Every Minute is Precious

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Massed bowls, July 2021

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Abstract

This project proceeded under the conceptual frames of materiality and the everyday, alongside a methodology I called the project as process. While projects are intended to create change, processes are designed to resist change, so the two operate in unison but with different agendas. A set of rule-bound actions and procedures (the process) can be allowed to proceed potentially indefinitely, all the while generating ideas and observations that can inform the project and move it towards completion.

The process governed the production of wheel-thrown ceramic bowls. My plan was to decide on a “perfect” bowl, then repeat it potentially hundreds of times. As the project progressed it was clear there were several avenues of investigation to explore. I have called the project in its entirety Every Minute is Precious – a name co-opted from a piece of writing exchanged for bowls and which encapsulates the contemporary dilemma of wanting to make the most of time but always being anxious that we are too busy to get everything we want done.

However, the central project that emerged from the methodology was The Exchange. Each bowl took an hour to make, glaze and document, and I exchanged it for an hour of someone’s time. This hour could be measured in several ways, from the participant’s hourly pay rate to goods or services for me or someone else that we agreed. Through The Exchange, and the process of negotiating and agreeing the 65 exchanges undertaken, social and cultural values were elicited, economic considerations were central to the process, and political values emerged from the consideration of time.
Acknowledgements

Thanks to my supervisors, Scott Eady and Ed Hanfling, who worked tirelessly to keep me headed in the right direction. Thanks to all the friends and family who engaged so enthusiastically with the project both as participants and publicists, especially to Pete for the varied wood ashes and the rat photo and to my studio companion Bron for all the promotional work for the project she did when I wasn’t there. Last, but not least, a really big thanks to everyone who took part in The Exchange. As much as the exchanges themselves were important, the conversations we had and the different perspectives participants brought to the project as we negotiated hours for hours were a richly rewarding part of this project.
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Introduction

We acquired a mantel clock recently. Not a battery-driven model, but a vintage one which needed winding by hand. The front glass case pulled opened to expose the winding arbor for the key to slot onto and the hands could be manually turned to the correct time. The body of the clock was made of plain oak, with two side wings that swept up beside and over the top of the clock face and just the hint of a decorative edge along the bottom. A very handsome piece.

When it was wound the clock’s tick-tock was so loud some foam was hastily found to put inside the body to try and dampen the sound, but it was still loud. Fortunately, the clock didn’t chime on the hour, but there wasn’t a room in the house where you could hide from the sound. I expected to become hyper-aware of time passing, with the tick-tocking relentlessly drilling the passing minutes and hours into my consciousness.

The opposite happened. The sound conjured a memory of visiting elderly relatives’ houses where there was always a clock somewhere. It would either be a grandfather clock in the hall or a mantel clock in the sitting room and the steady, sombre tick-tock would echo through the walls and around the rooms verbalising an eerie stillness. Nothing was happening. As a child it meant boredom, but now it evokes a memory of time standing still. How could the sound of a clock stand for nothing?

One of the first exchanges negotiated in this project was a piece of writing on time. Sue and I initially agreed she would write for two hours. “My initial intention was to sneak up on those two hours fully prepared to lay my best words down, as quickly as possible. But it turns out that it’s rattled me, this notion of writing against a stopwatch. It’s been a long time since I’ve written anything quickly,”¹ she says. We renegotiated to six hours of writing, which seemed more reasonable, but time still held its grip. “Every minute is precious, yet I waste three of them on YouTube, trying to find out whether pole vaulters use one or two hands to hold the pole on their dash to the jump. When I see it’s two (of course

it’s two, how else could they lift their bodies up and over?), I’m pissed off at the loss of time.”

At the start of this project my intention was to talk about globalisation, migration, and consumerism. Early on, however, it became clear that these issues were simultaneously too broad in scope and too limiting. Numerous mind maps and flow charts failed to deliver the right clues about where and how to start the project and it became clear that tackling three big issues at once, with an end point already in mind, was problematic. Instead, the specific issues and the fixed outcome were put to one side and a more exploratory approach taken, with the process allowed to take its own course and potentially lead to a conclusion. With this strategy underway, the focus of the project did indeed shift and I began exploring ideas about value, labour, and time. Questions that arose included how an artwork is valued, and what the value of labour is, especially the value of artistic labour versus the value of a factory worker. Time became an unexpectedly central concern, with questions such as how we each measure and value our time, whether we should be trying to manage our leisure and work time to be as productive as possible, and how we place importance on one person’s time versus another’s. As the quote from Sue illustrates, we are often simultaneously trying to find the time to get more done every day, and concerned that we mustn’t waste time, yet seduced by all sorts of trivial and banal distractions like the latest posting on Instagram, or a fruitless search on the internet.

The following three chapters describe how the project developed and what was discovered. Chapter one covers materiality and the everyday, two theoretical frameworks that survived the initial deconstruction of the project and that have remained central to it. Chapter two discusses the methodology of the project, where the initially planned outcome was set aside and a work process established that would allow a broad set of themes to develop and be explored. While the overall project is called Every Minute is Precious, a central part of it became The Exchange project and how this operated is explained along with an examination of its context within contemporary theory. The third and final chapter examines The Exchange in practice and its outcomes. I also look at some of the side-line ideas that came up during the project and how these proceeded.

2 Ibid.
Chapter one – A Framework

Materiality

The studio component of this project rests on a specific group within ceramics – functional domestic objects, with a particular emphasis on the handmade. Although the focus of the project shifted from that initially planned, this studio approach remained. Within this group I have focused on what is arguably the simplest form of all – the bowl – aiming to create the “perfect” bowl and repeat it potentially thousands of times.

An investigation of materiality gives shape to all sorts of ideas and issues inherent in domestic ceramics that are relevant to my project. Clay is very ordinary. Clay deposits are found almost everywhere on earth and humans have been making things out of baked clay for something like 20,000 years – utilitarian items to carry water, cook in and eat from, as well as ritualistic and decorative items. Clay bakes hard and durable in a fire and a lot of what we know about earlier civilisations is because their ceramic items have survived. Colour survives too, as clear and bright as the day it was made unlike paintings that darken and cloud over as the years go by. Many clay pieces have an indexical character in that they reveal the process of their own making. In surviving pieces of Roman pottery, such as a small pitcher, we can see the marks made by the hand of a potter who lived 1600 years ago.

As artist Uli Aigner says: “Pottery is highly concentrated matter. The certainty of being able to make a commodity out of a piece of damp earth that anyone may need anywhere in the world, at any time, connects us with the entire history of human development.”

Figure 1: Roman Pitcher.

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The tactile quality of domestic ceramics is a key part of how we read them. Their functional history means we are used to touching them, feeling the surface, and their weight and balance in our hands. But touch is a sense that is not easily translated into language and one that is rarely mentioned in relation to artworks. Understanding this was part of an investigation into touch that ceramic artist Bonnie Kemske undertook as an artist-researcher, and which led her to understand touch as our most direct, least intellectualized sense. “It is the grounding sense, the sense of tangibility that places us in the world. ... Yet it seems to me that within our western culture a hegemony of vision erodes our tactile sensitivities.”

A search on ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum comes up with 63,942 objects, while ceramic bowls elicits 5,536 examples with ages ranging from 4000BC to the present. But ceramics is not one of those museum curiosities of pre-21st century life. Clay and ceramics are as integral to our lives as ever, whether as a material used by an artist or to mass manufacture everything from toilets to artificial joints, space shuttle tiles, and dinner plates. It is in the domestic context that we most often use ceramics. Potter and writer Edmund de Waal says: “We feel we know ceramics; we handle them every day, we welcome them into our domestic lives and place them at the centre of our rituals. They are often an unremarked constant in the background of our days.” We also know their shapes, colours and glazes; a fine celadon glaze on porcelain reminds us of the sophistication and history of Chinese ceramics, a colourful earthenware plate might be an 18th century piece from Spain, a stoneware plate with a 1960s style geometric decoration is perhaps part of a Crown Lynn dinner set.

Contemporary makers are drawing on this history while layering new meanings and readings into their work. Turner-Prize winning potter Grayson Perry uses classical and instantly recognisable forms such as bottles, jugs, jars, and vases, often with seductive gold or lustre glazes, as his canvas. However, on closer inspection their subject matter is in stark contrast to the appeal of the forms, tackling challenging subjects such as sexuality, abuse, and violence. “My pots

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5 “Ceramics,” V&A, accessed 1 August 2021. [https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?q=ceramics&page=1&page size=15](https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?q=ceramics&page=1&page size=15)
always carry with them the intellectual baggage of the history of ceramics, its archaeology, geography and value system. But up close, the content of my work can confound all that,” he says.7

Artist and academic Clare Twomey turned the Tate Exchange gallery into a ceramic factory making everyday items, such as teapots, jugs, and vases in her 2017 project Factory: The Seen and the Unseen. Drawing on Britain’s industrial past, the project dealt with issues of collective labour, the loss of skills with the

7Grayson Perry, quoted in Grayson Perry, Jacky Klein (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 60.
decline in industrial manufacturing, the value of mass-produced goods versus the art object, and the factories of the future.\(^8\)

In my project I chose to make bowls because these are the simplest and most generic of forms – utilitarian as is, but also representative of all domestic ceramic objects. Bowls suggest several dualities: they hold our food, which is a necessity for survival, but also have a social function with rituals and performance over the making and sharing of food part of most cultures. The ceramic bowl speaks to issues of value and production. It can be mass produced in the thousands on a production line, or handmade in an artist’s studio; it can be cheap or valuable, made by an anonymous factory worker or a well-known artist.\(^9\) Our preference may be for the smooth fineness of white porcelain or the chunky bulk of a roughly made earthenware bowl; the set of perfectly matched bowls or the collection of unique bowls that each have a treasured history. The artistic potential of ceramics is a point made by art curator and writer Justin Paton in his introduction to the 50\(^{th}\) Anniversary publication for Auckland Studio Potters:

> Pottery’s modesty, its relative affordability, its dependency on users, its place in the thick of everyday life, the fact that it’s mostly ignored or discounted by inhabitants of the art world – all of these are not things to be jettisoned when potters move into the white cube context, but rather resources to be drawn on.\(^{10}\)

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\(^9\) Bowls are advertised for $3 at The Warehouse, accessed 7 August 2020. [https://www.thewarehouse.co.nz/p/living-co-bowl-round-small-9cm-white/R2229439.html?q=ceramic%2Bbowls&start=1]. Pamela Wiggins identifies the most expensive ceramic object in: “10 most valuable antiques and collectibles of all times,” last updated 10 February 2019. [https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/most-valuable-antiques-4158524]. She writes that the 900-year-old dish measuring 130.175 mm was from the Northern Song Dynasty and sold for US$37.68 million. “Ru guanyao” wares – known for their intense blue-green glaze and “ice-crackle” pattern – are extremely rare because the kiln in China’s central Henan province had a brief production run of only around two decades.

\(^{10}\) Justin Paton, “The Object I’m thinking of,” in *Playing with fire: Auckland Studio Potters Society turns 50*, Peter Lange and Stuart Newby eds. (Auckland: Centre for New Zealand Art Research and Discovery, 2011), 21. The white cube is a reference to contemporary fine art galleries, but I believe his expression “white cube context” indicates a more general reference to art sites both within and outside the gallery.
The everyday

Words like ordinary, overlooked, and daily use pepper any discussion of domestic ceramics, drawing it into the orbit of the somewhat nebulous conceptual frame of the everyday and everyday life studies.

That the everyday has a place within the contemporary art world is underlined with its inclusion amongst the early volumes in the book series, Documents of Contemporary Art. In his introduction to the 2008 publication, editor Stephen Johnstone says that the everyday has attained the status of global art-world touchstone and notes that contemporary art is saturated with references to the everyday.\(^\text{11}\) But he finds little in the way of a central theme common to these practices, citing a broad range of artistic motivations including a desire to recognise the dignity of ordinary behaviour, the loss of guilt before popular culture, and a desire to engage with the everyday’s transformative potential. The everyday may now be a global art-world touchstone, but that doesn’t make it any easier to pin down or define. Johnstone asks a series of questions regarding artistic practice and the everyday: Why the everyday now? How can it be attended to? Why should we wish to investigate it in the first place? Looking for answers to these questions leads away from the art world to sociology and cultural theory.

Cultural studies academic Ben Highmore writes:

> The investigation of “things” as they are made, used, discarded, refound, loved and loathed is central to everyday life studies. [...] An item of clothing or a piece of crockery can evidence a mode of production relentlessly driven by the desire for profit, while simultaneously being a vehicle for personal memories, unfulfilled longings, or aspirational desire.\(^\text{12}\)

Highmore concedes the everyday and its significance in cultural theory is paradoxical and ambiguous, acknowledging that it is “a vague and problematic phrase”. He identifies a range of dualities that underpin everyday life studies – the particular and the general, resistance and power, feeling and discourse, the micro and the macro\(^\text{13}\) - arguing that the value of studying the everyday is to be

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\(^{13}\) Ibid, 5.
found in paying attention to the overlooked and in finding the strange in the familiar.

The ambiguous and problematic nature of everyday life studies is investigated by sociologist Michael Gardiner. His study of theories of the everyday starts with Dada and Surrealism, and includes Mikhail Bahtkin, Henri Lefebvre, the Situationist International, Agnes Heller, Michel de Certeau and Dorothy Smith. Gardiner writes: “we could say that one of the primary goals of the theorists discussed here is to problematize everyday life, to expose its contradictions and tease out its hidden potentialities.”¹⁴ These theorists take an explicit ethico-political stance, and place considerable stress on the potential for individual and collective agency to transform existing social conditions, he says.¹⁵

In particular, Gardiner cites the French philosopher and Marxist Lefebvre as someone who articulated a valuable and multifaceted critique of everyday life that has continuing importance and relevance.¹⁶ Drawing on the Marxist concept of alienation, Lefebvre believed that, under capitalism and the conditions of modernity, everyday life for working people had become separated from the full breadth of human activities, leaving it fragmented, monotonous and dreary. The only escape was through distractions such as shopping, the cinema, and tourism, but leisure activities had become commodified, and people seduced by consumerism leaving everyday life governed by banality and triviality. However, the contradiction of everyday life meant that, while much of it may be banal, it was only within the everyday world that the possibility for revolution and transformation existed.

In one sense there is nothing more simple and more obvious than everyday life. How do people live? The question may be difficult to answer, but that does not make it any the less clear. In another sense nothing could be more superficial: it is banality, triviality, repetitiveness. And in yet another sense nothing could be more profound. It is existence and the “lived”, revealed as they are before speculative thought has

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¹⁵ Ibid, 9.
transcribed them: what must be changed and what is the hardest of all to change.  

The artistic possibilities for leveraging the ordinary and the everyday to tell a more political or transformative story are illustrated by the following two examples.

The artist collective Public Share has used the ordinariness of domestic ceramic mugs and the morning tea break to draw attention to environmental issues and workers’ rights. In their 2014 project *Allotted Break(s)* they sourced clay during the construction of Auckland’s North-Western motorway and used it to make mugs and small plates. In the first part of the project, they served morning tea on the plates at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki “Engaging Publics” symposium in September that year. The plates were gifted to the symposium participants who chose a plate, shared in the food, and took the plate away.

For the second part they made mugs for a morning tea with 60 motorway construction workers, gifting the mugs to the workers. This event took place on-site in October.  

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workers’ rights and entitlements. This was especially topical given the contentious changes to New Zealand’s “tea break” legislation happening at the time.\textsuperscript{19}

Another project that harnesses the power of materiality alongside the everyday is Martin Creed’s \textit{Work No. 1059}, also known as the \textit{Scotsman Steps} (2011). Creed was commissioned to provide a public art installation as part of the renovation of a dilapidated Category A heritage site in Edinburgh. He chose to re-surface the steps of the old tower with 104 different and contrasting marbles from around the world. In architecture and sculpture marble usually shouts “expensive and exclusive” but by choosing colourful pieces and putting them underfoot, Creed made this artwork friendly and inclusive.

Creed describes the project as a microcosm of the world; stepping on the different marble steps is like walking through the world, the new staircase dramatising Edinburgh’s internationalism and contemporary significance while recognising and respecting its historical importance.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.jpg}
\caption{Martin Creed, Scotsman Steps, 2011.}
\end{figure}


Again, the work is a simple gesture with a powerful social message. As well as providing plenty of fodder for art-world discussion, it engages everyone in the city directly by bringing attention to what is underfoot and the everyday act of walking through the city, and the potential to critically examine his stated message of inclusiveness and the equality of all peoples of the world.

From the start of my project the bowls have been understood as functional, utilitarian objects, and meant for daily use. They are commodities we might buy or be given, and they remind us of the daily task of preparing and consuming food, as well as the social rituals that involve sharing food and celebrating special occasions. While the project’s connection to the stuff of everyday life is clear, the question that needs answering is whether these various factors have the potential to invoke a more complex set of cultural, social, political, or economic values through the conceptual frames of materiality and the everyday. My contention is that this is possible through *The Exchange* project.
Chapter two – Methodology and Context

Project as process

This project began full of certainty; as a proposal with a name, “luck: fate”, broad themes of globalisation, migration, and consumerism, an object to work with in the ceramic bowl, and an outcome planned around an installation of bowls. But the certainty began to unravel soon after starting. Too many ideas needed disentangling and it became clear the fixed parameters needed to be dropped in favour of an open position that would allow a broad set of potential outcomes to be explored.

Two factors that stuck through this initial dismantling were the bowl and the everyday. The bowl had to be “perfect”; it had to be a pleasing shape visually, a satisfying shape to hold and use, and multi-purpose to be as useful as possible. Making it a ceramic bowl ensured that the rich materiality of clay was integral to the project. The everyday was explored in the previous chapter, where I acknowledged its nebulous character. From the earliest stages of the project the bowl seemed to encapsulate the idea of the everyday as something that is both overlooked and meaningful at the same time.

French studies academic Michael Sheringham asks whether we should pay attention to the everyday and, if so, how we should do it. Answering himself in the affirmative, he argues that the everyday will dissolve if scrutinized by way of concrete information such as statistics, properties, or data, that reduces the everyday to an analysis of its content. Instead, he proposes that it can only be made visible by practices that weave contexts together. His approach is centred
on the project as an experimental situation designed to maintain openness and avoid pre-judgement.

To outline a project is not so much to focus on an achievement as to invoke, on the one hand an idea, a mental postulation, and on the other hand a range of actions conducive – in theory – to its realization. A project – a commitment to midterm actions – implies a preoccupation with the domain of practice. ... Embarking on a project means avoiding the limitations of particular frames of understanding: a set of ad hoc, provisional, yet rule-bound actions and procedures provides a neutral framework within which experience can be freely addressed and received.  

Sheringham acknowledges process as part of the mix when he notes that repetition of a sequence of actions is often a central part of the project. “Repetition has its positive aspects as it focuses attention on minute variations. This allies the project to a kind of knowledge linked to process.”

I am dwelling on Sheringham’s idea of the project because it describes a methodology for how to move ahead with my proposal in the uncertain environment established early on. However, the difference between a project and a process is important. By keeping these two strategies conflated, Sheringham’s project is never finished although it may succeed in its everyday task by paying attention to what may be hidden by habit.

The project is a frame, but nothing that comes to fill that frame can be said to complete or realize the project, which always remains open and unfinished. ... We can see at work in the project the interface of alienation and appropriation that is central to thinking about the everyday.

This way of thinking about a project seems to trap it in a kind of Groundhog Day, which is at odds with an understanding of a project as an endeavour undertaken to achieve planned objectives. A process, on the other hand, is a collection of related, structured activities; a repeatable workflow that should always be followed.

Project and process can therefore be understood as separate activities that work together, but with an inherent tension. “As a bottom line, projects are intended

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21 Michael Sheringham, “Configuring the Everyday,” The Everyday, 144.
22 Ibid, 146.
23 Ibid, 147.
24 Project and process are not complicated terms to understand. An internet search of the two terms yields a range of similar and generic definitions.
to create change. In contrast, processes are designed to resist change.”

Understanding how the two operate – in unison, but with different agendas – means the set of rule-bound actions and procedures Sheringham describes (the process) can be allowed to proceed potentially indefinitely, all the while generating ideas and observations that can inform the project and move it towards completion. The repetition, the observation of small differences, the consideration of labour and time, becomes the project as process.

On Kawara’s practice demonstrates the project as process. Various actions repeated over many years drew attention to aspects of his daily existence – waking, walking, meeting people, being alive.

![Figure 8. On Kawara Date paintings, *Four Decades.*](image)

Each work was undertaken according to a set of protocols (the process) developed at the beginning of the work (the project) and strictly adhered to. The date paintings were the longest project, with Kawara painting the day’s date nearly 3,000 times over the course of 47 years. Through the application of a process recording that another day had passed, Kawara’s project to speak of the whole of life was eventually made visible. Daily markers, repetition, and seriality drew attention to time and our everyday existence in a way that few will ever

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replicate and, in doing so, focused attention on the nature of human life in general. Susan Stewart says:

In his work, Kawara is not merely counting or accumulating days and experiences. He has found a means of expressing the vast incommensurability between the scale of a human life and the scale of cosmic time: as he is “counting up” in the system of time, he also is “counting down”; for his days, like the days of all living things are “numbered”. ²⁶

Using this project as process methodology, I proceeded with the initial objective of attempting to make the “perfect” bowl and repeat it, potentially hundreds of times. The following protocols and rules governed the process:

- Making. Each bowl would be thrown on a potter’s wheel and I would make each one. The wheel allows for a reasonably speedy production, unlike hand building, but also ensures each would be unique unlike using a moulding technique such as slip casting.

- Clay. One clay only would be used. I chose a stoneware because it was cheap and versatile.

- Shape. With the criterion behind the perfect bowl in mind, a range of different wheel-thrown shapes were tried and tested on studio visitors in an unscientific survey. There was no outright winner, but a preference for a medium size, and an open form with a foot ring.

- Size. An amount of 1.25kg of clay was chosen after the testing process described.

- Coding system. Each bowl would be numbered sequentially and have a two-word phrase unique to each day’s “production”. If a bowl was not fired (due to an unsuccessful shape) it would be destroyed and the clay recycled, but the abandoned number would not be repeated. The word part of the coding system is examined further below.

- Glaze. Many glaze experiments were conducted before settling on a high-fire wood ash glaze, using ash from our home fires.

• Documentation. The making of each bowl and its code would be recorded in a
diary and the bowl photographed once finished.

After the test works, actual bowl making began on 15 June 2020. Daily production
wasn’t high, averaging five or six bowls with a maximum of 12. The process
required two days from throwing the bowls on the wheel one day and then
turning (finishing) them the following day when they had firmed up but not dried
out completely. Bowls were mostly made consistently from week to week, with a
couple of longer breaks while other work was completed. I paused the bowl
making after a year, by which time I had used 59 of the word phrases and had
reached bowl number 0318, although I had only photographed 276 finished
bowls. I recorded 34 bowls as destroyed so there were eight bowls “missing”,
probably due in part to less than meticulous record keeping, but also a result of
the glazing process which meant the number and words on some bowls were
difficult to read.

Despite using the same glaze recipe, the colours of the finished bowls vary
considerably, ranging from a pale blue to light grey, and with many spotted with
depth purple, green and purply-blue marks.

Figure 9. Bowls showing the range of glaze colours achieved. The rat ash is the
middle bowl.

The glaze is a simple mix of 50 percent soda feldspar, 25 percent silica, and 25
percent wood ash. The wood ash is from our home fires (two wood burners and a
brazier) and the differences in colour are due to the constituents of what has
been burnt – various woods and bits of recycled timber, with potentially metallic
elements like copper that may explain the purple/blues and iron that would lead
to dark green-black marks. One collection of ash included the burnt carcass of a rat and was christened “rat ash” which, curiously, produced a plainer grey glaze than usual. The final glaze firing is to a high temperature in a gas kiln with a reduction atmosphere. This firing appears to push the clay to its limits, so what were initially “perfect” bowls mostly became slightly distorted in the kiln.

Several of these process decisions reference the studio pottery movement of the 1960s and 70s. The bowls are thrown individually on a potter’s wheel, the clay is a basic stoneware clay, and the glaze a high-fire wood ash glaze. These decisions were made for simplicity and cost reasons, but unintentionally evoke the Anglo-Japanese style of studio ceramics popularised by Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada in the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century and embraced with zeal by the studio pottery world including in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{27} In this country the fashions of the day, including the popularity of so-called alternative lifestyles, ensured handmade pottery was in demand, helped along by Government-controlled import restrictions that saw high tariffs imposed on imported domestic ceramics. Local manufacturer Crown Lynn Pottery flourished under these conditions, and they contributed to the bonanza enjoyed by studio pottery. According to ceramic historian Moyra Elliott, robust sales allowed some of those who had considered it a leisure pursuit the opportunity to give up their day jobs and pursue a life-style choice of being a potter.\textsuperscript{28}

A recent world-wide resurgence in interest in studio pottery has in part been attributed to a resistance to our fast-paced technology-driven world.

After years in which studio pottery has seemingly been ignored outside a dwindling community of devotees and less often pursued as a serious profession – not least smothered by a tide of cheaply mass-produced ceramic imports – the field has recently gained a new legion of fans, collectors and makers alike traversing age, geography and demographics. ... In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century landscape, where things move fast and we increasingly live in a virtual world, where everyday items are mass-produced and often disposable, there has been a perceptible movement in retaliation to this life of “haste and waste”.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} A significant difference between the original studio pottery and my bowls is colour. Although I am using the wood ash glazes so popular then, the grey to blue glazes on my work are in marked contrast to the endless browns and black-browns of the 1960s and 1970s ware.

\textsuperscript{28} For background on studio pottery in New Zealand see Moyra Elliott, “Studio Craft and the Everyday,” in Crafting Aotearoa, 256.

\textsuperscript{29} Amber Creswell Bell, Clay: Contemporary Ceramic Artists (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 6.
It could also be argued that some of this resurgence is related to nostalgia for what is perceived as a simpler and safer time in the face of the uncertainty of contemporary life under conditions of climate change and a global pandemic. While acknowledging this possibility, it is not my intention to make nostalgia a theme in this project.

With New Zealand’s import restrictions long gone, and despite this resurgence of interest in studio pottery, there is no chance of handmade items competing on a price basis with the vast quantities of cheap imports now available. Studio potters making a living out of their craft today are not selling the functional or use value of what they are making, but instead the idea of use value along with emotional value such as the perceived authenticity of the handmade and the pleasure of owning unique items. When we grab a mass-produced bowl for our breakfast cereal we don’t generally think of the wages and working conditions of the factory workers who made it, the place where the raw materials were extracted, the distance it has travelled to reach our shores, or what will happen to it when we decide to buy a new dinner set. A handmade bowl, however, while serving the same purpose brings a whole host of associations that take us closer to the person who made it, the time it took to make it, and the conditions of its production. Paton says handmade ceramics help ground us in the real.

Technology encourages the fantasy that we are placeless and disembodied. Ceramic objects remind us that matter matters as never before. We are bound to and reliant on the earth. The products on our shelves are too easily separated from the labour that made them. This object will encourage us to remember the human effort and energy in even the humblest object.30

With my making process established and the number of bowls accumulating it became possible to understand aspects of the project previously only identified in theory, these being repetition, the observation of differences, and the consideration of labour and time. A decision could then be made about the dispersal and/or display method, which led to consideration of relational practices. As befitting an exploratory process, several side-line ideas developed and were explored as the project progressed. These are discussed in chapter three.

Repetition

Repetition is a cornerstone of any process as it is set into action. Dictionary definitions seem to focus on the negative – endless repetition, unnecessary repetition, tedious repetition, let’s avoid a repeat of last year’s fiasco – but repetition has its uses. It is a necessary methodology in a mass production or factory setting and, since the late 1950s, it has been a tactic employed by many artists to highlight the difference between the unique and the mass-produced. Not only is this an opportunity to critique modes of production that exploit workers and feed consumerism, but it calls attention to elitist attitudes in the art world where uniqueness and originality are prized.

American artist Allan McCollum talks of trying to include the logic of each artwork’s opposite, the mass-produced object, in every series of works he makes. This is demonstrated forcefully in the three versions of his Individual Works, made between 1998 and 1992 and which each include more than 10,000 objects in cast and painted plaster. They are displayed tightly placed on an enormous table and at first glance look like machine-made copies of the same thing, but in fact no two shapes are exactly alike. McCollum made rubber moulds from found objects and the pieces were put together using a mathematical formula to ensure no replication. The shapes were hand cast and painted, always in the same colour, by dozens of helpers.

Others of McCollum’s repetitive works more clearly critique art and art’s institutions. His Plaster Surrogates and Surrogate Paintings, a series started in 1982, are generally displayed in large, tightly focused groups on a gallery wall, acting like paintings but confusing the experience of viewing and understanding art because they are not paintings, but plaster casts painted with enamel without a frame or canvas. Like the Individual Works, they are made by a repetitive process that also involves hand work by the artist, muddling the differences between mass production and the handmade. As Trevor Starke says: “The surrogate fulfils the task of painting: it facilitates aesthetic engagement and

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economic exchange, produces discourse, and takes up space on the wall. It does all the things that a painting should do. But it is not a painting. It is a fraud, a fake, a stand-in.” McCollum has described his feelings of alienation when he visits arts institutions of the gallery and museum, and says he aims to work through this alienation by basing the value of his work on a new model, a model based on abundance and availability, not uniqueness and exclusivity. While critiquing the art establishment in these works, he also accepts that he is part of it and with many of his works he makes smaller numbers of the object available for sale. Ironically, because McCollum is famous, his works now sell for large amounts despite their abundance and availability, thus undermining his efforts to devise a new model of art’s value. For example, at an auction in 2019 his work titled *Five Colored Surrogates* (1987) sold for UK£35,000 and one *Perfect Vehicle* (2004) work sold for UK£47,880.

Repetition and multiples are integral to my project. My protocols required me to repeat the same “perfect” bowl potentially 9,999 times. However, while this suggests mass production, each bowl could never be an exact copy of the original

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35 Elger, “Allan McCollum”.

because of the protocols that each is handmade one at a time and coded individually.

What was not anticipated by the protocols were the differences between the finished bowls – the tendency for shapes to distort in the kiln and the variation in colours, not to mention my inability to consistently make the same shape. These differences continually undermined the idea of mass production regardless of how many bowls I made.

**Four-letter words**

The initial title of the project, “luck: fate”, referred to the apparent chance or perhaps destiny of where in the world we are born and can make our home. While this understanding of the project was put on hold at an early stage, consideration of this title led to the idea of using a range of two four-letter-word phrases as part of the coding system. The coding system was intended to play against the idea of mass production by giving each bowl a unique identifier. Once the idea of the word phrases took hold it was hard to shake, with new phrases coming to mind constantly. More than 300 were recorded and using these four-letter words in the coding meant the numbering had to become a four-number limit (9,999).

In their day-to-day usage the four-letter word phrases fit the everyday theme, being familiar phrases – often banal but sometimes more loaded – where meanings change and fluctuate depending on who says what, when they say it, and how it is said.

There are a myriad examples of text-based art and artists who work with text, but one I think is particularly relevant is Mary-Louise Browne and in particular her *transmutation* works. In these, one word of a four-letter word is changed at a time till the end point is reached via a logical succession of words. *Body to Soul* (1996) in the Wellington Botanic Gardens travels from the corporeal (BODY) to the inner psyche (SOUL) via bony, bond, bend, send, seed, seer, sear, soar, and sour. The words are engraved into granite steps, like a memorial, that rise up the hillside and invite the viewer to climb and read. Writer Elizabeth Knox describes these words as proof of the power of plain English. “*(Body to Soul)* is also a further proof of the plain, fertile power of the Anglo-Saxon strand of the English
language, as opposed to the privileged, obfuscating power-talk of the Latin strand. Anglo-Saxon monosyllables are the good hard bones of English.”

Plain Anglo-Saxon words predominate in my list of phrases. Some are words of the moment – fake news and lock down – quite a few belong to the self-improvement industry – self help, feel good, make time, calm down, self care – and some are designed to insult – shit head, dead loss, bull shit, drop kick. There are a number of terms from economics and business – cost plus, done deal, debt free, full time, part time, down size – and plenty of others that have been in common usage for many years – good luck, gold star, cast iron, life long, and grey area. The decision about which one to use on any day has mostly been random, though from time to time my mood dictated a choice such as “nice work” when I felt I deserved a pat on the back. Once assigned, the words assumed a greater significance than initially thought, becoming integral to each bowl. A bowl can’t be “read” without taking account of the words and the words are significant when considering similarities and differences between the bowls. The number of bowls with the same word phrase varied enormously depending on how many were recycled for whatever reason. “Fake news” should have been the code for four bowls, but only one made it through the making process and, despite my

initial optimism, only three coded “nice work” survived with three not up to par and sent for recycling. “Gold star”, on the other hand, ended up on 10 bowls.

Time and labour

Questions about time have exercised the minds of philosophers for millennia. How do we understand time and the passing of time, what is felt time compared to measured time, how do we comprehend cosmic time compared to our own brief lives? Many artists have also sought ways to get to grips with these questions and articulate time in its singularity for each of us as well as its enormity. On Kawara’s project is a good example as discussed above. Roman Opalka is another artist who spent his lifetime on one tightly focused project, painting sequential numbers on canvas from 1965 until his death in 2011. Like Kawara’s date paintings, the numbers and their endlessness ultimately express time, and the seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years that reflect a life.

But time for most of us centres on clocks, calendars, and diaries. Rather than contemplating the big picture of what to do with our limited time on earth, time is now a commodity to be managed daily. We can pass time and we can spend time, but we need to save time and we shouldn’t waste time. Time is money and money talks. There are plenty of time-related four-letter word phrases – part time, full time, time poor, time rich, time zone, time less, free time, and down time. Time management is big business as we search for ways to help us better manage our time, so we get more done and tick more off our bucket lists. Even our leisure time becomes managed and dedicated to self-improvement or for preparing us to be more productive workers by ensuring we are rested and recuperated.38 Time is increasingly about productivity and efficiency and thus closely related to economics and labour. When we clock-in at work our time becomes our employer’s time and must not be wasted. George Woodcock wrote of the tyranny of the clock in 1944.

The clock turns time from a process of nature into a commodity that can be measured and bought and sold like soap or sultanas. And because, without some means of exact time keeping, industrial capitalism could never have developed and could not continue to exploit the workers, the clock represents an element of mechanical tyranny in the lives of modern

38 For an accessible and enlightening exploration of our relationship with time, especially our efforts to manage time, see Oliver Burkeman, Four Thousand Weeks: Time and How to Use it (London: The Bodley Head, 2021).
men more potent than any individual exploiter or than any other machine.  

With regards to my project, each bowl takes a certain amount of time to make and as the process is repeated over and over and the bowls accumulate, the hours of labour involved mount up. Not only is this time very apparent to me as maker, but studio visitors are also immediately conscious of the time involved in making the bowls because they understand the handmade process even if they have no direct experience of it. A pile of mass-produced bowls on the other hand would not generate the same understanding of time spent on making because the factory process is unknown to most people.

Artist and art lecturer Sera Waters uses the term repetitive crafting to describe a mode of production in contemporary art that she argues explores, applies, and shares time. She defines her term as the accumulation of small gestures repeated over long periods of concentrated time, using crafting as a verb and one not necessarily linked to the historical legacies of craft. The essence of her argument is that repetitively crafted art uses time as a raw material in the making process, while the finished work draws attention to the accrual of time and connects with the viewer through a “common ground of experience”.

Time is spent very productively and consciously within repetitive crafting, working not wasting, but also not partaking in the typical workplace exchange of time and labour for economic reward. Time working and “work-life balance”, clearly a more grey area than that current aphorism suggests, are the conceptual, investigative domains of repetitive crafting and importantly, the artists who make in this way consciously “spend” their time in this manner.

It is important to Waters’ argument that repetitive crafting involves the use of common or ordinary materials because this also helps the viewer read the accruement of time in the artwork. “This engagement with “everyday” materials and gestures links the repetitively crafted art discussed here. Each artist plays with and builds upon the unremarkable and commonplace materiality of the

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41 Ibid, 77.
everyday as well as a human monotony of habits, routines, work and tasks,” she says.

My project aligns with this idea of repetitive crafting in several ways. Making pottery bowls on a wheel fits within a crafting oeuvre and the time it takes to make each bowl means it is an inefficient and unsustainable way to produce bowls if thought of from the economic rationalist angle. I am certainly spending time on making the bowls but am not the fastest thrower so even within the limitations of studio production methods I would not do well on an hourly rate. And while my efforts weren’t all in a burst of concentrated activity, the time and labour required to make even only 276 times was clear both to me and to visitors to the studio, and consideration of these became a key part of the project outcome.

The exchange

The question of what to do with the bowls as the final part of the project always needed to be resolved. As the bowls were finished and started accumulating in the studio, this question became increasingly urgent.

Bowls have been made to hold food and drink for thousands of years and, potentially, can be considered the original consumer item. Reflecting the original focus of the project, all the bowls made could be displayed in a gallery on dining tables to allude to consumption and consumerism or on pallets to reference shipping containers and global trade, reinforcing the repetitive nature of the process and suggesting large-scale industrial production. A massed installation of bowls would undoubtedly be impressive.

Clare Twomey harnessed this power in the project, *Manifest: 10,000 hours*, 2015-2017, in which an installation of 10,000 ceramic bowls was created for the Centre of Ceramic Art within the redeveloped York Art Gallery. Twomey was examining the time it took for someone to develop the skills needed to become a master craftsman. Each of the bowls took an hour to make and so represented the 10,000 hours it supposedly takes to become highly skilled at something. As with

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42 Ibid, 76.
43 “Manifest: 10,000 Hours,” York Art Gallery, accessed 20 September 2021, https://www.centreofceramicart.org.uk/exhibition/manifest-10000-hours-clare-twomey/. It is interesting that Twomey came to the same one hour one bowl equation as I did in *The Exchange*. Her process was quite different, however, using slip-casting and volunteer
Factory: The Seen and the Unseen, volunteers were involved in the 10,000 Hours project helping Twomey slip-cast and finish the bowls.

However, despite the drama of a massed installation, I felt that using this strategy in my project would distance the bowls from the idea of the everyday which has underpinned the project.

As an ordinary item in our kitchens the meaning of a bowl is acquired through use. We have our favourites, whether it be the shape, the size, the colour, or the history. And as part of our everyday activity of eating there is an active, even performative, nature to a bowl. I decided on a dispersal method that would engage the “audience” as active participants in the project. The dispersal would start while making continued so there would never be a display of the final, grand total of bowls, only those that remained at the end of the project along with a record of the ones already dispersed. The project was called The Exchange and its key focus was time. Each bowl took approximately one hour to make – from preparing the clay to making, firing, and documenting the final product – so would be exchanged for an hour of someone’s time. The exchanged hour could be measured in all sorts of ways, from someone’s hourly pay rate to the provision of goods or services to me or anyone else. The exchange would be discussed and agreed by both parties and documented by way of a non-binding contract and a labour to make the bowls. Given the project was talking about developing the skill of a master craftsperson, it is arguable that slip-casting doesn’t resonate in the way using a pottery wheel would because there is limited skill required in slip-casting once the initial moulds are made.
record of the final exchanged outcome.\textsuperscript{44} While \textit{The Exchange} could be seen as equivalent to trading or bartering, there were differences. Only one item was available for exchange and its value set by me. The exchange was a matter of negotiating the agreed hour equivalence, which could involve money, rather than trading or bartering over something.

An important point within the exchanges was that there was no negotiation over the time that each participant expected to take for whatever they were exchanging. There was no reference point or external standard for my time making the bowls, and participants could not dispute the hour it took me to make each one. In the same way, I would not dispute the time that they considered appropriate for their exchange.

The exchanges started in February 2021, almost a year since the project began and six months since bowl production started. By the end of that year 68 exchanges for 258 bowls had been negotiated and documented.

Relational practice

The participatory nature of \textit{The Exchange} project puts it within the relational practices camp. This is an increasingly diverse range of artistic practices that look to reformulate the relationship between the artwork, artist, and audience based on social connections. Although there are many earlier examples of participatory

\textsuperscript{44} As a participatory project, \textit{The Exchange} required approval through Otago Polytechnic Research and Ethics Committee and exchanges could not start until approval was received on 29 January 2021.
art, the term relational aesthetics came to define the artistic and curatorial zeitgeist of the late 20th century. Coined by curator Nicolas Bourriaud, his theorizing and use of the term became hugely influential into the early 21st century and continues to provide a point of departure, if not, at times, an intellectual punching bag, for art writers and theorists. Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as an artistic activity based on human interactions and their social context.45 “In other words, it is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through (the “owner’s tour” is akin to the collector’s). It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion.”46 Bourriaud’s position is that relational art is not the revival of any movement or the comeback of any style, but a direct response to the shift from a goods to a service-based economy. Works by the Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija are frequently cited as examples of relational aesthetics. In one of his best-known series, begun with pad thai (1990) at the Paula Allen Gallery in New York, Tiravanija rejected traditional art objects altogether and instead cooked and served food for exhibition visitors. For his second solo exhibition in New York, held at 303 Gallery in 1992, Tiravanija filled the white rooms with stacks of cultural cast-offs, rendering the space into what seemed like a storage facility, demoting the primacy of the revered art object.47

Like a souffle that rises spectacularly, only to collapse into an amorphous mass, Bourriaud’s ideas on relational aesthetics have since been extensively critiqued and expanded, and new terms suggested as the range of practices included becomes increasingly diverse. Participatory art, social practices, interactive art, occupational realism, dialogic art, connective aesthetics have all been used.48 Definitions are porous and criss-cross each other as artists and theorists attempt

46 Ibid, 15.
to pin down the concepts of a new contemporary art. Continuing the trend of earlier participatory art, central concerns being explored are the critique of the market driven model of art as commodity, the tradition of object making and its association with the idea of artist-as-solo-genius, the importance placed on shock value in art, and the siting of art consumption in museums and galleries. Rather than an individual or private art experience, relational practices involve a connected, often group, interaction between artist, action, and audience. Levels of participation vary enormously, from the artist-directed project where volunteers are helpers without influencing the outcome to interaction that is open-ended, guided by discussion and consensus, and provisional. Grant Kester proposes the term dialogical aesthetic, where a consensual and only provisionally binding knowledge is generated through collective interaction, and subjectivity is formed through discourse. The examples he provides are of disparate groups brought together to talk, where the conversation is an active and generative process that goes beyond fixed identities. Process must drive the artistic activity and its form is developed in consultation with the participants, or viewers.

A prominent voice challenging Bourriaud and his relational aesthetics has been art writer and lecturer Claire Bishop. In her book, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012), Bishop acknowledges the surge of artistic interest in participation and collaboration since the early 1990s but declines to even include relational aesthetics in her list of names for this expanded field of practice. One of Bishop’s concerns is the lack of rigour in much relational art, commenting somewhat acidly: “There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond.” She is also concerned at the tendency for relational art projects to ultimately promote the status of curators and for art to become a staged personal experience, rather than a discrete, portable and autonomous work, and the lack of any tension in many such projects. She would like to see more unease and discomfort generated, driven by the theory of democracy as antagonism. She does acknowledge, however, that the critical

49 For example, Twomey’s 10,000 hours project as discussed earlier.
50 Kester, “Conversation Pieces,” 82.
52 Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 69.
response to Bourriaud was the catalyst for a more informed discussion around participatory art. The shifts in relation between the art object, the artist, and the audience, she says, “are often more powerful as ideals than as actualised realities, but they all aim to place pressure on conventional modes of artistic production and consumption under capitalism.”

While wary of the intense discourse surrounding this subject, my preference is to use the term relational practices, which implies both audience participation and a relationship with the artist. There are many relevant examples of relational practice works, which meet Bishop’s criteria for tension between artistic production and consumption to varying degrees.

Eve Armstrong’s ongoing project Trading Table fits within the relational practices’ genre. Trading Table has operated at various sites since 2003 and involves trading objects and services without exchanging any money.

Unlike The Exchange, where the exchange is specified as one bowl for one hour, Armstrong curates a selection of items which she trades for other items, and almost anything is accepted as a trade. “I tend to be interested in trades that are more performative or seemingly ridiculous – those things that do not need to be

immediately useful in a practical sense.” Armstrong describes the *Trading Table* as the social element of a practice concerned with dislocating consumerist aesthetics and systems. At the Auckland Art Fair in 2016 she acknowledged that the art fair was commercial but wanted to encourage trades that benefited artists – pushing people to think what an equivalent trade would be for a creative service like an artwork. This does highlight the concern raised by Claire Bishop in her critique of relational practices. While eschewing consumerism and the capitalist system, *Trading Table* is itself a product that can be produced at events such as biennales, which have become the “spectacle” or, as Bishop puts it, the staged personal experience of contemporary art.

A relational practice work that acknowledges the need for artists to make a living and, at the same time, is concerned with the value structures surrounding contemporary art practice, is Ben Kinmont’s *Sometimes a nicer sculpture is being able to provide a living for your family*. The project, which Kinmont started in 1998 and which is ongoing, involves him running his own bookselling business and is intended to function both as an income-generating occupation and an artistic performance. As such, it avoids the criticism that can be levelled at the art event “product” by operating outside the art world as well as within it. The title could also be seen as indicative of a personal ethic related to consumer culture and value and, as such, a critique of the kind of value-related incomprehensibility epitomised by the sale of a Jeff Koons sculpture and other transactions like it.

However, by operating within the wider economic system, Kinmont takes a pragmatic approach to money and exchanges. *Sometimes a nicer sculpture* is described by Julia Bryan-Wilson as “occupational realism” because it is important that the business functions legitimately rather than as a symbolic gesture.

As a result, he partakes in what I have termed “occupational realism”, in which the realm of waged labor ... and the realm of art ... collapse, becoming indistinct or intentionally inverted. These are performances in

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
which artists enact the normal, obligatory tasks of work under the highly elastic rubric of “art”.  

Kinmont’s other works, also firmly within the relational practice genre, are often proposals or suggestions for things to come, some that he will carry out and some for others to do. Many are premised from a start-point only, with process, documentation, and an archival record being more important than a pre-determined outcome. He describes the archive as an accumulation of materials and traces and a map of the project with a beginning and no end.

In this vein, The Exchange became as much about the documentation of an artwork in process than about a display of an artwork as outcome. The actual relational moments generated by The Exchange are not antagonistic, but do challenge established social and economic models which assign value to objects and labour. The next chapter examines the exchanges in more detail and the outcomes resulting from the project.

APPENDIX

The Contact:

The following appendices are available:

- Appendix A: The Evolution of the Relational Practice
- Appendix B: The Archive and Its Functions

The Archive:

The archive is not a repository of materials and traces, but a map of the project with a beginning and no end. It is a collection of documentation that is a record of process, shaping, and evidence as well as contracts, talks, notes, and ephemera. It is an invitation for future interaction.

In this vein, The Exchange became as much about the documentation of an artwork in process than about a display of an artwork as outcome. The actual relational moments generated by The Exchange are not antagonistic, but do challenge established social and economic models which assign value to objects and labour. The next chapter examines the exchanges in more detail and the outcomes resulting from the project.

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Chapter three – *The Exchange*

*The Exchange* in practice

It has been interesting watching people choose their bowls. They pick them up, run their fingers over the inside and outside reading thickness and detecting bumps and marks made during throwing. Colour is a consideration, as is the shape – some bowls are round, while others are visibly warped from the firing process. Many participants say they prefer the irregular shapes to the more symmetrical. The story behind the glaze used and how it has resulted in such a range of colours intrigues people. The rat story, especially, amuses some people and revolts others to the extent they couldn’t bring themselves to eat from a “rat ash” bowl. Some are influenced by the meaning drawn from the coding of a particular bowl or the personal significance of the number. Bowl choice has frequently proven to be time-consuming as one bowl is pulled off the shelf leading to another, and another. Shape, colour, and codes start playing off each other with priorities and preferences fluctuating as more options are considered.

This process itself has been social and interactive, both between me and the participant, as well as in some instances between the participant and a further person depending on the exchange. Many participants have wanted a set of bowls, either for their family or for larger social gatherings, so many of the bowls seem destined for an active social life at the centre of family meals or dinner parties. Quite a few of the exchanges have involved making food, either for me or for someone else, which seems appropriate.
The exchange has encouraged discussion about the bowls and the ideas behind the project such as the value of labour and time, the search for perfection, and the attraction of handmade things. As well as the social side of the exchanges, there are economic resonances as well. As most exchanges haven’t involved money, they’ve drawn attention to the extent of the non-monetary economy that is alive and well in the community, but that slides under the radar of official measures of economic performance. A few participants mentioned how the project had reminded them of the Green Dollar exchange system. Some participants have found it a challenge to think in terms of an hour equivalent rather than an equivalent dollar value, while others have embraced the idea to the extent of working out exactly the time equivalent of their exchange. Mostly the hour equivalence has been loosely estimated. All participants have been drawn to the concept that time does not have to be used in the most efficient or productive way possible. Many of the exchanges have been with people who aren’t in full-time employment and juggle some paid work with non-paid work, often so they have time for an art practice or other project of interest. The variety of exchanges, and the potential for anyone to make an exchange based on their hourly pay rather than me setting a fixed price, has created a levelling of access so that an exchange is available for anyone, regardless of income.

Twelve of the exchanges have been for voluntary work, three for money, and the rest for me, including six pieces of writing or poetry and one of conversation. Occasionally an exchange has entered a second stage, for example an initial exchange for four hours of wool spinning has generated a further stage whereby the wool was knitted into something I wanted by a second participant as their exchange.

Promotion has been passive as I had a deliberate policy of not proactively seeking exchanges. Word of mouth has been the main promotional tool, but I also set up a website, and posted on Instagram from time to time. An initial plan to set up a stall in the Exchange area south of the Octagon for a week late in the year was

60 There are no recent references online to Green Dollar exchanges. There was an ANZAC Fellowship Report in 1993 by Mark Jackson, “Helping ourselves: New Zealand’s Green Dollar Exchanges,” accessed 15 November 2021, https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/filearea.cgi?LMGT1=ECON-LETS&a=get&f=/nzgreen.txt. Time banking, however, appears to be alive and well with 27 active time banks in New Zealand according to TimeBank Aotearoa New Zealand’s website, accessed 15 November 2021, https://timeexchange.co.nz/timebanks.
not carried out. Exchanges had been underway since early February 2021 and by the end of the year I felt I had enough material to make the project worthwhile and the number of bowls had diminished to the point where a wider distribution would not have worked well.

Although the self-selected nature of participants could be said to limit the scope of the project, thinking about who hasn’t wanted to be part of it is also instructive. A great deal more people have heard about the project than the number who have wanted to participate. Some of them will be people who don’t want bowls, or who can’t think of an appropriate exchange, but some of them will be people who don’t like the idea of such an open exchange, and prefer the usual process of shopping, choosing, and paying the fixed price.

Key themes

Value, labour, and time are themes that weave in and through this project. They have been looked at in depth in the previous chapter, but I am returning to them briefly as part of this discussion over outcomes. Firstly, however, are two projects that don’t sit in any one category, but which show ways of tackling these themes from diverse starting points.

Uli Aigner’s stated aim for her Eine million project (2014 and ongoing) is to make one million porcelain items before she dies based on a scheduled weekly output. Each item is thrown on a pottery wheel and separately numbered and recorded, then its location as it is dispersed around the world tracked and visible via google
maps. By May 2021 she had made more than 6,000 items, all household eating utensils and generally small pieces with bowl-like shapes, which she sells through her website and through galleries. Her website shows the distribution and location of each vessel. She poses a range of questions elicited by her Eine million project:

What does it mean to produce “something” and where does what we produce go? Art production versus production of consumer goods? What forms of payment are there today? Who pays whom for what? What is value, who defines it and who pays how much for one and the same thing? What exactly is paid? Ideal values or values in use, material values? What is worth more where and why?

The ambitious scale of Aigner’s project, whether eventually realised or not, blurs the lines between art production and mass production, and between artist and anonymous labourer. And as the project continues from year to year, the daily activity will eventually become absorbed by the scale of the project, generating new meanings, in much the same way as On Kawara’s date paintings.

An imaginative and compelling project that tackled these issues, as well as the issues of globalisation, migration, and consumerism that got put aside in the beginning of this project, was Judi Werthein’s 2005 Brinco project. She designed a shoe with many useful features for people attempting to cross the border from Mexico to the United States. One thousand pairs of the shoes were made in China for US$17 and Werthein gave away 500 pairs of shoes to prospective migrants on the Mexican side of the border. The other 500 pairs went to an up-market sneaker store in San Diego, on the US side of the border, where they were sold for US$200 with proceeds helping support the project.

The shoes were made in China, a country renowned for its factories exploiting cheap labour and adverse working conditions to make consumer goods for Western nations. Some of the shoes were then distributed in Mexico, where there is a similar exploitation of labour. Brinco highlighted the inconsistencies behind the US-Mexican border, where goods can cross with ease, but people cannot. Brinco also shows value can be created out of nothing except design and

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61 Aigner, “Eine million.”
62 Ibid.
branding. The shoes were cheap to make, but by making them desirable, Werthein was able to tap into the consumer culture of North America and sell them through an up-market boutique as the end action of the project.

*Brinco*, which means jump in Spanish, was highly visible and generated a significant amount of media coverage. Rather than confronting the economic issues around exploitation of labour and the social issues of the plight of migrants, however, the media focused on the politically driven outrage coming from the northern side of the border, accusing Werthein of aiding and abetting illegal migrant activity.

**Value**

Our economic system of market capitalism means we are used to “value” being measured by price, although this can be a very fluid and arbitrary position depending on our location, as the *Brinco* project shows. Piles of ceramic plates and bowls in a New Zealand Warehouse store should make us wonder about value compared to price. In price they range from $1 to $4 and have been made in factories in China. The price was probably set on a unit cost calculation plus a mark-up. The price of shipping to New Zealand had to be included, and a mark-up for the seller as well as the maker. At this price one can presume that the people extracting the necessary raw materials, and those working in the factories making the items were not paid huge wages and quite likely did not enjoy good working conditions or job security.
The Exchange is not an aggressive challenge to our economic system, more an acknowledgement that value exists in all sorts of ways rather than just a dollar-for-dollar equation. Instead of the price of a bowl being set based on a conventional business formula, it has a monetary equivalent based on the participant’s hourly rate, or a non-monetary equivalent based on an hour of their time doing something other than earning money. This creates a levelling of access to the project whereby participants can frame their own idea of value.

Labour

The repetitive aspect of my project was intended to highlight mass production, and in particular issues relating to skilled versus unskilled labour, “cheap” factory labour, and anonymous workers on production lines versus artists working in a studio environment.

While these issues still have relevance, the project seems determined to resist a reading of mass production. Any attempt to make the same bowl over and over has been thwarted by the range of colours obtained and the way the shape has frequently distorted in the firing process. The coding system was intended to be the only identifying difference between bowls, asserting the uniqueness of each one in the face of mass production, but instead only highlights the differences.

My skill set, while extending beyond that of an untrained assembly line worker, has not become so fluent that I can turn out bowl after bowl looking the same. Differences between skilled and unskilled labour and artist versus factory worker are not as clear cut as might have been imagined.

Time

As mentioned, time has become an unexpected focus of this project. It provides a link between the framework of the everyday and how The Exchange has worked in practice. The everyday is essentially our time and how it passes on a day-by-day basis. Lefebvre identified the contradiction in the everyday, that what we each do with our 24 hours is frequently banal and trivial, but despite that it is where the potential for transformation exists – a bottom-up approach to social and political change. Oliver Burkeman, in his book on time and how to use it, identifies the problem of “the culturally celebrated” goal of individual time sovereignty where we strive to be free to set our own schedules and free from other people’s
intrusions into our lives. But the result is that we live less and less in the same time “grooves” as each other.

Free to pursue our own entirely personal schedules, yet still yoked to our jobs, we’ve constructed lives that can’t be made to mesh. All this comes with political implications, too, because grassroots politics – the world of meetings, rallies, protests and canvassing – are among the most important coordinated activities that a desynchronised population finds it difficult to get round to doing. The result is a vacuum of collective action, which gets filled by autocratic leaders, who thrive on the support of people who are otherwise disconnected – alienated from one another, stuck at home on the couch, a captive audience for televised propaganda.  

Burkeman believes that leisure time also needs to be less focused on productive goals – instead dedicated to pursuing activities that are enjoyable in the present moment; things like going for a walk, listening to music, spending the evening talking with friends, or spending time on a hobby. The only reason for doing them is their inherent pleasure or value.

All of this is Lefebvre’s argument from a different angle. From this perspective, The Exchange can be seen to have a political value in that it deliberately changes the dynamic of productivity and its connection to the time spent doing something. The project places no importance on being as productive and efficient as possible, leaving both parties in the exchange able to use our time consciously but not in the usual economic mode of maximum effort for monetary reward.

Diversions and new ideas

Projects viewed from their end point tend to look slicker and more tightly managed than they were, and that they’ve followed a direct, linear path when quite often they haven’t. It is easy to leave out the diversions and new ideas investigated along the way and the circling back and around some ideas that are frequently outcomes of a creative process. This project was no exception, generating several side-line ideas.

As the process of making got underway, the word phrases started to take on a life of their own and became the basis for two sets of spin-off works. Each day’s production has the same word phrase stamped into the bowls as part of the coding. In a reverse of the stamping-in process, some of the phrases lent

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64 Burkeman, “Four thousand weeks,” 200.
themselves for making into word blocks with a range of glazes – a kind of stamping-out. As well as drawing attention to the word phrase, these blocks allowed for glaze experimentation as they did not have to be food safe. The second set of work was done at Otakau Print at the University of Otago, where I have used the phrases in a series of letterpress works. These letterpress works and the word blocks provide an extension to the project that allows for a playful approach to making.

Some of the writing pieces also lent themselves to the letterpress work, such as the essay on time mentioned in the introduction. Sections of writing and some of the poetry have been turned into art works via the letterpress process and a copy gifted back to the participant.

A further idea, borrowed from Kawara, was to collect a newspaper headline for each day while the project proceeded. This had mixed results, with good headlines hard to fine, and was abandoned at the end of the first six months. However, after a review a year later I made some wall works in clay, glazed black, with some of these.

One of the last exchanges was for two bowls in exchange for time collecting and delivering bone ash. The ash itself was produced from the cremating of test animals at the Invermay Research Centre. Bone ash is an ingredient in some glazes, particularly unusual ones such as crater and foam glazes, and the unexpected acquisition of the ash led to a new line of glaze experiments.
While not essential to *The Exchange*, these diversions have proved fruitful and enjoyable, throwing up new ways of expressing some of the ideas alongside ways of taking some exchanges further than the initial negotiated contract.
Conclusion

The question at the beginning of the project was whether handmade ceramic bowls, as the stuff of everyday life, had the potential to be used in a way that would invoke a more complex set of cultural, social, political, or economic values through the conceptual frame of the everyday.

My answer is yes for several reasons, discussed in the previous chapters, and summarised here.

The process of negotiating and agreeing the exchanges elicited interaction and discussion between me and participants that had social and cultural value. Discussion has been about the ideas behind the project such as the value of labour and time, the search for perfection, and the attraction of handmade things. Feedback from participants has often mentioned that the bowls are in regular use. One participant said her teenagers were more engaged in family meals when the bowls were used.

Economic values were to the fore in the project. While not so much anti-capitalist as more pragmatically resigned to the inevitability of capitalism, the project drew attention to the non-monetary side of the economy that is generally ignored in mainstream economic measures. There was a strong element of self-determination in the way the exchanges were “valued”, with both parties setting their own hour equivalent that was unrelated to any mainstream measures of efficiency and productivity. It was also unrelated to the usual hierarchical nature of hourly rates that feeds the impression that people on higher rates of pay have more value or worth to society than those on lower rates. By eliminating the fixed price on the bowls, access was equal for all and not dependent on income or perceived status.

The political value in the project emerged from the consideration of time. The decoupling of time from the usual drive for doing more with less means a broader perspective can be taken on how we use time, opening more possibilities of seeing time as available for social and collective activities.

The final measure of the project is in the success of the methodology itself – the project as process. This was theorized at the beginning, but only proven once the project was well underway. Not only did it generate The Exchange project itself,
but also the various other lines of inquiry. These could be seen as shorter discrete actions, or alternatively may lead to subsequent projects.
Image credits


Figure 2. Grayson Perry, Me wanking off, 1996. Glazed earthenware, in 2 parts. 78cm x 39cm. Source. Accessed 24 Nov. 21. https://www.phillips.com/detail/grayson-perry/UK010121/19


Figure 6. Luck Fate coding test. Studio, 5 August 2020.

Figure 7. Perfect bowls. Studio, 23 August 2020.


Figure 9. Range of colours. Rat ash in centre. Studio, 8 April 2021.


Figure 13. Two examples of exchange contracts. From project folder.


Figure 16. Sharon’s hats. Studio. Exchange #32

Figure 17. Mike’s wood. Studio. Exchange #47

Figure 18. Linda’s deli jars. Studio. Exchange #9


Figure 21. Studio. *Rock Hard*. Stoneware, H 17.5cm x W 6cm x D 17.5cm.

Figure 22. Studio. *Dead Head*. Ink on paper, 34cm x 25cm. 2021.
Bibliography


Documentation of studio project

Studio project – throwing bowls.

Studio project – turning bowls.
Daily diary. Record of number of bowls thrown, turned, and coded. For the first six months a newspaper headline for each day was kept.

Each two four-letter word phrase was marked off with the date used.
Bisqued (first firing) bowls ready for glazing.

"HOME FIRE 0201".
Glaze test bowls.

Studio image. Finished bowls accumulating.
Exchange. Wool spun by Locke in exchange for four bowls, and babies hat knitted with the wool by Claire in exchange for four bowls.

Exchange documentation. Each exchange was marked off as bowls were selected.
EVERY MINUTE IS PRECIOUS
yet I waste three of them on Youtube, trying to find out whether pole vaulters use one or two hands to hold the pole on their dash to the jump. When I see it’s two (of course it’s two, how else could they lift their bodies up and over?), I’m pissed off at the loss of time.

Letterpress work using quote from Sue O’s writing on time.

“TIME POOR”. Word block with accidental addition of a fellow student’s work that fell over during firing.
Experiments with newspaper headlines cut out of clay slabs.

Experiments with quotes from Sue W’s writing in response to her bowls.
Appendix 1 – Reflections on the exchanges

Writers called Sue

The first two exchanges were both friends, both called Sue and both writers. It wasn’t surprising that friends were first to take part because I’d been talking to people about the project, but, I wonder, can anything be deduced from the first two being writers called Sue? I’ll call them Sue W and Sue O. Sue W pondered my collection of bowls for ages, finally settling on four of the same colour but with different words – HARD TIME, EASY LIFE, LOOK HERE, and FREE WILL. In return I received four short prose pieces under each heading. She described the one called LOOK HERE as like looking into a telescope and seeing “little red suns and planets and freckling asteroids advancing into my face from the bottomless fathomless depths of the bowl”.

Writing is not something that is easy to measure by the hour. It’s quite likely that both Sues spent more than their allocated time on the works, but it’s hard to pin it down exactly.

Sue O nominated two hours initially writing about time, but the work extended (as I thought it would) so we renegotiated for four more hours. I chose the first two bowls and sent them to Wellington, but one broke in transit so I sent a replacement. Then she was in Dunedin a few weeks later so could choose the remaining bowls herself and picked two each of two different colours. In return I received a 2000-word essay on time and the nature of our nearly 40-year friendship.

There was a post-script to this exchange. Sue was about to throw out the broken pieces of bowl when her husband came home and decided they would make a good renovation project – a small creative interlude to his demanding day job. So BARE FACT 0194 has been given a new, and somewhat more colourful, lease of life.

Wool spinning

There is a certain presumption about time and making; that it is good or an achievement to make something in the very least time possible. Locke spins wool, but with a drop spindle rather than the more usual wheel. He wanted four bowls
and in return I will get four hours of spun wool. As he says, it won’t be a lot of wool because the drop spindle isn’t a fast process. But this doesn’t matter – my time to make a bowl is not the same as someone else’s time to make a bowl. Four hours of Locke spinning doesn’t have to be measured against how much wool someone else could spin in four hours.

Three travellers

Will, Steffen and Anna are three friends who were travelling around the south and heard about the project when in Dunedin. As it turned out, Will and Steffen had been looking for bowls but couldn’t find any they liked. Will is a writer and poet so we agreed a three-hour poem (about anything) in exchange for three bowls. One of them had to be from the FREE WILL series. Steffen is an artist and really enjoys collage, so he is spending three hours on a collage for his three bowls. Anna couldn’t think of anything to exchange. She is a mediator, but I didn’t need any mediation. We agreed to exchange one bowl for an hour making a meal for someone in need. Food seems a natural fit with the bowls.

Deli delights

Linda used to own a deli and she offered to make a selection of preserves. I was particularly keen on some chilli jam and kimchi but said just to make things and give me six hours’ worth. In the end I got a box of jars that included piccalilli and apple butter as well. Apple butter doesn’t actually have butter in it, but the texture is so thick and delicious it is a bit like butter. I’ve forgotten what you do with it, but I’ll ask Google. It’s slightly alarming how automatic it is to just turn to google when we want to know something.

The neighbour

I was out walking the dog and ran into the neighbour walking her dog. She asked how the Masters was going so I told her about The Exchange and invited her to visit the studio and see the bowls and talk some more about the project. The idea appealed and she went away to think of something to do for an exchange.

Her suggestion was to bake bread gifts for people in the community who need a boost. She is a member of the local Buy Nothing community which is an international project that encourages the giving of things and services freely. Through the community facebook page she asked for suggestions for recipients
and was amazed at the response. She wanted two bowls so baked two batches of
 cinnamon scrolls that became gifts for four people. The idea was such a success
 that she made another batch of scrolls to give away. A few made it to our place,
 and they were delicious.

When she visited the studio she brought along some colleagues who were keen to
 hear more about the project and one has since followed up with an exchange.

Kakabeak

Ruth suggested exchanging eight small kakabeak seedlings and a jar of nectarine
 chutney for two bowls. She has grown the kakabeak/ngutu kaka from seed
collected in her own garden and the nectarines are from Central Otago. She
delivered these and chose her bowls when I was out so, somehow, she managed
to choose one bowl that wasn’t part of the coded series. Where she found it was
a mystery but has made me think maybe I need to be open to exchanging “dud”
bowls because sometimes these are what people like even if I’ve rejected them.
Ruth left 15 kakabeak seedlings and the most enormous jar of chutney I’ve ever
seen. I think I’ll have to re-bottle it because otherwise we’ll never get through it
once it’s open. I’ve re-potted the seedlings and hoping they will grow at our
holiday place in Central despite the fact the DOC website only lists North Island
places where they are found. It turns out they are critically endangered in the
wild, although widespread in cultivation. A friend who knows lots about trees
thinks they will be fine in Central.

By November I have managed to keep most of them alive and some are looking
very well established. They’ve been re-potted once and I’ve got my fingers
crossed that they will survive to maturity.

Community gardening

We were talking about the bowls and how some of them have dark red spots that
look like black currants. I mentioned that black currants were some of my
favourite fruit things and Becky suggested some black currant and gooseberry ice-
cream sauce. Gooseberries are also on my list of favourite fruit things, so I said,
yum, yes please. That was one hour and she wanted two bowls. We talked a while
about what else we could exchange, then she suggested an hour’s weeding at a
local community garden that had got a bit out of hand.
Horse ride

My studio colleague is doing her masters about toys, fairy tales and horses. She has two horses – one who is called Pepper and is 34, which is really old for a horse, and another called Forest. I think both were rescue horses. We talked around a few ideas for an exchange and eventually agreed that she would collect horse poo for garden fertiliser and deliver it. She only wanted one bowl so that could be an hour’s worth. Then I thought it would be fun to have a horse ride as well so that is now included. It’ll be on Forest because 34 is too old to be giving people rides.

Robbo & Rose

These two negotiated four hours, two each. Robbo was going to give me a legal opinion on the contract and Rose do two hours of volunteer work. But they live in Auckland so for three months Rose hasn’t been able to get out to do this because of lockdown. I get the feeling it’s been a stressful time, so I will wait and see what might eventuate from this exchange.

Massage Therapy

Kimberly is a massage therapist and it’s a real treat to have a massage for an hour. Some people like to lie quietly when they are getting a massage, but Kimberly and I always seem to have a lot to catch up on, so we chat for most of the hour. Of course, one of the things we chat about is my master’s project and she was enthusiastic about the idea of the exchange. She wanted two bowls and suggested we exchange the bowls for two massages. What a great idea. Perhaps I can persuade her she needs more bowls in case they have friends over for dinner.

Her rooms are on the second floor of an old building that has been renovated and is now home to lots of different businesses. The women’s loos on her floor have four cubicles, which are all a bit small. It’s just a wee bit of a squeeze to get in, turn around, put your bag down, sit down … And it’s not as though there’s a huge demand for the loos as I’ve never seen anyone else in there. Years ago, when I lived in London, my boyfriend of the time was working for a builder and from time to time they had these jobs building peep shows in Soho. The objective was to get as many cubicles as possible into each site and it was always a fast turnaround – build one somewhere then repeat somewhere else after the cops had found the
first one and closed it down. One weekend I went with him to work at the latest peep show locale because I’d never seen one and was curious. I went into one cubicle and couldn’t even get the door shut behind me the space was so tight. There were a few rolled eyes and groans when I pointed this out, but they knew they’d have to rebuild. Men at peep shows are going to want a bit of privacy.

Social media

These days every artist seems to need some social media presence – maybe an Instagram account, a facebook page, or a website. Twitter anyone? There are probably other options out there that I don’t even know about. I have an Instagram account and have been posting pictures of bowls and related things for the last year, but with no explanation or those lists of hashtags. By November I had 142 followers, which isn’t bad for zero promotion. But to do the exchange I needed a website. Maybe I could have set this up on my own, but it was easier to ask a friend who knows a lot about these things if he could help. He could, so we agreed three hours of set-up and on-going advice on a website. All I had to do was write the words and load the pictures. Check out exchange.arts.nz.

Sara

Sara is a networker and she’s always on her computer doing social media and buying or selling stuff on Trademe. It’s sort of her job, though information management is a better title. She didn’t know what to suggest for an exchange but was having a phase making focaccia bread so in the end we agreed one loaf of bread for one bowl. The bread was alright, but a better idea could have been to have her spend some time promoting The Exchange. We could still do this for another bowl although she has about as much crockery as anyone would ever want because she collects Crown Lynn.

A glamourous lunch

Marion suggested spending an hour making a glamourous lunch for me and two friends in exchange for a bowl. We debated dressing up but, in the end, just wore normal Wednesday lunch time clothes. It was a delicious lunch though, with dessert, and a lot of laughs.
Bekah

Ages ago I bought this top that I loved and wore heaps. It should have been thrown out by now because it’s got extremely shabby and has pilled, but I’ve kept it because I like it. The woman who made it was Bekah who does fashion design amongst other creative things. She’s going to make me another version of the top in exchange for four bowls. I’ll be able to throw the old one out when I get the replacement.

Kiri

Exchanges can sometimes take a while to negotiate. Others not so much. One day Kiri walked into the studio with two of her one-hour life drawing studies and asked if I’d consider them for an exchange. They were exquisite so I readily agreed, and she chose two bowls. She said she’d been trying to think of something to exchange for ages. Later she came back to the studio to say how much she loved using the bowls.

Bread and volunteering

Janine lives in one of New Zealand’s smallest settlements and was in Dunedin for a week-long course. She wanted to do an exchange but couldn’t think of a good suggestion. Then she had the idea that she could be the “intermediary” and organise an exchange with her son, who is a baker and makes delicious sourdough bread and pastries. She would exchange negotiation time for two bowls and Taine would exchange two bowls for some bread and pastries. This idea had a lot of appeal. In the end she felt that her time negotiating the deal wasn’t worth two hours of time, so we changed it to her doing two hours’ voluntary work when she got back home. She is an architect and drew up a house plan for a young man whose dream is to build his own simple but comfortable barn. The bread and pastries that Taine delivered were delicious.

Gardening and writing

People’s professional lives often don’t translate easily into an hour for an hour exchange. Grace is a GP and it wouldn’t really be ethical for her to offer time doing a medical consultation. As it happens, she is also a keen gardener and spends a lot of time growing seedlings and cuttings to sell as a fundraiser for the
local school. We agreed a one-hour garden consultation and three hours of preparing and planting the chosen plants. She probably spent another hour choosing bowls. There were her four bowls along with the four that I was exchanging for writing with her husband. There is a lot to take into consideration when choosing eight bowls. Henry has proofread my website and made a few suggestions, given me a painting he said was equivalent to one hour, plus he has written a piece on the search for perfection. He has introduced me to a new word, asymptote, which means a straight line that continually approaches a curve but never reaches it. This is a good metaphor for my striving to make the perfect bowl.

Georgina

While Grace was choosing bowls, Georgina came into the studio to discuss her exchange. They know each other, but it was sheer coincidence they were there together. As well as being a part-time gardener, Georgina is a textile artist and makes weavings and other materials. Grace nodded at me enthusiastically when Georgina suggested a piece of weaving, so I agreed to that. I said it could be anything though I was thinking some kind of wall hanging would be good.

The flatmate

Taine’s flatmate saw the two bowls he’d chosen and wanted to do an exchange of her own. She’s planning a tiny house so every item in it must be chosen with care. Sasha is in her second year at art school and thought about a painting or some of the wooden plates she makes as an exchange, but artwork poses a problem because it can be very hard to quantify how much time a particular piece took. The simplest was Kiri because the drawings were from one-hour poses. Sasha is also keen on photography and has an old film SLR camera. We agreed she would take some photos of me throwing bowls and then organise for one or two to be printed.

Jane M

We agreed on some cooking and some haiku. Jane made a delicious pumpkin soup with her home-grown pumpkins, and some very tasty muesli bars. The haiku included the words from the three bowls she chose – Down Cast, Your Lane, and Food Bowl. Your lane was an expression I first heard not so long ago, meaning to
stick to your knitting, but Jane took it to mean “place”. Being super well-organised and efficient, Jane was back to the studio with her exchange goods within a week. There were seven haiku and down cast made them all a little sad. One read:

Your lane leads you on  
Past down-cast people eating  
From communal food bowl

Migrating

I was explaining the project to a group of the Diploma in Ceramics students. Explaining about the perfect bowl and what it stood for, I said a bowl would be the thing that all migrants need to carry with them so they can eat and drink. This resonated with Eva, who came to New Zealand from China eight years’ ago. Her first job was as a chef making breakfasts in a fast turn-around café where she didn’t get a chance to stop and have her own breakfast until 10am. At that time the ritual of getting her bowl and making her muesli was part and parcel of her pleasure in stopping for a short rest.

A day in the life of a bowl

So far, recipe developer is the most unusual occupation I’ve come across in the project. Hayley is a trained cook, writes recipes for cookbooks and magazines, and is a food stylist. She suggested a project called “A Day in the life of a bowl”, where she would make recipes for bowl food for each meal and then photograph it. Great idea. We’ve exchanged six bowls for six hours of bowl life. When the recipes came back they looked delicious: Coconut and almond overnight oats for breakfast, nacho bowls with fresh summer salsa for lunch, and salmon udon noodle bowls for dinner. Hayley said for this project she wanted to highlight the purpose of the bowl in the preparation and method – not just as a serving device, but also as a practical and essential kitchen item.

$1 an hour

During a studio crit session, Dillon came up with the idea that he could say his hourly rate was $1 and I’d have to exchange a bowl for that. There was a whole lot of complicated reasoning behind his argument, which also somehow involved him going to the Warehouse and buying a cheap bowl to exchange it for one of
my bowls plus me giving him a one-hour lesson in throwing a bowl on the pottery wheel. At the time I was thoroughly irritated by all these arguments, though tried carefully not to show it, and thought he was being a real smart-arse. There was no way I was exchanging a bowl for $1. Later Ed challenged me on this and asked why it was reasonable to exchange a bowl for a higher hourly rate, but not for $1. It was a good point and got me thinking that some of my irritation was around the fact that $1 an hour was blatantly disrespectful of my time making the bowls. Which led me to wonder what it must be like being a factory worker somewhere overseas getting paid a pittance for my labour.

Later I suggested to Dillon that we should go ahead with the $1 exchange. He agreed, though neither of us could remember what the original reasoning was. When he came over to choose a bowl, he brought an IOU note because he couldn’t find a $1 coin. The IOU note was on a scrap of paper where he’d done a rubbing from an old piece of machinery he was doing a project about. I like the IOU note better than a coin so I’m going to keep it and never cash it in. It also means Dillon has an obligation to me for as long as I keep the note. He now says he’s going to make me a $1 coin, which will be interesting to see although I’m still going to keep the IOU note. Dillon might become famous and then the note and the coin will be worth a lot whereas an actual $1 coin is likely to eventually go the way of the 10c coin and devalues so much that it is worthless.

Peter

In another of those strange parallels, Peter is also a GP who likes gardening. We agreed four bowls for four hours of tree propagation. It was difficult for him to get to the studio, so I took two sets of bowls home for him to choose from. One set was the pure rat ash and the other had the blackcurrant flecks through it. He chose the blackcurrant set. The trees he has propagated are totara and will be planted at Cambrian to make a grove of totara trees, which will be lovely in about 50 years’ time when I’ll be dead. While we were talking trees and bowls we got onto lemon trees, which we have found extremely problematic to grow. Peter said he had some lemon trees which he’d been “hardening” up to the Dunedin climate for a couple of years and so we will get one of those as well as the totara. Fingers crossed it likes it at our place.
Word surprise

Louisa had been thinking about the project since we’d discussed it ages ago and decided it would be good to take part. Mostly she has about eight people at home for dinner each night, so she needed eight bowls in exchange for eight hours of voluntary work and possibly a bit of writing. Her set took a while to choose. She went with the blue ones and was quite particular about the shape – more so than the words. As she says, the words are the surprise after you’ve noticed the other aspects of the bowl like shape and colour.

The voluntary work ended up being drawing classes at the Anatomy Museum, especially focused on joints. Around five participants had four lessons covering the major joints - knees, ankles, shoulders, and elbows.

At this stage of the project (mid-June 2021) I have pressed pause on making bowls because I need to spend some time on other aspects of the project. It is a year since I started the numbered sequence, which is a nice “round” timeframe, and I have 154 bowls left to exchange.

Sharon

There is a primary school next to Sharon’s house and last year she noticed that a lot of the kids didn’t have warm winter things like hats. She has been knitting them beanies since then. Some of the beanies are a bit big for the children so they go further afield to the families, which is a nice project. We agreed to exchange bowls for beanies, and she brought some to show me when she visited the studio. There were at least 20 brightly coloured beanies in the bag – it was a bit hard to decide how long each took to make so what number of bowls would be a fair exchange. In the end we settled on 10 bowls because she wanted some for whanau and enough for herself for when she had people for dinner.

Tess

Tess does website content for a living, but her passion is writing – both stories and poetry. She chose four bowls because that’s the maximum number of people she would have for a meal as she’s only got four dining chairs and, anyway, her dining table is quite small. She lives in an apartment in Melbourne. We’ve exchanged the four bowls for four hours of reflective writing on bowls. Her bowls
are Wind Gust, Easy Life (times two), and Free Will and it’ll be interesting to see if these words have any influence on the poetry. The “Ode to a Bowl or Shout out to the bowl” arrived late in the year. One part read: “Last night I served kalamata olives in a grey-green glazed bowl on a bright red tablecloth. Set pink flowers, white candles alongside it. Thought about how I might start collecting little bowls and get into styling elaborate table settings to show them off.”

Wi

This exchange was about conversation. I was interested to hear Wi talk about his work and his cultural perspective on working with clay. I also suggested he help me with some of my (bad) pronunciation of Māori words and perhaps even teach me a mihi, although I wasn’t sure if I would ever feel confident enough to use it. Conversation with Wi turned out to be a wide-ranging thing; we wandered around a lot of ideas, circling backwards and forwards over ideas about making and working with clay. I asked him about the Māori patterns he included in his artworks, and he said they were just his way of working, showing me by drawings pattern on a piece of paper that described roadways, dead-end streets, roundabouts, orchards and the route he might take from home to work. They looked like old carving designs but in reality were just his language for his pots. We never got round to the language discussion. He chose four bowls.

Jahn

The rat ash story has intrigued a lot of people. For some it induces such a strong sense of revulsion that they can’t cope with the thought of eating out of one of the rat ash bowls. But not Jahn. She was so taken by the story that she wanted to incorporate her own rat ash into a glaze and have bowls glazed with that. The rat she had in mind had been found, dead, under the house and she wanted to know the burning procedure to get the ash. I told her that it was very simple – put the rat carcass in the fire and when the embers are cold dig out the ash and sieve it. This she did and duly presented me with a small bag of rattus domesticus ash. It wasn’t enough to make its own bucket of glaze, so I added it to the existing rat ash bucket and used it to glaze the last 30 or so bowls I had. The results were quite lovely – there seemed to be more of a warm green tinge to some of the bowls and more raspberry spots compared to the original rat ash. In exchange for four bowls Jahn is going to use a photo of the original rat to make some prints.
Bekah (2)

This was the second exchange with Bekah. She wanted another two bowls to send to a friend in Australia. She had an apron she’d made for a friend who’s a potter and suggested making one for me. I liked the one already made so took that. It was in a gorgeous raspberry red linen and far too nice to use in the studio and get clay all over it, so its home is the kitchen.

Anya

Six hours of painting for six bowls. Painting is a bit like writing, it’s hard to be too specific about the time it takes to do. I liked one of her flowers on unstretched canvas works and she gave me that one plus will do another work for the rest of the hours.

Letterpress

I’ve always wanted to do some letterpress printing and knew that the University had the facilities at Otakou Press in the library. I made a few inquiries about accessing the Press room and was told to contact Shef, who is a lecturer in the English Department. He proved to be a generous and patient teacher so I suggested we should exchange some of the time involved for some bowls. He took a bit of persuading but eventually it was agreed.

Sue O (2)

This was a further post-script to the exchange with Sue O. She was at the celebration which provided the ash that went into “pesky” glaze. As a memento of the occasion, she decided to add a Pesky bowl to her collection. In keeping with the spirit of the exchange project, she offered one hour of her current fee as a part-time lecturer, $115.

Megan

Megan lives in Auckland and we discussed the exchange without any bowls in front of us. Her hour was spent making chutney and I had to choose a bowl for her and deliver it when I was next there. That was supposed to be early September, but the three-month lockdown stymied my plans. In the end I sent
the bowl by courier so she at least gets a chance to use it while we wait for travel restrictions to end.

Lissie

I wanted a bit of film footage so I could do a short video showing the throwing process. We had a couple of sessions with her filming and taking still pics. I then spent ages turning it into a video, avoiding most of the parts with me in the frame which was a bit tricky. I found a good free programme for video editing, but it’s a slow job. There were a few too many double chin shows for my liking. I found some free music/sound on the internet and put that with the video. It’s okay, but not great. The other part of the exchange was helping me work out how to use the small Sony camera I have. It has more flexibility than my phone camera, but I seem to end up using the latter most of the time. Lissie wanted small bowls so took four of the test ones I had done.

Denise

Denise suggested gardening or sewing for her two bowls. I can sew but haven’t done much for a few years and it is a bit tiresome having to get the machine out and set it up on the dining room table. I found three dresses I never wear, and Denise chopped the bottoms off and re-hemmed them so now I have three “new” tops.

A family affair

In exchange for six bowls I get a range of things from all members of the family (at least all of those over three years old). There is two hours of massage and a facial, two hours of help learning to pronounce Te Reo a little better, and two hours of drawing and story-writing. The latter has apparently thrown the eight-year-old into a bit of a spin. She is a great story writer but is over-thinking this task which is a shame. It’s not meant to cause anyone angst. At least they all enjoy using the bowls.

Michaela

Michaela showed us this gorgeous string of beads she was making from white air-dry clay. They were like rough opaque pearls and properly knotted so that made
them look even more like pearls. She made me this really long string of them in exchange for 11 bowls. Now I’ve found a short string of cultured (or maybe freshwater) pearls that are about the same size and will get her to add them in, which will confuse the reading of the beads. They’ll sit somewhere between cheap and valuable and that seems appropriate in relation to the bowls themselves.

“Word” is always highlighting phrases like “really long” in the above paragraph and telling me that more concise language would be clearer for my reader. It sparked a discussion amongst three of us in the studio about long, really long, really really long, quite long, and really quite long. We disagreed about how much length each expressed. I’d say that it should go (shortest to longest) quite long, long, really long, really quite long, and really really long. The main thing is that they all imply different lengths and my reader would know that, so I shouldn’t change really long to just long.

Peter (& Judith)

It was Judith who initiated this exchange, but she roped her husband in because he was retired and, she said, made incredible marmalade. They live in Wellington. We agreed he would make marmalade and distribute it to people in their street with a note explaining what the project was about. I haven’t had any feedback from the recipients, but it would be nice to know what they thought.

Judith brought me a jar of marmalade and a jar of pear and date chutney. I’m saving the marmalade for a Christmas present for my elderly father because he loves marmalade and it’s very difficult to think of presents for him.

Designer chef

There are a range of titles that fit Neil – graphic designer, artist, chef. I was particularly interested in the designer skill set because I’m going to need a poster and postcard for my final exhibition next March. Neil and his partner are very fond of entertaining and he wanted eight bowls so they could be used at dinner parties. Eight hours of design-work seemed about right so we agreed on that. As he was choosing bowls, he mentioned that he was also a good cook and had made the final cut for the South African version of MasterChef. Cooking for private dinner parties was another thing he used to do and that could also be an
exchange. It’s a tough call. Having a private chef for a dinner party would be fun, but then again I really do want to get this poster done more professionally than I would manage.

Knitting

In a nice closing of the circle, Claire knitted the wool that Locke had spun. It wasn’t a very big ball of wool, so it was never going to make a big garment. It was a rich dark chocolate colour and the ply varied from very fine to a double knit. Claire knitted a baby’s hat. She added some ribbing in pink to begin with and two stripes of pink at the end to make sure she didn’t run out of the spun wool. She thinks it probably took around 10 hours to make, but she only wanted four bowls so that’s what we agreed. The hat was a present for baby Mae.

Project promotion

Ngaire has been especially enthusiastic about the project and four of the people she’s talked to about it have decided to do an exchange. She’s recently taken a bit of a break from her usual work as a counsellor and wants to put a bit of serious time into her writing. She and her partner have “drop-in” potluck dinners on a regular basis and sometimes lots of people turn up, so she wanted 10 bowls. We agreed three hours of baking (she’s vegan so these would be vegan cakes), three hours of gardening, and four hours of writing. She did a micro story, a poem about the rat ash, and some haiku based on the bowls she chose.

*Down Fall*

All in a moment

Bike, car, fear, flight, sorrow, pain

Sitting on the road

I can relate to this, having had a crash on my bike a few months ago. Very painful. It was great having Ngaire help with some gardening and we cleared a whole area around some newish planting that’s supposed to turn into a grotto type place. Actually, she did most of the work. We talked a lot.
Wood for bowls

Mike offered a trailer load of firewood, delivered, for some bowls. I thought the arborist may not be keen on this exchange because we have a lot of firewood already. However, it seems more is always better when it comes to wood. Mike wanted five bowls, so he said he’d chop wood and load the trailer till he ran out of time. He lives at Waitati so I thought one of the hours should go towards the delivery. He got right into the idea of the time and decided he should start from scratch by felling a tree then chopping it up and loading the trailer for the remaining four hours. It was a decent pile of wood so he must have worked hard.

Sports car

John & Gill’s idea was for a ride in John’s Jaguar XK120 Roadster sports car followed by a picnic lunch somewhere. John would pick me up from home, and Gill & Pete would arrive via normal transport with the refreshments. I am excited about this exchange. My uncle Hugh had an E-type Jaguar and, when we were kids, we thought it was the coolest thing going. Getting a ride in it was a big deal, though it didn’t happen very often because he was a farmer and driving back roads in the country in a low-slung sports car probably wasn’t that comfortable.

Sometimes I got to go to the farm with my cousin Nicole while my brothers had to hang out with Mum and the grandparents. One time we drove to the farm in the E-type with Nicole and I squished into the front passenger seat together. Another time Hugh drove home from Invercargill in the E-type and fell asleep on the way, waking up to find himself off the road and parked haphazardly in a cemetery. We all thought this was a very funny story. He had no doubt been drinking before setting off home, which didn’t elicit any comment or disapproval. It’s interesting how far attitudes have shifted towards drink driving since then.

Gill

As well as the picnic, Gill wanted to do a separate exchange for two bowls for their daughter and her fiancé in Melbourne. This would be some volunteer work. John found bowl number 42, which he said was perfect for Tom as he is a professional footballer and that’s his number. The other bowl was number 50. She did two hours fund raising for the Cancer Society on Pink Ribbon Day.
Amanda

Amanda is a creative arts therapist as well as doing her PhD. She works with all sorts of people and offered four hour-long therapy sessions and I immediately thought of someone I know who might like to do that. They are going to sort times out between themselves. Amanda also likes to do her own creative response to the therapy sessions, which could be writing or drawing, and she’ll send that to me, making six hours for six bowls in total. She chose her bowls and then we spent ages talking about all sorts of other things.

Louisa (2)

An unfortunate accident occurred at Louisa’s place, wherein two of her bowls got knocked off the bench and broke. Fortuitously, Louisa was offered some bone ash which she didn’t need and thought that Locke and I might like some. When she arrived with it, it seemed appropriate to exchange another two bowls for the time she’d spent collecting and delivering it. It was from the Invermay Research Centre and it’s the bones of the animals they used for experiments. The animals are cremated in a large kiln and treated respectfully so it doesn’t feel like a bad thing to be using this ash. The biggest surprise was how incredibly heavy it is. We filled up a large bucket and some smaller containers and the bucket is almost impossible to lift without breaking the handle. Bone ash is an ingredient in some glazes and both Locke and I are eager to do some testing to see if we can come up with an interesting new glaze. I’m looking for crater-like surfaces and perhaps eruptions. Bron suggested wedging some of the bigger bits into the clay itself, which was a good idea.

Natural dug clay

Stuart and Raul were both in Dunedin for the various 60th anniversary pottery activities over Labour Weekend. Some of us from art school gave talks on the Sunday about our projects, and after my talk both Stuart and Raul asked if they could do an exchange. They belong to a pottery group in Queenstown and are into collecting and processing their own clay. Stuart says two of their favourite spots are around the banks of Lake Dunstan near Bannockburn and around the Kyeburn cliffs. Stuart wanted one bowl, so I got one hour’s worth of him processing ball clay from Hyde. He even included a test strip showing the
shrinkage after firing. Raul’s clay was from the Manoburn Dam and fires chocolate brown. The woman who delivered the clay said the Hyde clay was very nice to throw.

Bridie

Bridie is doing two hours of doodling. This is sort of like an artwork and sort of not. My understanding is that it’s “active” doodling, rather than just drawing the same thing all the time in the margins of the newspaper (for example).

Shona

Shona spotted the bowls at the back of the studio while she was visiting another exhibition and Bron told her about the project. She offered what she called “old school” skills in cooking, baking, gardening, sewing, growing things, knitting, making organic jewellery, and dog walking! Such a lot of talents. In the end I went for baking and chose shortbread and crackers for the first two hours, to be followed by another batch or two in a month. When she brought the first ones in, she was full of apologies about everything. It wasn’t clear why until she explained that she’d dropped one tray on the floor and the dog had swooped in to clean up before she could even think of salvaging any. She needn’t have said anything about it because both lots of baking were delicious. I have chosen Christmas mince pies and fudge cake for the second two hours. This feels a bit indulgent for some reason.

Judith

Judith also had an accident as she was transporting the bowls for her husband Peter’s exchange. They were packed in an airline carry-on bag, and she heard one of the bowls break as the bag was being loaded into the airport shuttle. After the success of Ngaire’s gardening hours and looking at the state of the garden with its spring growth, I negotiated an hour’s gardening for another bowl. It was weeding really, but gardening sounds better. It reminded me that another exchangee had suggested gardening, but it was the middle of winter when we negotiated that exchange and it didn’t seem like such a compelling idea at the time. A shame really. Gardening with someone to talk to is fun.
More beads

Kate was wearing some ceramic beads she had made, which were lovely. A different look than Michaela’s white air-dried clay. She is spending six hours making me a string of beads. When she had finished it had only been four hours, so she brought the beads and two bowls to give back. This seemed a bit extreme as I’m sure there is something else that could be exchanged for the last two bowls. It was almost Christmas and everyone gets a little frantic about now, so we agreed she’d keep the bowls and think about it again early next year. The beads are lovely. They’re all slightly different sizes and made from a few different clays, which means they’re different colours.

Barefoot protest

Nicky decided she had to do something during the COP26 Conference in Glasgow to protest the lack of action on climate change. Her idea was that she would go barefoot for the two weeks of the conference and encourage as many others as possible to join her because walking barefoot is a very natural, human action that connects us with the earth. She came over for some advice on getting publicity. Despite my support for the protest, I couldn’t quite bring myself to do the barefoot thing (too ouchy after a winter in shoes!), so supported four hours of her time promoting the protest in exchange for four bowls. Interestingly, she said even though going barefoot was difficult, it was nothing compared to the embarrassing and weird feeling of being seen without shoes in the city. However, on the plus side it gave her an excuse to start a conversation with people about her protest and she garnered a lot of support that way.

Mary & Reg

One’s a counsellor and the other a support worker. The counsellor suggested, a little tongue in cheek, that they do three hours of psychoanalysis of pottery. The support worker is doing three hours of musical response to the bowls. As they were choosing the bowls they decided they needed eight rather than six, so added two hours of baking to the deal.
Heramāahina

Heramāahina was also at the Labour weekend talk and excited by the idea of the exchange. She is learning to be a tohunga moko (tattoo artist). I thought having my own tohu design would be good in case I ever decided to get a tattoo, so we talked for quite a while and Heramāahina based her design on what she learned about me from that conversation. What came back is known as a “āwhiowhio” which is based on the whirlwind, and which she says was a reference to the way I have tried lots of different things “career” wise. She says the āwhiowhio creates the koru in its negative space which shows the fruits of my labour in everything I do, but especially the bowls.

Gemma

Gemma has been cutting my hair for about 18 months, so she’s been up to date on the project progress from the beginning. Like all good hairdressers she remembers our conversations even though I only see her about every four months, and she has been keen to see pics of the bowls as the project progressed. Last time I went she asked if she could do an exchange and the only thing she could think of to exchange was a haircut. Needless to say I readily accepted – the need for haircuts goes on for ever unless you are bald or grow dreadlocks or something like that – and we arranged a time for the studio visit. Once there she decided she needed two bowls, so two haircuts was the deal.

Robyn

This is another exchange where Bron stepped in to explain the project as I wasn’t there. Robyn came back a bit later and we discussed exchange possibilities. She describes herself as a surrogate godmother/grandma to two children whose sole parent mother she is friends with, and we agreed that some time helping the children with a clay class would be fun. Initially she suggested an hour to teach them how to throw on a wheel, but I thought that was overly ambitious as most people – adults or children – will need considerably longer to get even remotely competent on the wheel. She is going to spend the hour helping them hand build something, which is a lot more realistic.
Jane V

This Jane is an artist and loves making music. Her suggestion was to come into the studio and, with the bowls around, make a musical response to them. I love this idea, not least because I have no musical abilities of any shape or form. Being able to play Good King Wenceslas on the recorder when I was at school doesn’t really count. Jane brought loads of equipment, a guitar, amplifier, and loop machine amongst other things, and set about playing and recording. Instead of a lively, slightly crazy, and clashing kind of recording, it became a lovely calm and meditative piece with just the odd “ping” in response to some of the small colour bursts in the bowls. I’m probably going to use it with my little video of the making process instead of the free downloaded piece I found online. Alternatively, maybe it could play on headphones that people wear as they go round the exhibition.

Shirley

Shirley said she had been a member of the green dollar barter system years ago in Dunedin and understood the complexity of balancing time, labour, craft, and value when making these exchanges. She is a retired early childhood teacher and is now a gardener and harakeke weaver living at Twizel and really liked the idea of exchanging some weaving for bowls. She sent photos of waikawa, the large kete, and kete kupenga for gathering seafood, and a couple of small kono. I requested something with handles that can be taken shopping.

Handles are so helpful on bags/baskets. But when the plastic bag ban came into force, bags with handles became a no-no, unless they are of a particular weight. This means you can still have bin liners, bags for pet waste, and bags for putting fruit and veg in at the supermarket, as long as they don’t have a handle. It’s all a bit hard to fathom. While people have embraced the plastic bag ban and are trying to limit their use of other plastics like drink bottles and cling-film, the use of plastics seems to be sky-rocketing elsewhere. Building sites are now shrouded in plastic – no doubt so they can be weather-proof, but there are metres and metres of plastic involved. Hay bales are the same. Gone are the days when hay bales were stored in a hay shed; these days the big round bales are covered in plastic, and long rows of them are stored on the side of the paddock. The one that really left me gobsmacked was seeing a car transporter recently laden with new vehicles including two utes which were covered in plastic. A ute wrapped in
plastic so it doesn’t get dirty on its way to the showroom! You’ve got to be kidding. What happens to all this plastic once it’s done its dash on the building site, farm, car yard?

Shirley wasn’t sure how long the weaving would take, so she didn’t want to choose bowls until she’d finished the basket. Because she lives in Twizel her daughters came to choose bowls on her behalf – eight in the end. I will get the bag when she comes down to Dunedin for Christmas.

Shona (2)

Shona arrived with the second round of baking the week before Christmas. It was jars of six different treats and seemed rather a lot, but she said the previous delivery had only really been a sampler. After a tentative enquiry as to whether there were any bowls left (there were) she chose six more bowls, most of which will be for Christmas presents. The exchange may be for more baking, although I’m wondering whether it would be a good idea to eat that much baking and thinking that we might have to agree something else next year.

Paul

I have played bridge with Paul for a number of years but had never discovered that he was a keen collector of ceramics. As the project was nearing its end, we were talking about it and his collector’s interest came to light. He wanted one bowl and we agreed it would be for his hourly rate as a teaching fellow. When he arrived at the studio to choose his bowl he decided he would need two bowls.

Ngair (2)

Another person on their second exchange and wanting a bowl for a Christmas present. Like Paul, Ngair decided she needed two bowls when she got to the studio. There are only 17 left now. After the success of the original gardening portion of the exchange, I persuaded her that two hours of gardening would be perfect.

(68 exchanges for 258 bowls)