

Re-connecting with the Gathering Container:

A re-looking at just a few months ago, o how different the container looked then.

Written by Ben Urban



18 January 2020, we congregated for the opening of the Gathering Container, we were led into this world by Hastings based Common Clay. Whilst we re-connect with a few months back, we can stand still in the slowness of now as an invisible migrant slows us down. Slowed down, so much so, we are actually looking at what matters, what matters more than ourselves, and ceramics. But I suppose ceramics are what has bought me too sit down and think, so we should keep with thinking through ceramics.

I have been thinking a lot about the future, that first laid hand upon my arm from a now alien body. Slippages of touch, the molecular closeness of touch generates pressure, force which imprints on our skin, and makes us feel as if our bodies align with one another. The infinitesimally small atoms constituent parts of matter which roll together¹, collide together, to build our bodies. It's at our point of collapse or touch that we become to understand other bodies. Ceramics hold together, ceramics touch, ceramics are made for grasp, ceramics collapse, they burn, they crack, they personify the waves of emotions which my body, our bodies have all been isolated with.

¹ Jaime Trosper, *Why Physics Says You Can Never Actually Touch Anything*, (futurism.com, June, 2014)



I now turn back, several hidden weeks, months forward in time to this moment of collapse, the beginning of the Gathering Container. We stand in front of two vessels, now one. Carla + Richard became together by the nature of touch, by collapse. Siamese and un-identical, genetically fused together by their conception, by the incubator. They scream inside the kiln as their bodies fuse. As they cool, their shoulders relax and prepare to be together for the future months that lay ahead of us.

As members of the Gathering Container together we are prepared. Family, families, familiar, turn to nearing familicide acts as the situation intensifies. The fused together body of family sobers us to another day of internal explosion. I lean on the idea of unintentional-accidentalism which is a coping mechanism for me now. Unintentional-accidentalism means we are meandering bodies colliding at wrong and right times of history. I am extremely happy that we are all here together, unintentionally.

Sweaty, saliva puddles in the middle of our chests as we lay back to close our eyes to meet tomorrow's light. The fluid that lays on my skin is touching me in the same way as I imagine the moment in time when Richard's brown speckled chested pot abruptly stands still, whilst the shadow like posture of Carla's grey utter leans towards the polished gleam of the freckles poised upon his vessel. The sun manages to still capture and intensify the brown smudges upon the whiteness of Richard's underglaze, the sexy roundness of this nods towards the beckoning of hope which we look for in Richard. The competitive edge of height, as the sunflower steals all of the sun's rays away from all of the plants beneath. Its petals spread themselves across a circumference casting darkness below, down a tier, towards the pansies.

Thankfully, in this new world, that we are all preparing for, the site of unified bodies will be more and more important. We will lean on the unintentional slippages more than before, as they may be the last time we touch that outside body for some time. Gentle clippings of colliding shoulders on Warrior-square platform are what I now long for, I may ask them to stand still with me for some moments, just to prolong touch that I may not get again.

We can gather with mindfulness now, hopefully the subsequent progression will be that we can gather in some future without intention undermining our actions. I want to feel like a teetering vessel on the edge of a shelf, wobbling towards the point of fall, my shattered pieces spray towards people. I can be touched by exploding molecules of saliva; I will leave them on my skin without noticing once again.

The Gathering Container multiplied bodies: the core group of makers meant there were 17 bodies, plus the operatives of the container, meant 4 more bodies, which consequently meant there was 84 invited bodies, and then we should account for a minimum of 20 random unaccounted for bodies. All of whom needed to be a part of the initial touching of bodies as we splattered, spat, sprayed, our voices around the container. For a fortnight onwards alien bodies came, and existed, and held clay, more hands touching clay. 5 months on, I do not touch anything more without anti-bacterial interaction. A shield lays over my skin, cleaning the antibody off of my surface.

A plasma sheen, waterproof layer, a wet-look cell wall hovers above my skin now. I am infinisble to anti-bodies, my freckles still latch onto UV rays as they tighten my skin, pulling the non-infected areas together. Leaching.

I enter myself into the kiln, I lay on a bed as I pour a clear glaze over me. This could be my clearest path to protection, initially I scream as the flames set in, but the pain will simmer, and the protection will be put to good use as I slip out, back into this new world, as a body without trace, without fingerprints, with limitless touch. Perhaps the risk is what I will miss the most, the risk of infecting myself or another makes me wonder how life will feel, when this is the first thing we think of. Infection. Contamination. Cross body.

The sun is back, and I am now out of a frenzy, currently I am looking intently into Richard + Carla, they lay un-identically together, they do not fit, nor do they go, neither do they mean to be together. But they have slipped. This slip is important.

