Adelaide, SA

'During my *Wild Women Wild Clay* research, I was delighted to read about some of the amazing women who worked with the clay from Tamborine Mountain during the informative years of the cottage craft movement in Queensland. I was particularly taken with the Morris sisters, who established a pottery shop and studio during the 1940s-1950s and Frances Carnegie (1901-1988), who produced highly refined ceramic domestic objects.

I felt a strong affinity and respect for these makers. I was humbled by their tenacity, ingenuity, dedication, resourcefulness and how they managed to make something out of nothing. It's hard enough nowadays working with clay, constantly tackling technical issues such as continuity with raw materials

and clay supplies, cost of equipment, and not to mention having access to kilns. I really don't know if I would've had the motivation to do what they did with the limited resources and technology. I can only assume it was the passion for the craft and the inspiration they received from living and working on the mountain.

The Morris sisters and Carnegie were products of their time, focusing on domestic ware as my work does now. I've chosen to make objects that represent me and these tenacious makers, using some of the very same clay they used to throw on the pottery wheel and put within their own glazes.'

**Stephanie James-Manttan,**  
artist statement

Artwork title: *6 ceramic vessels*, 2023  
Materials: Keane's 33 Stoneware, Eva clay, Hillside slip clay, with Tamborine Mountain Wood Ash slip and white matte glaze  
Firing: Reduction, cone 9, Gas  
Dimensions variable  
Photograph courtesy of the artist.





Stephanie James-Manttán's functional ware in its greenware state (before glazing and firing).  
Photograph courtesy of the artist.

Stephanie James-Manttán was inspired by Isobel and Joyce Morris and Frances Carnegie to create her functional ceramics.

## Functional Wares – activity

In this activity, students are asked to observe and compare the design styles of two different Australian potters/ceramic artists, then design their own functional ceramic piece (e.g. a cup, jug, or bowl) informed by their research and personal ideas.



### 1. Research & Observation (Class or Homework)

- Choose two Australian potters who specialise in making functional pottery forms. Suggestions: Sylvia Halpern, Tamborine Mountain's Isobel and Joyce Morris sisters, Janet Mansfield, Gwyn Hanssen Pigott or one of the exhibiting artists.

### 2. Look closely at one functional object (e.g. jug, cup, teapot, vase) by each artist. This will inform the next activities.

### 3. Sketch & analyse

- Sketch each piece (two in total).
- Annotate the sketches with observations like:
  - Shape & form (e.g. tall, short, round, wide spout)
  - Handle design (slender, wide, round)

- Glaze and surface treatment (smooth, textured, matte, lustrous)
- Decoration (patterned, plain, abstract, colourful, earthy)
- Overall *feel* (rustic, elegant, practical, domestic, artistic)

### 4. Design Your Own Pottery Piece

- Sketch a design for your own domestic ceramic object inspired by what you discovered in steps 1 and 2.
- Annotate your drawing to explain:
  - The elements you have borrowed from the two artists you researched.
  - The changes or additions you have made to reflect your own ideas, personality, or values.
  - Why you made these design choices?



## Larissa Warren

Location: Tamborine Mountain, QLD

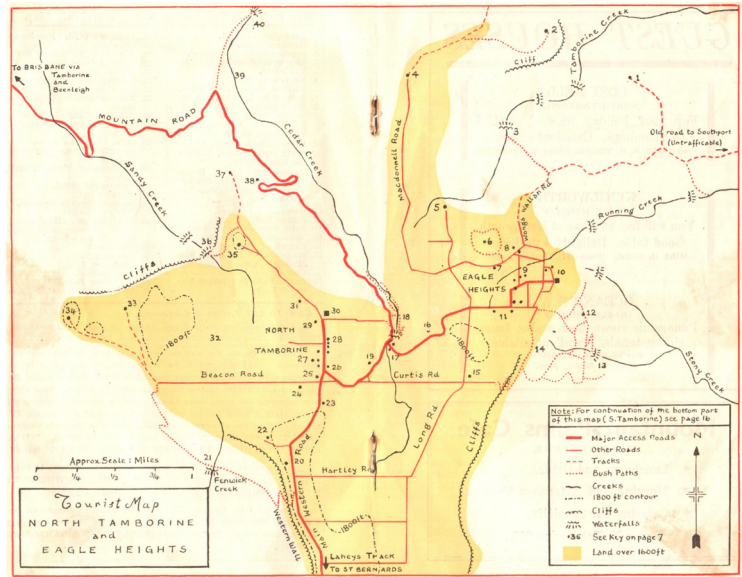
'Collecting oral histories from the families of past artists provided a unique glimpse into the world of Tamborine Mountain potters from the 1950s to the 1970s. I was particularly inspired by stories of how the Tamborine Mountain Creative Arts group came together, united by their shared passion for creating art. In response, I created these 'share plates' to celebrate the skills shared and friendships formed that defined their small community.'

Exploring the lineage of these female makers also led to the rediscovery of forgotten local clays, each with its own distinct colour, texture, and unpredictable nature. These materials, in turn, reflect the toughness, resilience, and uniqueness of the women who inspired this research.'

**Larissa Warren**, artist statement

Artwork title: *Share Plate*, 2022  
Material: porcelain, ceramic stains and Tamborine Mountain local clays: Poplars, School, Hillside, Red Retreat, Eva and Lucille, gold lustre  
Firing: Reduction, cone 10, and oxidation  
Dimensions: 4 plates 21.5 (diameter) x 6.8cm each (variable)





Top left: Larissa Warren sourcing wild clays at Tamborine Mountain  
 Top right: Tourist map of North Tamborine and Eagle Heights, extracted from *Guide to Tamborine Mountain* 1948-50. Photograph by Trevor Worden.  
 Bottom left: The wild clays with sample pots made from each of these clays.  
 Bottom right: Ceramic shrinkage tiles made from each of the harvested wild clays, labelled with their location.  
 Photographs by Larissa Warren.

## Plates of Place – Mapping My Landscape in Clay – making activity



Create a ceramic plate that reflects the geological and environmental features of your local area.

Inspired by Larissa Warren's use of clay to echo the strata and geological layers of Tamborine Mountain, students will research and visually represent elements of their local environment, such as soil layers, rocks, waterways, plant life, or landforms using techniques such as carving, coloured slips, underglazes, and added texture.

This activity will take the form of a plate, which will act as a visual map of their local landscape—one that blends personal connection with natural history.

### Materials:

- Clay (earthenware or stoneware)
- Rolling pin or slab roller
- Clay knife, wire cutter, carving tools, brushes
- Coloured slip or underglaze (various colours to reflect local features)
- Reference materials (maps, photos, sketches of the local area)
- Plate or bowl for slumping (optional)
- Scoring tool and slip for joining pieces
- Kiln (for firing)

### 1. Research Your Local Landscape

- Investigate the geology and landforms of your local area. What types of rock, soil, and natural features define where you live?
- Look at historical and cultural connections to the land and consider what stories, historical or geographic sites, or community places are important to you.
- Sketch, take photographs or collect reference materials of these features to inspire your design.

Suggested resources for local geology and information:

- [Geoscience Australia – Education](#)
- Local council websites (many provide environmental or historical mapping)
- State geological surveys (e.g. Geological Survey of Queensland, Victoria, NSW, etc.)

- Local museums, historical societies or visitor/tourist information centres
- Google Earth or satellite maps

### 2. Design Your Plate

- Plan how your plate will represent the land. When planning your design, consider how you will achieve your desired outcome. For example, will you layer coloured clays like strata? Carve a river, creek or other watercourses or fault lines into the clay? Add texture to show cliffs or rock formations? Include symbolic references to local plants, places or animals?

### 3. Prepare the Clay

- Roll out a slab of clay approximately 5-10mm thick, 15–25 cm wide.

### 4. Shape the Plate

- Trace a circle or organic shape onto your clay and then cut it out. Smooth the edges.
- If you would like a curved plate, carefully lift the clay slab and slump it over a bowl or mould.
- (Optional) To prevent your curved plate from rocking, you can slightly flatten the base by gently tapping it with a wooden paddle, or you can add feet. Feet are made by rolling three small balls of clay, adjusting them to the size and shape you want, scoring them on one side, adding some slip and placing them at an equal distance apart on the base of your plate. Smooth the clay surface once they are positioned in place.



## 5. Decorate

- Once leather-hard, begin to illustrate your environment on your plate through:
  - Carving geological shapes, contours, plant life or watercourses
  - Painting with coloured slip or underglaze to represent natural layers, geological strata or key features
  - Building up shapes and textures with clay (e.g. hills, boulders, tree trunks)



## 6. Firing and Glazing (Optional/dependent on access to a kiln)

Once bone dry, bisque fire the students' plates. Students can glaze their plates with a clear glaze if desired – this will require a second firing of the plate.



Finished artwork (detail). Photographs courtesy of Larissa Warren.

## Reflection Questions:

Ask the students to consider the following questions and either prepare a written response or share their responses with their classmates in a group discussion:

- What aspects of your local environment did you include? Why are these meaningful or interesting to you?
- How did you use visual elements (colour, texture, shape) to reflect the natural features or geology of your area?
- How does your plate act as a map, not just of place, but of your personal or cultural connection to land?
- Larissa Warren's plates represent both geology and community history. How could your class display these plates as a collective landscape or regional map? What stories could the class's display communicate about your region?







## Sarah Zalewski

Location: Beaudesert, Scenic Rim, QLD

*'Past-Kumi (Grandmother), Present-Waijung (Mother), Future-Muyum (Son) explores intergenerational knowledge-sharing within the artist's family. Through working with clay — a natural material drawn from the earth — Zalewski connects to Country and her ancestors, honouring traditional practices while nurturing new ones. She involves her children in her*

*creative practice, encouraging play, storytelling, and the continuation of creative traditions. Recent findings that First Nations peoples had their own ceramic practices, though now largely lost due to colonisation, further inform her work and underscore the importance of cultural preservation.'*

**Sarah Zalewski**, artist statement

Artwork title: *Past - Kumi (Grandmother), Present - Waijung (Mother), Future - Muyum (Son)*, 2023  
Materials: Tamborine Oxenford terracotta, Hillside slip, grasses sustainably collected from Mununjali country (Beaudesert)  
Firing: Oxidation, cone 10  
Dimensions (left to right): 13 x 8.5 (diameter) cm, 19.5 x 9 (diameter) cm, 28.5 x 8.8 (diameter) cm



Sarah Zalewski uses a technique called Sgraffito to decorate her ceramics. This is achieved by coating the clay with a coloured slip or underglaze and then scratching through the surface to reveal the colours below.



Photographs of Sarah Zalewski working in Larissa Warren's studio.

## Sgraffito pinch pots

In this activity, students will create a pinch pot from white coloured clay, coat it with a terracotta or coloured slip and then scratch their design into the pot using the Sgraffito technique to decorate it.



### Materials:

- White clay (air-dry or kiln-fired)
- terracotta or coloured clay slip (air-dry or kiln-fired)
- wooden skewer, pencil or other implements to scratch into the clay

### Task:

1. Knead the clay into a ball
2. While holding the clay in one hand, push the thumb of your dominant hand into the top of the clay ball to make a deep indentation at the opening.
3. Gently pinch the walls of the clay with your thumb and forefinger while rotating the ball of clay in your non-dominant hand. As you pinch the clay, the walls of your pot will start to take shape. Be sure to apply

even pressure so that your pot does not go wonky or have thick and thin spots.

4. Once you have reached your desired size and shape, use a damp sponge to smooth the surface of your pot.
5. Set your pinch pot aside to dry until leather hard.
6. Coat your pot in the terracotta or coloured slip, allowing it to dry slightly.
7. Then, taking a sharpened pencil or wooden skewer, begin to scratch your design onto the pot, revealing the white coloured clay beneath the surface. Try different drawing implements to achieve different thicknesses of line or effects.
8. (Optional) Bisque fire the finished pieces.

## Sgraffito drawing activity (for younger students or in gallery activity)

### Materials:

- Scratch art paper (white)
- wooden stylus, pencil, or other implements to scratch the surface
- pictures of Tamborine Mountain

### Task:

1. Make a drawing of a landscape inspired by images of Tamborine Mountain, by scratching directly onto the special scratch art paper using a sharpened pencil, wooden stylus, or other implement. Your drawing will appear as you remove the black coating on the paper to reveal the white below.
2. Try different drawing implements to achieve different thicknesses of line or effects.
3. Create a display of the finished artworks in class or the gallery.



# earth matters

Tamborine Mountain's unique geology is shaped by the remnants of a collapsed shield volcano, with layers of volcanic rock and sediment revealing millions of years of tectonic and erosional processes. This dynamic history has created diverse landforms, from ancient basalt cliffs to rich, fertile soils that support lush rainforests and diverse ecosystems. Artists in this section explore these natural wonders.



## Pie Bolton

Location: Melbourne, VIC

'For me, it is always about geology. My earliest memories are related closely to the soil, sand and rocks of the many places I have lived, and these associations are reflected in my response to the materials sent to me. It was important for me to enclose my responses to this place in the box in which they arrived. I thought about Tamborine Mountain and the stratigraphy developed over millions of years through volcanic activity and subsequent erosion, transport and deposition of the collapsed shield volcano caldera. I thought about erosion and the geological sorting of grain

sizes and the distances they travel from their source through fluvial and aeolian mechanisms. I thought about stacking and sorting, about rearranging, about old and new landscapes, about human prints on the earth, about weaving stories around the materials, about the different vocabularies flowing around the Mountain. I thought about grids and organisation and nomenclature and labels. Mostly, I thought about my obsession with mountains. They are always on their way to being something else.'

**Pie Bolton**, artist statement

Artwork title: *mountains are always on their way to being something else*, 2023  
Materials: Australia Post Medium Parcel Box, ceramic, plastic, sandwich bag, plastic mesh, string, cardboard, paper, Lanes' Road Ochre, iron oxide, Eva, School and Hillside clays, rock (trachyte), sand, thread, coloured pencil, paint pen  
Dimensions: 13 x 26 x 10.5cm  
Firing: 1220°C, cone 6

View Pie Bolton's [artist book](#):



## Artist Box: A Landscape in Layers (Years 7-10) – making activity

In this activity, students are encouraged to think like an artist, geologist or archaeologist to create an Artist Box, or 3D assemblage, that tells the story of a place through collections, layers, and materials. Each box will hold a personal response to a landscape that is meaningful to the students—real or imagined. It can include found objects, drawings, labels, textures, and written elements.

Encourage students to research other artists who combine art and science, or create assemblages using boxes, such as Joseph Cornell, Janet Laurence, Rosalie Gascoigne, Isabel Davies.



### Materials:

- found natural and man-made objects
- pens, pencils
- paint
- card
- scissors
- string
- small to medium-sized box or container

### Task:

#### 1. Choose a Place

- A mountain, river, beach, park, or street
- A place you've visited or dream of visiting
- An imaginary landscape

#### 2. Gather or Make Materials

- Natural items: small rocks, sand, leaves, twigs, fallen bark, shells (if allowed or appropriate to remove from the environment)
- Found objects: fabric scraps, wire, metal bits (e.g. keys, old nails, washers), paper, beads, ribbon, jars
- Handmade items: photographs, drawings, textures, notes, maps, 3D printed objects, sculpted clay forms, colour swatches
- Labels: Thinking like a geologist or archaeologist, handwrite or print words onto pieces of paper or card to create labels that describe the items. Include details of where the objects were found, the composition of materials, dimensions and estimated age. If thinking like an artist, do you need labels, and if yes, think about the words you may include e.g. poetry, short stories, single words, or do you use visual language such as shapes and colour?

#### 3. Find a Box or Container

- A shoebox, wooden box, recycled container, tackle box, or biscuit tin
- Decorate the exterior and/or interior of your box or leave it plain—your choice

#### 4. Arrange Your Collection

When arranging your collection in your box, consider how the items will be placed to tell a story. This may include creating separate compartments, constructing lift-out trays, grouping items, binding items together, or a combination of these.

If thinking like an artist, geologist or archaeologist, does this change how you present your collection of items? Are your collection of items arranged in a systematic, scientific way, or are they arranged creatively or in an aesthetically pleasing way?

When assembling your collection in your box, consider:

- Layering the items to show the history or changes to your chosen place
- Sorting items by size, texture or meaning
- Colour – How can this be used to guide the viewer's eye or convey meaning about your chosen place?
- Labels – How are these used and positioned to convey information about your chosen place?
- How can the placement or grouping of different items change the narrative or meaning?
- How can erosion, age, or memory be shown visually?

#### 5. Write a Short Statement

Write a short statement of approximately 200 words that tells the story of your Artist Box. When writing this statement, consider:

- What place/location does your Artist Box represent?
- Why did you choose this place? What does it mean to you?
- What kinds of natural processes (like erosion, layering, weathering) happen in this place?
- The special memories or stories the items in your Artist Box may hold, including how they relate to your chosen place.





Photograph courtesy of Larissa Warren.

Collected ceramic materials, rocks, and ash from Tamborine Mountain are sorted on a ceramic tile, ready to be fired in the kiln. The documentation and compartmentalisation of these materials could be achieved in an Artist Box.

### Shield Volcano (years 1-6) – making activity

Download, print, cut out and assemble the A4 paper model from Geoscience Australia's website to create a 3D Shield Volcano. (Instructions are included with the download.) Printing onto a heavier-weight paper, such as 120 gsm A4 paper, will make the finished volcano sturdier.

<https://www.ga.gov.au/bigobj/GA8583.pdf>

Ask the students to research Shield Volcanoes and create an informative poster illustrating a cross-section view of a volcano. In this activity, students will show the internal structure of the volcano and label each part (e.g. magma, base, vent, pipe).





## Jackie Masters

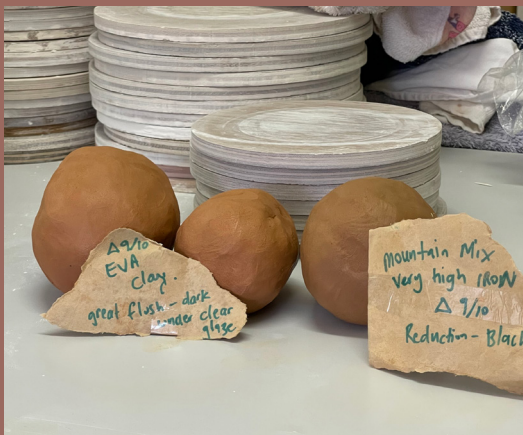
Location: Perth, WA

'The *Shifting Ground* project provided a unique opportunity to explore the character of wild clays from Queensland, allowing me to push their limits and observe their responses to my glazes. As a potter deeply fascinated by materials, I was especially drawn to how these clays revealed their histories through texture, colour, and unpredictability in the firing process.'

The collaboration across regions added a profound sense of connection—not only to the geology of Tamborine Mountain but also to the tradition of potters who have worked with these clays before us. My work includes a vase blending Queensland and Western Australian clays, a symbolic fusion of landscapes, histories, and shared experiences, mirroring the bonds formed through this project.'

**Jackie Masters**, artist statement

Artwork titles: Left to right, *Woodland 1*, *Clays connect*, *Hinterland*, *Woodland 2*, *Strata*, *Rainforest*, 2020-2023  
Materials: Mountain Mix, Hillside slip and white Western Australian Kirup clay, gold, white, matte green, iron matte, black gloss, clear and volcanic glazes  
Firing: Oxidation, cone 10, 1280°C  
Dimensions (left to right): 7.5 x 17 (diameter) cm, 12.2 x 7.3 (diameter) cm, 7.2 x 20 (diameter) cm, 9.2 x 19.5 (diameter) cm, 10.5 x 8 (diameter) cm, 10 x 14 (diameter) cm



Top left: Balls of prepared clay with notes about their material properties, which Jackie received in the mail.  
Top right: East meets West, combining and marbling Tamborine Mountain clays with a local Perth clay.  
Bottom: Jackie's freshly trimmed pots, ready to dry before firing and glazing.  
Photographs courtesy of the artist.

## Artist's Statement Reflection – activity

Imagine you are a contributing artist to the *Shifting Ground* project. Like Jackie Masters, you have created a ceramic piece that reflects your personal connection to land, history, and materials. Your task is to write a short artist's statement (150–250 words) explaining the inspiration behind your work.

You might like to sketch a design of your ceramic piece first to help consolidate your thoughts about colour, shape, pattern, texture and form. Consider:

- Is your design functional, sculptural, abstract or symbolic?
- Would you decorate your design? If yes, would you use imagery, carve or glaze your ceramic piece? What colours would you use?
- How does your design reflect your identity or connection to land, culture, or community?

Share your artist statements with your classmates.





## Yen Yen Lo

Location: Melbourne, VIC

‘When I opened my Tamborine Mountain parcel, it dawned on me that these balls of clay in my hands were thousands of years old. It prompted me to create something in the manner of an artefact, along the lines of totems unearthed from an archaeological dig. I have used the Eagles Close clay to make a Tusked Frog and a Goanna, and the Hillside clay for a pair of oblong Goanna plates. Both animals are residents of Tamborine Mountain and are ground dwellers. Other than a grey and white wash to highlight the incised textures, these are unglazed as I wanted to show the clay in its naked form.’

**Yen Yen Lo**, artist statement

Artwork titles: *Tusked Frog totem*, *Goanna totem*, *Goanna oblong plate 1 & 2*, 2020

Material: Eagles Close and Hillside clays, grey underglaze, sgraffito, red, grey and white wash

Firing: Oxidation, cone 5

Dimensions: *Tusked Frog totem*: 5.5 x 10.5 x 7.6cm, *Goanna totem*: 2 x 26.8 x 4 cm, *Goanna oblong plate 1 & 2*: 1.7 x 17.8 x 4.7cm, 1.5 x 18.2 x 4.3cm







Yen Yen Lo's *Tusked Frog totem* in progress. The clay is wrapped in plastic to keep it damp and workable over time.

Photographs courtesy of the artist.

## Sculpting the Wild: Native Animals in Clay (Years 6-9) – making activity

Students will use hand-building ceramic techniques while also experimenting with texture and surface decoration to create animal sculptures that reflect the distinctive features of native Australian animals and their relationship to the natural environment. Through the process, students will reflect on the cultural and symbolic significance of artefacts and totems, drawing connections between their own work and that of contemporary and traditional artists.



### Materials:

- Terracotta or natural clay (air-dry or kiln-fired)
- Clay tools (pin tools, ribs, loop tools)
- Water containers and sponges
- Slip for joining pieces
- Underglazes or oxide washes (optional)
- Reference images of native ground-dwelling animals (e.g., goannas, frogs, echidnas, wombats, etc.)

### Task:

#### 1. Explore and Observe:

Begin by introducing the students to Yen Yen Lo's clay critters – Tusked Frog and Goanna.

#### 2. Design:

Students are asked to select a native Australian ground-dwelling animal and to sketch their chosen animal in both realistic and stylised/totemic forms.

#### 3. Build:

Using hand-building slab, pinch or coil techniques, students build the body of their animal. Use coils to add body parts. Support small limbs and wrap them in plastic so they don't dry out quicker than the body.

Students are encouraged to emphasise textures using carving/incising patterns and surface detail, reflecting the artist, Yen Yen Lo's, etched decoration style.

#### 4. Finish, dry and fire:

Leave the clay unglazed or apply an oxide wash to highlight textures. Optional: burnishing the clay surface or smoothing parts will create contrast with textured areas.



# a potters journey

The process of creating ceramic artworks takes time, commitment, and patience. In this section, we celebrate the unique skills and artistic personalities each artist brings to their craft.



## Pru Morrison

Location: Brisbane, QLD

'I've enjoyed learning the stories of the innovative and radical women who were digging wild clays on Tamborine Mountain. They were a diverse and motley group of determined women. The persistence and cohesive spunk were admirable and ahead of the standards of the time.

My work illustrates a day in the life of a potter. It is biographical as it frames a day in the life of a potter sitting on a

recliner, going to the toilet and watching Netflix. I've recycled a reference to antiquity in the style of Greek columns. The intent is to raise the commonplace and familiar to the symbolic and monumental heights of the classic ionic column. I have actively placed the hedonistic yet mundane activities of my life on a patriarchal pedestal.'

**Pru Morrison**, artist statement

Artwork title: *A day in the life of a potter*, 2023  
 Material: Stoneware with various Tamborine Mountain clay terra sigillata  
 Firing: Oxidation, 1140°C  
 Dimensions (left to right): 14.5 x 8.5 x 4cm, 18 x 8.5 x 4cm, 16.8 x 8.5 x 4cm



Left: Pru conducted tests with the Tamborine Mountain clay terra sigillata before applying them to her sculptures.

Centre-left and centre-right: Pru sculpted and carved details into her clay forms.

Right: Pru applied the Tamborine Mountain clay terra sigillata once her sculptures had dried.

Photographs courtesy of the artist.

## Years 10-12 Visual Art

### Relevant Units Queensland Visual Art (General Syllabus)

#### Unit 1: Art as Lens

Students explore the concept of ‘art as lens’ to examine personal, contemporary and cultural viewpoints and representations. This task invites students to reflect on their own lived experiences, daily rituals, and home life through a symbolic or satirical lens—perfect for unpacking how art reflects identity and domestic narratives.

#### Unit 2: Art as Code

Students explore how artists use visual language and symbol systems to communicate meaning. By framing everyday objects in a classical or ironic context, students are encouraged to create and interpret layers of meaning using visual codes (like Ionic columns, ornate framing, etc.).

### Domestic Icons – Still Life with a Twist

Pru Morrison’s work is a clever blend of satire and homage. By referencing classical Ionic columns, a symbol of strength, permanence, and patriarchal history, and then placing toilets, recliners, and TVs on top of them, she is:

- Poking fun at what we choose to value or glorify in culture.
- Highlighting the disconnect between what is historically ‘monumental’ and what our actual lives look like.
- Elevating the mundane, self-care, rest, and leisure; especially in a feminist context, where domestic and private spheres have often been undervalued.

There is a playful irreverence here, but also a deeper commentary: why shouldn’t our Netflix binges or toilet breaks be enshrined in terracotta? These are, after all, the intimate realities of being human and in this case, of being a potter, literally surrounded by clay.

*A day in the life of a potter* offers a great jumping-off point for students to consider:

- Whose stories get preserved in art?
- What is worthy of a pedestal?
- Can humour be used to critique history?





## Still Life Making Activity:

Create a still life artwork based on everyday domestic objects (e.g., a kettle, slippers, TV remote, washing basket, coffee cup), but presented in an unexpected or elevated context. This task encourages students to question the boundaries between high art and everyday life.



### Research & Brainstorming:

- Research artists such as eX de Medici, Kate Just, Debra Porch, Lucy Culliton or Pru Morrison, who elevate or parody everyday life.
- Brainstorm personal or household objects that are meaningful or represent daily rituals.

### Photography Session:

- Arrange your objects in dramatic lighting or odd compositions and photograph these from different angles using a mobile phone or tablet device. These images will serve as references for your artwork.

### Design & Sketching:

- Referencing your photographs, or working from life, sketch compositions that mimic traditional still life arrangements but with ironic twists—perhaps framed with classical motifs or using ornate detailing (like gold leaf or borders) to “elevate” a mundane subject.

### Create:

- Select a medium: painting, digital collage, mixed media, or ceramic sculpture.
- Create an artwork using your chosen medium, reflecting on your daily life, materials, or the cultural context that informed the artwork.
- Write a short text explaining your object choice/s, presentation style, and intended message.



## Nicolette Johnson

Location: Brisbane, QLD

‘These pots were an exercise in discovering the limits of wild clay—to see how much it could be manipulated, how far it could be pushed and prodded, and how it could withstand the intensity of a wood-fired kiln. Thrown on the wheel, the pots were then altered from the inside using my fingers to create loose textures. Some pots were thrown very thinly and were fired in an electric kiln before being re-fired in a wood kiln, all of which cracked from the stress of the second firing and bear the lovely scars of kintsugi to show for it.’

**Nicolette Johnson**, artist statement

Artwork title: *Ribbed and Prodded Pots*,  
2022-23  
Material: School clay  
Firing: wood-fired  
Display Dimensions: 22.8 x 55 x 30cm



Nicolette Johnson glazing at a Gold Coast studio, images of her ceramics, and the inside of a wood kiln. Photographs courtesy of the artist.

## Fire + Form: The Transformation of Clay (Years 8-10) – making activity

Witness the unpredictable transformations that occur when natural materials meet heat, learning to embrace both control and chaos in the ceramic process.

**NOTE:** This task requires the use of an electric kiln, wood-fired kiln, and pit firing or barrel firing.

Students will create a set of near-identical small ceramic vessels or forms (such as pinch pots or small thrown bowls) and then subject each to a different firing method and surface treatment. This task emphasises how material, firing technique, and finishing methods dramatically affect the outcome in both form and aesthetic.



### Materials:

Suggested Clays:

- Fenneys BRT (Buff Raku Trachyte)  
Firing range: 1000°C – 1300°C
- Walker Ceramics Raku T (or equivalent grogged raku clay)  
Firing range: ~1000°C – 1300°C
- Keane's White Raku or Stoneware 33  
Firing range: 1000°C – 1280°C

### Firing Methods:

- Electric kiln – Low fire (cone 06) creates smooth, bright, controlled results. Can show vibrant commercial glazes.
- Electric kiln – High fire (cone 10) creates vitrified, strong results. May dull some glaze colours.
- Wood firing – Produces natural ash glazes, flame marks, and intense, unpredictable surface character.
- Raku firing – Produces crackled glazes, metallic sheens, and deep blacks.

- Pit firing or barrel firing (if possible). Adding combustibles like sawdust, leaves, and salts to the firing processes creates smoky, random effects.

### Surface Treatments:

- Glazed (glossy, matte, or textured)
- Unglazed (bisqueware only or raw-fired)
- Oxides or stains
- Burnishing (before low fire): smooth and polish the surface before firing for a soft, satin finish.

### Display the finished artworks:

When the students have completed this making task, ask them to analyse the different outcomes achieved through the different firing processes.

Have each student select one of their completed pots for a curated display of the finished artworks in the classroom.

Invite students from other classes to view the artworks and have members of your class give a guided tour to speak about the artworks and share their learnings.





## Julie Pennington

Location: Canberra, ACT

'I loved the story behind Larissa's research into wild clay, and her enthusiasm to follow in the footsteps of the passionate and dedicated women who found and dug their own clay in the 1940s and generously distributed it to other female potters around the country. It was a lovely thing to receive little packages of clay in the mail dug and prepared by Larissa, and

to experience how the characteristics of the clay impacted my method of making. When this project first started, I was predominantly using porcelain, working with these wild clays inspired me to explore possible clay bodies that could bring colour and textural variation to my work.'

**Julie Pennington**, artist statement

Artwork titles: *Red Retreat Red Ripple* and *Wild Weave*  
Materials: Lucille, Eagles Close, Red Retreat clays  
Firing: Oxidation, cone 6  
Dimensions: (left to right) 10 x 10.5 x 6cm, 14.5 x 12.5 x 7.5cm



These photographs demonstrate how this pot, made from Eagles Close clay, dramatically changed from a bright orange colour to a deep purple after firing.

Photographs courtesy of the artist.

### Visual Analysis Questions:

What techniques do you think Julie Pennington used to create these vessels?

How does the texture of the surface influence your perception of the objects?

How do the forms of the vessels interact with one another in the exhibition space?

How does knowing that the clay was hand-dug and shared among women in the 1940s change how you see the work?

What ideas are conveyed through the handmade texture and uneven surface?

How does this work challenge or align with traditional ideas of ceramic art?

If you could touch Julie Pennington's vessels, what do you imagine they would feel like? How might that tactile experience deepen your appreciation of the skill and time it takes to create such textured surfaces by hand?

How do these artworks invite you to consider the unseen aspects of making, such as the repetition, experimentation, and resilience that go into developing this level of craftsmanship?



## additional resources

### Geology Educational Resources and Activities:

[Weathering, erosion, landforms and regolith - Teacher notes and student activities, Geoscience Australia](#)

[Geological Time Walk activity, Geoscience Australia](#)

[NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory: Make a volcano, with a lesson plan and teacher notes \(grades 5-8\)](#)

[Foaming Slime Volcano – The Kitchen Pantry Scientist](#)

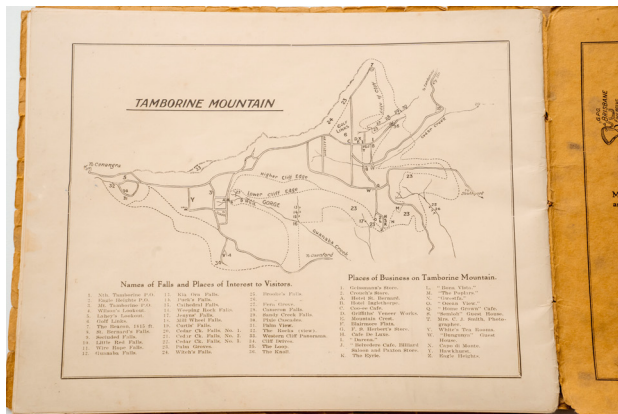
[Little Bins Little Hands: Volcano Science Projects](#)

### Maps:

[Map of Tamborine Mountain c. 1938, Queensland Historical Atlas](#)

[Department of Primary Industries, Moreton Region, Land Resource Map, 1994](#)

[Topographic Maps – search Australian topographical maps to view on screen, download or print for free from Geoscience Australia](#)



Excerpt from *Souvenir and Guide: Tamborine Mountain, Canungra and Beechmont*, c. 1940s. Photograph by Trevor Worden. Courtesy of Tamborine Mountain Heritage Centre, 2025.

### Ceramics Terms and Definitions:

[Ceramic Arts Network](#)

[Walker Ceramics, Definitions of Ceramic Terms](#)



Cedar Creek Falls and Palm Shaded Pool, excerpt from *Souvenir and Guide: Tamborine Mountain, Canungra and Beechmont*, c. 1940s. Photograph by Trevor Worden. Courtesy of Tamborine Mountain Heritage Centre, 2025.

### Tamborine Mountain postcards and historic memorabilia:

[Queensland Places – Postcards, Tamborine Mountain](#)  
[Tamborine Mountain postcard, Mountains Palms Café, c. 1938, Queensland Historical Atlas](#)

[Curtis Falls, Tamborine Mountain, c. 1933, Queensland Historical Atlas](#)

[Wish you were here....Queensland Postcards, State Library of Queensland](#)

### Clay Materials:

Searching your web browser will provide you with a range of suppliers of clay materials. These can be purchased in store or online.

\* There are several organisations and pottery supply stores within Australia that provide firing services if your school does not have access to a kiln. Some organisations, such as [Ceramic Arts Queensland](#), and [NQ Potters Association](#), Townsville, can be contacted to arrange raku and alternative firing workshops for schools. Search 'kiln firing services near me' online to find a local provider.



