

JANIS IRIS CHURCHER

**Portfolio created to accompany the application to the
MA Ceramic programme at the University of Sunderland 2017**

Having retired from 18 years of teaching Graphic Design, winding down a career as an illustrator and looking for an alternative form of artistic creativity, I chose to enroll in ceramic courses at Vancouver Island University in the Fall of 2014. This portfolio reflects creations from these courses.

It also includes work in other media that are more closely related to my illustration interests, but in 3D using the medium of papier mâché. Work from my illustration career can be seen on this website: <http://www.flyingbetty.ca>. It hasn't been updated since 2014 because I've chosen not to accept any illustration commissions for the time being. I do have personal fine art work, but they are not online as yet. I plan in the next month to completely redo my website to reflect all my interests.

Back to ceramics. Two of the courses involved set projects and two were Independent Study courses, the content developed in discussion with the instructor Scott Leaf. Because of my free time I was able to devote between 4 - 5 days a week to ceramics for 4 semesters, as well as take some time in the summer to fill in some gaps in my knowledge. This academic year I have been able to use my privilege as an Honorary Research Associate of the university to be in the ceramics studio without a course designation, but with an understanding that I will assist the professor if required. In this capacity I've made examples for ceramic projects or step by step instruction sheets.

The following portfolio images are accompanied by brief descriptions of purpose and materials.

Ceramics



Portrait of Jenni Green-Becker

*Coloured Pencil 2014
27 ins x 19 ins*

After creating this portrait, I felt creatively restless. So I made a doll with modelled hands and face. The modelling was much easier than I thought, even though simplistic in style. Then later in the summer when teaching botanical illustration at

MISSA (Metchosin Summer School of the Arts) I met the ceramic artist **Carol Gouthro**. I loved her sense of colour and form in ceramics and that confirmed my decision to register for ceramic courses.



ARTS 271

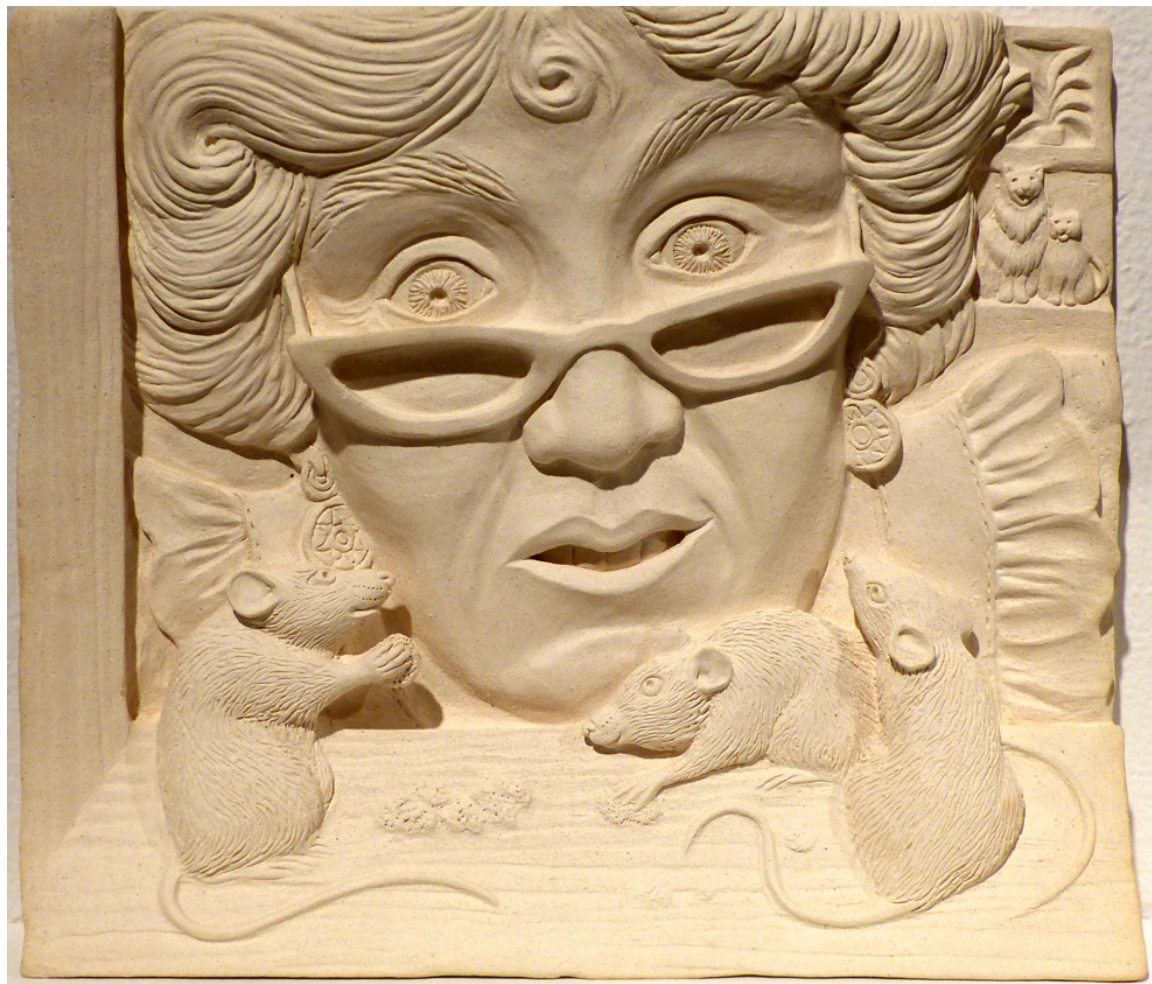
Intro Ceramics

This semester was packed with projects. We jumped right into creating a full size self portrait bust, a 16in coin relief based on imagining ourselves as rulers of rome, slab work and glazing. I have continued an interest in shallow relief carving and particularly enjoy the medieval carvings at the V&A for their use of space in low relief.



*Bust
WSO clay
Jano White glaze
Cone 6*

*Relief
Navaho Wheel clay
Black wash applied and
wiped to reveal form
Cone 6*



Old Mother Hubbard
 Coloured Pencil and Relief
 12 ins x 10 ins

Out of curiosity in my own time I made a shallow relief version of an illustration I'd created, illustrating the nursery rhyme. I'm interested in how light completely changes an object in contrast to fixed light within a representational artwork.



*Bmix/WSO mixed clay
 Cone 6*

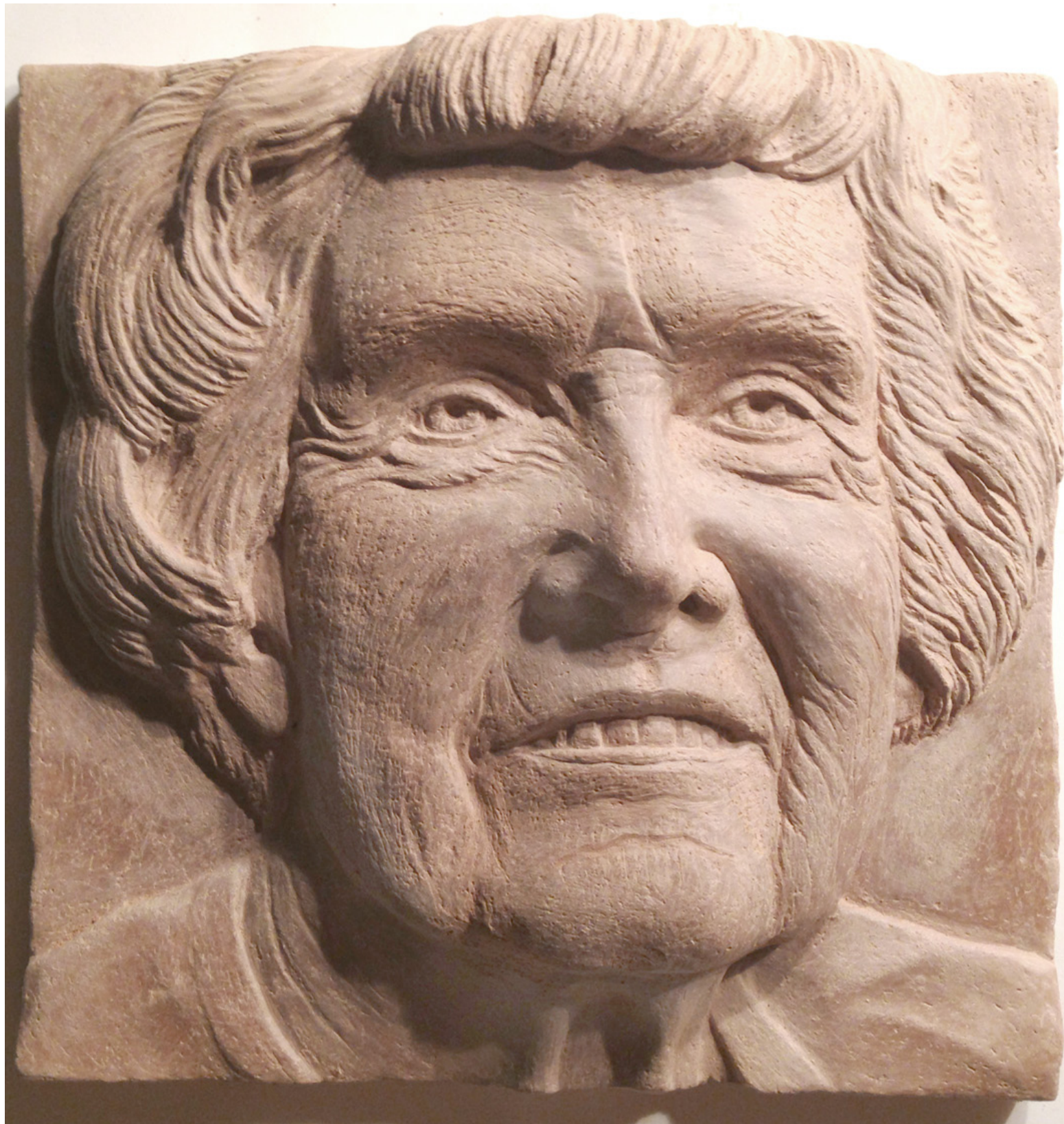
*lower photos whilst
 still greenware*

Dorothy

6.75ins square

A recent rendition of my mother as an old woman. Created as a way of overcoming my memory of her in her last days and wanting to remember her as a young happy woman. I intend to create a younger version now that this image is out in the open.

*Bmix/Navaho Wheel
mixed clay
Cone 6*



ARTS 272

Ceramics II

10 ins x 10 ins

This semester was about wheel throwing and included mugs, bowls, and sectional vessels. During the semester we were required to present an aspect of ceramic history. I chose the Jomon period and this has influenced and inspired my approach to sculptural work.

I felt that I could perhaps understand the Jomon vessels if I made one, and so using the many online images, I reconstructed the one that attracted me the most. Last summer when at the British Museum and I viewed a vessel almost identical to the one I had reconstructed. I used a coil and slab construction.

I chose to glaze it using 520 Yellow applied and rubbed off. The glaze was tested on a container made from pressing clay into a basket. I was curious about the method described in ceramic history books and tried it out, short of burning the basket off in the kiln.



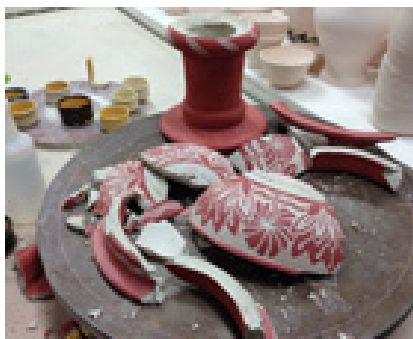
*Navaho Wheel clay
520 Yellow Glaze
Cone 6*

Sgraffito

The sgraffito technique allows me to continue an interest in black and white surface design and I've applied it to several projects. In learning to create a sectional vessel inspired by early mediterranean pottery I chose this one.



As the work from this era mostly reflects their daily lives, I chose to do the same. My version reflects my pond and fish. The bowl of my version, made of thrown sections, fell off. So I remade the whole vessel again using a slab technique.



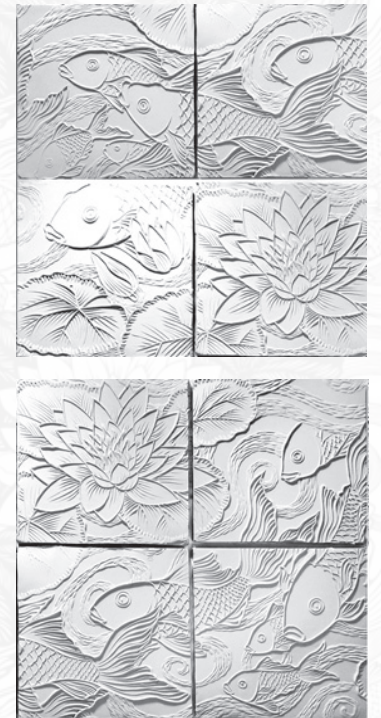
*Bmix with sand clay
I didn't like the
dark brown of the
slip so overpainted
in terracotta acrylic.
Cone 6
16 ins high*

Sgraffito

A current commission for a friend who liked this sgraffito set of fish tiles (right) has led me to explore pattern design. The tiles are being pressed from 6 lino cut stamps and I'm currently trying different ways to press them to get the best result. The 6 tiles repeat as a unit in a half drop pattern. I'm still testing glazes and colours. The idea is to make more than one composition from one design unit, breaking down into groups of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 tiles together. I have also created a border tile.



These days with online companies such as Spoonflower out of the States, one can create fabrics from any imagery.



*Top
6 sgraffito cut tiles each
5.5 ins x 3.5 ins approx*

*Right
Pen and ink drawing scanned
and repeated in Photoshop*

*Far right
Pressed tiles as greenware
each 6ins x 6ins wet.
M370 clay preferred*

Arts 371
Independent Study 1

Bird Vase

I love the beech woods of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and so upon returning from a UK visit and drawing on my experience creating the Jomon pot I launched into two projects. One inspired by trees and architecture, the other by birds. Here on Vancouver Island we have few songbirds and I miss the dawn chorus greatly.

The bird vase was created directly from slabs, the tree vase from coils initially and then slabs.

*Navaho Wheel
clay with grog
19 ins high
Cone 6*



Arts 371
Independent Study 1

Cathedral Trees

As I was working on the bird vase I also worked on this tree vase. Its shape developed very much from moving too quickly with the clay wet. By pinching the 4 corners of the coiled cylinder to avoid collapse the vase began to take form. From there it evolved, applying what I'd learned from the Jomon construction.

Having been exposed to so much art and imagery over many years, it is inevitable that images of historical arts and cultures inform my decision making as I proceed.

There are some marvellous column capitals from the medieval and renaissance periods, images of which float about in the imagination.

Also daily events, personal reflections and experiences direct the outcome as I try and give voice to what I am thinking or feeling.





*Navaho Wheel
clay without grog
19 ins x 17 ins
Cone 6*



Arts 372
Independent Study 1

Contemplation Series

In the Spring last year I seemed to have a lot to express and these feelings, thoughts and concepts came out in the form of heads.

Each head represents a different aspect of experience.

- **The fire of Imagination**
- **The Architecture of Thought**
- **Conciousness is a Swan**

It was quite an adventure figuring out how to keep the clay in place and again the form was greatly affected by the balance of the piece, the weight of the clay, the speed of drying etc.

I'm including some of the pictures taken during construction. The male and female aspects evolved as the pieces evolved. The faces are obviously influenced by a range of cultures, although I didn't seek them out to copy. They are stored in my head.



The fire of Imagination

Navaho Wheel with grog clay

17 ins x 17 ins

Cone 6





The Architecture of Thought

Navaho Wheel with grog clay

13 ins x 13 ins

Cone 6



Consciousness is a Swan

Navaho Wheel with grog clay
20 ins x 15 ins x 10 ins

Cone 6



Latest Work

Oak and Beech Trees

I spent 4 weeks with family in September and early October. We walked in the beech woods as usual, but we also visited the ancient oaks on the Blenheim Palace Estate. These magnificent trees really had an impact on me, especially as it was in the company of my eldest brother and his wife on the day before returning to Vancouver Island.

Upon returning to the studio I started two sculptures - one of oak trees the other beech trees. I was not attempting to render exact replicas of the trees, but rather to express their energy and growth. I had some idea of how they might work out, but it was definitely a case of starting and letting the form develop. I chose 3 oaks of varying sizes and 4 beech trees. As their trunks grew and the branches were added, the forms grew out of their interaction until the leaf canopy became a series of interlocking planes. To my amazement they held together with minimal cracking and made it through the bisque firing. They are awaiting a final firing and surface treatment.





Beech Trees

Navaho Wheel with grog clay

17 ins

Cone 06



View from above going into the kiln. Just my mother and the two trees are my work.

Test small trees and glazed trunk around bisqued trees

Oak Trees

Bmix and WSO clay

Cone 06



*Hollowing out the trunks to clear all the debris
from carving the leaf canopy*





Papier Mâché

When the whimsical mood takes me I have fun with Papier Mâché. Because I don't yet have a kiln or a ceramic studio at home, this medium allows me to create in 3D with minimal equipment and materials. It is more akin to my illustrations and it is very easy to add colour with acrylic paint.

I have no idea most of the time where the ideas come from, they just come. Or I will take some newsprint, scrunch it up, start wrapping it with tape and something will start to take form. It is just fun.

Basically the forms are scrunched up newsprint with tape, occasionally wrapped in plaster bands and supported by dowels or wire and then covered with paper pulp. It is fairly easy to mold, sand and shape. I'm including this part of my work because I would really like to introduce some whimsy

and fun into my ceramics and really need to find a way to add colour to surfaces. I have a lot to learn and explore in regard to ceramic glazing and surface treatment.

I also am interested in my ancestry and recently made a couple of dolls to represent a Captain Joseph Dillon and his wife Joanna. They lived in the late 1700s in Falmouth and Captain Dillon ran a mail packet across to New York and back a couple of times a year. I'm just learning how to make cloth figures, but would be interested in exploring the human form in ceramics also.

So here are some examples of this medium,



Just for the fun...



for Jenny's 70th birthday...





AcrobRats...





an exercise in balance...



My 4th Great Grandma
Mrs Dillon...



and Sandra whose portrait upset the dog...

