

**Turning the page:
a new dimension to the language of ceramics
with reference to wayfaring, porcelain paperclay
and the archetype of the paper page**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

This research project represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared, the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Alison Louise Rees

8 October 2021

Abstract

This research establishes an original clay form – a clay page – that stands apart from traditional clay-based archetypes such as the vessel, the figurine and the tile. The surface treatment and the presentation of the new clay page, formed from porcelain paperclay, all correspond with the language of the paper page.

My research asks how this new physical clay page can be developed, and what it might mean. These questions are examined by conducting practice-based investigations. In the studio, the primary research involves tests and compositions in which the clay page corresponds with international paper sizes and the characteristics of the paper page, such as thinness, flatness and lightness. Outside the studio, the research engages in wayfaring (as theorised by Ingold) predominantly in the urban environment of the UK; information is recorded using a camera and brought back to the studio.

Layers of coloured slip and glaze are applied to the clay page surface to construct abstract compositions that respond to the clay page form, and which reflect wayfaring. The clay pages are then composed into a group, using the grid, and are presented on the wall. My research explores repetition and variation; grids and edges; borders and framing; levels and layers; lightness and minimality; the ordinary and the everyday; colour and spatial organisation; series and progressions; arrangement and rearrangement; temporality and flexibility. It involves an ethos of working in a self-sufficient manner.

The meaning of the clay page and its surface is interpreted as a story of the self, finding a place in the world, seeking joy and freedom within a framework of restricted order and balancing tensions, elevating ordinary, everyday experiences into the extraordinary. The interplay of subject, object and place is grounded in Modernist abstraction and colour theory (Itten) and later theoretical frameworks of the grid (Krauss), the parergon (Derrida) and the overlooked (Bryson). Besides fine art and anthropology, secondary research also draws on poetry, economic theory, philosophy and ceramics. Continual processes of making and material thinking, alone in the street and the studio, are the means by which the new clay archetype develops. Through these collective research procedures, the clay page achieves the aim of the title: a new dimension to the language of ceramics.

The research expands the potential of paperclay, ceramic practice and its theorisation, and will be of interest to both specialist and interdisciplinary constituencies.

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Introduction

Background context to the research and its genesis

The aim of this research is to originate and establish a new dimension to the language of ceramics through an investigation of form and surface. I seek to achieve this by investigating what happens when the language and characteristics of both the paper page and the activity of wayfaring are introduced to the material clay. The intention is to create an iterative reconfiguration of both matter and meaning.

The paper page: it is probably the medium upon which you are reading these words. You could be holding a real-life paper page or, perhaps more likely, viewing a two-dimensional representation of a page on a digital screen. The page is something that has evolved and changed throughout its history.¹ For example, the page, or *pagina*, was originally used to visually organise text on a long scroll.² Subsequently, the page left the scroll and became a physical thing in its own right before being bound into a codex. Today, the page has reasserted its role as a visual organiser: the scroll has been replaced by the digital screen, which is ordered by the presence of pages, through which the user scrolls. The user's digital relationship with the page gives the sense of things coming full circle. As Bonnie Mak has observed in *How the Page Matters*,

The matter and the matting of the page are entangled in complicated ways as they reconfigure each other iteratively through time.³

The idea for this research – of investigating what happens when the language and characteristics of both the paper page and the activity of wayfaring are introduced to the material clay – came about in the following way.

From the outset, I wanted to develop a new form and surface language in clay which was not based on the language of existing ceramic archetypes such as the vessel, the figurine or the tile; I wanted to create something new and original. Alongside this, I had a set of interests and concerns that I wanted to examine: namely, I wanted to investigate how a clay form and surface

¹ Prior to the use of the paper page, clay tablets, mostly fashioned from red clay and developed in Mesopotamia, enabled day-to-day transactions, contracts and laws to be documented and recorded. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/4000-year-old-tablet-recording-workers-wages> (accessed 11 June 2021).

² Bonnie Mak, *How the Page Matters* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

might embody a sense of lightness, portability and freedom, a sense of minimality, clarity and order, a sense of containment, smallness and self-sufficiency. These sensibilities reflected a means of relating to the space around me, a sense of the self in the world.

I had arrived at these two starting points following a degree in Archaeology, a Master's degree in Ceramics and many years of making in clay. In recent years, the objects that I made had become flatter, more concerned with surface, but their form had become uncertain.

Then, at the start of this research, I made a journey on a bus through the city, during which I had an encounter with a building that had lost its volume. The brick building façade that I saw that day led me to make a connection with the paper page (the story of that journey, and its connection with the paper page, is told at the start of Chapter 1). The paper page, as an archetype external to clay, seemed to embody the research interests and concerns noted above. For example, the paper page is a compact, minimal, light form that is easily portable, whose perimeter gives a sense of containment and whose surface can be composed upon freely. The paper page therefore presented itself as the basis for making a form that was new in clay. As I started the practice-based investigations, I realised that the introduction of the paper page to clay involved a series of complex decisions and raised questions about how I thought about material, form and surface.

This was the start of the research. However, alongside these investigations a further strand of research emerged. I noted above that part of my research interest was how I relate to the space around me. For many years I have engaged in an activity that the theorist and anthropologist Tim Ingold has described as 'wayfaring', of journeying without a map, of actively and materially engaging with the landscape around me as I travel.⁴ The journey on a bus through the city referred to above is one such example. At first, my wayfaring took place in parallel with the practice-based investigations, and the connections between the two activities were tentative and coincidental. But then the thinking processes behind the practice-based investigations of my research and the wayfaring started to inform each other: the visual information that I recorded whilst wayfaring was informing the practice-based investigations taking place in the studio, and what was happening in the studio was informing and heightening my wayfaring activities. Wayfaring forms part of my research's methodology.

⁴ Tim Ingold, *Lines: a Brief History* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2016) p. 16.

My thesis is the story of a research investigation, laid out over the pages which follow. It is concerned with the language of ceramics and how it can be developed to elicit new meaning. It is about how ideas from outside of the discipline of ceramics can be utilised to enrich the experience of, and insight into, ceramics. It is about how clay can enable stories to be told in a different way, through an unfolding sequence of clay pages which convey a narrative of the self in the world.

Research questions and methodology

Research questions

My research asks two overarching questions, each of which give rise to a series of sub-questions, as follows:

First, how might a new physical form, based on the external archetype of the paper page, be developed?

- How would such a form be made?
- What language could be developed on the surface of the clay page?
- How would the clay page be presented?

Secondly, what might a new clay page, its surface language and presentation, mean?

- In what ways do the new clay page and its surface language and presentation draw on the language and characteristics of the paper page and wayfaring?
- What would this new form in clay represent?
- How would the new form relate to and differ from existing ceramic contexts?
- What can be learnt about this new form by drawing connections with other theoretical frameworks?

These questions guided the direction of the research and are answered over the chapters which follow. My methodological approach, outlined below, allowed for more detailed questions to be identified and investigated along the way.

Methodological approach

In determining the methodological approach for my research, I considered the following:

- i) My research questions required the generation and collection of qualitative data. In this research my role was that of researcher, practitioner, participant and observer, and insight was gained from experiential and tacit (intuitive/ felt) knowledge. I collected data, in the form of my own observations regarding ceramic process and material and their relationship with each other, as part of my research tests. The accumulated data was examined for patterns, for example, frequently observed words, making processes and making behaviours. The identified patterns were then analysed.
- ii) Wayfaring, which is discussed in more detail below, played a role throughout my research. For example, wayfaring as an approach was used to formulate the order and detail of the investigative tests; wayfaring as an activity was used in the collection of photographic data from the urban and rural environment; and wayfaring as a metaphor was used to analyse my test results.
- iii) As a researcher, practitioner and participant, I was central to the research inquiry, and I was responsible for primary data generation and gathering. My overall methodological approach was less about control and uniformity, and more about responding to observation and interpretation. The contemporary philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti has described the theoretical process as being ‘not abstract, universalized, objective, and detached, but rather [...] situated in the contingency of one's experience’ and my methodological approach acknowledges my role as an individual researcher rooted in my own experience.⁵

My observations, and the wayfaring, evolutionary approach to each test, were necessarily subjective. As the American academic Donna Haraway has written:

Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is

⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 237.

always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another.⁶

My interpretation of the data generated and collected during my research, does not claim to be whole or perfect, but it nonetheless constitutes a valid and original set of conclusions.

Methods

The following methods were used for data generation and collection:

- i) Tests were conducted in a ceramic studio environment to investigate specific research questions. These tests are documented in the thesis Appendix and include,
 - a. Written documentation of activities performed, materials used, and processes executed.
 - b. Photographs of processes and test results.
 - c. Written observations regarding materials, making processes, making behaviours and test results.
- ii) Tests were recorded day-to-day in notebooks, sketchbooks and studio diaries prior to writing up in the Appendix.
- iii) Wayfaring, discussed below, was employed as a method in the studio tests. Each test was designed once the previous test had been completed.
- iv) Wayfaring as an activity was used to collect photographic data in the urban and rural environment. Images were stored digitally.
- v) Test results in the form of clay page compositions were publicly exhibited and feedback noted.

⁶ Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14.3 (1988), 586.

- vi) The results of the research were subjected, through exposition and exhibition, to peer feedback, acknowledging multiple perspectives within Fine Art and the Humanities.

The following methods were used for data analysis:

- i) Qualitative methods were employed as follows,
 - a. Documented test observations were reviewed to detect patterns of repeated words. For example, the frequent use of the word ‘grid’ was identified. The role of the grid is analysed in Chapter 4.
 - b. During the tests, attention was paid to behaviour repetition. For example, it was noted that surface compositions repeatedly responded to the edges, or the limits, of the clay page and the role of the clay page edges is analysed in Chapter 3.
 - c. The clay pages as a complete body of work were reviewed and analysed to identify any familial characteristics which were less apparent on a test-to-test basis. The role of colour was identified, and this is analysed in Chapter 2.
- ii) External contexts, that is, frameworks from outside the field of ceramics, were used as direct analogies to analyse data. For example, Derrida’s theory of the parergon and Marin’s process of framework were applied in Chapter 3 when analysing the role of the clay page edges. In Chapter 4, the use of the grid by artists such as Larry Poons and Sol LeWitt were applied in the analysis of the clay page’s use of the grid.
- iii) Metaphors were applied as a method of analysis. In Chapter 1, Calvino’s observations on his desired qualities in writing – notably lightness – were applied as a metaphor to analyse the clay page. In Chapter 5, the metaphor of wayfaring, and its relationship with the language of repetition and the ordinary and everyday, was used to analyse the same characteristics in the clay page.
- iv) Data analysis was performed concurrently with data generation and collection. The process was iterative and reflexive. Analysis was also undertaken using mind-mapping diagrams and matrices whilst reflective writing aided synthesis and interpretation.

Wayfaring

Wayfaring plays an integral role throughout this research: it is part of my research's methodological approach, it is a research activity and it is a method of data generation, collection and analysis.

Ingold, writing in *Lines: a Brief History*, identifies wayfaring as a mode of travel, a way of traversing the landscape. He states that the wayfarer is 'continually on the move', and that they are their own movement.⁷ He observes that 'the wayfarer is instantiated in the world as a line of travel'.⁸ Ingold calls such lines of travel 'trails'.⁹ He argues that when wayfaring 'the traveller's movement – their orientation and pace, their trail – is continually responsive to their perceptual monitoring of the environment that is revealed along the way'.¹⁰ The wayfarer is therefore alert; they react to the environment that they are in, they are not bound by a planned route. Ingold additionally argues that the wayfarer is in a dynamic and engaged relationship with their environment. He writes that 'the wayfarer has to sustain himself, both perceptually and materially, through an active engagement with the country that opens up along his path'.¹¹ Wayfaring, Ingold posits, is movement and thought together; a dynamic process which 'couples locomotion and perception'.¹²

In this research, I am a wayfarer who travels through an unmapped research landscape. I set off on a journey with my research questions, and as I proceed along my research path, I document the route taken, the trail laid down. As Ingold states,

In wayfaring [...] one follows a path [...] reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along. Only upon reaching his destination [...] can the traveller truly be said to have found his way.¹³

The academic Anne L Cunliffe has written about wayfaring as a research methodology as follows:

⁷ Ingold, *Lines: a Brief History*, p. 78.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 77-85.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 78.

¹² Ibid., p. 81.

¹³ Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, p. 16.

Wayfaring is the embodied experience of walking/moving along paths in our research landscapes paying attention – where attend means to wait and be open to what may unfold. We can prepare for the activity of walking/research with a backpack of tentative interests and ideas, with a commitment to the craft or art of inquiry rather than to a fixed position, control or prediction.¹⁴

Cunliffe neatly expresses the activity of wayfaring as a research methodology, of moving through the research landscape, of paying attention, of noticing and being receptive to what takes place. As a wayfaring researcher nothing is pre-determined, but I am alert, open and responsive to what takes place. I adjust my 'orientation and pace' as required.¹⁵ I carry in my research rucksack a sense of curiosity embodied by my research questions. The result of one investigation frequently leads to the determination of the next.

Cunliffe argues that as researchers, we should 'conduct our research as a scholarship of possibilities' with a sense of openness, imagination and reflexivity.¹⁶ Wayfaring as a methodological approach, allows detailed research questions to emerge in specific locations within the research landscape. For example, when investigating the effect of coloured slip and glaze placement on the surface of the clay page, an outcome was observed that could not have been pre-determined: an emerging language of glaze cut-outs.¹⁷ Based on these observations I designed a test that investigated the glaze cut-outs specifically without coloured slip. A balanced tension between presence and absence was identified as a result.¹⁸

By exploring the research landscape, by finding footholds, by using my senses and understanding of materials, I improvise a path through the terrain and a line of knowledge is forged and substantiated. Ingold has stated that the wayfarer experiences 'the integration of knowledge *along* a path of travel' and that the wayfarer 'knows as he goes'.¹⁹ In this thesis the wayfarer as researcher documents the path, the trail, and forges new knowledge. My accumulated knowledge of that path is embodied by the practice-based findings and thesis.

¹⁴ Anne L Cunliffe, 'Wayfaring: A Scholarship of Possibilities or Let's not get Drunk on Abstraction', *M@n@gement*, 21.4 (2018), 1433.

¹⁵ Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, p. 81.

¹⁶ Cunliffe, 'Wayfaring: A Scholarship of Possibilities or Let's not get Drunk on Abstraction', 1433.

¹⁷ See Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations, Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation.

¹⁸ See Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations, Test 4. Surface composition using only transparent glaze.

¹⁹ Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, p. 91.

Wayfaring as an activity, of gathering visual data, is undertaken almost daily, on foot. I predominantly walk in urban contexts – from the front door, from a station, from a new unfamiliar location in the city – but I also wayfare in rural settings. Whatever the location, the activity is the same, that of putting one foot down in front of the other repeatedly, of being interested in what surrounds you and letting that draw you through the landscape. Wayfaring in this research is cumulative; it is a repeated activity. It is a process through which information is accreted; it provides a constant source of cognitive and visual material. Wayfaring is a means of gathering data.

I gather the cognitive and visual material that I encounter through wayfaring using a camera phone: the screen is used to frame and abstract the visual information from its environment. An ordinary everyday camera phone is used because it is light and portable meaning I can travel quickly and nimbly: I like to carry as little as possible. It's something I always have with me. The camera phone's digital folder of images becomes a visual diary, a record of information gathered.

Ingold, when writing about the textility of making (its weave-like nature), argues that 'making is less a matter of projection than one of *gathering*'.²⁰ He continues, 'As they make things, practitioners bind their own pathways or lines of becoming into the texture of the world.'²¹ In my research, the 'pathways or lines of becoming' are both the lines, or trails, of wayfaring – which are created whilst I am in the landscape, gathering information – and the lines created by the work that is derived from that information – the clay pages.

This gathering of visual information is not 'an attempt to exhaust a place' as Georges Perec tried in Paris by sitting in one place and attempting to record all the things that evolved around him.²² Rather, it is selective – only that which is required is abstracted and recorded; the small extracted from the large.

Each of the thesis chapters opens with the narration of a particular wayfaring journey undertaken during the research. Whilst the experience of each journey is pertinent to that

²⁰ Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 178.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Georges Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2010).

individual chapter, its exact geographical location is not. The journey's location is therefore alluded to rather than explained in detail.

Contextual and literature review; theoretical frameworks

The contextual setting for this research is the field of UK ceramic practice. Approaches to the contemporary field and the critical thinking around it have been articulated in several recent publications. Books such as *Breaking the Mould: New Approaches to Ceramics* and Dahn's *New Directions in Ceramics: from Spectacle to Trace* survey the field by examining the work of individual artists and makers whilst applying broad categorisations to aid navigation, such as performance, installation, raw clay, figuration, vessel, surface, the surreal and the earthly.²³ *Vitamin C: Clay + Ceramic in Contemporary Art* undertakes a medium-specific survey of contemporary art by artist, without attempting categorisation.²⁴ Livingstone and Petrie's *The Ceramics Reader* surveys critical texts and key themes within contemporary ceramics, covering the categories noted above and additional themes such as new technologies, metaphor, sculpture, gender and identity.²⁵ Such categorisations are necessarily broad and definitions can vary, as these publications acknowledge. But the field as articulated by those publications assists, to a certain degree, the location of this research.

The research is conducted in a speculative manner: that is, I introduce the notion of the paper page to clay to see what emerges. Therefore, the location of the research emerges as the thesis progresses. For example, the repetitive nature of the clay page suggests a connection with the notion of installation; the imperfect nature of the clay page, and its relationship with wayfaring, suggests a connection with ceramics as metaphor – of the self in the world.

The potential for locating the research within existing categories is limited. It is therefore helpful to also situate the research at a more granular level – that is, relative to those artists working with clay who are exploring territory that in broad terms relates to the page, although,

²³ Cigalle Hanaor, ed., *Breaking the Mould: New Approaches to Ceramics* (London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd., 2007) and Jo Dahn, *New Directions in Ceramics: from Spectacle to Trace*. (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

²⁴ Louisa Elderton and Rebecca Morrill, eds., *Vitamin C: Clay + Ceramic in Contemporary Art* (London: Phaidon, 2017).

²⁵ Andrew Livingstone and Kevin Petrie, eds., *The Ceramics Reader* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

as described below, each have adopted approaches that are very different from each other, and from the one I have taken within this research.

The British artist Edmund de Waal (b. 1964) has created exhibitions which explore his relationship with clay, books, words, poetry and writing. Key, however, for de Waal are literal words and poetry. For example, in his 2020 exhibition *library of exile*, de Waal placed vessels and books written about exile side by side: an exercise in ‘dialogue and contemplation’.²⁶ As part of his 2019 exhibition *breathe*, de Waal created an artist’s book in which paper pages and text, relating to the poetry of Paul Celan, were partially painted over with porcelain slip to connect poetry, the written word, porcelain and the colour white. This book was presented alongside ‘vitrines, shelves, and diptychs conceived as open books’.²⁷ In de Waal’s exhibition *a sort of speech*, also held in 2019, he included paper-thin sheets of porcelain ‘leant or stacked like pages of a notebook against vessels or marble fragments’, to explore the ‘immersive qualities of writing’.²⁸ These sheets were embossed with de Waal’s own handwritten words.

Other artists have taken books as found objects and used them as a starting point for their work. The British ceramic artist Sara Radstone (b. 1955) has explored the book and its relationship to the word ‘volume’ in her work *Corpus* (2001–2).²⁹ Radstone made moulds of forty-four open books and cast them in clay to explore the relationship between the interior of the book and vessel. Other artists, such as Yohei Nishimura (b. 1947) from Japan, have sought to transform the nature of paper by firing whole books in a kiln.³⁰

My research follows a new, distinct and different path to the approaches adopted by the artists noted above, by focusing not on the book or on the written word, but exclusively and in depth on the investigation of a new form and surface language, derived from the introduction of the paper page to clay. To that end, literature that examines the history and nature of the paper

²⁶ De Waal, Edmund, ‘library of exile’, at the British Museum, London (12 March 2020 – 12 January 2021) <https://www.edmunddewaal.com/making/library-of-exile-1#1> (accessed 23 May 2021).

²⁷ De Waal, Edmund, ‘breathe’, Ivorypress, Madrid (20 February – 18 May 2019) <https://www.edmunddewaal.com/making/breath#1> (accessed 23 May 2021).

²⁸ De Waal, Edmund, *a sort of speech*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin (22 September – 2 November 2019) <https://www.edmunddewaal.com/making/a-sort-of-speech> (accessed 23 May 2021).

²⁹ Hannah Savage, *More Than Words: A New Exhibition of Work by Sara Radstone* <https://www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/blog/more-than-words-by-hannah-savage-york-art-gallery/> (accessed 23 May 2021).

³⁰ Cavin-Morris Gallery, ‘Spent Heat: the works of Yohei Nishimura’ <http://www.cavinmorris.com/spent-heat> (accessed 15 November 2020).

page has been instrumental. For example, Lothar Müller's *White Magic: the Age of Paper* explores the history and manufacture of the paper page and the language of its form and surface.³¹ Bonnie Mak's *How the Page Matters* sets out the architecture of the page and how it can be read and understood.³² Both publications have helped to map out the practical and metaphorical role of the paper page in this research. The page is examined from a philosophical perspective by Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) in *Paper Machine* where he scrutinises the printed and typed page.³³

The thesis draws upon the work of writers who think about how materials are used. Glenn Adamson's theory of material intelligence and the writings of the American artist Anni Albers (1899-1994) have informed my thought processes.³⁴ I also draw on other contextual settings for theorisation. For example, the research draws upon on concepts and themes associated with Modernism, such as geometric abstraction, colour, flatness, minimalism, repetition and the grid. The research can also be seen as part of the aesthetic legacy of Kazimir Malevich's (1879-1935) *Black Square*.³⁵

Texts, writings and observations by theorists and artists whose work provides context to this research include Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the New Millennium*, and in particular the essay 'Lightness'; Johannes Itten's (1888-1967) colour theory as described in *The Art of Color*; Rosalind Krauss' seminal essay 'The Grid'; the thoughts of the American artists Sol LeWit (1928-2007) and Larry Poons (b. 1937) regarding the role of the grid within the artwork and Agnes Martin's (1912-2004) relationship with abstraction, imperfection and the self.³⁶

The thesis also draws upon and applies theoretical frameworks more typically associated with the analysis of fine art. These include Derrida's deconstructionist approach to the framing of the artwork in his essay 'The Parergon'; the writings of those that have responded to and

³¹ Lothar Müller, *White Magic: the Age of Paper* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

³² Mak, *How the Page Matters*.

³³ Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³⁴ Glenn Adamson, *Fewer Better Things* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Anni Albers, *Selected Writings on Design* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000).

³⁵ Iwona Blazwick, ed., *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society* (London; Munich; New York: Whitechapel Gallery; Prestel, 2015).

³⁶ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (London: Penguin, 2009);

Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color: The Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Color*, trans. Ernst van Haagen (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973) (originally published in German as *Kunst der Farbe* by Otto Meier Verlag, 1961);

Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids', *October*, 9 (Summer 1979), 50-64.

extended Derrida's thinking, such as the philosopher Louis Marin, the academic Paul Duro and the philosopher and critic Christopher Norris; Charles Sterling and Norman Bryson's examination of rhopography in *Looking at the Overlooked*, and Alain de Botton's analysis of a Ben Nicholson painting and its relationship with the ordinary and everyday, in *Art as Therapy*.³⁷

Lastly, beyond the contextual setting of ceramics and the theoretical context of Modernism and fine art, the research draws upon the poetry of the contemporary poet Naomi Shihab Nye and her focus on small-scale objects and material realities; an aspect of E F Schumacher's economic theory in *Small is Beautiful*; and importantly, the anthropological writings of Tim Ingold, in particular his theory of wayfaring as outlined in his book *Lines: a Brief History*.³⁸

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, 'The Parergon', *October*, 9 (Summer, 1979): 3–41; Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990); Alain De Botton and John Armstrong, *Art as Therapy* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2013).

³⁸ E. F. Schumacher and Jonathan Porritt, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (London: Vintage, 1993); Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*.

1. Setting Out: the physiology of the clay page

1.1. A journey through the city

One afternoon, a few years ago, I found myself riding on the top deck of a bus and I saw to my right, out of the window, a building rendered flat (Figure 1).



Figure 1. A scaffolded brick façade, somewhere in London (2016)
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Its volume, interior capacity, structure, divisions, thresholds and rooms had gone. The brick-built façade stood bolt upright, supported by a network of metal girders, crisscrossed by walkways and a grid of scaffolding poles.³⁹ It was the front slice of a building, the bit with the

³⁹ 'Façadism is the unfortunate practice of destroying everything apart from the front wall of an old building and constructing a new building behind it.' Façadism as defined by The Gentle Author in *The Creeping Plague of Ghastly Façadism* (London: Spitalfields Life Books Ltd., 2019), p. 1.

icing and the decoration. It was like a medical slide ready for the microscope. And behind it, a void.

The traffic became stationary, and I was temporarily mesmerised by the scene. The building should have been volume-ous, three-dimensional – and yet there it was presented flat. The slice, the façade, became integral to my experience of it. Its flatness, in that moment, became a new way for me to view and think about the building and its relationship to volume. I became unsure as to whether the volume had been lost or whether it had been compressed into a flat-fronted-ness. I wondered if it needed a sign saying, ‘This is not a Building’.⁴⁰

The art critic Clement Greenberg argued in his essay ‘Modernist Painting’ that painting had been struggling for centuries to free itself from its inherent flat plane.⁴¹ He wrote that the old masters created ‘the most vivid illusion of three-dimensional space’, providing depth and volume through the use of perspective with one viewpoint, the flat surface masquerading as something three-dimensional.⁴² The scene beside me on the bus that day was the reverse of that: what should have been actively three-dimensional had been made flat.

As the bus moved on, my thoughts about the building façade took me to my experiences of working with clay. Clay is a material that is understood as sculptural and architectural. When you open a bag of it, pre-made and pugged at the factory, there is an expectation of three-dimensional possibility ahead; an infinite number of making possibilities. But this flat-fronted building made me think: could I put that aside and make a flat form and surface in clay? Would it be a slice or a façade? Or would it exist as compressed volume, like a car through a crusher?

Returning from my journey I started leafing through my sketchbook, reviewing collaged compositions. I imagined the volume of the sketchbook reducing, page by page, until there was just one page. And in holding that one page in my hand I found myself thinking about that page as a parallel to the building façade and its lost volume.

⁴⁰ A reference to Rene Magritte’s 1929 representation of a pipe titled *La Trahison des images* (Ceci n'est pas une pipe) (The Treachery of images [This is not a pipe]). <https://collections.lacma.org/node/239578> (accessed 28 April 2021).

⁴¹ Clement Greenberg, ‘Modernist Painting’, in *Modern Art and Modernism: a Critical Anthology*, ed. by Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 5–10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

1.1. Introduction

The blank surface of the page is an empty space or a canvas waiting for an inscription, for contact, for interaction with me. It is a surface on which to think, to reveal ideas hidden, unfamiliar until their point of beginning. It is a site for working something out: an unknown puzzle or conundrum. Something troubling or bothersome can be soothed by the plain page. Each flat page is identical. Each page is a boundary or a frame within which a composition can be composed and placed. Yet the page can also seem infinite, endlessly fascinating and enduring through qualities such as its sameness, its repeatability, its reliability, its flatness, its thinness.

The page seemed to be just enough of something, something easily overlooked, an everyday thing. It was a repeatable unit. It was precise and concise, compact and portable. Its ability to wait for interaction with me spoke of quietness, and the surface offered the possibility of storytelling. The page, whose size was once governed by the span of an arm, seemed to exist in the space in front of the body, a space one understands when thinking about throwing on the wheel.⁴³ If these qualities could exist in the paper page, I asked myself: why could they not exist in clay?

Having established the wayfaring narrative of how the idea for clay page came about, this chapter examines how the clay page is made. It looks at the choice of material for the body of the clay page; it analyses how its dimensions and proportions are determined; it examines the clay page's characteristics of thinness, flatness, lightness, minimality and portability; and it highlights the clay page's correspondences with the paper page. It interrogates the character and behaviour of the clay page and it identifies an emerging language of restricted parameters and a connection between the clay page and the self.

1.2. Clay body: porcelain paperclay

Glenn Adamson, speaking at the 2018 symposium *Ceramic Plasticity*, argued that artists who use clay are being both specific and particular in their use of that precise material: that is, they

⁴³ Müller, *White Magic: the Age of Paper*, p. 74.

use clay because it plays a significant role in the construction and narrative of an object or work, a role that another material could not play.⁴⁴ He observed that people are accustomed to the English language being employed intelligently and to express intelligence (words can be specifically chosen and arranged to convey a point of view) and he argued that clay, as a material, could be used in the same way: it could be used to convey what he termed ‘material intelligence’.

Porcelain paperclay, which consists of a porcelain clay body mixed with paper or flax fibres, was selected to make the page in clay because of its material intelligence. Paperclay was independently developed by several artists and researchers in the late 1980s and 1990s, including (but not exclusively) Rosette Gault (b. 1951) in the USA, Graham Hay (b. 1959) in Australia and Carol Farrow (1944-2012) and Ian Gregory (1942-2021) in the UK.⁴⁵ Paperclay is available commercially.⁴⁶

Porcelain paperclay conveys material intelligence in the following ways within this research:

a) It facilitates a direct correspondence with the archetype of the paper page through a shared material: paper

Porcelain paperclay’s paper fibres act as a bridge material – as a physical material connection – between the clay page and the paper page. Whilst artists such as Yohei Nishimura have kiln-fired whole books of paper pages to produce fragile clay structures (exploiting the fact that china clay is used to coat certain papers), paperclay is used in this research to establish the primacy of clay to make a page-based form that is strong, clear and distinct.⁴⁷ Both approaches

⁴⁴ Glenn Adamson, speaking at *Ceramic Plasticity* symposium, West Dean College, Chichester (26 January 2018).

⁴⁵ Joyce Michaud, ‘Paperclay Sculpture with Ian Gregory’, *Clay Times* (Sept/Oct 1999)

<http://www.ian-gregory.co.uk/paperclay.html> (accessed 26 May 2020).

Jeoung-Ah Kim, ‘Paper-Composite Porcelain: Characterisation of Material Properties and Workability from a Ceramic Art and Design Perspective’ (PhD thesis, The School of Design and Crafts (HDK) at the Göteborg University, 2006), p. 17. https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/19089/1/gupea_2077_19089_1.pdf (accessed 5 September 2021).

Leanne April Frisinger, ‘Paperclay in Recent South African Ceramics: Continuity and Change in Studio Works’ (MA thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2012), p. 16.

https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10413/8727/Frisinger_Leanne_April_2012.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 5 September 2021).

⁴⁶ This research uses Scarva FLAX Paper Clay ES600 Porcelain. Further information can be found at <https://www.scarva.com/en/gb/Scarva-FLAX-Paper-Clay-ES600-Porcelain/m-72.aspx> (accessed 26 May 2020).

⁴⁷ Cavin-Morris Gallery, ‘Spent Heat: the works of Yohei Nishimura’, <http://www.cavinmorris.com/spent-heat> (accessed 15 November 2020).

burn out the paper material in the kiln, but paperclay enables the translation of the idea of the page into clay, rather than kiln-firing an actual paper page.

b) Its plasticity enables the making of a flat, thin page-based form

Porcelain paperclay's paper fibres give plasticity to porcelain. This plasticity enables the making of a flat, thin porcelain clay page. Flatness and thinness are characteristics which correspond with those of the paper page and are discussed later in this chapter.

European porcelain, whose main constituent is kaolin or china clay, is less plastic than other clay bodies due to its larger primary clay particle size.⁴⁸ By using porcelain in combination with flax or paper fibres in the form of paperclay, the porcelain becomes far more plastic. The fibres, as well as being longer than clay particles, contain cellulose molecules which spiral round a hollow core called the lumen.⁴⁹ The lumen acts as a microscopic tube and holds water when wet.⁵⁰ Chains of cellulose molecules form a lattice-like structure within the clay body and act as an armature for the porcelain.⁵¹ This structure gives the porcelain a strength and plasticity which means it can be manipulated in its green state to make a page in clay that is both thin and flat.

c) It facilitates and conveys lightness

Porcelain paperclay's paper fibres facilitate and convey an experience of lightness. For example, when porcelain paperclay is fired in the kiln, its paper fibres burn away, leaving small spaces within the clay body's internal structure. The resulting clay page is therefore physically lighter than an equivalent work in porcelain alone. Lightness as a characteristic of the clay page is discussed later in this chapter.

d) Its colour corresponds with the paper page and it can act as a vehicle for colour

Porcelain paperclay conveys a correspondence with the paper page through its colour. For example, the colour of high-fired porcelain paperclay corresponds closely with the colour of sketchbook paper. Both paper and porcelain are light in colour and are closer to white than

⁴⁸ Frank and Jane Hamer, *The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques* (London: A & C Black, 2004), p. 270, 273.

⁴⁹ Anne Lightwood, *Working with Paperclay and other Additives* (Wiltshire: The Crowood Press Ltd., 2000), p. 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

any other colour. Because of this, porcelain paperclay is also able to hold colour itself and therefore act as a vehicle for colour. Like paper, porcelain can be adapted to make a range of colours, and is therefore a visually flexible material. The significance of colour in this research is discussed in Chapter 2.

e) It can be used to convey a language of minimal means

The interest in minimal means in this research is conveyed by the high shrinkage rate of porcelain paperclay, which creates a precise and concise, compact and dense physical form. Throughout the making process porcelain is in a continual state of contraction, initially through water evaporation in its green state and then through chemical change in the kiln firing. The fired and finished clay page is around 27 per cent smaller in surface area than when it is first cut from green clay.⁵² This high rate of shrinkage generates a dense and compact clay body that occupies the smallest amount of space it possibly can. The density and strength of porcelain additionally facilitates the post-bisque processes applied to the edges of the clay page, such as sanding with a diamond pad to form thin edges whose appearance belie their own solidity. The clay page is small, yet strong. Minimal means is a recurring theme throughout the thesis.

1.3. Proportions: international paper sizes

Having selected porcelain paperclay as the materially intelligent clay body, the next question I asked was: what size should the page in clay be? Specifically, how tall and how wide? The following factors influenced the determination of the clay page's proportions.

I was interested in working in a self-sufficient manner, delegating no part of the making process: that is, I wanted the role of the artist and maker to be paramount and for the clay page to be made without assistance or access to commercial facilities.⁵³ This meant that the clay page should be small enough to be fired in the largest size of kiln that can be run on domestic electricity.⁵⁴ I wanted the clay page to be made comfortably in the space directly in front of

⁵² This represents a linear shrinkage of about 15% to 16%.

⁵³ Without assistance in moving work or lifting kiln shelves, or the requirement for a larger kiln or 3-phase electricity.

⁵⁴ Kiln and firing information can be found in the Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations, Technical information and notes.

the body (Figure 2), an intimate space encompassed by the span of the arms; for there to be a physical making relationship between the clay page and the body.⁵⁵ Additionally, I was interested in making a thin clay page that would reflect a correspondence with the thinness of the paper page.

Each of the factors noted above – kiln size, the space in front of the body, the notion of thinness – indicated that the clay page should have smaller, rather than larger, proportions. The clay page should be its own visually distinct thing, clear and new, distinguishable from an existing clay archetype such as the tile.

International paper sizes

Having determined that the proportions of the clay page should be smaller rather than larger, I tested the dimensions of standard international paper sizes as a template for the page in clay. Such dimensions not only embody the criteria outlined above; they are also a repeatable proportional unit and signify a direct correspondence with the paper page.

International paper proportions – such as the A series under the International Standard ISO 216 – give the viewer a subconscious reference point; they are an established and recognisable part of our everyday life.⁵⁶ For example, A4 is commonly used for typed communications, whilst A6 is the size of a typical postcard. By taking such dimensions as a template, the research draws upon an association with the proportions of a known archetype, an archetype whose visual language is part of the ordinary and the everyday.

Dimensions of the clay page – A6

The research therefore tested A6, then adopted it as a set of repeatable measurements. A6 is the size of a standard postcard and measures 105mm x 148mm.

⁵⁵ Appendix, Part C: Studio, shows the scale of the clay page relative to the maker and the studio environment.

⁵⁶ ISO 216:2007(en) 'Writing paper and certain classes of printed matter — Trimmed sizes — A and B series, and indication of machine direction'. <https://www.iso.org/standard/36631.html> (accessed 25 August 2020).



Figure 2. Working in the space in front of the body (2018)
© 2018 Stefan Stefanou. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

By corresponding with the measurements of the A6 postcard, the page in clay makes an additional correspondence with the characteristics and function of the postcard. The postcard is a small, seemingly everyday object, connected to journeys and travel, to stories of time and place and to memory and written correspondence. In selecting the postcard as a set of dimensions in this research a deliberate choice was made to reference both the visual and metaphorical language that is associated with the postcard.

Dimensions of the clay page – A5

The research then tested, and adopted, an adjusted arrangement of A5 as a set of repeatable measurements. The true A5 dimensions of 148mm x 210mm were modified slightly in this research to approximately 167mm x 210mm. I made the modification to distance the clay page from any visual correspondence with the proportions of a clay tile. Such correspondences are subtle and arguably subjective, but by maintaining a vertical length of 210mm and increasing the horizontal measurement to 167mm, such connotations were minimised. In the adjusted A5 configuration there is a clear visual correspondence with a paper archetype – the A5 page – rather than a clay archetype, the tile.

Restricted parameters

The proportions of the clay page are limited in this research to the two sizes noted above, with a single surface facing the viewer. These restrictions, in addition to the sole use of porcelain paperclay, are not a limitation on creativity or outcomes. Instead, they are a mechanism or framework within which to work infinitely; the restrictions stimulate rather than suppress. As Derrida observed in *Paper Machine*, his creativity was ‘provoked’ by the constraint of the paper page.⁵⁷ He responded to ‘the narrowness of its area, its fragility, its hardness, rigidity [and] passivity’ as opposed to the ‘interactiveness’ of the computer screen.⁵⁸ The concept of restricted parameters will be seen throughout the thesis.

⁵⁷ Derrida, *Paper Machine*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

1.4. Thinness

After establishing the horizontal and vertical proportions of the clay page, two related questions arose: how thin could the clay page be, and how stable would it be? Whilst my practice-based investigations did not set out to achieve the actual thinness of paper, I intended, as noted above, to establish a visual correspondence with the paper page through a perception of thinness.

Throughout my practice-based investigations, I rolled porcelain paperclay increasingly thinly to determine where the boundaries of minimal depth lay. The clay was first passed through a weighted roller, wound by hand, before being left to stiffen between boards. When firm enough to hold its own form, I rolled the sheet more thinly, this time by hand on both sides. It was then left between boards for a few more hours before a final rolling, again by hand, to further thin the sheet. The clay page was then cut from the sheet. I judged the thinness, or depth, of the clay page by hand and by eye, and through experience gained during the making process, rather than by direct measurement.

It was via this process of rolling, hardening and thinning that a relationship, or balanced tension, between thinness and stability developed. The thinner the clay, the more unstable it became, in both the making and the firing. At the boundary between thinness and stability, a small amount of waving and warping of the edge of the clay page occurred. If the clay page was too thin, the waving became pronounced. However, when it was present more subtly, the waving deepened the correspondence between the clay page and the paper page: the undulations at the edge suggested movement and emphasised the thinness of the clay form. Through the balanced tension between scale and stability, it was established that the A6 clay pages could be made more thinly (a finished depth of approximately 1.5mm) than the adjusted A5 clay pages (a finished depth of approximately 2.0mm).

My practice-based investigations also determined that the depth of the clay page should be adjusted according to the degree to which the surface area of the clay page was to be painted with slip. For example, if porcelain slip was to be applied over most of the surface area of the clay page, then the clay page had to be rolled less thinly to counteract the marginally higher rate of shrinkage of the porcelain slip. This made the clay page more stable. If the clay page was too thin, the differential rate of shrinkage caused the clay page to curl upwards.

The perception of thinness was further emphasised by sanding the edges of the clay page. For example, after the bisque firing, a diamond pad was used to thin and visually soften hard-angled edges, thus increasing the visual and haptic perception of thinness around the perimeter of the clay page. This thinness gave the clay page a delicate appearance – a perceived fragility which belied the clay page’s actual strength and depth.

Although other ceramicists have used thinness within their work – for example, the Danish ceramicist Bodil Manz, who works with slip-cast eggshell porcelain to make vessels with extremely thin walls – my exploration of the correspondence between the paper page and a thin clay form represents a different and new direction in ceramic practice.

For Manz, the thinness of her vessels is a way of achieving the translucency that is essential for the reading of her enamel surface compositions through the vessel walls; it is a means by which she can play with light and surface decoration. She writes that the ‘translucent porcelain [...] is so thin that the outer and inner decoration merge to form a single composition’.⁵⁹ David Whiting has described her vessel walls as ‘like taut tissue’ and ‘a canvas stretched like a skin’.⁶⁰ Manz attains the thinness needed to produce this translucency by using the established archetypal form of a vessel to provide structural stability and support. By contrast, my research takes an archetype established outside of ceramic practice – the paper page – in which the quality of thinness is inherent, and seeks to translate it into a stable, flat clay form. Through repeated testing, I identified the minimum depth at which a clay page of given dimensions can hold its form when fired. With these key dimensions established, my research builds upon the page’s quality of thinness and looks at flatness.

1.5. Flatness: volume

The next investigation related to the flatness of the clay page. I was interested in achieving a correspondence with the flatness of a paper page, the aim of which, was to provide a horizontal (or vertical when displayed) working surface on which everything could be viewed at the same time.

⁵⁹ Bodil Manz, <https://bodilmanz.com/Info> (accessed 1 December 2020).

⁶⁰ David Whiting, ‘Bodil Manz’. <https://www.oxfordceramics.com/artists/52-bodil-manz-/overview/> (accessed 30 June 2020).

Flatness in this research is not a machine or factory-made flatness, but a hand-rolled flatness, in which the form and surface of the clay page contain subtle and variable undulations. These undulations were most visible when the clay page was later covered with a shiny, transparent glaze, generating a surface which reflected the light in different directions. The flatness of the clay page was also affected (as noted above) by the occasional subtle warping of the clay page edges.

In the practice-based investigations I applied slip and glaze to the surface of the clay page. These materials subtly but significantly transformed the surface of the clay page, producing delicate shoulders, lips, raised lines and indentations. These characteristics – the rolled undulations, the subtle warping of the edges and the application of slip and glaze to the surface – all resulted in a clay page which appeared flat but was not actually so. Flatness therefore sits in a balanced tension with surface variations.

The flatness of the page-based form meant that the clay page did not purposely hold or enclose any empty volume – as, for example, a vessel would – but rather had its own compressed volume, like a tightly packed suitcase. Therefore, flatness in this research – like thinness – is about the reduction of physical volume. Contained volume is central to the culture, history and narrative of the ceramic archetype, the vessel. The vessel contains a space in which things can be held or stored. It was the archetype of the vessel, in the form of a ceramic jug, that the philosopher Heidegger (1889-1976) chose to illustrate his concept of ‘thingness’ in his essay ‘The Thing’.⁶¹ He wrote, ‘What is the jug? We say: a vessel, something of the kind that holds something else within it.’⁶² In the essay he describes how the walls of the clay jug form the void contained within, whilst the void itself forms the jug.

In making a clay form that corresponded directly with the archetype of the paper page, I intentionally chose to make a thin, light, flat clay page without the ability to contain or hold volume in the way that a jug or vessel would. Given the three-dimensional possibilities of clay, making a flat thin form felt like an act of rebellion – of doing something very simple and uncomplicated. But rebellious acts generate complexity, rather than simplicity. As noted above, the clay page has its own compressed volume: the clay page is not a façade from which

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 164.

the volume has been removed – as observed in the journey on the bus at the start of this chapter – instead, the volume has been compressed into the form itself.

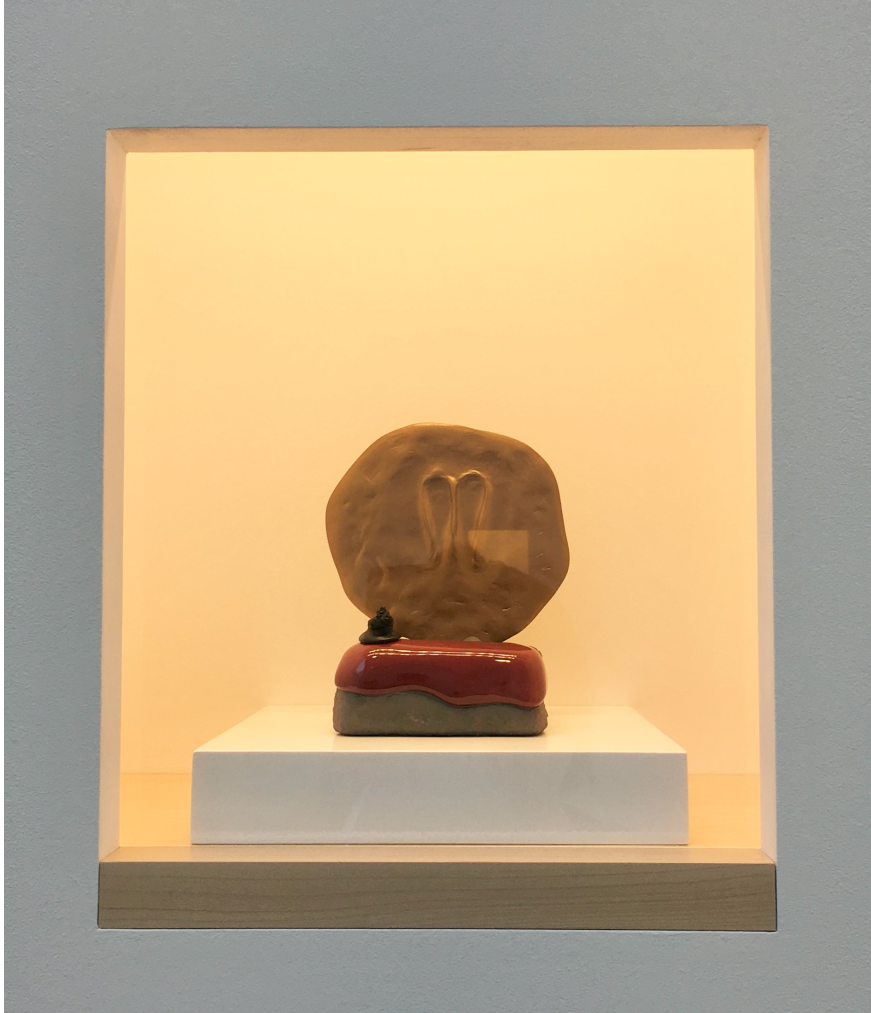


Figure 3. *Incense Inferno*, Ron Nagle (2016)
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A different perspective on the notion of flatness is taken by the American artist Ron Nagle (b. 1939). His small-scale, volume-containing ceramic sculptures have, in recent years, been presented in niches (Figure 3), effectively restricting the observer’s view to a two-dimensional plane. Nagle sees these three-dimensional works as flat and makes a play between volume and flatness by deliberately presenting them in recesses. Jens Hoffmann has observed: ‘His

sculptures are always based on drawings and, though they exist in three dimensions, there is a flatness to the works that he strives for.’⁶³

The flatness of the clay page form parallels the flatness of the archetypal ceramic tile – both are compact forms, typically with visually flat surfaces. This, however, is the only way in which the clay page and the clay tile correlate; in all other ways, the two object types are quite different. For example, the tile is thicker and more structurally robust than the clay page; it is primarily functional – ready to receive grout adhesive and to be permanently fixed to a surface; it can be used to protect a more vulnerable surface, such as plaster, against water; and tiles are abutted to each other to form a continuous surface. The research does not draw upon the language or the history of the tile and when the dimensions of the A5 page-based form seemed to subtly reference the dimensions of a tile, they were adjusted to remove that association.

1.6. Weight: lightness

Having established the external boundaries of the clay page – its horizontal and vertical proportions and its thinness – the weight of the clay page was then considered.

Subtraction of weight

Italo Calvino, in his writings about literature, has provided a useful insight into lightness as a quality in the context of my research. In his memo ‘Lightness’ he wrote that his ‘working method has more often than not involved the subtraction of weight [...] from the structure of stories and from language’.⁶⁴ In doing so, Calvino sought to use less weight but still achieve the same effect: that is, he sought to achieve as much as possible with as little as possible.

The research takes the same approach to the clay page: I subtract as much volume and weight as possible in the making process whilst maintaining a workable and stable form. For example, the clay page is rolled as thinly as possible, thus making it as light as possible; the clay page is pared down to its minimum quantity – it is concise and precise, a deliberate editing. The burning out of the porcelain paperclay paper fibres in the kiln means that the clay page is lighter

⁶³ Elderton and Morrill, eds., *Vitamin C: Clay + Ceramic in Contemporary Art*, p. 202.

⁶⁴ Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, p. 3.

than if it had been made from porcelain alone; the edges of the clay page are sanded to round and further thin them. Each of these actions subtracts weight from the clay page – there is no more material present than is required. The clay page is an expression of minimalism.

Minimalism

Calvino, in drawing his reader's attention to the ability of language to be both light and weighty, observed, 'We would be unable to appreciate the lightness of language if we could not appreciate that language has some weight to it.'⁶⁵ The clay page achieves an appreciable visual and literal lightness when considered in comparison to its heavy beginnings: a weighty bag of clay from which a light, slender form emerges. Lightness also results from making a visually simple form which, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, carries weight and meaning.

Calvino also observed that lightness went hand in hand with 'precision and determination, not with vagueness and the haphazard'.⁶⁶ In the deliberate paring-down of the clay page to its minimum thinness, the clay page is no vague or haphazard thing. Lightness anchors the clay page in minimalism.

Portability

In 'Lightness', Calvino described the appearance of the Florentine poet Guido Cavalcanti (in Boccaccio's *Decameron*) as 'vaulting on nimble legs over a tombstone'.⁶⁷ For Calvino, this expression of lightness of movement was emblematic of lightness in literature. When the idea of lightness of movement is applied to the clay page, a further characteristic is discovered: that of portability. The compact proportions of the clay page, in combination with its characteristics of thinness and lightness, mean that the clay page is easily moveable: it can be readily carried and when in a group, rearranged. Like the wool-based installations of the American minimalist sculptor Fred Sandback (1943-2003) and the haiku-like paintings of the British artist Vicken Parsons (b. 1957), the clay pages can be carried by the artist in a carrier bag.⁶⁸ The pages have none of the physical weight sometimes associated with works in clay and, like a wayfarer, they

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁸ Sandback: Gallery label at Indianapolis Museum of Art, Fred Sandback *Untitled* (1989), <http://collection.imamuseum.org/artwork/51102/> (accessed 28 November 2020). Parsons: see Rachel Spence, 'Great and Small', *Financial Times*, 27 January 2012, <https://www.ft.com/content/1083688a-45b5-11e1-93f1-00144feabdc0> (accessed 20 April 2017).

are metaphorically light on their feet. The page in clay is as light and as minimal and as portable as it can be; it embodies a sense of personal freedom, of the self, of not being weighed down.

The connection with the self can also be seen in the character and behaviour of the clay page.

1.7. Character and behaviour

Each of the clay pages made as part of the practice-based investigations is cut to the same initial measurements, but when the making process is complete the individual clay pages exhibit small variations in size; they have individual character and exhibit individual behaviour. This is due to several factors.

Whilst every effort is made to execute a consistent and accurate cutting of the clay page, the process is performed by an imperfect human using their hands and eyes; the process and the maker are fallible. Differences in clay page size also results from the variable water content of the clay body. The water content of the clay is affected by the timing of the cutting of the page and the studio temperature: both affect the amount of shrinkage in the clay before it is cut and fired. Additionally, variations in size occur during the drying and firing process, in which some clay pages shift/twist marginally in the horizontal plane. Such movements can be reduced at the bisque stage by sanding the fired clay page to true up its proportions. These slight variations in proportions go hand in hand with small variations in depth. As noted above, hand-rolled undulations occur, giving rise to subtle changes in the surface and the depth of the clay page. Additionally, small amounts of waving can occur at the edges of the clay page. All these factors result in clay pages which are subtly, but individually, different from each other.

The clay page, like the paper page, is a repeatable unit, but with variations. Each clay page has a uniquely different character that results from material and human behaviour; each clay page has a connection with the self.

1.8. The clay page as a metaphor for the self

The lightness of the clay page, its embodiment of portability and personal freedom and its character and behaviour, start to reveal an unexpected association with the idea of the self.

There is an enduring relationship between clay and the human body. Common to many religions and beliefs is the idea that humanity was formed from clay by a god or deity; this is a story that occurs across the world in mythology and folklore. Philip Rawson has observed that ‘potters [...] are very much aware of the nature of clay, as coming from the body of the earth, the mother of all’.⁶⁹ There are other metaphorical similarities between the substance of the human body and clay: for example, as the American artist Ebitenyefa Baralaye (b. 1984) noted, when interviewed about the making of a series of clay heads, ‘clay has a similar density to the weight of the body’.⁷⁰ A connection can therefore be made between the density of the clay page and the weight of the body, the weight of the self.

This connection between clay and the human body has resulted in well-established archetypes in the discipline of ceramics that act as a metaphor for the self. For example, the language associated with the archetypal form of the clay vessel corresponds intimately with the language of the human body. Rawson observed that the clay vessel ‘stands erect on a vertical axis, very much as a human being does’, and it is described using terms that reference the human body, such as the neck, the lip, the foot, the shoulder and the belly.⁷¹ The vessel is also a container, a holder of space, a marker of volume; it connects interior and exterior; it can be related to exchanges between people, to giving and receiving, to rituals and to sustenance. The language of the vessel links us to the language of ourselves, the body in space; it is a language of human presence and of physicality.

⁶⁹ Philip S. Rawson, *Ceramics* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 23.

⁷⁰ Ebitenyefa Baralaye and Glenn Adamson, ‘The Weight of Matter: Ebitenyefa Baralaye and Glenn Adamson in Conversation’, *Art Journal Open*, 20 May 2021. <http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=15441> (accessed 1 June 2021).

⁷¹ Rawson, *Ceramics*, p. 100.

Even more directly connected with the self is the archetype of the figurine. This is a language with associations through ceramics from the earliest civilisations to the present day. The oldest known clay figure, the Venus of Dolní Věstonice, dates from between 29,000 to 25,000 BCE.⁷² Later, in the eighteenth century, companies such as Meissen introduced the manufacture of decorative and ornamental figurines in porcelain; the descendants of these figures can now be found throughout the world. The figurine remains a common form in contemporary ceramic practice, for example the British artist Antony Gormley (b. 1950) has used small hand-made clay figures en masse as surrogates for the body in his work *Field (1989 – 2003)*.⁷³ The Canadian ceramicist Greg Payce (b. 1956) combines the language of the vessel and the figurine by constructing figure-shaped negative spaces between vessels.⁷⁴

In addition to the aspects of clay page character and behaviour noted above, the association with the self can be seen in other aspects of the clay page. The clay page is made with intimate reference to the human body – it is made in the space encompassed by the span of the arms, in front of the body. It is made by an individual maker using their own hands, rather than being processed mechanically or industrially; its flatness and thinness are gauged by hand and by eye.

When these characteristics, behaviours and associations are combined, the clay page begins to be understood as a metaphor for the self. However, it is set apart from the archetypal forms of the vessel and the figurine by the establishing of its own references to self. In the chapters which follow, I will demonstrate further connections between the clay page and the self.

1.9. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the clay page is made with direct reference to the language of an archetype external to clay: the paper page. It is made from porcelain paperclay, it uses an adjusted arrangement of the paper page dimensions A5 and A6 and like the paper page, it exhibits the characteristics of flatness, thinness, lightness and portability. The clay page is a minimal form and the parameters for its making are purposefully restricted – one clay, two

⁷² Pitt Rivers Museum catalogue note regarding a plaster cast of the original figurine. <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/the-venus-of-vestonice> (accessed 19 April 2018).

⁷³ Antony Gormley *Field (1989–2003)* www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/245 (accessed 19 April 2018).

⁷⁴ Dahn, *New Directions in Ceramics*, p. 141.

page sizes. But the clay page is infinitely and imperfectly repeatable with each clay page displaying variations in character and behaviour and a series of balanced tensions. The clay page is shown to be a metaphor for the self in the world, set apart from archetypal forms of the vessel and the figurine.

In the next chapter I examine how the clay page presents itself to the world through colour and surface material.

2. Experiencing the Senses: colour

2.1. A walk home

Returning home one evening, I found myself following a fingerpost pointing to a gap between two tall fences. As I made my way along the path, it narrowed and became enclosed by overgrown ivy. I rounded a corner before stepping into an area of trees, and ahead I could see a further signpost, this time missing all its fingers. I decided to follow a gullied path to my right. I walked down a short steep slope which landed at a wrought-iron footbridge above a track. As I crossed over the bridge and started to descend towards the track, a colourful view opened up before me (Figure 4.).



Figure 4. Graffiti, London (2021)
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Framed by the green foliage of spring were the purples, oranges, blues and yellows of graffiti; above them was some bright red metal buttressing. To my right, the sun highlighted the branches, trunk and leaves of a tree. It was an intensely colourful scene; joyful and emotional. It made me stop and look and take it all in. It was arresting. In this moment, the scene was

mine alone; no one walked along my path or on the track below. I hurried to record the view with my camera before the light changed. Eventually, a dog walker came by and broke my reverie and I walked onwards towards home.

2.2. Introduction

The powerful effect of that colour has stayed with me – a feeling of being alive and being present, of experiencing a vivid assault on my senses.

This chapter examines the role of colour in the making and meaning of the clay page. I use Johannes Itten's theory of colour to analyse what is communicated and symbolised by colour, both in the body of the clay page and on its surface. I highlight how my research uses colour to communicate clarity, order, certainty, minimality, emotion and how I use colour symbolically. I then examine how the materials of slip and glaze are used on the surface of the clay page.

2.3. An approach to colour

The painter and Bauhaus teacher Johannes Itten, writing in his colour theory text *The Art of Color*, stated that

color aesthetics may be approached from [...] three directions:
impression (visually)
expression (emotionally)
construction (symbolically).⁷⁵

The three directions in Itten's approach – the visual, the emotional and the symbolic – succinctly articulate how colour is used in this research, both on the surface of the clay page and within the body of the clay page itself. I will examine each of the approaches in turn.

⁷⁵ Itten, *The Art of Color*, p. 17.

Before continuing, it is important to note that the words used to describe colour in this chapter, and in the thesis, are always shorthand for something more complex, something which might appear different from person to person and from day to day. For example, when I first examined a rectangle of glazed yellow slip, it appeared to be a straightforward, uniform block of yellow colour. However, over time, subtle variations, changes in intensity, some highlights and some lowlights, some greens and some blues, were all observed. The yellow was not uniform. In addition, my visual perception of that yellow varied as the light changed: I saw egg yolk (daylight, overcast) and acid yellow (fluorescent light). As the painter and colour theorist Josef Albers (1888-1976) has observed, ‘the nomenclature of colour is most inadequate’.⁷⁶

2.3.1. Visual

a) Visual impression of clarity, order and certainty

Colour is used to convey clarity, order and certainty by using single, separate, intense, evenly applied colours with sharp boundary lines on the surface of the clay page (Figure 5). There is a deliberateness about the way the colour is applied; there are no accidental brush strokes.

Colour is applied in discrete ordered spaces, using masks to define and isolate areas before they are painted with a single colour of slip. There is no blending or abutment: each painted colour is deliberately distinct and separate. The colour is clear, ordered and certain, and reinforced by sharp boundary lines. In Figure 5, crisp, straight, purposeful horizontal and vertical lines demarcate yellow and black rectangles and black and white borders. Itten observed that the horizontal and vertical directionality of colour, when taken together, ‘give an effect of area, a feeling of equilibrium [and] solidity’.⁷⁷ It is this equilibrium and solidity, resulting from the directional boundaries of colour, that my research seeks to achieve.

⁷⁶ Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 3.

⁷⁷ Itten, *The Elements of Color*, p. 92.

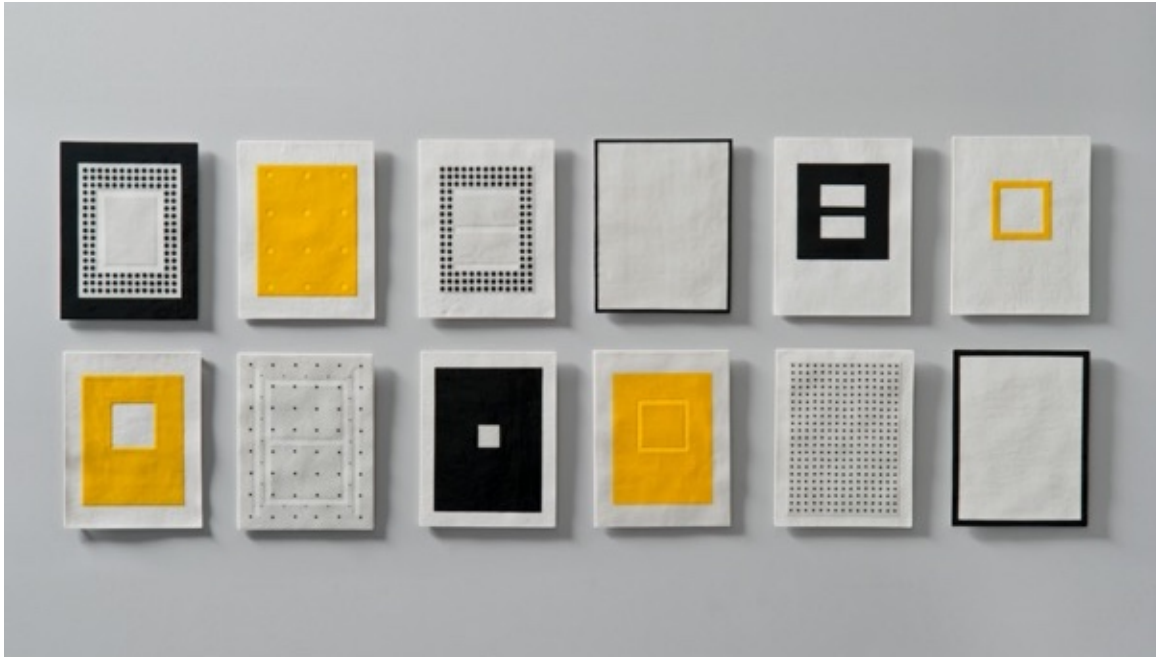


Figure 5. Alison Rees, *Twelve Porcelain Pages* (2017)
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Clarity, order and certainty are further reinforced by the intensity of the colours that are used. For example, the very first colour laid down on the surface of the porcelain clay page was a highly saturated bright, yellow slip. This was not a hesitant colour: it pushed its way forward to make itself known. Because the colour was saturated and of a high intensity, it demanded a certainty of approach, to be applied with full confidence. This certainty of approach is illustrated by Figure 6, in which a slim but solid layer of black slip is evenly applied to the surface of the clay pages, as a printer might do with ink. If the coloured slip is applied too thinly, the porcelain canvas shows through, and the illusion is lost.

A further aspect of clarity is achieved by using colour to direct the eye. For example, in Figure 6 by applying black slip to the surface of the clay page to enclose small white spaces in various configurations, the eye is directed to look at that white space as it moves around from page to page; it is clear where the viewer should look. Equally, in Figure 7, colour takes the eye repeatedly to the centre of the page where there is only one circle of colour present. The Cuban-American abstract and minimalist painter Carmen Herrera (b. 1915) has stated that ‘In the

chaos we live in, I like to put some order.⁷⁸ Like my research, Herrera uses the organisation of colour to achieve a sense of order.

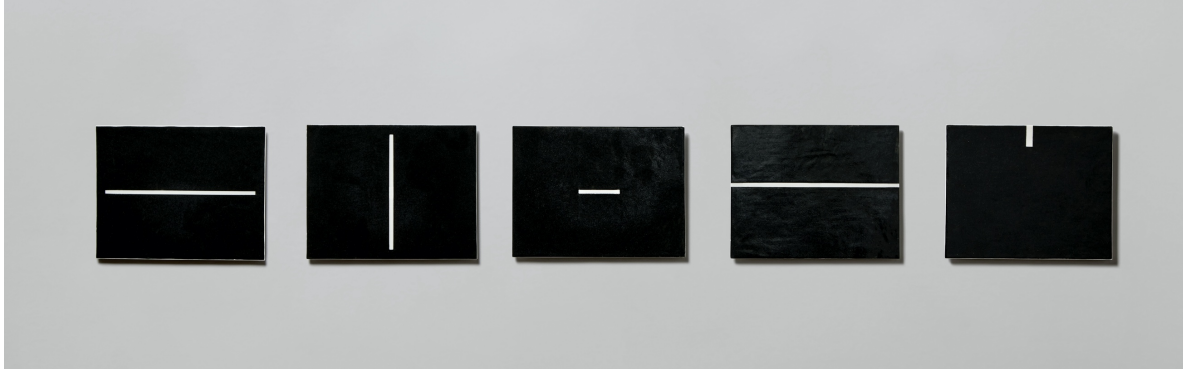


Figure 6. Alison Rees, *Enclosure I* (2019)
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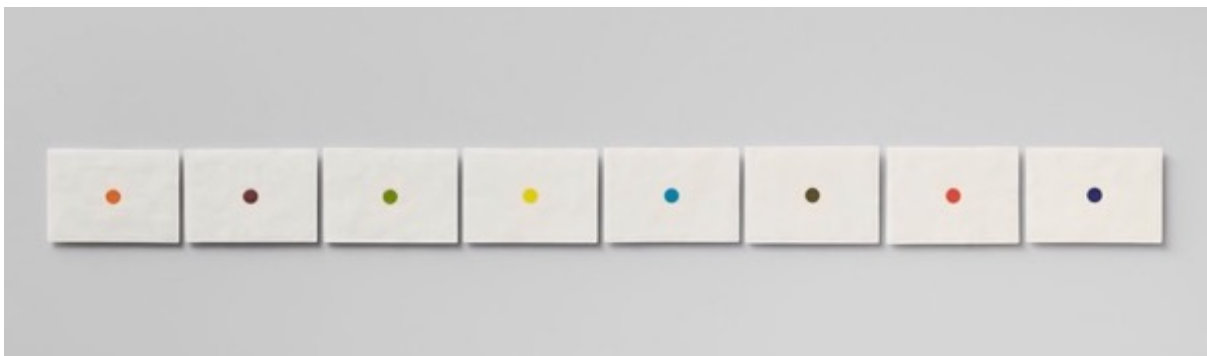


Figure 7. Alison Rees, *Graffiti Spot* (2018)
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b) Visual impression of minimality

The use of colour to convey clarity, order and certainty goes hand in hand with minimality. I use colour to achieve as much as possible, with as little as possible. For example, in Figure 6, I only used two colours to construct the composition: black slip and the white of the porcelain page. In Figure 5, I used three colours: yellow and black slip in combination with the white of the porcelain page. In Figure 8, I used two colours in each of the upper and lower rows. In the

⁷⁸ Carmen Juliá, *Carmen Herrera* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery Ltd., 2009), p. 21.

top row, the clay body was stained blue, and grey slip applied; in the lower row, the clay body was stained red, and black slip applied. In restricting the number of colours in a composition, I used colour to suggest minimality. This minimal approach again has connections with Herrera. Herrera has consistently sought ‘to reduce her visual vocabulary’ and therefore constructs mostly two-colour compositions.⁷⁹ In a 2005 documentary, she stated: ‘I will use as much as I can, but I cannot go any further.’⁸⁰

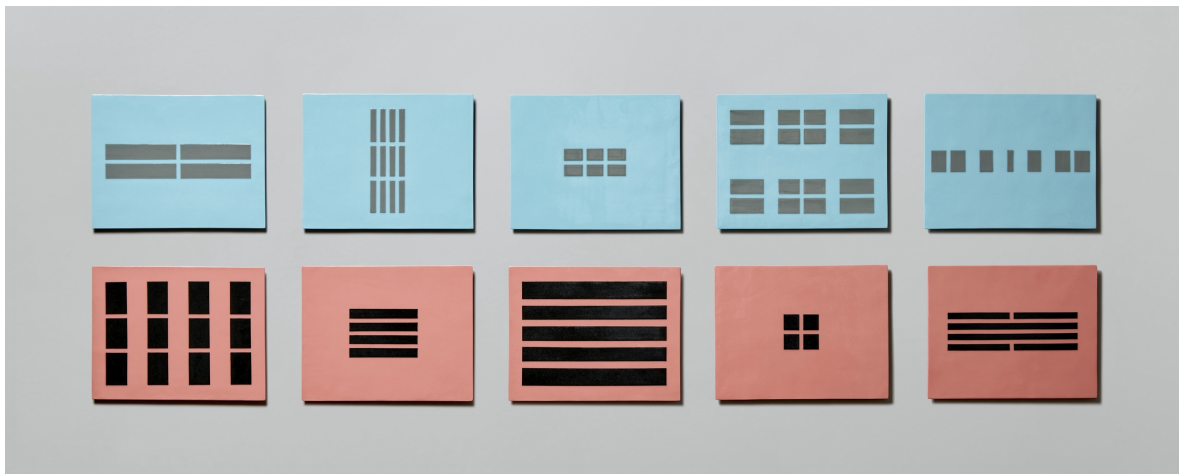


Figure 8. Alison Rees, *Engineered Construction* (2020)
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When more than two or three colours are used (either in the clay body or in the applied slip) – for example in Figure 7, where nine colours are used – these colours are made from just three primary-coloured stains mixed in a triaxial blend. This means that all the compositions are derived from just three coloured stains, plus black and grey, and the white of porcelain. These limited parameters – the mixing of primary colours – is in contrast, for example, with the approach of minimalist painter Josef Albers, who preferred not to mix colours at all but rather to ‘use manufactured oil paints [...] directly from the tube’.⁸¹ Albers sought out subtle variations in colour by seeking out a wide variety of manufactured paint. His limited parameter was to always buy a paint that was ready made.

⁷⁹ Exhibition Guide, *Carmen Herrera: Colour Me In*, The Perimeter Gallery, London (25 September 2020 – 8 January 2021).

⁸⁰ *Carmen Herrera: 5 Degrees of Freedom*, dir: Konstantia Kontaxis, 2005.

⁸¹ Tone Hansen and Milena Hoegsberg, eds., *Josef Albers: No Tricks, No Twinkling of the Eyes* (Köln and Oslo: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, 2014), p. 30.

The limiting of the colour parameters, however, does not limit the possible outcomes. The composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), writing about the composition of his music, stated that his freedom came from ‘my moving about within the narrow frame that I have assigned myself for each one of my undertakings’.⁸² With this statement, Stravinsky drew attention to the idea that he found creative freedom within limited parameters. He continued:

I should go even farther: my freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles. Whatever diminishes constraint, diminishes strength. The more constraint one imposes, the more one frees oneself of the chains that shackle the spirit.⁸³

Stravinsky's ‘narrow frame’, ‘limit[ed] field of action’, ‘obstacles’ and ‘constraint[s]’ have direct parallels with this research and my use of limited parameters. The limiting of colour is part of the structure of limited parameters and minimality in this research. It is these limitations that allow creative freedom and a new dimension of the language of ceramics to emerge.

My research frequently uses one of the three primary mixing colours on its own: yellow. Yellow is ‘the colour nearest to white light’ and is a ‘denser, material white’.⁸⁴ Yellow is not only the colour closest to the white of the porcelain clay page, but it is also minimally different from it. In addition, the sensitivity of the human eye is at its peak when it encounters wavelengths of light that are perceived as yellow.⁸⁵ Therefore yellow is the colour that human eyes are most sensitive to. Thus, by using the most minimal of means – using two colours that are close together, yellow and white – the maximum effect is achieved.

This minimal colour differential can also be seen in Figure 9, in which different tones of grey are produced when transparent glaze is applied in lines across a grey clay body (second from right), and in Figure 5 (bottom row, third from the right), where a line of glaze in the shape of a square is omitted, creating a minimally different shade of yellow. By applying or omitting

⁸² Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 68.

⁸³ Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, p. 68.

⁸⁴ Itten, *The Elements of Color*, p. 84–5.

⁸⁵ Joann Eckstut and Arielle Eckstut, *The Secret Language of Colour* (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2013), p. 108.

transparent glaze, a tonal difference can be achieved by using the most simple and minimal of means.

Continuing in this minimal vein, the research frequently uses black. Henri Matisse (1869-1954) stated in a 1946 lecture: ‘Black is a force: I depend on black to simplify the construction.’⁸⁶ Black exists in powerful contrast to white, and in Figure 6 and Figure 10, black is the only colour applied to the surface of the clay page. This minimal use of colour reinforces the idea of clarity. In using just black and white, colour is edited to its most basic elements. The painter Georgia O’Keeffe (1887-1986) said of her early work that she ‘decided not to use any other colour until it was impossible to do what I wanted to do in black and white’.⁸⁷ This paring-down, this editing, this minimality, a setting of limited parameters – an approach with parallels to Herrera’s – facilitated a period of creative freedom for O’Keeffe. Black with white plays the same creative role in this research.



Figure 9. Alison Rees, *On the Road* (2018)
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⁸⁶ David Batchelor, ed., *Colour* (Documents of Contemporary Art) (London; Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2008), p. 100.

⁸⁷ Exhibition Guide, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, Tate Modern, London, (6 July 2016 – 30 October 2016).



Figure 10. Alison Rees, *Enclosure II* (2019)
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My research, in using colour to communicate a visual impression of clarity, order, certainty and minimality, participates in the visual aesthetic legacy of the painter Kazimir Malevich and his 1913 painting *Black Square*. The art critic Iwona Blazwick has written: ‘The black square is paradigmatic in the genesis of geometric abstraction.’⁸⁸ Geometric abstraction, and its focus on monochromatic colour, sets up a contextual setting for this research through both the research’s use of colour and geometric surface layouts and, as will be seen later in the thesis, through its use of the grid.

2.3.1. Emotional

The American artist Doug Ashford, in a letter to Josef Albers, wrote that ‘colour itself, its full shifting nature, is a key to understanding the vibrant story of mood’.⁸⁹ Ashford was recovering from addiction at the time of writing, and was reflecting on how he perceived colours changing throughout the day. Colour is used in this research as a joyful response to the world, as a

⁸⁸ Blazwick, *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society*, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Hansen, *Josef Albers: No Tricks, No Twinkling of the Eyes*, p. 102.

‘vibrant story of mood’, an expression of being present in the world, of accessing something non-verbal. Herrera neatly expressed the use of colour to access the non-verbal as follows:

There is a moment that I treasure. It is a moment where you are expressing something that is inside of you, but you could not express it with words. You are expressing it with lines and colours and so on. From that moment on, I am in heaven.⁹⁰

In this research, colour does just that: it expresses ‘something that is inside’; it expresses an articulation of wonder, of being present and celebrating that.

The repeated use of yellow in my research is part of this story. I use yellow to brilliantly contrast and vibrate against black (Figure 5) and to make bright and lively greens and oranges when mixed with blue or red (Figure 7). In India, yellow is associated with the spiritual and is used as a symbol of peace and knowledge.⁹¹ B N Goswamy, the Indian art historian and author, says of yellow:

The rich luminous colour holds things together, lifts the spirit and raises visions.⁹²

This observation returns us to Herrera and her heavenly experience of using colour to express ‘something that is inside’ in her paintings.

Nicholas Fox Weber, Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, has written that ‘the power of colour was Josef’s elixir’.⁹³ He described this power as having a ‘penetration of our emotions [that] is so rich that it can physically destabilise us’.⁹⁴ Albers himself connected colour with emotion in his paintings, writing that ‘conditioned by our changing emotional state [...] colour challenges me as the most relative medium in art’.⁹⁵ Colour and its emotional properties are part of both Albers’ visual language and my research.

⁹⁰ *Carmen Herrera: 5 Degrees of Freedom*, dir: Konstantia Kontaxis, 2005.

⁹¹ St. Clair, *The Secret Lives of Colour*, p. 64.

⁹² B N Goswamy, ‘The Colour Yellow,’ *Tribune India* 7 September 2014. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2014/20140907/spectrum/arts.htm> (accessed 12 December 2020).

⁹³ Hansen, *Josef Albers: No Tricks, No Twinkling of the Eyes*, p. 14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The role of colour in this research as an expression of being present in the world is further evidenced through the use of colour in the body of the clay page itself. Figure 11, for example, shows a small colour test which examined the effect of colouring the clay body with the three primary colours. These colours were then also applied to the surface of the clay page.

What emerged from this investigation was an understanding that when colour was added to the clay body, it made the form of the page in clay more active and less passive: that is, the clay page had an increased presence. When the clay page is porcelain white, the page in clay functions more like a neutral canvas, as a backdrop to what is taking place on its surface; the clay page form recedes. However, when colour is added to the body of the clay page, the page becomes more present, and more object-like. In Figure 9 the clay body is coloured grey, and where the surface is unglazed the clay page is sanded using a diamond pad. Here, the object-like qualities of the clay page, which begin with the colour grey, are then haptically enhanced by its smooth surface.



Figure 11. Test 9. Clay body colour investigation
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By using colour to communicate an expression of joy and of presence in the world, the omission of applied colour, as well as expressing minimalism in my research, is used to communicate a quieter presence – a counterpoint to applied colour. In Figure 12, I used transparent glaze to create a series of compositions on the surface of the clay page; no coloured slip was applied. The absence of colour resulted in a composition which immediately appeared quite subtle – that asked the viewer to be more patient. The clay page surface was revealed only as the light

changed or as the viewer changed their position and perspective. Without this movement, blank white pages of clay were presented; there was a sense of the composition being only just present. In Figure 13, colour other than white is present, but only just. I used minimal amounts of black slip to construct frames and lines, and the dominant sense is of a largely empty space on the surface of the white clay page. A withholding of applied surface colour in this research, is an expression of a quieter presence.



Figure 12. Alison Rees, *Not Absent, But Present* (2017)
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Figure 13. Alison Rees, *Enclosure III* (2019)
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2.3.2. Symbolic

a) *Correspondence with the paper page*

As noted in the previous chapter, the colour of porcelain corresponds closely to the colour of paper: white is the natural colour of both. In this research the colour white symbolises the page and provides a signpost to the correspondence between the page in clay and the paper page. Lothar Müller writes that the ‘white page plays a special role [...] it is the symbolic form at the heart of modern authorship’.⁹⁶ Here Müller refers not only to the colour of the page itself but to its form: one cannot be separated from the other. The correspondence of the clay page with the paper page is therefore made through both colour and form.

The colour white is symbolic of the paper page because it is part of the language of the page. Müller writes that the white page as a ‘neutral physical writing medium’ has become ‘the visual representation of originality’ and that ‘it is more than just the setting for the act of production; it [is] an organic component of it’.⁹⁷ White as a colour plays a crucial role in this: white allows the paper page to recede so that the text can be read and understood as the main event. The colour white plays the same role in this research: the white clay page sits behind what is taking place on its surface whilst also being ‘an organic component of it’.⁹⁸

The page in clay takes its white colour from porcelain. Edmund de Waal describes the white of porcelain thus:

White brings us all into focus, it dispenses clarity.⁹⁹

Müller also connects the colour white with clarity, stating that ‘white became the colour that signalled production’ and that ‘the white page became the author’s mute imperative to write’.¹⁰⁰ It is the colour white that provides a clear uninterrupted working space, whether this is in paper or clay. Equally, of course, a white coloured surface can also inhibit – the terror of the blank

⁹⁶ Müller, *White Magic: The Age of Paper*, p. 86.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ De Waal, *The White Road*, p. 258.

¹⁰⁰ Müller, *White Magic: The Age of Paper*, p. 87.

page. Müller writes: ‘The white page is the barrier between writing and not writing that must be surmounted anew each day.’¹⁰¹

The use of black slip on the surface of the white clay page also indicates a symbolic connection with the paper page. For example, in Figure 14, black dots are painted on the surface of the clay page in a grid pattern and are suggestive of dot matrix and halftone printing. The use of black on white in this and the other practice-based investigations in my research introduces a graphic, print-like quality to the surface of the clay page.

b) Correspondence with the city

My research uses colour to symbolise and construct references to the landscape and the environment of the city as experienced through wayfaring. For example, Figure 15 shows the bright saturated colours of graffiti from a hoarding surrounding disused land. These colours were subsequently used as the basis for the composition in Figure 16, where bright greens, reds, orange, blue and yellow progress across the clay page. Figure 17 shows part of an ongoing series of photographs of road markings taken in car parks, service stations and roadsides. The colours in these photographs say: ‘Do not park here!’ and ‘Slow down!’ and ‘Beware!’. The yellow and white of the road markings (and their graphic form), along with the grey of the tarmac, were used to construct the abstract composition in Figure 9.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

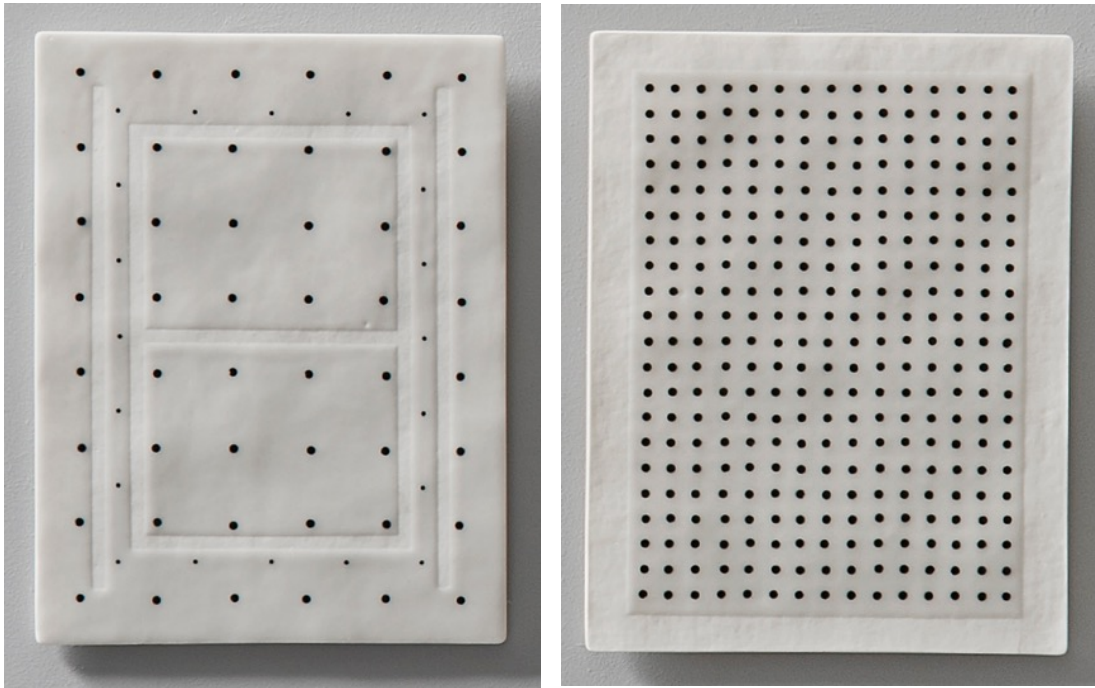


Figure 14. Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation – clay pages 11 and 12
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Figure 15. Graffiti, Seven Sisters Road, London (2018)
© 2018 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

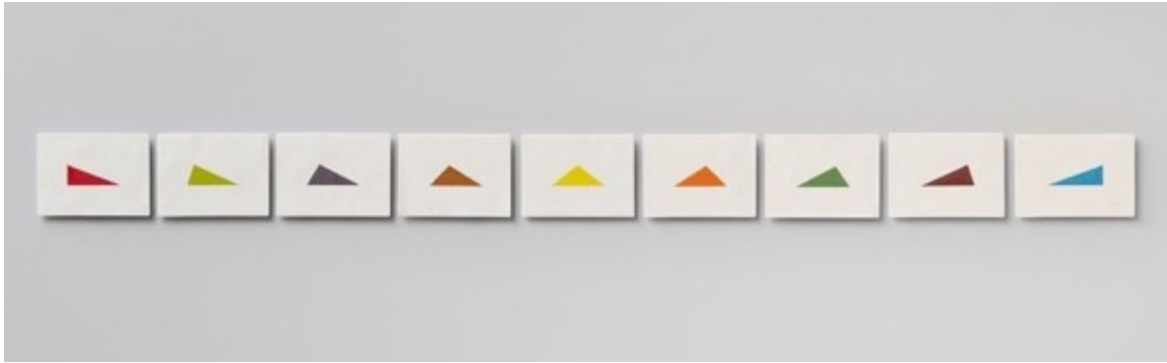


Figure 16. Alison Rees, *Tip Toe II* (2019)
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Figure 17. Road markings, various locations (2016-2020)
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The colours of graffiti and road lines are examples of the vivid markings that humankind creates and applies to the landscape. The British artist David Batchelor (b. 1955) has adopted similar bright artificial, industrial colours as visual references in his own work. Fiona Bradley writes of Batchelor that he ‘has made colour his leitmotif. Not the colour found in nature, but

the synthetic colour of the illuminated street sign and lurid glare of the nocturnal metropolis.’¹⁰²

Batchelor writes about his use of such colours as follows:

City colours tend to be flatter, more consistent, more even, more monochromatic.

And more artificial, obviously. That's the kind of experience I'm drawn to. It's absolutely the colour of the city.¹⁰³

Bright colours not only symbolise the landscape around me and the city that I live in; they also tell a story of that city, of what is noticed and observed and of how an individual might relate to their wider environment. The philosopher Walter Benjamin writes of storytelling that ‘It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report’ but rather to sink into the storyteller themselves, so that in the retelling ‘traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.’¹⁰⁴ Colour in my research is a retelling of the colour of the city, not as direct report, but as a remembered experience. Storytelling is one of the functions of the clay page, and will appear again later in this thesis.

2.4. Ceramic context

Although Itten’s approach to colour was formally theorised in the early 1960s (and translated into English in the 1970s), he had been developing it throughout his studies and teachings in the previous fifty years.¹⁰⁵ During this time, he emphasised a connection with the self and with emotions, rather than with objects.¹⁰⁶ When thinking about, or analysing, colour within ceramics there is often a focus on glaze chemistry – what glaze recipe makes which colour, for example – or the analysis is led by an interest in firing techniques (reduction shino glazes) or found materials (ash glazes). My research makes a contribution to thinking about colour in the context of ceramic practice by applying Itten’s approach to colour to the clay page. The analysis and understanding of colour within this research are therefore led by an expression of the self – visually, emotionally and symbolically – and the self within the world.

¹⁰² Rudi Fuchs and Fiona Bradley, *David Batchelor: Flatlands* (Edinburgh and Bristol: The Fruitmarket Gallery; Spike Island, 2013), p. 6.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Random House UK, 1999), p. 91.

¹⁰⁵ Itten, *The Art of Colour*.

¹⁰⁶ Itten, *The Elements of Color*, p. 6.

This research uses colour with intensity to express the joy of being present, of experiencing the city. It is an emotional response. The British ceramicist Tanya Gomez (b. 1974) also uses colour to convey emotion. She has written of her own work (Figure 18): ‘I am fascinated by the idea of creating an overwhelming sense of something that is so overpowering that one cannot comprehend its boundaries.’¹⁰⁷ One of the devices she uses to achieve this is colour, and her thrown forms announce and express their presence using a dense, single-coloured glaze.



Figure 18. Tanya Gomez, *Frida* (2011)
© Simon Punter. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of Tanya Gomez.

My research is positioned in contrast to Gomez’s approach, however, in the way that colour is achieved and applied. Whilst Gomez uses glazes to create colour, saturating each ceramic vessel with a single enveloping glaze, this research uses layers of coloured slip and transparent glaze, thus allowing colour to occupy discrete and precisely defined areas. This surface treatment sets up a dialogue between the colour of the slip and the white space of the clay page, within each individual clay page composition.

¹⁰⁷ Tanya Gomez at The Ceramic House Gallery. <https://www.theceramichouse.co.uk/whats-on/artists/tanya-gomez/> (accessed 28 April 2021).

The Japanese ceramic artist Takuro Kuwata (b. 1981) also uses colour in an intense way, seeking to symbolise the modern and the city. Kuwata takes colour inspiration from urban sources such as the brightly coloured London Underground map and, like Gomez, his use of colour is intense and direct.¹⁰⁸ Kuwata achieves this through an experimental approach to materials and the use of the traditional form of the Japanese tea bowl (Figure 19). This is a collision of colour, materials and form; again, a different approach to the one adopted in my research, with its precise and ordered approach to colour, and its expression of minimality and clarity.



Figure 19. Takuro Kuwata, *Untitled* (2016)
© Takuro Kuwata. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of Alison Jacques, London.

¹⁰⁸ Katja Sifkovic, 'Bringing the Power of Nature into Ceramics: Interview with Takuro Kuwata', *Azito Art*, 2013 <http://azito-art.com/topics/bringing-the-power-of-nature-into-ceramic-interview-with-takuro-kuwata/> (accessed 5 January 2020).

2.5. Surface material – porcelain slip and glaze

Having established the role of colour in my research, this section examines why porcelain slip and transparent glaze were selected to be applied to the surface of the clay page.

a) Compatibility

I selected porcelain slip because of its compatibility with porcelain paperclay in terms of shrinkage and colour. The white colour of porcelain means that its slip, just like the clay page, can be coloured with stains; it acts as a vehicle for colour. The availability of stains which can be easily and precisely mixed gives significant freedom to create and use colour within surface compositions.¹⁰⁹ A slip made from porcelain paperclay is unsuitable for the purposes of this research due to the coagulation of its paper fibres when wet.¹¹⁰

I selected the shiny, transparent glaze to be compatible with the porcelain clay body, porcelain slip and their firing temperature of 1260 degrees.¹¹¹

b) Levels and layers

Porcelain slip and shiny, transparent glaze were also selected because of their ability to create subtle, but observable, levels and layers on the surface of the clay page. In the practice-based investigations, layers of coloured slip were applied to the surface using newspaper or tape masks to create a crisp boundary. At this boundary, a step change in levels formed where the layer of slip ended and the clay body continued. This step change can be used to create the impression of a layer that clearly sits on top of the clay page; a sense of the slip being ‘cut out’ and placed on the surface, or of a print being made on the surface of the clay.

At the boundary between the slip and the surface of the clay page, the change in levels provides a point of balanced tension between the fluid movement of the slip (brush strokes can be seen) and the static surface of the clay body. This visual and haptic change in levels can be softened or emphasised with glaze. For example, on the surface of the left-hand clay page in Figure 20, the edge of the layer of slip is emphasised by the edges of the glaze being coterminous with it,

¹⁰⁹ This gives a much wider colour flexibility than can be achieved through glaze, it minimises the number of materials required, and it means that surface thickness can be judged more consistently (to avoid clay page warpage).

¹¹⁰ Such a slip is unsuitable for sieving and painting.

¹¹¹ This is an oxidation firing, which ensures a bright, rich and clear colour response.

creating an enhanced sense of three-dimensionality and a further point of balanced tension. When the glaze flows over the edges of the slip (Figure 20, right-hand clay page, black slip boundary, centre), it softens it.

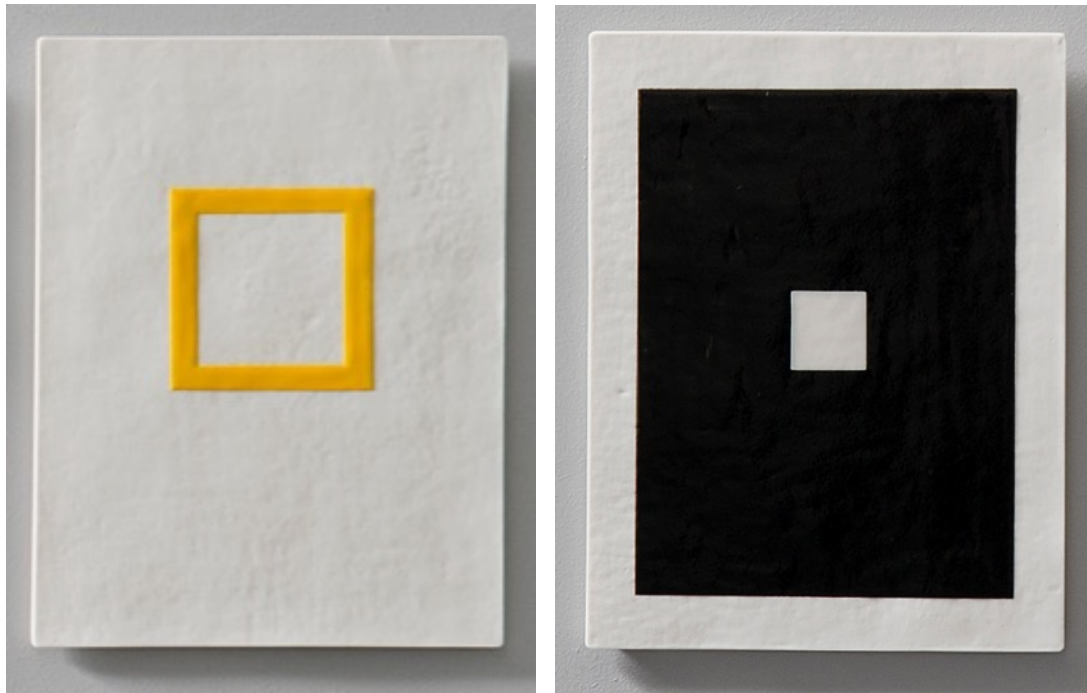


Figure 20. Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation – clay pages 4 and 6
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The coterminous slip and glaze shown in Figure 20 corresponds with the printing technique known as spot-varnishing. In spot-varnishing, a gloss is applied to certain areas of the surface of a page whilst the remainder is left matt.¹¹² This technique is often seen on book covers and postcards.

¹¹² 'Printing Terms', Swallowtail Print, <https://www.swallowtailprint.co.uk/information/printing-terms> (accessed 21 June 2021).

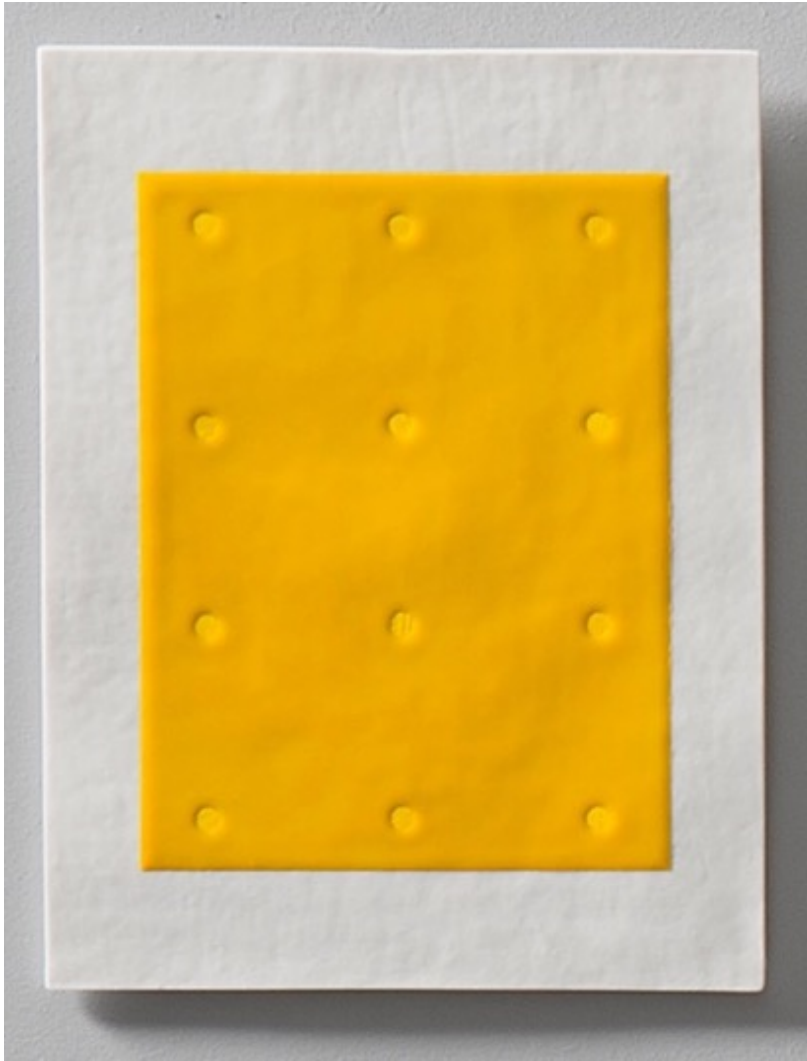


Figure 21. Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation – clay page 1
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c) Cut-outs

The glaze cut-outs in Figure 21 were created using wax resist. A grid of twelve small circles was painted in wax resist on top of yellow slip prior to glazing. Like excavating a layer of earth in an archaeological dig, circles of matt yellow slip with visible brush strokes are revealed through the areas that have been ‘cut away’. By revealing the slip, an extra layer is made visible in the surface composition and the detail of the matt slip is framed by a shiny layer of glaze, thus giving the impression of a layer of glaze with pieces punched out of it. In this composition, the cut-outs create a subtle variation in colour, the bare yellow slip being lighter in colour and less intense than the area covered by glaze.

Compositions using glaze in this way are an exercise in reverse thinking. To produce the positive image in glaze, the reverse image must first be painted in wax resist. These seemingly simple compositions become more complex: one image is painted to generate another.

d) Detail

Lastly, I selected porcelain slip because detail can be worked into the slip. Most work with slip takes place at the greenware stage. However, after the bisque firing the slip can be worked into with a blade to produce small details that are not possible with a newspaper or tape mask. For example, a rectangle of slip can have a line scored through it, or small blocks of slip can be removed to add detail to a composition.

2.6. Conclusion

By applying Itten's colour theory, this chapter demonstrates that my research uses colour in three purposeful ways: visually, emotionally and symbolically. I use colour to visually impart clarity, order and certainty by applying separate, intense, evenly applied colours to the clay page surface. This colour has sharp boundary lines, creating discrete ordered spaces. I use colour to visually convey minimality by achieving as much as possible, with as little colour as possible. I use colour to communicate emotion, by expressing a feeling of joy and presence in the world. Colour is demonstrated to symbolise a correspondence with the paper page as well as the city environment, as experienced on wayfaring journeys. An emerging language of storytelling is identified. When colour is added to the body of the clay page, the clay page becomes more object-like. An examination of the materials used on the surface of the clay page reveals further evidence of a language of balanced tensions and restricted parameters.

In the next chapter I examine how the limits, that is the edges, of the clay page operate.

3. Limits: edging within, around and beyond the frame

3.1. An accidental framing

Travelling on the London Underground some time ago, I found myself in a crowd; there were people walking, headphones plugged in. I tried to walk at my own pace, but was slowed by the throng, a disembodied experience. Further along the tunnel was a busker. He was wearing sunglasses and singing a melancholy song in a language I didn't understand. There was a crowded silence all around him, clarity and abstracted emotion in what he said. The rise and the fall, the timbre of his voice, the gaps and the pauses, were succinct. I stopped to empty my purse.

Walking onwards from the busker, I soon found myself having to stop again. The tunnel wall was covered in grey render but framed upon it, with grey tape, was a blank white space – a board punctuated by eleven holes in a random configuration (Figure 22). And just to the right of the board were two more grey framed white spaces.

Something about the arrangement of the white spaces on the wall and their improvised, accidental framing by the tape made me stop and think about the scene. The spaces varied in size, as did the colour of the tape that covered the edges of the boards, securing them to the wall. The edges of the board were hidden, but implied. In an otherwise empty concrete space, here was an impromptu gallery – framed boards sat in front of a backdrop, a concrete rendered wall. I waited for a gap in the people walking past before recording the view with my camera.

I set off once again, but within a minute I was stopping. This time, straight ahead of me, was another framing (Figure 23). Bordered by black tape was a white coloured board with sixteen punched holes.



Figure 22. Underground tunnel, London (2020)
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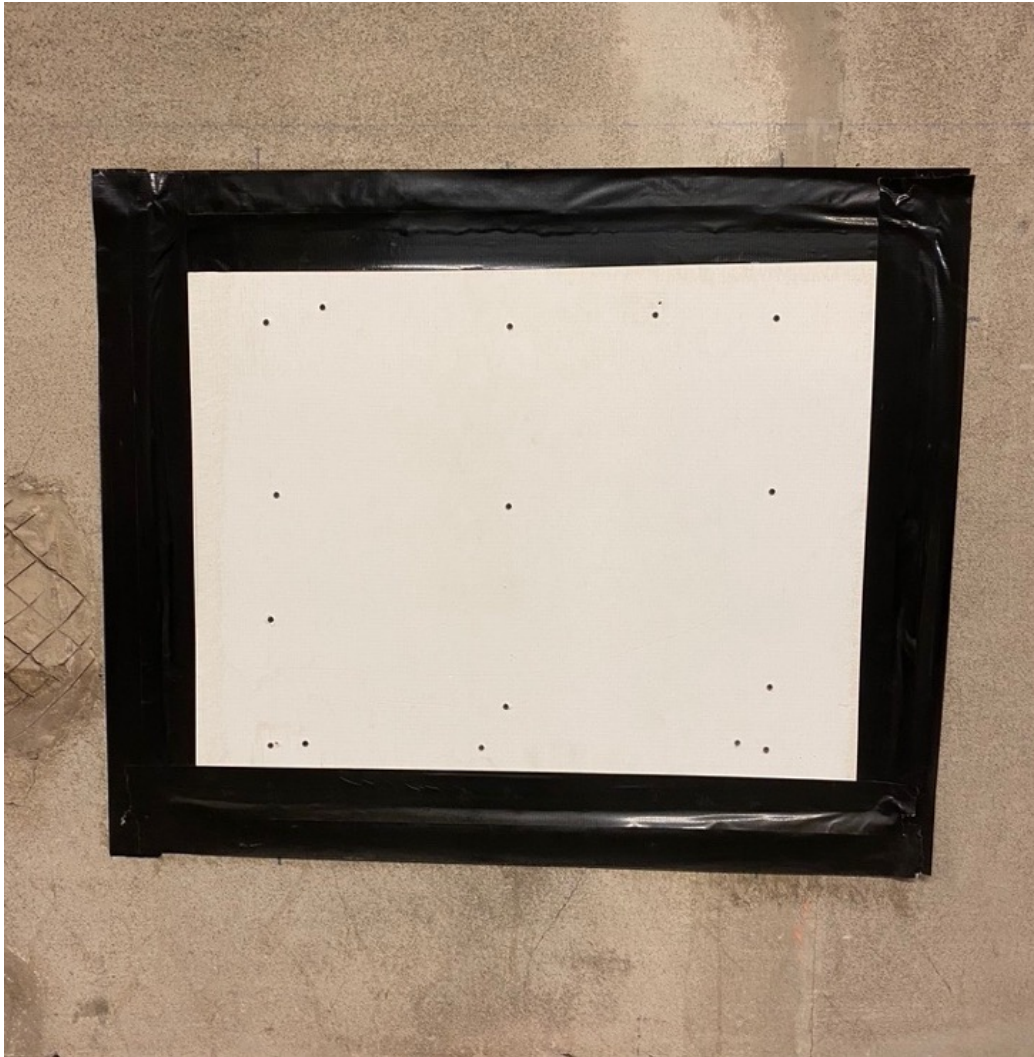


Figure 23. Underground tunnel, London (2020)
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The borders and the framing of these white spaces seemed to lend a coherent formality to what were clearly ad hoc improvisations. The real purpose of the boards and their taped framings were unknown to me. Again, I documented the scene with my camera before moving on. But before I could emerge above ground, there was one more framing to observe. Further along the same tunnel, the grey render had been freshly painted white, and close to the floor was another framing (Figure 24).



Figure 24. Underground tunnel, London (2020)
© 2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

I crouched down to get a better look. Bounded and edged by white paint was a dirty rectangle of render, again punctuated by an arrangement of circles. This seemed to be the reverse of what had come before: a flat enclosing, a non-existence of what had previously covered the space. Looking around I realised that I was the only person whose journey had been interrupted by these features.

I took one last photo before joining the queue for the escalators.

3.2. Introduction

The accidental framing observed on my wayfaring journey reflects what was took place in the studio where the idea of a clay page border, or frame, appeared almost by accident during the practice-based investigations.

This chapter examines the role played by the limits of the clay page – its edges. The clay page is bounded by two surfaces, front and back, and by its four edges to which a series of surface frames and borders, respond. This chapter investigates and analyses – by applying Derrida’s theory of the parergon – how the edges of the clay page set up a limit, defining what takes place within them, and in the space beyond them.

3.3. Border and frame

Thinking about what to convey on the surface of the clay pages, I settled upon a straightforward first step: the painting a bright yellow rectangle of slip (Figure 25: (1)). Yet after this was done, I realised that the seemingly uncomplicated action of painting a rectangle of slip resulted in a set of complex outcomes. The complexity related to the edges of the clay page; the yellow rectangle had responded to those edges, mirroring them on the surface of the clay. In doing so an accidental border, or frame, of bare clay, had been created. This in turn was framed by the edges of the clay page itself.

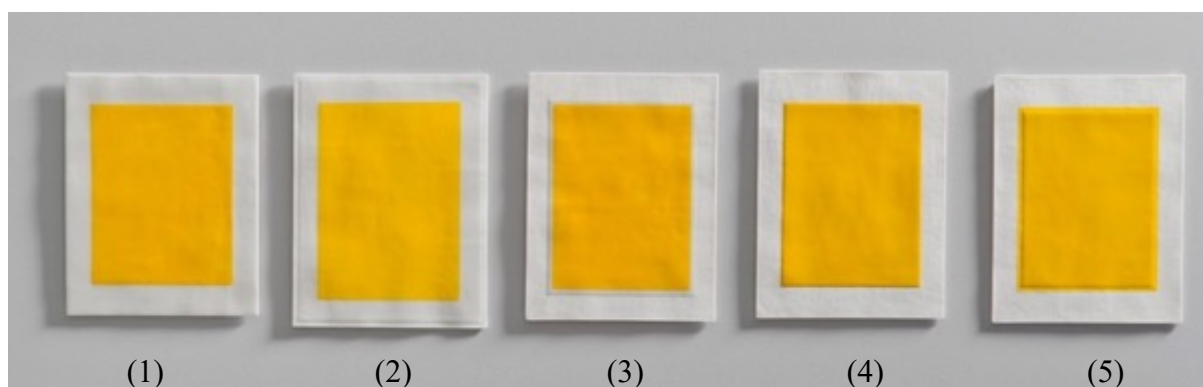


Figure 25. Test 2. Glaze placement investigation
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When bisque fired the clay page generated further questions, this time regarding the placement of the glaze. For example, would the glaze go to the edge of the clay page, or inside it? To the edge of the slip, or somewhere else? Four more clay pages painted with identical yellow slip rectangles were made to help answer this question and the placement of the glaze was experimented with – see Figure 25: (2) - (5). The detail of this test is documented in Part B of the Appendix (Test 2. Glaze placement investigation).

In summary, the glaze test commenced with the placement of the glaze to the edge of the clay page before it was moved incrementally inwards towards, and then inside, the rectangular outline of the yellow slip. Rather than clarifying matters, however, this test created a whole new series of frames and borders. For example, if the yellow rectangle is the figure on a white clay ground, then from left to right in Figure 25 there is:

- (1) a glazed white border;
- (2) a narrow unglazed border enclosing a glazed border – both white;
- (3) a wider unglazed border and a thin glazed border – both white;
- (4) an unglazed white border; and
- (5) an unglazed white border with a thin border of unglazed yellow slip.

Borders within borders; frames within frames.

Further questions emerged: how were the edges of the clay page going to operate? How would they influence the composition on the surface of the clay page? What did the edges signify? Where to begin?

3.4. The parergon

The philosopher Jacques Derrida, writing after structuralism in the 1970s, applied his deconstructionist approach to Kant's third *Critique* and the framing of the artwork in his seminal essay 'The Parergon'.¹¹³ In that essay, he considered the framing of the artwork both

¹¹³ Derrida, 'The Parergon', pp. 3-41.

in terms of the physical frame surrounding a painting and the framing of an artwork within a discourse.

Derrida highlighted the frame as both supplemental to the artwork and removable from it.¹¹⁴ But when thinking about the page in clay, there is no physical framing, and there is nothing that can be separated or removed. Derrida stated that

A parergon is against, beside, under above and beyond the ergon, the work accomplished, the accomplishment of the work. But it is not incidental; it is connected to and cooperates in its operation from the outside.¹¹⁵

This statement helped me begin to understand what might be occurring with the frames in my research: that is, the borders of clay, slip and glaze. These frames are part of the clay page – the ergon – rather than being against or beside it. Therefore, the clay, slip and glaze frames cannot be thought of in terms of a parergon: they are not beyond the work, they are the work. However, the edges of the clay page occupy more of the territory of the parergon.

The edge is clearly part of the page in clay, but it is at its outermost limit. Paul Duro wrote in his essay ‘What is a Parergon?’ that, ‘A parergon cannot be identified as a thing in itself, but only in relation to something already recognised as the main work.’¹¹⁶ Perhaps, then, the edge of the clay page can be considered as the frame – as a parergon – because the edge is not a thing of itself, it only exists in relation to the main work, the page in clay.

To think about the edge of page in clay as the frame is to think about a thin sliver of material and marginal space – the outermost north, south, east and west surface molecules of the clay page. Derrida identified that the parergon exists in the space between the ergon – the work itself – and the background that is behind the ergon. He wrote: ‘The parergonal frame is distinguished from two grounds, but in relation to each of these, it disappears into the other.’¹¹⁷ Here he indicated that the frame, when considered in relation to the background, disappears into the ground of the canvas. And when it is considered in relation to the ground of the canvas,

¹¹⁴ Paul Duro, ed., *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Derrida, ‘The Parergon’, p. 20.

¹¹⁶ Paul Duro, ‘What is a Parergon?’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 77.1 (Winter, 2019), 26.

¹¹⁷ Derrida, ‘The Parergon’, p. 24.

it disappears into the background. This describes the edge of the page in clay. Furthermore, Derrida stated:

The parergon is nevertheless a form which has traditionally been determined not by distinguishing itself, but by disappearing, sinking in, obliterating itself, dissolving just as it expends its greatest energy.¹¹⁸

Whilst the edge of the page in clay is not perceived as a form in and of itself, the edge very much fulfils the remainder of Derrida's statement. For example, in the test shown in Figure 25, the edges of the clay page exert their energy immediately. The edges of the clay page directly influence the placement of the bright yellow slip rectangle. The rectangle of slip becomes highly visible whilst the outer edges of the clay page – the parergon – relax and sink into the background, their job done.

The philosopher and literary critic Christopher Norris, writing after Derrida, gave the following summary of the parergon:

The parergon is the frame, the marker of limits, that which establishes [...] an impermeable boundary between the artwork (ergon) and everything that belongs in its background, context, space of exhibition, mise en scène or whatever.¹¹⁹

This statement, I would argue, reinforces the role of the edges of the clay page as a parergon and as a frame. It is the edges which contain and mark the limits of the page in clay (the artwork, the ergon) and distinguish it from the space that is behind it.

I want now to return to the borders and frames on the surface of the clay page, which operate in relation to the edges of the clay page, the parergon.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹⁹ Christopher Norris and Andrew Benjamin, *What is Deconstruction?* (London: Academy Group Ltd., 1988), p. 17.

3.5. A process of framework

In the test shown in Figure 25, the edges of the clay page – established as the frame or parergon – act upon the clay ground: the footprint of the frame is reflected into the work itself and forms the edges of the yellow slip. In the test which followed (Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation), I experimented with the surface language which emerged in Figure 25. The edges of the clay page continued to act, to direct their energy inwards onto the surface of the clay. For example, from left to right in Figure 26, there is a frame cut out of the glaze on top of the yellow slip, with a glazed white outer border; next, there is a central window cut out of both the slip and glaze with an unglazed white border; and lastly a glazed yellow slip frame appears to hover on the surface of the clay page.

As noted by Derrida above, the parergon ‘is connected to and cooperates in [the artwork’s] operation from the outside’.¹²⁰ This is what is happening here – the parergon is cooperating in the operation of the artwork from the outside: the edges of the clay page affect what happens on the surface of the clay: there is a relationship between the two.

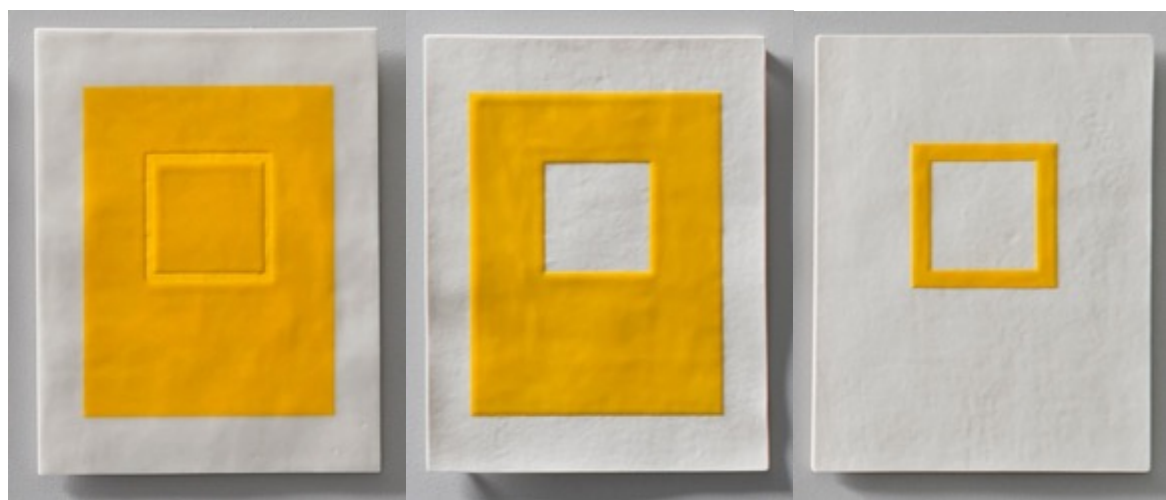


Figure 26. Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation – clay pages 2, 3 and 4
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¹²⁰ Derrida, ‘The Parergon’, p. 20.

This relationship is seen in other tests and compositions. For example, in Figure 10, the frame or border becomes the subject of the surface composition; the frame becomes the figure, the frame is no longer accidental. In this example, the depth and dimensions of the frame or border, painted in black slip, and the position of the enclosed space, is altered from page to page to create an interplay between the role of the frame and the space that is contained by it. The uneven dimensions of the frame create an uneasy or unsettling effect compared to a frame that is symmetrical or balanced.

In the composition shown in Figure 13, the surface frame is constructed as a line drawing and again becomes the composition itself, although it is less concerned with the space that is enclosed. Here the frames are composed of lines (in slip or glaze or both) in varying equal depths and distances from the edges of the clay page. Again, the ergon, the artwork, always exists in a dependent relationship with the edges of the clay page, the parergon.

In Test 20. (iii), shown in Figure 27, all the elements on the surface of each clay page are aligned with its edges. This alignment starts with the edges of the central composition, which are parallel with the edges of the clay page; surrounding this central element is a frame of black slip: this frame is then framed by a square of glaze, which in turn is bounded by a border of unglazed clay set inside the outermost frame – the edges of the clay page themselves. In this and other compositions discussed throughout the thesis, the edges of the clay page – the frame, the parergon – continually act upon and inform the surface composition creating surface frames and datum points for the alignment of lines, dots and grids.

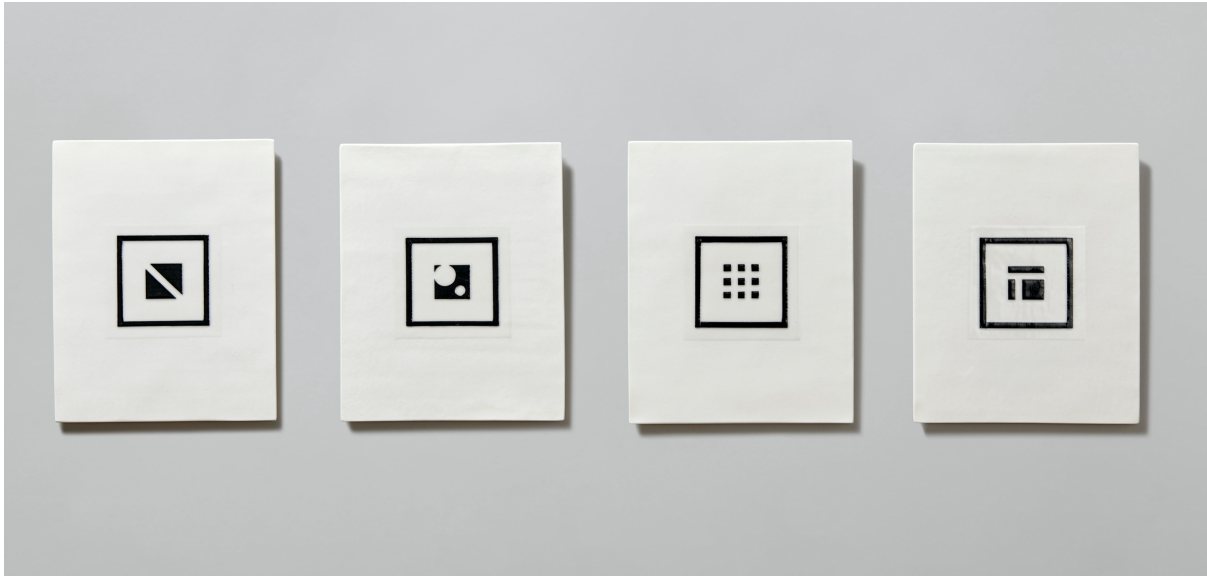


Figure 27. Test 20. (iii) Squares with framing investigation
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The Frank Stella (b. 1936) painting *Gran Cairo* (Figure 28) is a good comparison for the way in which the frame, or parergon, of the clay page acts upon the composition itself. Louis Marin made the following observation about *Gran Cairo*:

At first sight, this canvas is made of frames. The field of representation is invaded by them from its outer most edge to its centre, a victory of the frame and framing [...]. The canvas is the field of an omnipotent force, the outer boundary directed entirely towards its centre.¹²¹

¹²¹ Louis Marin, 'The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures', in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. by Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Limited, 1996), p. 92.



Figure 28. Frank Stella, *Gran Cairo* (1962)
© Frank Stella. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of ARS, NY and DACS, London.

The subject of this painting is the very ‘process of framework’ itself.¹²² Marin uses the phrase ‘process of framework’ to describe the way in which the frame acts upon the canvas. The canvas of *Gran Cairo* is a celebration of framing, with a feeling of centripetal force emphasised by the rotational use of colour. Each coloured frame is separated by a thin frame of bare white canvas. The processes that take place in the composition of *Gran Cairo* feel directly comparable to the processes that are taking place on the surface of the clay page where the edges, or frame, of the clay page precisely govern what takes place on the clay surface. Marin’s ‘process of framework’ is therefore a good way of describing and contextualising the process of activity that takes place on the surface of the clay page.

¹²² Marin, ‘The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures’, p. 93.

3.6. Spatiality and the paper page

The paper page also provides a template for understanding and contextualising the edges of the clay page and the accidental border. If you look at the visual arrangement of the page that you are reading now, you will see that white space has been left between the text and the edges of the page at each side left and right and at the top and the bottom. This white space, or white border, gives clarity to the text itself. It gives the eyes a point of register at the beginning and end of every line and at the top and bottom of each page. It allows the eyes to easily read the text and provides a space for the hands to hold the page. As Mak notes, the ‘unmarked zones of the page are purposeful and participate critically in the communication of ideas’.¹²³ This border of white space, of separation, links directly back to the test in Figure 25 in which an initially accidental border of white clay helped to focus the viewer’s attention on the rectangle of yellow slip.

The white, or blank, space that sits between the text and the edge of the page is part of what the reader instinctively understands as the language of the page. This language echoes that of the clay page, its frames and Marin’s process of framework. Mak writes of the page that

the boundaries of the interface are always identical to the edges of the material platform of the page – namely, that the cognitive space and the physical dimensions of the page are necessarily coterminous.¹²⁴

Mak emphasises that the cognitive space of the page, which includes the white space, extends to the edges of the page. Therefore, the white space should be seen as an inclusive part of the surface, a frame that helps us read the composition or text.

3.7. Beyond the parergon

As described above, in their role as a parergon the edges separate the clay page from that which is behind it, usually a wall (the clay pages sit proud from the wall). But once multiple clay pages have been brought together to form a composition, the edges also act beyond the

¹²³ Mak, *How the Page Matters*, p. 16.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

boundaries of the individual clay pages; they locate each page within an invisible wall-based grid which is used to organise the pages. Whether the clay pages are composed to form a single horizontal line (Figure 16) or sit in a number of rows (Figure 10 and Figure 13), the principle is the same: the edges, in combination with the unseen grid, determine the location of the work. In doing so, the edges of each clay page act outwards, towards and in relation to the other clay pages within the composition. This directional outward action sits in a balanced tension with the inward action of the edge of the clay page and Marin's process of framework.

As noted above, the clay pages shown in Figure 16 are presented in a linear series. Their location in relation to each other, combined with their surface narrative, evoke the pages of a hand-held flick book or the frames of a film. This ordering of frames allows a narrative, or story, to emerge. Here the frame goes beyond its primary function as a marker of limits and instead links one page to the next cinematically, reflecting what Duro has described as 'the framing of narrative and the temporal and spatial sequencing of the motion picture'.¹²⁵

3.8. Ceramic context

Having established the edges of the clay page as a frame, as a parergon, the focus shifts to the wider ceramic context. Are the edges of the page in clay the only example of frames, and the process of framework within the discipline of ceramics? And how does this research differ from related examples?

The use of the device of the frame is certainly not common in ceramics. Key archetypes such as the vessel or figurine do not, in general, apply it at all. Where frames are employed, they tend to take a tangible, literal form, as, for example, in the work of Edmund de Waal, who frequently presents groupings of thrown porcelain vessels in vitrines or steel frames (Figure 29). The frames here, though, play a very different role from that of the edge of the clay page. De Waal uses the externally constructed configuration of the frame – the shelf, the case, the vitrine – as a grand frame to structure, organise, contain and frame the work that he makes, and to orchestrate space and articulate scale.

¹²⁵ Duro, *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, p. 3.

De Waal says of his work: ‘That’s my poem. That’s how I want it to be. I want it to be in this particular frame, this particular vitrine. I want them to be in that order.’¹²⁶ Unlike my research, in which the device of the frame is inherent within and around each and every individual clay page, de Waal’s frames and vitrines are separable and removable from the ceramic work.



Figure 29. Edmund de Waal, *Kin, enclosure, site* (2020)
© Edmund de Waal. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

The concept of the frame can also be found in the display of ceramic murals. These monumental works never stand alone: they are always hosted, or framed, by a building or a structure. For example, the 1960 ceramic mural *Impressions of Telecommunications* (by the British artist Dorothy Annan, now installed at the Barbican Estate, London) was originally located on the outside of the General Post Office building on Farringdon Street, London, as shown in Figure 30. The mural told the story of postwar telecommunications over nine panels, each panel consisting of forty clay tiles.

¹²⁶ ‘My London: Edmund de Waal’, *Art World News*, Christie’s, 13 October 2015
<https://www.christies.com/features/My-London-Edmund-de-Waal-6604-1.aspx> (accessed 1 October 2020).



Figure 30. Dorothy Annan, *Impressions of Telecommunications* (1960)
© 2012 Google Maps, 70 Farringdon Street, London.

In this location, the mural panels were designed to be framed by the building itself, each ceramic panel sitting between horizontal and vertical concrete pillars. These structural elements of the building framed each panel of the mural, on which its surface composition flowed from tile to tile. The concrete building located the mural in time and space and provided the grand frame – the backdrop to the ceramic mural – as well as initiating a process of framework with the panels and tiles each being set into ever smaller frames.

The role of the frame, the parergon, in my research differs from the mural, though, in several key ways. Because the clay pages use their edges to contain and frame their surface and surface compositions, each clay page is discrete and separate, and the overall group composition does not flow over from page to page. This is different from the presentation in the mural, where pictorial images flow continuously over many tiles – an example of this can be clearly seen in the left-hand panel of Figure 30. The ceramic mural participates in a frame on a public scale, a frame designed to interact with the crowd. In my research the frame and the process of framework are constructed to have a more intimate relationship with the viewer.

I would argue that framing, and the process of framework, is also an integral part of formal ceramic tableware, although it is not generally theorised or thought about in this way. The circular edge of the plate or vessel is typically reflected in a decorative surface design. In Figure 31, the outline of the circular edge – or rim – of the plate is used concentrically four times to construct a black and gold border for the plate. The eye moves round the edge of the plate, but the border design also asks us to focus on the centre, the space contained, and when used functionally, upon the food served. This is an example of Marin’s process of framework, not in an artwork but on a functional, domestic plate.



Figure 31. Satori Black coupe bowl (22.5cm) Royal Crown Derby.
© Royal Crown Derby. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

Such functional forms are significantly removed from the language of my research and, unlike the frames on and around the clay page, the circular framework employed in tableware operates only in one direction – inwards. Even if the plate were to be arranged with other plates, each would exist in isolation from the other, prevented by its circular shape from operating outwards and interacting with its neighbours.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the edges of the clay page can be understood by applying Derrida's theory of the parergon: the edges contain and mark the limits of the page in clay – the artwork, the ergon – and distinguish it from the space that is behind it. The clay page edges are found to act in two directions: inwards, where they influence what takes place on the surface of the clay page and outwards, where they locate the clay page on an external organising grid. These directional forces sit in a balanced tension with each other. In addition, it is established that the external archetype of the paper page provides a template for understanding and contextualising the clay page edges and their relationship with the clay page surface. This chapter demonstrates that the edges of the clay page are a nexus for meaning and activity and can be understood as highly active and multivalent.

In the next chapter I examine another highly influential aspect of my research: the grid.

4. Crisscrossing the Grid: finding equilibrium

4.1. An encounter with a window

Some things appear when you are not looking for them: I did not go looking for the grid, the grid found me.

A few summers ago, I was walking along a country road when I came across an Elizabethan manor house. Across a carefully cut lawn and to the left of a doorway was a double-height gridded window (Figure 32).



Figure 32. Elizabethan manor house window, England (2017)
© 2017 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

The window was divided into two main sections by a central mullion. Slender mullions then further divided each section into twelve panels. Each panel was of equal width, but each row of panels in the window decreased in height in an upward direction. In all, the window consisted of 576 panes of glass. The panes were organised and structured by two grids: the outer grid was provided by the stonework mullions whilst the inner grid was the network of lead that held the glass panes in place. Each of the grids acted like a skeleton, supporting, holding and structuring what was around them.

Intrigued by the appearance and scale of the window, I approached to examine it in more detail. Although all the panes looked the same from a distance, when viewed up close I could see that no two panes of glass were the same, and that they reflected the view behind me in differing directions (Figure 33).



Figure 33. A close-up view of the Elizabethan manor house window, England (2017)
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Just like the repeating, imperfect clay page, the imperfect panes of hand-made glass were repeated again and again, but with variations. Many of the panes had broken and had been repaired with lead, resulting in a series of random lines which began and ended with the structure of the leaded grid. The grid seemed to act as a stabiliser – a structure within which the imperfections could be held.

It was some time later that I wondered if the window was in some way familiar to me. On a hunch I looked through some old family photo albums and there it was: the window as a backdrop to a family photograph (Figure 34). In my hand I held two images of the same window, taken thirty-five years apart; a grid that had survived the ages.



Figure 34. Elizabethan manor house window, England (1985)
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4.2. Introduction

The grid is a totemic device and motif in twentieth- and twenty-first-century art. It has appeared as a device and motif in the paintings of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), the Cubist paintings of Georges Braque (1882-1963), and in the floor sculptures of Carl Andre (b. 1935); as a device in Damien Hirst's (b. 1965) dot paintings and Rachel Whiteread's (b. 1963) floor sculptures; it has been used repeatedly in the sculpture of Antony Gormley.

This chapter examines the key roles the grid plays in my research: from being a motif observed whilst wayfaring (as illustrated above), to being a device that is both mobile and static. I show how the grid is a strict structure from which the clay pages are created and against which the clay page rebel. The chapter draws upon the writing of the theorist and critic Rosalind Krauss and her seminal essay 'Grids', in which she argued that the grid is both spatial and temporal, that it is a barrier between language and vision, that it is impervious to change and that it is anti-real.¹²⁷ I highlight the ways in which my research diverges from Krauss's approach. This chapter is a story of stability and instability, order and disorder, and the place of the individual within the environment.

4.3. Stabilising the measurements

The grid is used as the starting point for the making of each clay page: a sheet of rolled-out porcelain paperclay is placed on a gridded cutting mat and a ruler positioned along the appropriate gridlines. I cut four lines into the clay to make a right-angled rectangular page-based form. The artist Sol LeWitt, who used the grid in the construction of his wall drawings, made the following observation:

The grid system is a convenience; it stabilises the measurements.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids'.

¹²⁸ Lucy R Lippard, *Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids: Exhibition Jan. 27 to March 1, 1972*, *Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1972). (unpaginated)

This research also uses the grid to stabilise its measurements: the grid acts as a repeatable and consistent starting point. Governed by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures, the printed grid used in this research is set out in half-centimetre increments, which are optically defined relative to the speed of light.¹²⁹ The grid not only stabilises the measurements; it is also a framework that is itself fixed in space and in time. Everything starts out from this definitive framework.

The grid is a natural landscape mapping tool. Ordnance Survey maps use the grid to stabilise measurements by providing common sets of scale which aid landscape navigation. The grid is also used to stabilise measurements when recording a close-up topographical view: for example, archaeologists use a mobile grid to document human-made and natural landscape features.

In this research the grid maps out the form of the clay page itself by setting out its architecture, and its edges. And as I will demonstrate below, the grid is additionally used to map out the surface of the clay page, itself a reflection of the landscape as experienced through wayfaring. The grid is therefore a device that is present from the start, a device that maps out the clay page, that stabilises measurements. Its next role is in mapping out the surface of the clay page.

4.4. Scaffolding

The grid provides the framework, or scaffold, for what takes place on the surface of the clay page. In Chapter 3, *Limits: edging within, around and beyond* the frame, I noted that the first composition on the surface of the clay page was a yellow slip (Figure 25). I will now describe how that rectangle was painted.

When the clay page was firm enough to be worked upon, it was centred on the same gridded mat that had been used to map out and cut the clay page. The intersecting lines of the grid provided anchor points for the placing of straight-edged newspaper masks. These masks framed a rectangular area on the surface of the clay page, onto which I painted slip.¹³⁰ When

¹²⁹ A metre is the distance travelled by light in a vacuum during a time interval of $1/299\,792\,458$ of a second. Bureau International des Poids et Mésures, <https://www.bipm.org/metrology/length/units.html> (accessed 2 April 2019).

¹³⁰ If I were to write instructions for the making of a particular piece of work, I could give the grid co-ordinates that each rectangle, line or border would be aligned to.

the work was done – the newspaper masks removed and the clay page left to dry – the grid immediately became invisible, the clay form and its surface merely an echo of the grid.

The abstract painter Larry Poons, in conversation with the art historian and critic Phyllis Tuchman, made the following observation about the grid and its role in his dot paintings. He stated:

It's like scaffolding, right. When the picture was finished, hopefully the scaffolding wasn't to be seen.¹³¹

Poon's *Imperfect Memento* (Figure 35) perfectly illustrates this point: the grid, used as scaffolding, isn't visible in the painting at all. However, it is clearly seen in Figure 36, an example of a preparatory drawing for a dot painting by Poons. The idea that the scaffolding, or the grid, is invisible once the work is done corresponds with the scaffolded building façade that I encountered on my journey on the bus at the start of my research. When the building has been completed the scaffolding will be gone and its role in the construction just a memory. Yet without the scaffold or the grid the work would not be possible.

The scaffold of the grid is used to construct the surface of every clay page. For example, in Figure 37, the grid was used to first create and then position the black slip circles. I drew a grid on a sheet of newspaper and at the points of intersection, punched out circles by hand and by eye. I then aligned the newspaper grid with the grid beneath the clay page before painting over the punched-out circles with black slip. The circles of slip were revealed when the gridded mask was removed. I then painted a black slip frame outside of the circles in alignment with the grid before creating an interior frame, again aligned to the grid, with glaze. In this example my research uses the grid to provide a scaffold, and, like Poons' *Imperfect Memento*, the grid is implied rather than seen – there is an invisible consistency.

¹³¹ Lippard, *Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids Grids*.

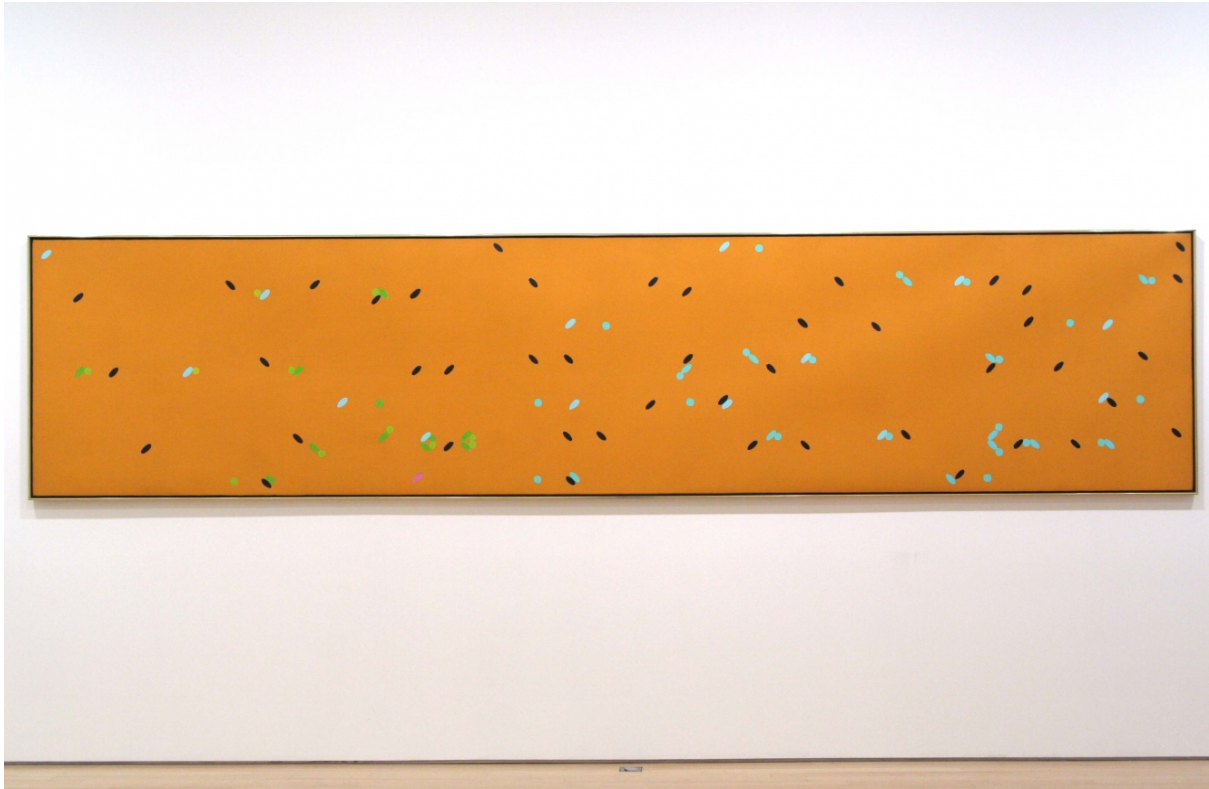


Figure 35. Larry Poons, *Imperfect Memento: To Ellen H. Johnson, 1965* (1965)
© Larry Poons. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London.

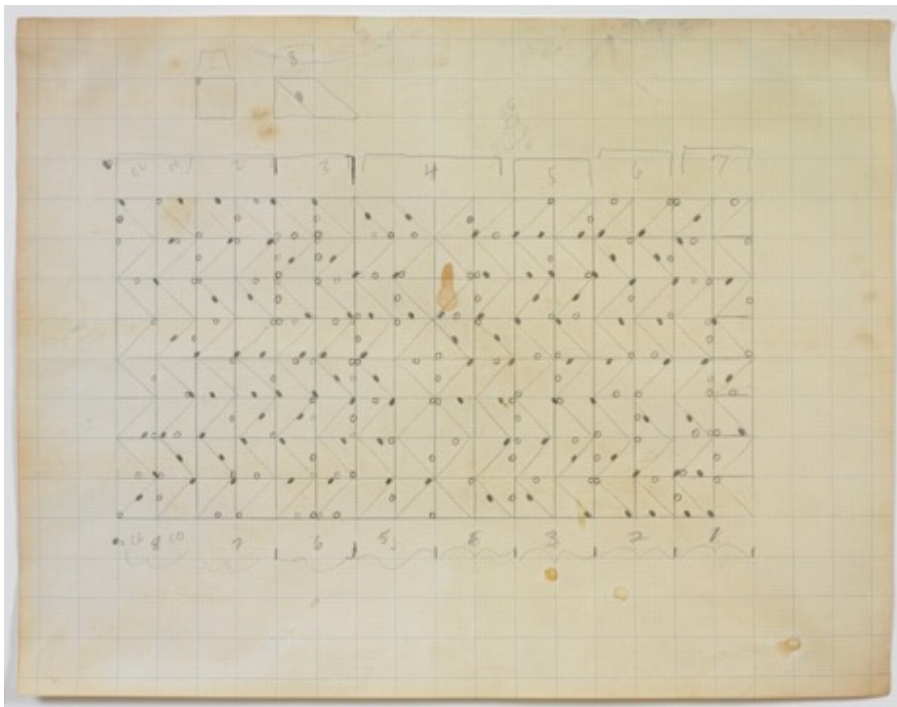


Figure 36. Larry Poons, *Untitled* (c. 1964)
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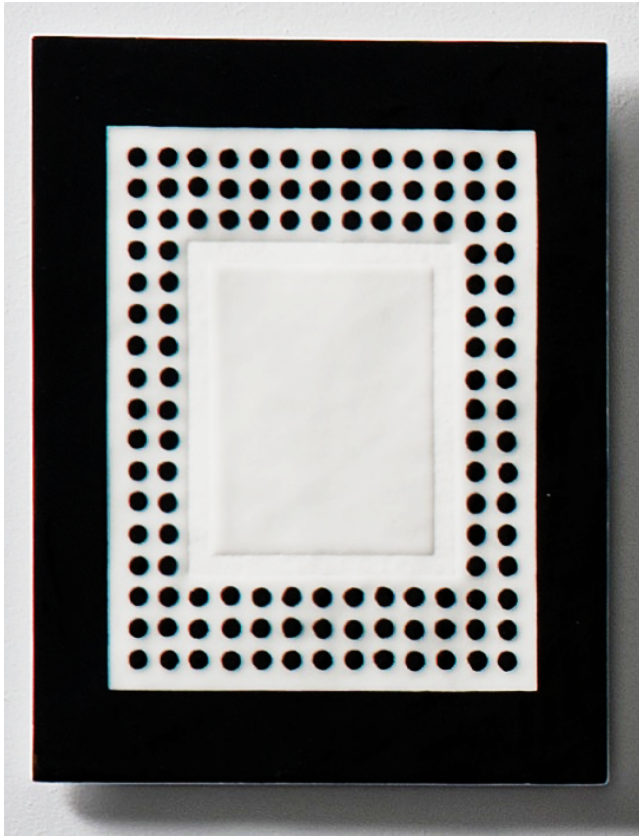


Figure 37. Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation – clay page 10
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The grid provides a scaffold, but its rigidity also provides a source of dynamic tension. Poons' work and my research both push against the inflexibility of the grid. For example, as shown in Figure 36, Poons placed his dots just above or below the grid lines or on a diagonal between them. This created a dissonance between the dots and the grid: there is order, but also disorder. In Figure 37 the gridlines are adhered to, creating a surface composition that has a sense of organisation and order, a sense of formality. But the imperfectly punched and painted circles with edges softened by glaze push back against the perfection and order of the straight-lined grid. There is a balanced tension between the two.

In using the stationary scaffold of grid to map out the surface of the clay page, there is an intersection with Marin's directional concept of the process of framework. In Figure 37, not only is the grid used as a scaffold, but the edges of the clay page – mapped from the grid – act inwards on the surface of the clay, creating frames within frames. Thus, the surface of the

clay page is composed in two ways: from the grid as a stationary field and from the edges of the clay page acting inwards along the axes of the grid.

In Chapter 2, *Experiencing the Senses: colour*, I noted a connection with geometric abstraction; this connection is now reinforced by the grid. Blazwick has observed that geometric abstraction is characterised by ‘mathematically defined systems’.¹³² My research uses the grid as a ‘mathematically defined system’ for mapping out and scaffolding the surface of the clay page. Where the lines of the grid intersect, points or coordinates are created, and each surface composition is created relative to those coordinates. I apply this system to the surface of every clay page. The role of the grid as a stationary field, as a scaffold, as something that is there and not there, serves to connect one clay page to the next by providing an invisible underpinning.

4.5. The paper page

The idea that the grid is both there and then not there connects the clay page to the paper page. The layout of text in newspapers, magazines and books is based on a system of grids which are used to plan the visual arrangement of text and images. Graphic designer Weiming Huang wrote, ‘The grid is a guide for a layout – a series of invisible lines that make the book look consistent.’¹³³ The grid of the graphic designer provides, like the scaffolding of the grid on the surface of the clay page, a means of organising a surface composition and an invisible consistency.

Krauss declares, in the opening to her essay ‘Grids’, that ‘The grid announces, amongst other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse.’¹³⁴ In making this statement I believe she overlooked the role of the grid in print. During the first half of the twentieth century, artists working with collage, such as Braque, used printed text and images within the picture frame, drawing upon the qualities of magazine and newspaper layouts. As Gabrielle Dean has noted, the ‘integration [of text and images] was consummated

¹³² Blazwick, *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society*, p. 9.

¹³³ Weiming Huang, *Flipping Pages: Details in Editorial and Page Layout Design* (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2017), p. 9.

¹³⁴ Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 50.

through the grid, a paradigmatic structure into which words and pictures could be placed and valued as equals'.¹³⁵ The structure of the grid was essential to this process, but was essentially invisible.

In establishing a connection between the clay page and the paper page through the grid, the clay page and its surface participates in a literary and narrative activity, of using the grid to consistently guide, map and scaffold composition and layout. Dean, writing about the connection between the grid and the layout of notebooks, expresses the connection thus:

The grid devolves from, reinforces, and is reified by print [...] It does not erect a fortress against language as Krauss claims, but is instead profoundly attached to language.¹³⁶

Dean also observes that the grid can be used to guide our reading of the page: for example, by structuring text in lines, and by guiding the eye to spaces which are empty, awaiting inscription, such as 'the vacant square of the postcard'.¹³⁷ This research does the same: for example, it uses the grid to structure circles in lines, as seen in Figure 7 and Figure 37, and to guide the eye within frames that contain empty spaces, evoking the postcard's 'vacant square', as shown in Figure 13.

The idea that the grid forms both vacant and solid spaces on the surface of the page is further expanded upon by Dean. She observes that the grid can create 'maybe an empty space, a framed absence, or it may be a solid block'.¹³⁸ She continues:

The grid therefore puts into play a constantly changing and contingent relationship between what is there and what is not there, requiring a visibility that must be aware of the potential legibility of both positive and negative lines and spaces.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Gabrielle Dean, 'Grid Games: Gertrude Stein's Diagrams and Detectives', *Modernism/Modernity*, 15.2 (2008), 321.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 323.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Dean's observation applies equally well to the surface of the clay page, where the grid is instrumental in creating positive and negative spaces. In the next section I examine the visible grid as a motif on the surface of the clay page.

4.6. The grid as a motif

The grid lines are not always invisible: sometimes they appear on the surface of the clay page as a motif. In Figure 38, the grid was brought into the foreground, referencing the grid of the built urban environment: for example a drain cover or grille, or window architecture. I drew the grid in pencil first onto the surface of the bisque-fired clay page. I then applied paper masks prior to painting it with wax resist. When the paper masks were removed, the grid appeared as a positive image in wax and glaze then adhered to the areas of unwaxed bisque fired clay (images documenting this process are included in the Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations, Test. 4). As noted previously, this was an exercise in reverse image thinking: that is, when fired the wax resist and the pencil lines burned away, and it was the reverse image in glaze that remained.

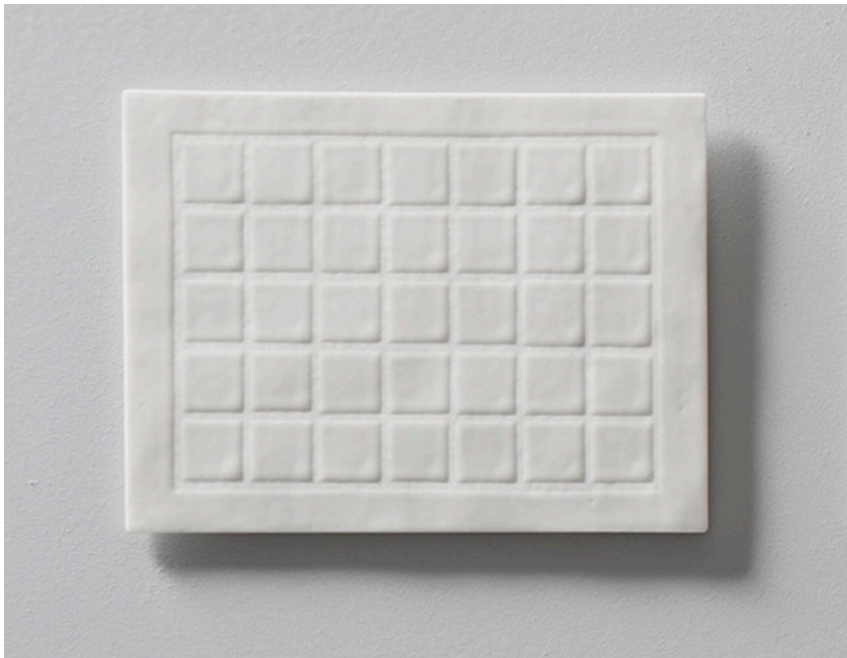


Figure 38. Test 4. Surface composition using only transparent glaze – clay page 6
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Krauss argues in 'Grids' that by using the grid on the surface of Modernist paintings, artists such as Mondrian and Malevich were not interested in 'canvas or pigment or graphite or any other form of matter'; nor were they interested in 'what happened below in the Concrete'.¹⁴⁰ Krauss theorises that artists used the grid in their paintings to express higher, more spiritual matters and that the grid has a 'mythic power' that allowed it to straddle 'science or logic' as well as 'illusion, or fiction'.¹⁴¹

My research challenges this analysis of the grid by Krauss. In this research the grid is anchored in material, rather than in higher, more spiritual matters. For example, the clay page itself is directly formed from the grid by its use as a cutting template; when the grid appears on the surface of the clay page using glaze (Figure 38), the grid becomes both visually and haptically based in material; the grid is used as a scaffold to build layers of coloured porcelain slip on the surface of the clay page (Figure 37). The grid facilitates the making of a clay form and a surface language that is grounded in material, rather than the spiritual.

In addition to this, the grid is purposely used to anchor the research in the 'concrete', that is, in real life, in the ordinary and the everyday. Krauss omits from her essay 'Grids' any parallel between the grid and the environment, or 'the real' that surrounds us.¹⁴² She states:

Flattened, geometricized, ordered [...] it is what art looks like when art turns its back on nature. In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral spread of a single surface.¹⁴³

In my research, I ground the grid in material thinking by using the grid to visually and haptically represent parts of urban street architecture. The grid as a motif is selected deliberately: it represents human activity in the landscape. From the outset, this research is rooted in the everyday environment, as illustrated by my encounter with the scaffolded building façade and later with the gridded Elizabethan window.

¹⁴⁰ Krauss, 'Grids', p. 52.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

4.7. The imperfect self

The sections above demonstrate that the grid plays an important role in my research: it stabilises the measurements in constructing the clay page form; it is a scaffold for surface composition; it connects the clay page with the paper page through layouts, and it is a surface motif that is grounded in material, the urban environment and human activity. The grid's role is one of providing order and control, of straight lines and edges. But the grid also functions to reveal the imperfect: the behaviour of materials; the marking of the grid by eye; the cutting of lines by hand. This is most evident in the first stage of making, where the grid starts to lose its power as soon as the clay page has been cut.

Like all clay in its green state, porcelain paperclay contains water, which starts to evaporate the moment that it is exposed to the air. Therefore, whilst the grid is used to fix and stabilise the measurements, the clay page undergoes a process of shrinkage and contraction away from the grid. Sometimes this is even; sometimes it is not. The accuracy and timing of the cutting of the clay page, its water content, the temperature of the studio, the handling of the clay page and the heat-work of the bisque firing all influence how, and by how much, the clay page deviates from the perfection of the grid. Therefore, as noted in Chapter 1, *Setting Out: the physiology of the clay page*, whilst every clay page is cut to the same gridded measurements, each clay page varies by small amounts from one to the next: each clay page is a repetition with a variation. By the end of the making process each clay page is similar, yet individual, setting up a dynamic between the perfection of the grid and the imperfect behaviour of the material and the maker.

The grid as a mirror for imperfection is seen in the work of the artist Agnes Martin. Martin worked towards the perfection of the grid in her hand-drawn compositions (Figure 39). Teresa Stoppani has made the following observation about Martin's grid paintings:

the perfection of the grid is never attained. The grid remains within the realm of the human, and it is therefore mediated by and refined by tactility and the body.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Teresa Stoppani, 'Grid Effects', *Theory*, 12.3/4 (2008), 258.

This observation places both the artist and the material as mediators of perfection. Martin, in trying to draw a fine line with a pencil, is impeded by the texture of the canvas and the control of her own hand. Martin's intention was the perfection of the grid, but she never arrives at it. This experience is reflected in her own words:

The work is about perfection [...] but the paintings are very far from being perfect – completely removed in fact – even as we ourselves are.¹⁴⁵

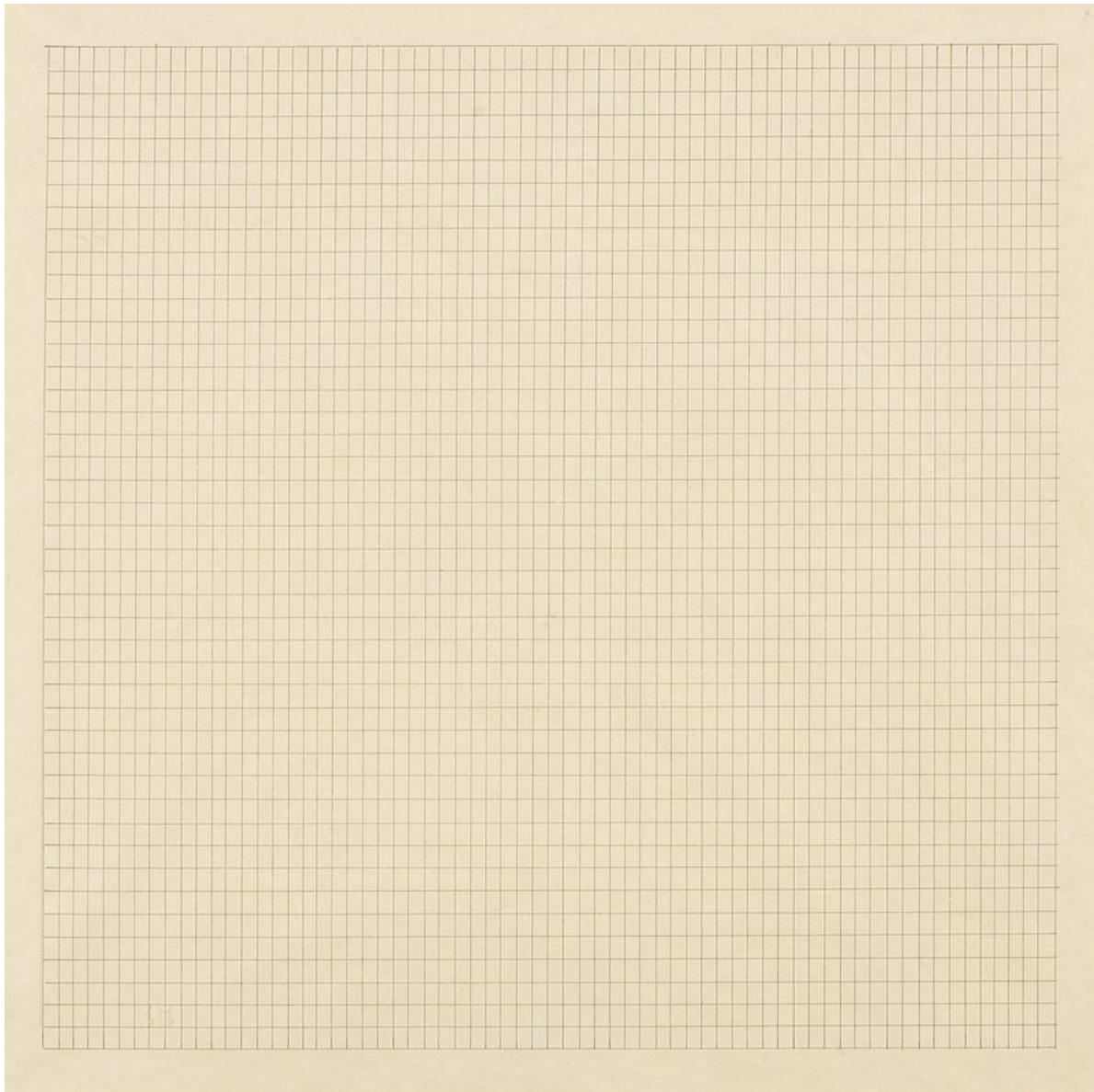


Figure 39. Agnes Martin *Spring Field* (1962)
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¹⁴⁵ Agnes Martin, quoted in Stoppani, 'Grid Effects', p. 258.

Martin's words add an additional layer of meaning to this research. Martin sees her attempt to paint her way towards the perfection of the grid as a reflection of her own, and our, imperfections. The clay page starts with the perfection of the grid and then moves away from it. This movement, or imperfection, becomes a metaphor for us, our imperfect selves in the world. If the clay page was made in an industrial process, then the uniformity of material, making conditions and alignment to the grid would all be controlled and maintained. But the making of the clay page is a hand-made process, an intimate process; it is created in the space in front of the body. It is not the intention to maintain perfection, but to let the material find its way.

This material behaviour is articulated by Anni Albers whose work, through the warp and weft of her weavings, is associated with the grid.¹⁴⁶ Anni Albers stated:

we have to go back to the material itself, to its original state, and from there partake in its stages of change.¹⁴⁷

The clay pages, initially aligned to the grid, make their way through porcelain paperclay's states of change, and in the process each imperfect clay page becomes a nuanced reflection of the imperfect self. The nuances between the clay pages are especially evident when the grid is reimposed – that is, when the clay pages are arranged and displayed.

4.8. The grid reimposed

The reimposition of the grid – to organise, structure, narrate and present the clay pages on the wall – makes the grid visible. The grid is present throughout the construction of the clay page and its surface compositions, but its role is mostly hidden, its presence merely implied. Therefore, its reappearance in the presentation of the clay pages on the wall is a visual statement, one of presence. However, that statement of presence goes hand in hand with absence – the grid is present, but as a negative space, formed in between and around the positive spaces occupied by the clay pages (Figure 40).

¹⁴⁶ Albers is associated with the grid through the warp and weft of her weavings and the grids in her paper-based compositions.

¹⁴⁷ Albers, *Selected Writings on Design*, p. 6.



Figure 40. Alison Rees, *Tip Toe I* (2019)
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The curator Jennifer Scanlan has described Anni Albers' woven pieces as 'a materialisation of the grid'.¹⁴⁸ This description of materialisation could also be applied to the grid in this research, but it takes place in a different way. For example, Anni Albers' textile grid materialises by the bringing together of material: the warp and weft threads create and form the grid. In my research, the material does not construct the grid, but reveals it: the grid is made present by the bringing together of the clay pages. The grid as a negative space is akin to something unspoken. The writer John Berger has observed that

¹⁴⁸ Jennifer Scanlon, 'Crafting with and Against the Grid,' *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 8.2 (July 2015), 216.

Stories walk, like animals or men. And their steps are not only between narrated events between each sentence, sometimes each word. Every step is a stride over something not said.¹⁴⁹

The absent grid between the clay pages can be thought of as the gaps between words or sentences in the telling of a story; the gaps separate the clay pages to enable the telling of a story.

The presence of the grid on the wall is used to both reveal and disguise the imperfections of the form of the clay page. The re-imposed grid is, from a distance, regular in nature – the eye makes an assumption about what it sees. However, up close, the internal edges of the re-imposed grid are irregular, being formed from the external edges of the clay page (as previously noted, the clay pages and their edges exhibit small variations in both size and adherence to the vertical and horizontal planes). The grid allows the nuance of each page to be seen, for the pages to be read individually, to be understood as being made by hand from material with unique behaviour. However, the grid also allows those differences and nuances to recede by providing equal spaces for each clay page within the grid. In doing so, the grid juxtaposes imperfection with perfection; it allows things to be seen and not seen. The grid is a chameleon.

The clay page is a repeating form and the grid, itself a repetitive structure, is a symbiotic device for framing, holding and re-enforcing the repetition of the page in clay. The grid provides a framework for spatial organising and facilitates the reading of the clay pages in relation to one another. The repetitive nature of the grid means that it can be used to build scale, and a connection with E F Schumacher's economic theory, articulated in *Small is Beautiful*, can be made.¹⁵⁰ Schumacher advocated for the building of an economy from small units, arguing that

we always need both freedom and order. We need the freedom of lots and lots of small, autonomous units and at the same time, the orderliness of large-scale.¹⁵¹

Schumacher posited that if economies can work with small units, then they will have the freedom and flexibility to build scale by accumulating and organising just the right number of

¹⁴⁹ John Berger, 'Stories', in John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2016) pp. 277–288 (p.284).

¹⁵⁰ Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

small units for what is required. When this theory is applied, the clay page becomes the small unit which can be accumulated and organised, using the grid, until there is just the right number of clay pages to form the desired composition. It is in this way that compositions of scale are built. In bringing together the clay pages as a group, as a community, a further connection with geometric abstraction is observed. Blazwick has noted that geometric abstraction has been ‘linked to the proposal of new models of social organization’.¹⁵² The grid is a natural organiser, and when the clay pages come together, they become a physical manifestation, an embodiment, of a new social organisation based on the relationships created between the pages. They can juxtapose, create tensions or form series and progressions.

When the grid is reimposed on the wall, the grid moves from the contained space of the clay page to the exponential and the infinite. The infinite nature of the grid led Krauss to theorise that the grid can be read as having a centrifugal effect: that is, ‘The grid operates from the work of art outward[s], compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame.’¹⁵³ This reading of the grid, she argued, rendered the work of art a ‘mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric’.¹⁵⁴ The grid on the wall in my research is used not to suggest a fragment of something larger, but to give presence to the clay pages. In addition, any perceived outward centrifugal effect is more than balanced by Marin’s process of framework acting inwards.

The grid’s repetitive format means that it can be configured in many different ways. It can be linear, as seen in Figure 16, where the eye is directed in the horizontal plane to follow an unfolding transition or progression. Equally, it can be more expansive in layout, as will be seen in Chapter 6, *Final Composition: The Library of the Wayfaring Self*, where thirty-three clay pages are arranged in a rectangular grid.

Although a stationary field, the grid also performs the role of an activator. For example, the clay pages shown in Figure 5 were made in a chronological sequence that is deliberately disrupted when the pages are placed in the grid. Yellow is juxtaposed next to black, solid colours next to white space and borders next to frames. The eye can move around the clay pages and their surfaces, finding connections and differences, repetitions and variations. Again,

¹⁵² Blazwick, *Adventures of the Black Square*, p. 15.

¹⁵³ Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 60.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

in Figure 40, the clay pages were made in one sequence before being re-presented in another. The rearranged composition represents a re-mapping of the clay pages using the grid, and, like the squares on an Ordnance Survey map, the clay pages appear in the order that offers a meaningful reading – or a viewing – of the terrain that has been covered. The terrain may have been surveyed in a different order chronologically, but the map is presented in the order that makes visual sense of the territory.

Whilst each clay page, if considered individually, could seem ordinary and everyday, when they are considered as a group presented through the grid, the clay pages become more extraordinary; they become elevated. The grid accentuates the effect of the repetitions, the haptic and colour variations, the connections and the juxtapositions. When the clay pages are grouped together in the grid, they become more than the sum of their parts. Dahn observes that

[...] a contemporary ceramics installation involves more than one object or artefact; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts and there is a relationship between the various components even if they are also capable of operating independently. Installation work is site-specific...¹⁵⁵

The first part of Dahn's description of a ceramic installation would situate this research's compositions within that category: there is more than one clay page, and the grouping of the pages elevates them. However, they are not site specific, and in this regard the compositions cannot be categorised as ceramic installations. When the grid is reimposed the clay pages are arranged into a composition, and it is this term, 'composition', that I feel correctly describes the clay pages as a group.

The grid on the wall has a connection with other grids which contain, and facilitate, the active rearrangement of information. For example, computer spreadsheets are used to organise numbers that can be moved from cell to cell within the spreadsheet grid to tell a story through order and clarity. Similarly, children's hand-held number puzzles – where tiles slide horizontally and vertically along the lines of a grid – oscillate between random placement and order. In the latter example, even when the numbers are placed in a random order, one can perceive that there is the potential for an ordered connection between them. In my research,

¹⁵⁵ Dahn, *New Directions in Ceramics*, p. 56.

the grid means that the clay pages remain active: that is, the clay pages could be positioned and repositioned if so desired.



Figure 41. Unknown Cologne artist, *The Life of Christ* (1410-20)
This image is available under a Public Domain license.

The grid additionally facilitates a connection with the unbound codex. Because the clay pages are placed in relationship to one another, they can be used to tell a story facilitated by the grid: the grid enables a story to unfold across its structure. For example, in Figure 16 the uppermost point of a triangle progresses across the clay pages, from left to right, using the structure of the grid. Using the grid to facilitate the unfolding of a story is a well-established device that is also seen in religious paintings: for example, Figure 41 shows the chronology of the life story of Christ.

This use of frames, located within a grid structure, also connects the clay pages with the layout of comics and the visual process of storyboarding, in which the image frame locates that image within an overall narrative, often within a grid. The edges of the clay page act as a locator not

only for the surface narrative but also for the sequencing of that narrative across a number of pages.

4.9. Ceramic context

Although my research, through the construction of the clay page and its surface and group compositions, takes a fresh approach to the application of the grid, the grid is a device that has an historic association with ceramics. Perhaps the earliest and most enduring example of a ceramic grid is the offset grid, used in combination with clay bricks to construct a wall.¹⁵⁶ Originating as a way of bonding low-fired handmade bricks, the grid persists in this form today in the creation of buildings and cities. The brick and the grid mark time, place and space. It was a brick-built façade, supported and scaffolded, that I encountered at the start of my research, and which provided the idea from which the clay page developed.

The grid is also used in ceramics as a practical way of structuring and organising ceramic tiles on a wall or floor, for example, in a domestic or commercial context. It can also be used more formally too: as a mechanism for the projection of power. Tiled floors in buildings such as cathedrals have used the grid as a device to present powerful symbols. For example, during a 2018 archaeological excavation at Bath Abbey, late thirteenth /early fourteenth-century terracotta tiles displaying the coats of arms of the Plantagenet kings and powerful Norman Marcher lords were uncovered.¹⁵⁷ The grid was the structure through which symbols of craftsmanship, wealth and power politics were conveyed.

Ceramic artists have also made use of the grid. Annan's *Impressions of Telecommunications* described in Chapter 3 (in the context of that mural's adoption of framing and a process of framework), was constructed with reference to a grid. Each of the nine panels forming the work contains forty ceramic tiles and was organised using a grid to provide structure and narrative. Additionally, Annan actively used the grid lines as part of her abstract composition.

¹⁵⁶ Hannah B. Higgins, *The Grid Book* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2009), p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ Bruce Eaton, 'Bath Abbey - Archaeologists Floored by Floor under Floor', *Wessex Archaeology*, 31 August 2018 <https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/news/bath-abbey-archaeologists-floored-floor-under-floor> (accessed 1 December 2020).

In a more contemporary context, the Japanese artist Jun Kaneko (b. 1942) has used the grid to construct his ‘tile walls’: for example, *Polka Dot Wall* (1989) and *Dutch Wall, Image of Tulip* (1996).¹⁵⁸ The British ceramicist Lubna Chowdhary (b. 1970) similarly uses the grid to structure large-scale tile-based compositions such as her recently installed *Interstice* (2020) at 100 Liverpool Street, London.¹⁵⁹

However, in contrast to the clay pages developed within my research, all three of the artists described above work with forms closely tied to the archetype of the ceramic tile, and therefore use the grid to literally fix their compositions in place. The individual elements of their compositions do not seek the separateness inherent to the clay pages of this research, and they are constructed on a larger, less intimate scale than the A5 or A6 clay pages. Their compositions adopt the language of the tile, with the individual elements being mounted flush to the wall and abutting each other.

The British ceramic artist Henry Pim (b. 1947) takes a different approach to the grid. Working three-dimensionally, he builds grid-based sculptures made from paperclay (Figure 42). His work is rooted in the horizontal and vertical grids of cities such as New York, and it references the internal steel structures of buildings.¹⁶⁰ Pim uses his three-dimensional sculptures to generate a ‘kinetic’ view, one in which the grid shifts as the viewer’s visual perspective changes, and for Pim, they are a way of metaphorically ‘work[ing] out where you are in the world’.¹⁶¹

Whilst Pim’s use of paperclay in combination with the grid, and his interest in the self in the world, provides points of intersection with this research, the ambitions and outcomes of the two approaches are very different. Pim uses paperclay in his work only for its structural stability whilst it is unfired: it allows him to construct sculptural pieces in three dimensions. By contrast, my research uses paperclay not only to provide stability, but also as an important material link with the paper page. Also, for Pim the kinetic energy within his work arises from the use of a three-dimensional form with multiple viewing angles, in which the grid is explicitly shown to the viewer. By contrast, this research generates movement and visual interest not

¹⁵⁸ Jun Kaneko, *Dutch Wall, Image of Tulip* (1996)

<http://www.junkaneko.com/artwork/ceramics-detail/channel/C25/#/14> (accessed 1 December 2020).

¹⁵⁹ Chowdhary, Lubna, ‘News announcement, 01.11.20, *Interstice*, 100 Liverpool Street’

<http://lubnachowdhary.co.uk/news/> (accessed 1 December 2020).

¹⁶⁰ Video interview with Henry Pim [YouTube video], 6 April 2016.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkcnY_3_4fA (accessed 6 September 2021).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

from a single gridded structure which can be viewed from different angles, but from a series of clay pages organised with reference to an implicit grid over which sequences unfold, interactions take place and through which the viewer is invited to make connections.

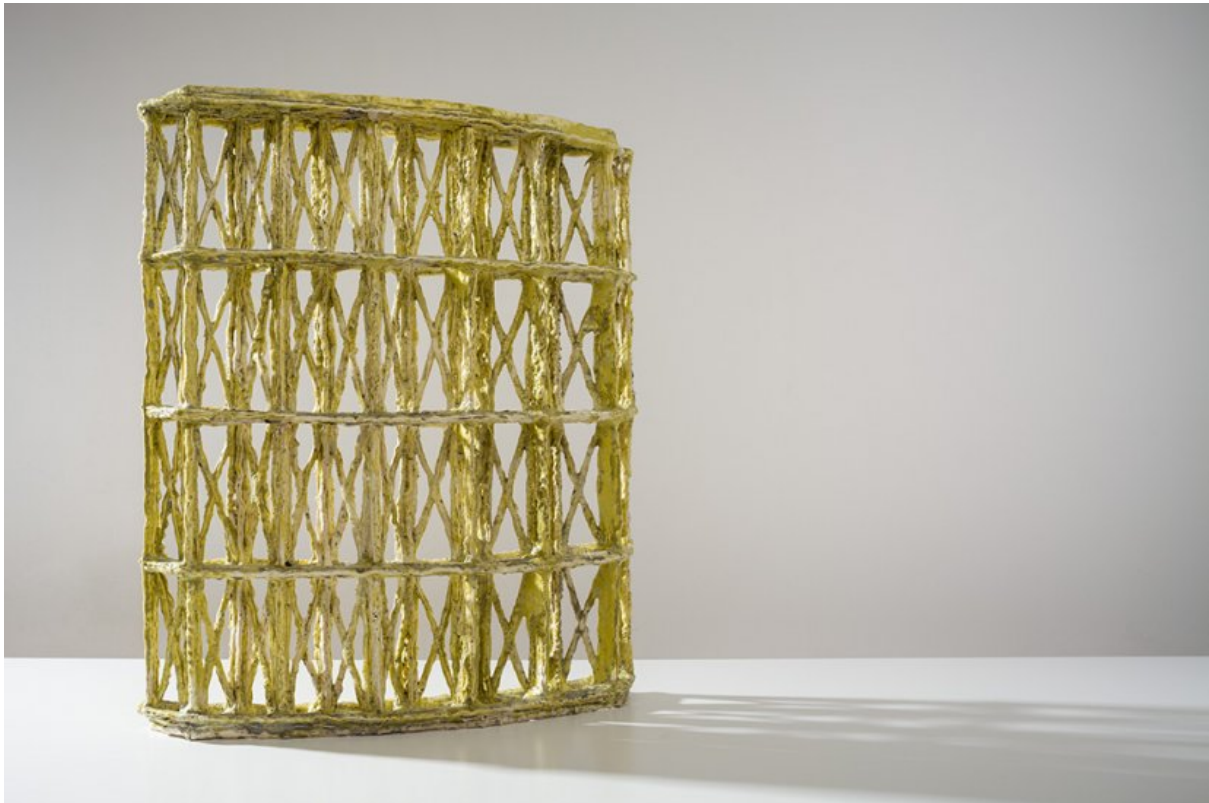


Figure 42. Henry Pim *Yellow Filter with Curved Front* (2014)
© Henry Pim. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

Although, self-evidently, the use of the grid as a device for the construction of a composition is not unique to my research, through its iterative and multivalent use of the grid my research provides a new and fresh perspective on its possibilities. My research applies the grid in multiple and repeated ways; to fix the dimensions of the clay page; to align and position the surface treatment of each page; to provide a constraint to push against, and to prescribe each page's position in relation to each other within the overall composition. Crucially, within my research the grid assumes an intangible presence within the composition, filling the spaces between each page.

The grid in this research is rooted in material; it is ever present but often invisible; at times perfect, yet imperfect; it is resisted then imposed; it provides order and structure; it is attached to language and storytelling. It is the superstructure skeleton that gives the group of clay pages their shape, their narrative and their unique qualities.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the grid plays a pivotal role throughout the making and presentation of the clay page. The grid is a stabiliser during the rolling and cutting of the clay page; it acts as a scaffold for laying out the surface; and like the paper page, the grid provides visual consistency from page to page. The grid is visually present both as a surface motif and as a negative space between the clay pages when they are presented in a group on the wall. The lines of the negative space grid are shown to both reveal and accommodate the imperfections of the individual clay page forms. The grid is demonstrated to have a role as a storyteller: a story assembled from clay pages, a story about what we look at and what we really see and what we think we know. The grid is a device in my research that provides a sense of equilibrium and balance and reflects my wayfaring journeys that crisscross the cityscape.

The next chapter examines the activity of wayfaring – as seen at the start of each of the previous chapters – and looks at the metaphors that are revealed within it.

5. Wayfaring: discovering metaphors

5.1. A walk between two fields



Figure 43. A line in the countryside, England (2019)
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Often, I am laying down a line of activity through the city, but today I have left the urban and suburban behind and I am following a line through the countryside between two sloping fields (Figure 43). Behind me is a gate, which I have taken when leaving the lane. Ahead, is a brown

line leading towards a cluster of trees and shade. I haven't seen anyone today, but the path has clearly been walked: the effect of repeated footfall demarcates the way ahead.

As I walk, I think about the people who have walked this path and other well-established paths before me. I'm going nowhere in particular, but in years gone by the act of walking these paths was an ordinary everyday activity, a repeated means of getting to work, to school, to church, to the next farm. Further on my path branches left and right, and I have a choice to make, a variation to choose. I am participating in a network of paths, repeating and varying in their layout, direction and function, but which ultimately all act as lines of connection and communication.

Today, as on the other days described in this thesis, I am engaging in wayfaring.

5.2. Introduction

In previous chapters, wayfaring has been seen to inform my studio activity as part of a symbiotic, primary research process. This chapter applies Ingold's theory of wayfaring (as documented in the thesis introduction) as a metaphor, as an interpretative framework, to explore and explain what wayfaring reveals in terms of the content and meaning of the new clay page. I identify a language of repetition and variation, and of the ordinary and the everyday. I examine how the language of the ordinary and the everyday encompasses small-scale objects, material realities and a process of arrangement and rearrangement. I show how, through the lens of rhopography, a process of elevation has taken place – of materials, processes and of repetition.

5.3. Language of repetition and variation

The very act of wayfaring is one of repetition. In walking across a space, one foot is placed in front of the other, repetitively. But no journey is a repeat of another, even if the walker is travelling over the same ground: wayfaring is repetition with variation. For example, when walking the same location over time, I have seen trenches dug then filled, pipes removed and

replaced, lines of dry grass appearing in a field before disappearing again with the rain. On one evening I photographed the gap left by ten bricks missing from the pavement. When passing again in the opposite direction half an hour later, the composition had changed – the environment had composed its own variation (Figure 44). The landscape is a palimpsest that is written and re-written.



Figure 44. Ten missing bricks, London (2020)
© 2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

It is this repetition and variation that interests me visually. I record things that I see repeatedly, but which vary with each iteration. For example, Figure 45 shows incidences of hazard tape. Whilst each roll of tape is the same – alternating diagonals of yellow and black – the moment the tape is unrolled and applied, unique variations are created. The process of applying the tape re-animates it, gives it new life. Each time I photograph a new composition, I record a moment of joy, of connection and reaction to the tape. I frame the hazard tape in its location with the camera and the image not only becomes a record of a waypoint on my journey but goes on to form part of a larger visual collection. Further examples of repetition and variation documented through wayfaring include road markings (Figure 17), gates (Figure 46), blocked-up windows (Figure 47) and arrangements of pipes (Figure 48). Each image, gathered from the environment, is of the same type of thing but each image is different – a variation.



Figure 45. Hazard tape, various locations, London (2017-2020)
© 2017-2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 46. Gates in various locations, England (2017-2020).
© 2017-2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 47. Blocked up windows in various locations, England (2017-2021)
© 2017-2021 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 48. Pipes in various locations, England (2017-2020)
© 2017-2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

The activity of wayfaring therefore has its own language of repetition and variation, derived both from the activity of wayfaring itself and from the visual information that is gathered en route. This language is reflected in the clay page itself. The page in clay, just like the paper page, is an extremely repeatable unit: it can be made again and again, continually cut to the same dimensions. Yet, whilst each clay page is a repeat, each one is also a variation resulting from the material behaviour of the porcelain paperclay and the imperfect actions of the human maker. The clay page and wayfaring therefore share a language of repetition and variation. This language is also reflected in the use of materials within my research – a limited selection of ceramic materials is used repeatedly but with variation.

The repetition and variation of wayfaring also plays out on the surface of the clay page, where the visual images gathered during wayfaring provide source material for compositions. The early practice-based investigations were sometimes a close translation of what I had observed. For example, in Figure 9, the road markings are clearly identifiable as such, even though the compositions are not direct copies. The road markings are repeated, but with some variations of my own.

However, as the investigative tests progressed, the language of repetition and variation developed into something more abstract. For example, in Figure 7, the circle represented the idea of the repeat whilst the variation occurred through the colour changes across the series of eight clay pages. In Figure 8, there is the repeated use of a constant width: a particular roll of tape was used to create a set distance which appeared on every clay page. The variation occurred in the form and dimensions of the blocks of slip on the surface.

Contextually, the writer Emma Crichton-Miller has observed that de Waal is a maker who also sees the significance of thinking through repetition.¹⁶² She writes that for de Waal there is ‘the appeal of the endless return to a moment, which allows you to endlessly reframe your experience of time’.¹⁶³ Although the clay page compositions arrived at through this research are very different to de Waal’s work, and explore different territory, the appeal of repetition noted by Crichton-Miller is a point of intersection with this research.

¹⁶² Emma Crichton-Miller, ‘Can a Poet be a Potter of Song?’, in *Edmund de Waal*, ed. by Emma Crichton-Miller et al., (London; New York: Phaidon, 2014), pp. 11–89 (p. 36).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

Informality; formality

Because the clay page is repeatable, it can be experimented on again and again. And, just like the paper page, or a wayfaring journey, if something doesn't work out it can be discarded or repeated. The repeatability of the clay page also means that clay page compositions can be adjusted – a page added, a page taken away – providing a fluency to the language of the clay page and facilitating composition. This ability to discard or put aside a clay page lends it a feeling of informality.

Conversely, the repeated making of the clay page brings formality. Each repetition reinforces its existence; it becomes more present and more real, perhaps even more archetypal. An archetype can be defined as 'the original pattern or model'.¹⁶⁴ During my research the clay page making process has become embedded and the actions of making are less of a conscious thought (or an investigative test) and more of a habit. The action of repetition, just like the repeated throwing of a pot on the wheel, allows for small adjustments to be made as the material knowledge, intelligence and correspondence is deepened. I, the maker, become more intimate and knowledgeable about the making of a clay page. Further formality is brought through other repetitions in the making and composition process: the repetitions in the treatment of the surface of the individual pages; the sequencing of the clay pages; their arrangement through the grid into a composition.

The formality of the repeated making means that the page in clay starts to suggest the language of an archetype itself. In my research the two sets of fixed proportions adopted as a template for the clay page become the 'original pattern or model'. This model is then repeated over and over again, and the individual clay pages are then assembled into a wider composition; whilst variations occur, the model stays the same.

The repetition and variation of wayfaring, and the images gathered, provide the rhythm for the research. Closely connected to the language of repetition and variation is the language of the ordinary and the everyday.

¹⁶⁴ *Chambers Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 2003).

5.4. Language of the ordinary and everyday

Wayfaring as a practice is an ordinary and everyday activity. It requires only oneself; no equipment is necessary. And as I wayfare, I document the ordinary and the everyday that I see around me, such as graffiti, gates, window frames and road markings. It is the repeating nature of these items, their common occurrence, that makes them ordinary and everyday. I am not recording the large-scale, the unusual or the one-off, but the things which I see repeatedly, and which vary.

This language of the ordinary and the everyday is shared by both the paper page and the clay page. For example, it is ordinary and everyday standard paper sizes that are used as a basis for the dimensions of the page in clay. When creating compositions on the surface of the clay page, I make a deliberate decision to use ordinary and everyday ceramics processes and techniques: for example, surface compositions are created using coloured slip applied with brushes; glaze is applied by dipping. These are simple, traditional techniques and processes that any student of ceramics would be familiar with.

The contemporary American poet Naomi Shihab Nye also uses the language of the ordinary and everyday. Below, I examine her use of this language, what it signifies and how that informs this research.

Small-scale objects and material realities

Shihab Nye, in her poem *Why I Could Not Accept Your Invitation*, writes that the invite contained the following words:

action-research orientated initiative;
regionally based evaluation vehicles;
culture should impregnate all different sectors;
consumption of cultural products;
key flashpoints in thematic areas.¹⁶⁵

She continues:

¹⁶⁵ Naomi Shihab Nye, *You & Yours* (New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2005), p. 58.

but that is not the language I live in
and so I cannot come.
I live in teaspoon, bucket, river, pain,
turtle sunning on a brick.¹⁶⁶

Shihab Nye is a proponent of the ordinary and the everyday, the individual and the specific. In *Why I Could Not Accept Your Invitation* she rejects the generic, impersonal, obfuscating language of the invitation – the language of the crowd and of the conference – and instead directs her reader to the precise and concise language of the ordinary and the everyday. This language is Shihab Nye’s way of navigating the world; a way of anchoring thoughts and narratives. Samina Najmi has summarised Shihab Nye’s approach to language as

an artistic emphasis on small-scale objects and material realities, which include not only the ordinary, unadorned, and everyday, but also the personal and particular.¹⁶⁷

Najmi’s summary of Shihab Nye’s approach to language has parallels with this research. For example, through its use of the language of the ordinary and everyday, my research gives ‘an artistic emphasis’ to ‘small-scale objects’. This is achieved not through words such as ‘bucket’ and ‘brick’ on a page, as Shihab Nye has done, but through the clay page itself – a restrained and contained slender object with a flat simple surface on which to work.

My research also places ‘an artistic emphasis’ on ‘material realities’. This research embraces the reality of material behaviour. As previously noted, porcelain paperclay gives rise to small variations in the size of the clay page. The research additionally embraces the ‘ordinary, the unadorned and the everyday’. Window frames, the arrangement of drainpipes, missing bricks and painted hoardings are the source material for the compositions which appear on the surface of the clay page. Like Shihab Nye, these ordinary and everyday things are my way of navigating the world; they are the things that I notice.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

Elevation of the ordinary and the everyday

The British artist Cornelia Parker has used materials to elevate the ordinary and the everyday. For example, in her work *Pavement Cracks (City of London)*, (Figure 49), she cast fragments of insignificant space – the joins between pavement slabs – in bronze. Something easily overlooked and walked on has had attention poured upon it through the language of material. This elevation is accompanied by a literal lifting: the work is displayed on pins, raising it above the floor. Parker has not only elevated the ordinary and the everyday in this work; she has also arrived at the concept for the sculpture by walking the city: what this research would call wayfaring.

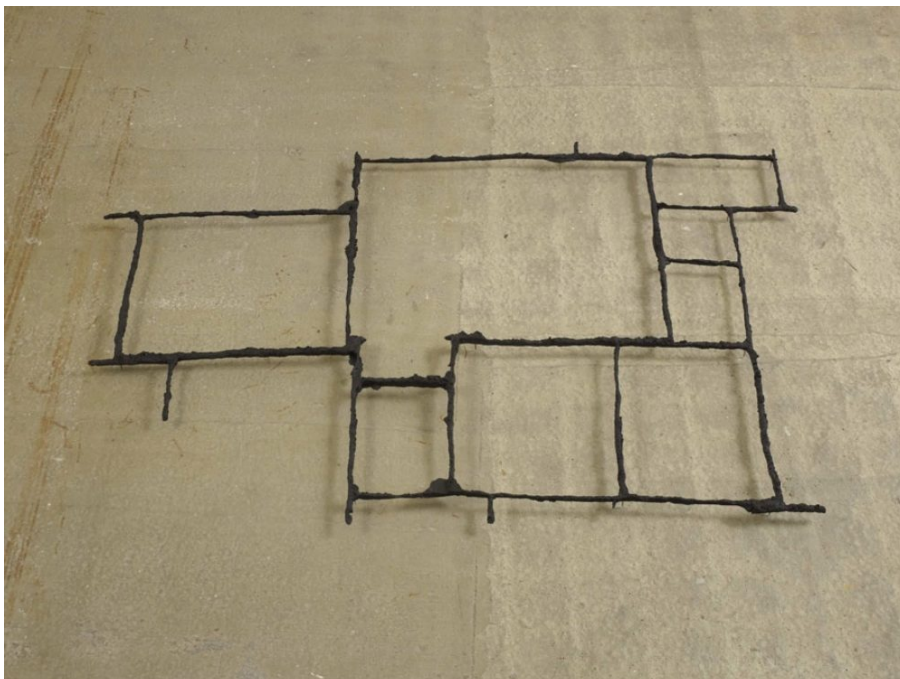


Figure 49. Cornelia Parker, *Pavement Cracks (City of London)* (2012)
© Cornelia Parker. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of Frith Street Gallery.

In my research, the paper page, porcelain paperclay, the visual information gathered when wayfaring and the ceramic techniques employed – all originating from the ordinary and the everyday – come together to create something ‘personal and particular’: that is, a new dimension to the language of ceramics. But when the ordinary and the everyday are brought together in my research, something less ordinary and less everyday emerges.

This research starts with an ordinary and everyday thing: the paper page. Müller has written that ‘paper is omnipresent’, and Bonnie Mak, writing in *How the Page Matters*, has observed that ‘the page has become transparent, disappearing in its very function’.¹⁶⁸ However, in the translation of the paper page into porcelain paperclay, what was ordinary and everyday, omnipresent yet transparent, becomes much less so. Porcelain paperclay transforms and elevates the page, making it more materially and physically present, less ordinary and everyday. Porcelain is a material which Edmund de Waal has described as ‘beautiful beyond comparison, that is complex to create’.¹⁶⁹ He has written that it is a material that ‘is the present tense and historical present’.¹⁷⁰ Through its material qualities and history, porcelain elevates those objects made from it. The use of porcelain paperclay in my research transforms the notion of the ordinary everyday paper page into a more substantively existing, elevated object.

Similarly, in the context of my research, traditional and familiar ceramic techniques and the visual language of the ordinary and the everyday become elevated through the application of precision and concision: through the application of skills acquired through constant repetition. The fine parameters and tolerances that make the porcelain clay page and its surface compositions work, are identified and fine-tuned. When the clay page is completed, with slip and glaze applied and fired, the ordinary and the everyday become elevated; the language of the clay page emerges, and it becomes more than the sum of its parts.

Rhopography

The transformation and elevation of the paper page into porcelain, and Parker’s casting of pavement cracks in bronze, have parallels with the concept of rhopography in fine art. The art historian Norman Bryson, writing in *Looking at the Overlooked*, states that still life painting deals with ‘the routines of daily living, the domestic round’ – what this research would term the ordinary and the everyday.¹⁷¹ He describes such paintings as attending to ‘the world ignored by the human impulse to create greatness’.¹⁷² Bryson draws upon Charles Sterling’s distinction between ‘megalography’ and ‘rhopography’, stating that

¹⁶⁸ Müller, *White Magic: The Age of Paper*, p. ix; Mak, *How the Page Matters*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁹ De Waal, *The White Road*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, p. 15.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Megalography is the depiction of those things in the world which are great – the legends of the gods, battles of heroes, the crises of history. Rhopography (from rhopos, trivial objects, small wares, trifles) is the depiction of those things which lack importance, the unassuming material base of life that importance constantly overlooks.¹⁷³

The still life kitchen pictures of Juan Sánchez Cotán, empty of detail other than everyday ingredients, are an example of rhopography (Figure 50). As Bryson has noted, this painting has ‘exactly reverse[d] the scale of values in [...] what is unique and powerful’ by ‘lavishing [...] the kind of attention normally reserved for what is of supreme value’.¹⁷⁴ Bryson can make this assertion because Cotán applied the same quality of painting to the ordinary, everyday kitchen ingredients as would be applied to the painting of a battle scene. The ordinary and everyday commonplace subject matter therefore becomes elevated.



Figure 50. Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber* (1602)
This image is available under a Public Domain license.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 63, 64.

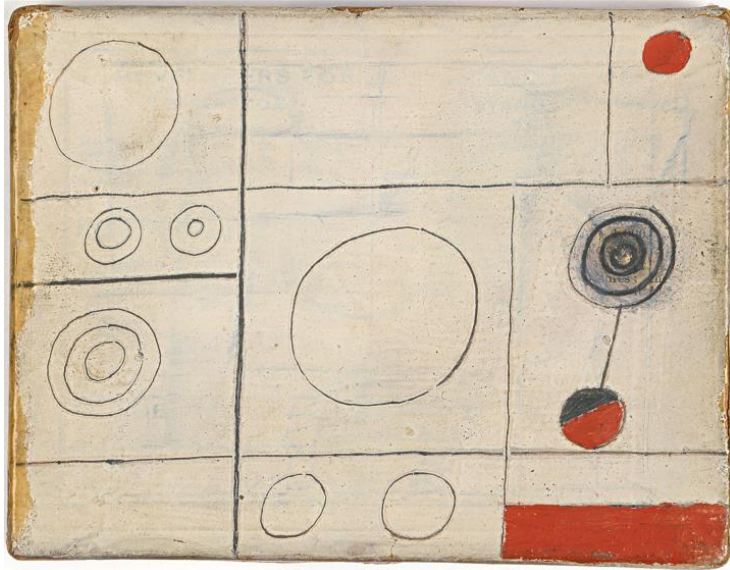


Figure 51. Ben Nicholson, *Abstract Box* (1933)
© Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of DACS, NY.

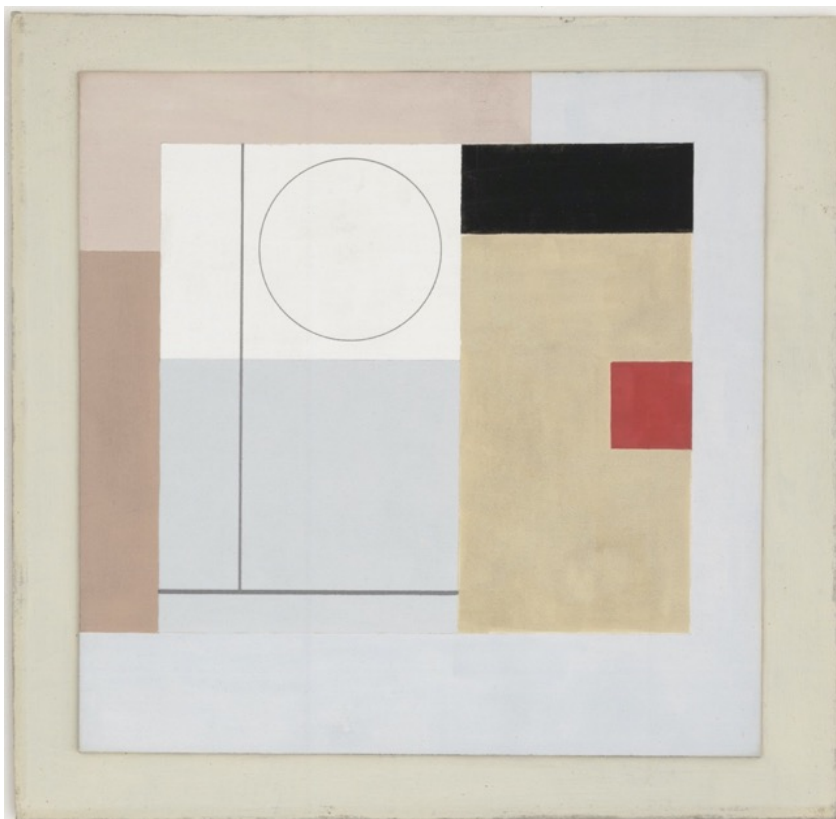


Figure 52. Ben Nicholson, *Painting 1943* (1943)
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The paper page translated in porcelain achieves the same result: as described above, the clay page is given a treatment that reverses the scale of values. The clay page that emerges from this research can be said to be part of the language of rhopography – the elevation of that which is often overlooked: the ordinary and the everyday.

Once, when wayfaring in Cambridge, I found myself wandering into Kettle’s Yard.¹⁷⁵ I was drawn towards a Ben Nicholson painting on the inside of a small box (Figure 51). This small box – this object, this painting – has anchored itself in my mind: it was so ordinary and domestic in its scale, it felt utilitarian in origin, like an oversized matchbox. Yet it had a quiet power and strength. The philosopher Alain de Botton has written about another of Nicholson’s small works, *Painting 1943*, shown in Figure 52, as follows:

Painting 1943, by the English artist Ben Nicholson, is a testament to the basic pleasures of simple things. One can imagine Nicholson absorbed by the task of carefully working on the arrangement – and subtle rearrangement – in search of a particular kind of harmony. There is a kinship here with the pleasures of doing a jigsaw or organizing the household accounts. The work is a product of a spirit that loves small manoeuvres, a spirit that could with ease be translated into the language of domestic tasks or quiet hobbies (stacking a dishwasher, designing a model railway layout).¹⁷⁶

De Botton perceives in Nicholson’s painting the language of the ordinary and the everyday. He equates the process of composition with the ‘basic pleasures of simple things’ such as ‘domestic tasks or quiet hobbies’. He sees the configuration of Nicholson’s painting as resulting from a process of ‘arrangement – and subtle rearrangement,’ of having a kinship with a love of ‘small manoeuvres’ in search of a ‘particular kind of harmony’, of organising something or puzzling over and then solving something.

These observations are rooted in the language of the ordinary and the everyday, and Nicholson’s process of configuration and re-configuration is also present in this research. For example, when I construct a composition on the wall, I lay out clay pages in a preliminary arrangement (a first guess) before reorganising them, using ‘small manoeuvres’, until a

¹⁷⁵ The University of Cambridge’s modern and contemporary art gallery.

¹⁷⁶ Alain de Botton and John Armstrong, *Art as Therapy* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2013), p. 55.

‘particular kind of harmony is achieved.’ The process of arrangement and rearrangement is repeated until a composition is achieved; the moment of composition is unknown until it occurs and registers as complete. This takes place when the composition is balanced: when the clay pages achieve a ‘particular kind of harmony’.

De Botton continues:

The artwork lifts these moods and moments of happy concentration into the public realm and directs some of the accumulated prestige of art towards them. This is an act of justice and not of condescension, because in the scheme of life these satisfactions, which have received so little acclaim and have not been much celebrated in the history of philosophy, genuinely need to be taken more seriously. They are not heroic, disturbing or dramatic, but this is their virtue.¹⁷⁷

These observations bring us back to rhopography. De Botton believes that ordinary but pleasurable activities deserve attention, just like Cotán’s kitchen ingredients. What is ordinary and everyday – the processes of rearrangement in both Nicholson’s painting and this research – are elevated by the completed work itself. In this research, the language of the ordinary and the everyday becomes elevated through materials, the skills developed in the making process and the community of clay pages arranged and rearranged on the wall.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the clay page gains additional meaning through the metaphor of wayfaring. For example, it is shown that the repetition and variation of the clay page, in its body and on its surface, reflects and embodies wayfaring: each clay page is a repeat but with unique variations. With each repeated making of the clay page, its properties and characteristics become increasingly formal and archetypal. The metaphor of wayfaring connects each clay page to the language of the ordinary and everyday, through an emphasis on the small scale and material realities. It is demonstrated that by paying attention to the ordinary and the everyday, and through a process of rhopography, the ordinary and everyday become elevated in the clay page.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

As noted earlier in this thesis, wayfaring is about a human correspondence with space. In the next and final chapter of the thesis, I bring theory and practice together in an examination of the final clay page composition of my research – a library of clay pages – which demonstrates the clay page as a metaphor for the self in the world.

6. Final Composition: *The Library of the Wayfaring Self*

6.1. An encounter with a hoarding

I first saw the painted shapes during a wayfaring run; something about them caught my eye. Not wanting to stop, I arrived home and announced to my husband, ‘There’s something I need to show you’. And later that day we went back to look for them. When we arrived, I excitedly pointed out the painted shapes (Figure 53) saying, ‘Aren’t they great? They are so interesting!’



Figure 53. The Old Dairy pub, London (2020)
© 2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.

I stood and pondered them from across the road before walking over to take a closer look. Each of the shapes seemed abstract but purposeful (Figure 54 and Figure 55).



Figure 54. Painted shape (I) on a hoarding at The Old Dairy pub, London (2020)
© 2020 Alison Rees. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 55. Painted shape (II) on a hoarding at The Old Dairy pub, London (2020)
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After that, I started seeing the painted shapes repeatedly, but with variations, in other locations (Figure 56). Greys and blacks – ordinary and practical everyday colours – adorned boarded-up and closed premises. I recorded each one that I saw with my camera.



Figure 56. Painted shapes in various locations, London (2020)
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As I thought about the abstract painted shapes, I began to think about them as being formed from a complete rectangle, or square, with something taken away – a process of subtraction. I thought about the tests I was conducting in the studio, and I started to see the process of subtraction from a square as the starting point for a surface investigation and a composition of clay pages at scale.

6.2. Introduction

This chapter examines the final clay page composition – the culmination – of this research. Whilst many of the tests and clay page compositions arise from wayfaring material accreted over time, this final composition begins with a specific wayfaring journey, as described above. That journey gives rise to a series of clay page sequences which then come together to form an inter-connected collection of clay pages, from which the final composition *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* is selected. This process is described below.

The chapter examines how wayfaring directly informs the making of the individual clay pages and the selection and composition of those pages in the construction of the finished work. It looks at what can be understood from a reading of those pages.

6.3. In the studio

Returning to the studio after my wayfaring journey, I started making A5 clay pages. I taped out a square on the surface of the clay page and cut out a piece of newspaper, placing it to obscure part of that square (the detail of this investigation is documented in the Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations, Test. 20 (ii) onwards). I then painted the surface with slip and an abstract shape was revealed when the newspaper and tape were removed. The intention was not to copy the painted shapes on the hoardings but rather to subtract something from a regular shape to create something abstract: a repeated square with a variation.

The first test, which resulted in the series shown in Figure 57, produced seven clay pages. The size of the surface square was then increased, and the process of subtraction repeated, this time

resulting in the division of the square. This division into sections prompted the introduction of another colour – grey – and the composition was framed by a square of glaze (Figure 58). The enlargement of the square and the process of subtraction was repeated three more times and the colours yellow and green were introduced (Figure 59, Figure 60 and Figure 61). The square was then increased in size to a rectangle and the process repeated twice more (Figure 62 and Figure 63).

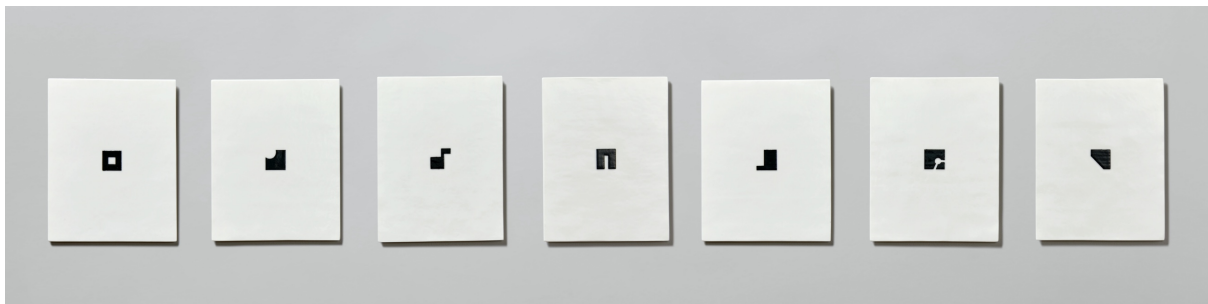


Figure 57. Test 20. (ii) Squares with something taken away investigation
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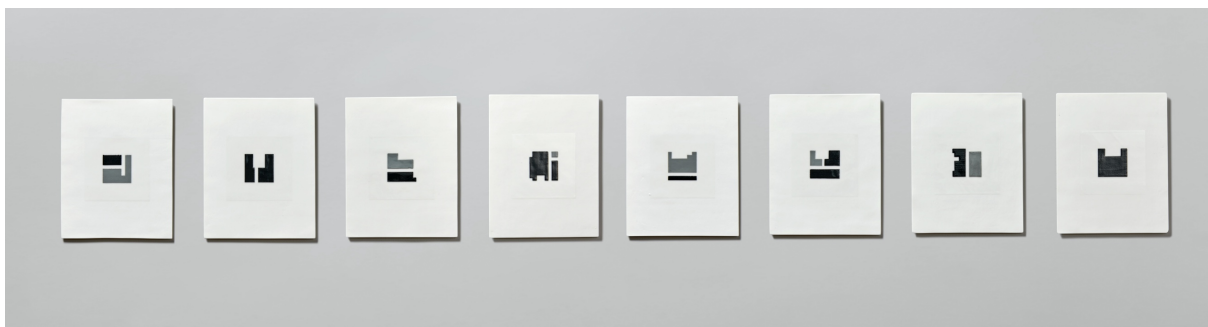


Figure 58. Test 20. (iv) Evolving squares investigation
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Figure 59. Test 20. (v) Evolving squares investigation
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Figure 60. Test 20. (vi) Evolving squares investigation
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Figure 61. Test 20. (vii) Evolving squares investigation
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Figure 62. Test 20. (viii) Evolving squares investigation
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Figure 63. Test 20. (ix) Evolving squares investigation
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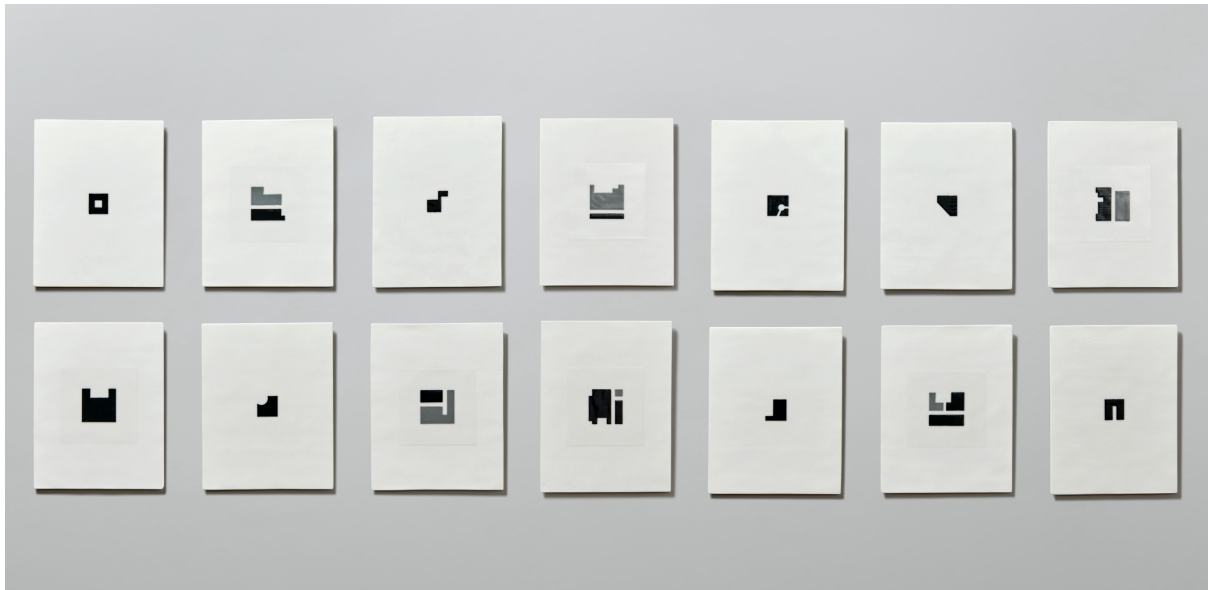


Figure 64. Test 21. Composition investigation – *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* (Clay pages from Test 20. (iv) and (v))
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Each sequence of clay pages formed its own discrete series, and if taken no further would stand as seven individual compositions. However, when taken together the forty-four clay pages form a collection, or a library, of pages. It is from this collection that the pages for a larger composition can be selected.

The final test of this research (see Appendix, Part B: Practice-based Investigations Test 21. Composition investigation – *The Library of the Wayfaring Self*) looked at how the library of forty-four clay pages could be used to construct a larger-scale composition beyond the individual sequences.

To build a composition of scale, I began the investigation by looking at sequence combinations with close registers – that is, where the underlying square was different by just one evolution. For example, in Figure 64, sequences (iv) and (v) from Test 20 were combined. This smaller composition was successful, and it started to indicate that multiple compositions existed within the library of clay pages. I then used the grid as a mobile field to combine different combinations of sequences, producing further effective compositions (detailed in the Appendix, as noted above).

The largest composition in Test 21 combined all forty-four pages. That composition was less effective because it was dominated by the later sequences (sequences (viii) and (ix)) which used a rectangle rather than a square, and whose surface took up a much larger part of the clay page. There was too much juxtaposition and not enough harmony: the composition was unbalanced. By removing and disregarding the last two sequences, I arrived at a final composition (Figure 65).

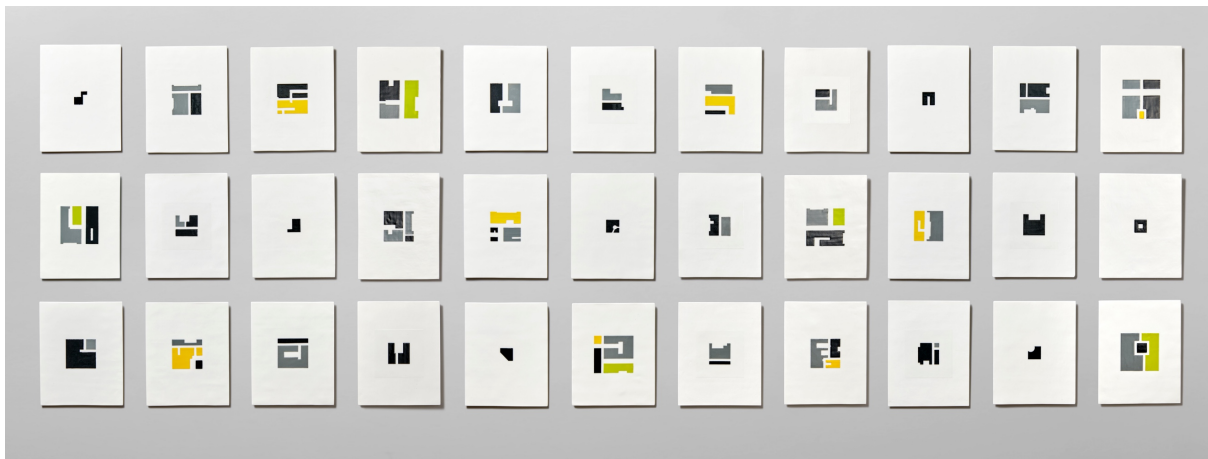


Figure 65. Alison Rees, *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* (2021)
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6.4. On the wall

In creating the composition *The Library of the Wayfaring Self*, I utilised the lightness and portability of thirty-three clay pages to repeatedly arrange and rearrange the pages, until I arrived at a satisfactory composition. The composition is not conceived in advance (each page made so that it fits in a specific place alongside pre-assigned neighbours): rather, there is an element of risk as the pages are organised and reorganised to find a meaningful order. This is composition by wayfaring. I look for footholds and adjust my orientation and pace; I look for harmonies and juxtapositions.

Each clay page within the composition is presented on the wall within a community of clay pages, each relying upon the others for context and meaning. Each clay page is an imperfect self within the group. Once the grid has completed its role as a mobile field, used to organise

the pages, it becomes static, providing each page with a location in space. When presented together, the clay pages become a form of storytelling based on wayfaring.

The overall composition of *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* is dependent on the surface of the clay pages. Each of the individual clay page surface compositions reflects an experience of wayfaring. It is the outcome of a process of noticing and recording, thinking and translating. In this way, the mundane abstract painted shapes on the outside of the hoardings make their way on to the surface of the clay page. The spatial organisation of colour is used to convey clarity, certainty, order and minimality. The greys and blacks of the hoardings are used to symbolise the city before the brighter colours of yellow and green are brought in to communicate a delight at being in the world. The compositions on the surface of the clay page are laid out with reference to the edges of the clay page, and the white space that is left around the compositions enhances readability. The slip and glaze create levels and layers; glaze is used to provide a frame for some of the surface compositions.

The composition responds to the set of restricted parameters applied to the research. The clay pages are restricted to white; they are all made from porcelain paperclay; they are cut to the same dimensions; there is a single forward-facing surface presented for viewing, and on the surface a square is subtracted from, differently and repeatedly. *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* works out what can be generated in response to those restrictions.

The composition demonstrates a language of elevation. Ordinary and everyday marks on hoardings are elevated into an abstract composition; ordinary ceramic materials, such as slip and glaze, are elevated through skill and attention, and the clay pages selected from the library become as a group more than the sum of their parts. A language of balanced tensions is evident. The thinness and lightness of the clay page is in balance with its stability and material density; the edges of the clay page act inwards on the surface composition, influencing its framing and layout before acting outwards to locate each page on the grid; the grid is mobile before becoming static; the grid both reveals and holds the imperfections of the clay pages.

Although the number of compositions that can be assembled from the library of pages is almost limitless, each composition is unique in time and place. Because there is a single set of clay pages within the library, for as long as one composition exists, no other composition using the same pages can exist alongside it: the act of creating a new composition destroys its predecessor.

The ability to select clay pages and create repeated but varying compositions from a library of pages, has an analogy with collections of loose paper pages or with a box of postcards. Such pages and postcards are not stitched or bound together in a fixed unalterable formation but are temporal and flexible in their order and arrangement.

The ability of *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* to morph and transform, to create multiple – even ephemeral – non-hierarchical compositions is a deliberate choice on my part. I am not presenting a single work of art – a single composition of clay pages – but instead, I am offering a library that contains many potential compositions. The library exists as a resource from which clay pages can be selected and combined to tell different stories, to create different narratives. Clay page compositions can be reflected on, and unwanted pages can be returned to, and be reabsorbed by, the library. My decision to offer multiple outcomes, means that *The Library of the Wayfaring Self* provides the artwork owner with their own decision-making path when choosing how, and in what space, to display the work.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates an additional outcome of my research: the formation of a library of clay pages from which individual, if ephemeral, compositions can be created. The library is demonstrated to be a community of pages comprised of many imperfect individuals, and when that community comes together, they become elevated, more than the sum their parts. The pages in the library are connected to each other by an evolving series of surface repetitions and variations – a response to a particular wayfaring journey. When selecting pages from the library, the grid is demonstrated to be a large mobile field which facilitates composition by wayfaring, prior to holding the pages in a static, if temporary, position. It is demonstrated that the library can morph and transform to create multiple, non-hierarchical compositions.

In the following and final part of the thesis I bring the key research findings together and envisage future developments.

Conclusion

Key research findings

The aim of this research was to create an iterative reconfiguration of both matter and meaning. I posed two overarching questions at the beginning of this thesis. First, how might a new physical form, based on the external archetype of the paper page, be developed? Second, what might the new clay page, its surface language and presentation, mean? Each of the thesis chapters has examined an aspect of the clay page making: in the process, the meaning of the clay page has been demonstrated. I address the key research findings, in response to the research questions, below.

How might a new physical form, based on the external archetype of the paper page, be developed?

Forming the page

A new clay page form has been developed by drawing upon the characteristics and language of the paper page. The form of the clay page, originated in porcelain paperclay, exploits both that clay's fibrous connection with paper – a material link – and the physical properties of porcelain paperclay, which enable the making of a flat, thin clay page, referencing the flatness and thinness of the paper page. Clay is cut using a grid and, when fired, the clay page corresponds with both the dimensions of international paper sizes (A6 and an adjusted arrangement of A5) and the colour of the everyday paper page. The physical form of the clay page, as it has developed through this research, creates a direct and intentional correspondence with the paper page.

The language of the surface

The new clay page has layers of coloured slip and transparent glaze applied to its surface. Colour is organised in discrete areas, in combination with glaze, to create abstract surface compositions which respond to the edges of the clay page and engage with a process of framework. A palette of colour is achieved by mixing only three primary colour stains in porcelain slip. This palette is then used alongside black and grey. I used this small, restricted set of materials, as well as a single transparent glaze, throughout the research.

The surface compositions use repetition and variation and originate from the activity of, and the visual information gathered during, wayfaring journeys. The compositions are not literal copies of what has been observed and recorded in the landscape but are abstractions which reflect the repetition and variation of wayfaring, both in its activity and the images encountered en route. Likewise, the colours applied to the surface (and sometimes to the clay body) are products of the wayfaring journey, reflecting city colour as observed in graffiti and road markings, for example.

The direct and intentional correspondence with the paper page, established in the forming of the clay page form, is also reflected on the surface of the clay page. Both types of page use a language of borders and white space to enhance the experience of reading their surfaces, which are organised and understood with reference to their rectangular edges. Both types of page use an invisible grid as a scaffold to lay out their surfaces, thereby providing visual consistency. Further page-to-page correspondences can be observed: when black slip is applied to the surface of the clay page, a print-like graphic effect is produced, corresponding with the typical appearance of black print on a paper page; the use of black slip dots evokes the visual effect of dot matrix printing, and when slip and glaze are coterminous there is a correspondence with the printing technique known as spot varnishing.

Presenting the page

The new clay page is always presented on the wall as part of a group, or community, of pages; each page relies on the other members of the group for its meaning and understanding. Some groups of clay pages are made in a specific order and presented as such, but most often the pages are made in series, then arranged and rearranged to generate an overall composition containing connections and juxtapositions. This is composition by wayfaring – no map or diagram exists in advance; rather, the rearrangement takes place using my senses and understanding of the clay pages in order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

My research adopts the device of the grid to facilitate the rearrangement and display of the clay pages. It is only when they are placed within the grid that their repetition and the small variations in form can be observed. Each page is placed, and centred, an exact and repeated distance from its neighbour. The organisation of the clay pages within the grid, which exists as an intangible space formed in between the multiple clay pages, connects the research with

techniques of visual narrative such as storyboarding, the sequencing of comics, the frames of films or an unbound codex.

What might the new clay page, its surface language and presentation, mean?

Language of the page: storytelling

Building on the inherent connection between storytelling and the paper page, the clay pages – presented on the wall – tell a story that has been made visible. Their front-facing surfaces can be read immediately; there are no hidden volumes or corners. Whilst the individual clay pages have their roots in autonomy and self-sufficiency, the viewer of the clay page group is, themselves, an integral part of their overall story; they are witnessing and sharing in the narrative of the clay pages.

The clay pages tell a story of wayfaring, of the trails walked and of the trails laid down. It is a story of what is noticed and observed in the city and its environs; a story told through colour, through the motifs of architecture such as the grid and through repetition and variation. Colour additionally tells a story of emotion, of joy at being in the world. In the final composition of the research, it is demonstrated that a library of clay pages can be drawn upon to tell multiple stories and narratives.

The clay pages also tell a story of the ordinary and the everyday – the paper page, the practice of wayfaring, the visual environmental language recorded when doing so, the use of everyday ceramic surface material and techniques, the process of arrangement and rearrangement – and in the process of telling that story, my research transforms the ordinary and the everyday into something more extraordinary. A process of elevation takes place.

Language of the page: elevation and restricted parameters

The elevation begins with the translation of the dimensions of the ordinary paper page, and its characteristics of flatness and thinness, into porcelain. This translation produces an object in clay that exhibits nuanced variations, that conveys meaning and demonstrates physical presence.

During the making process the visual language gathered during wayfaring is elevated through a process of abstraction and translation onto the surface of the clay page. Ordinary and everyday ceramic materials and techniques – slips, commercial stains, a commercial glaze, masking – are elevated through deliberately precise and concise application and execution.

The elevation comes, too, from minimality and my deliberate decision to impose a set of restricted parameters on my research – one clay; two page sizes; three primary coloured stains plus grey and black; one glaze; the consistent use of the grid and the wall. This network of restrictions, however, imposes no limitations on creativity: instead, the parameters are a device for stimulating originality – infinite variations are available within those limited parameters.

The presentation of the clay pages as a composed group also contributes to the process of elevation. The elevation takes place through the repetitions and variations that appear across the pages – repetitions of colour, haptic variations, changes in levels and layers – and through the connections and juxtapositions that are created. When presented together, the clay pages become more than the sum of themselves: they become a ceramic composition.

Language of the page: balanced tensions

The research further identifies a series of balanced tensions: that is, of two or more things which sit in balance with each other, or which play oppositional roles and which provide additional meaning to the clay pages.

The dimensions of the clay page, when combined with its thinness, exist in a balanced tension with the flatness of the clay page. If the clay page is too large and/or too thin, it will warp; if it is too thick, the clay page will lose its correspondence with the paper page – there is a point of equilibrium at which a correspondence with the paper page and a stable form are both achieved. There is also a balanced tension between the flatness of the clay page and the undulations in form that arise from the hand-making. Too many undulations become visually distracting, too few mean that the clay page appears manufactured and characterless.

Within the body of the clay page, there is a balance between the density and compression of material achieved through the high rate of shrinkage of porcelain clay and the lightness that is created by the burning out of the paper fibres. Further balanced tensions arise from the

regularity of the clay pages and the behaviour of the maker and of the clay body. The clay page is always made to the same dimensions, yet each clay page, once fired, has a subtly different size.

In my research the edges of the clay page can be seen to act in two opposing, balancing directions. The edges act inwards onto the surface of the clay page, through a process of framework, to produce a language of borders, frames, rectangles, squares and lines; and they also act outwards, to locate the clay page on an external organising grid. These two forces are in balance with each other.

On the surface of the clay page, further balanced tensions occur: fluid brushstrokes of slip terminate cleanly (through the use of a mask) against the static surface of the clay; co-terminating slip and glaze produce a distinct haptic shoulder, a fluid glassy meniscus against the unmoving clay page; hand-punched and imperfectly aligned painted circles of slip push against an invisible straight-lined grid. These intersections create points of tension, which are always in balance and provide interest for the eye within a composition.

Lastly, when the clay pages are arranged and presented on the wall, the grid in which they are displayed performs several oppositional roles: it is visible and present on the wall but only as a negative, intangible space formed by the edges of the clay pages; its intangible lines reveal the imperfections of the clay page forms whilst also accommodating those imperfections, facilitating their disappearance into the overall regularity of the composition; the grid performs as a stationary field (it is static once the clay pages are presented on the wall), but also as one that facilitates movement and expansion (the clay pages can be arranged, re-arranged and added to).

The clay page as metaphor for the self

My research did not set out to embody a representation of the self, but this key meaning of the ceramic page emerged through the practice-based investigations and their analysis.

The clay page draws upon a material that has long been associated with the body, with metaphor and with the creation of the self – world religions, mythology and folklore incorporate the archetypal idea that man was formed from clay by a deity.

The boundaries and the proportions of the clay page are established with reference not only to the external archetype of the paper page, but also to the intimate scale of the human body: that is, with reference to the space encompassed by the span of the maker's arms – a close and intimate making space in front of the body. The clay page is made in the same way every time, yet each finished page exhibits variations, embodying the fallibility of its maker and their materials. The maker's hands and eyes make constant judgements, and each and every clay page embodies those differences. Because the clay page is light in weight, it is nimble, and it is portable. It is a ceramic form that expresses a sense of individual freedom and ease of movement within the world, a sense of not being weighed down. The metaphor of the self is therefore built into the making of the clay page.

Moving to the clay pages as a composition, their repetition, variation and surface compositions tell a story of uniqueness and of the self in the world. Each clay page shares a family resemblance with the others within the composition, yet remains an individual, distinct from its peers. The individual clay page acts as a metaphor for the self, for the human being in space, and when the clay pages are brought together there is a story of individuals within a community. Each clay page relies on the other members of its group, its community, for meaning and understanding – each clay page is read and understood relative to those it is presented with. The grid allows individuality and difference whilst generating a communal sense of understanding, accommodation and belonging; the grid accepts the imperfections.

The clay page as an archetype

The correspondence that the clay page has with the external archetype of the paper page helps reveal the clay page's own independent character as an archetype distinct from the conventions of other ceramic archetypes, such as the figurine, the vessel and the tile. The clay page is grounded in the language of the paper page and the metaphor of the self. An archetype can be defined as the 'original pattern or model', and in this research the original pattern or model is made up of several features which are present in every clay page.

Every clay page is repeatable. It can be made again and again, but differently each time within the same parameters. The clay page is made with four edges to the same fixed proportions. It has one forward-facing surface and is always presented within the symbiotic structure of the repeatable and extendable grid. The formality, or archetypal nature, of the clay page emerges

through the repetition of making. Each iteration of the clay page embeds its existence, deepens the maker's knowledge and establishes the clay page as an object with meaning. An archetype.

Key challenges and discoveries encountered in the research practice

I encountered several challenges and discoveries during the practice-based investigations.

At the start of the practice-based investigations the idea of a making a thin, flat rectangle in clay felt simultaneously like an obvious yet subversive thing to do; it seemed too simple and straightforward, something you could figure out in a couple of days and that would be that. That thought process had to be fought against. But after I had undertaken the first few practice-based investigations, I discovered that that what looked simple as an idea – the making of a page in clay – was not at all simple in practice. Questions arose immediately regarding proportions; how to balance flatness with thinness; what would be on the surface of the clay page; the effect of slip on warpage; the influence of the edges; how to glaze the clay page.

When answering the questions above, further challenges and discoveries arose. Whilst individual tests could answer individual questions, much of the knowledge gained in the making of the clay page was gained over time through repetition. Small incremental steps were taken (on reflection) in a spirit of continuous improvement. This took place through the iterative making of the clay page, rather than just being resolved in a single test. Much of this practice-based testing activity felt like learning to throw a pot on a wheel – making the same thing repeatedly. Each making of the clay page revealed further information, each piece of learning was additive: that is, key research findings were often invisible until enough repetitions had taken place for their effect to be noticeable. For example, over time, through my senses of touch and sight, I was able to judge when to cut the clay page and how it should be handled and kept flat. There was a period in the research during which the small variations in clay page size felt like a problem to be solved, but in time these were understood as an intrinsic part of the new language being developed and a manifestation of the balanced tensions inherent in forming clay pages within the parameters that I had set.

Through the practice-based investigations, I discovered that there were multiple meanings to the clay page beyond a straightforward correspondence with the paper page. Again, these only became apparent through repetitive making. Whilst I performed a specific test, for example, to investigate the language of borders and frames relating to the edges of the clay page, it was only after further tests, repeats and variations, that the connection between this language and the visual language of wayfaring was revealed.

I discovered that the practice-based investigations were a conduit for thought processes – sometimes conscious, sometimes not – and when combined with analysis – ceramic contexts and theoretical framings – new knowledge was formed. This is examined below.

Reflections on shifts in ceramic context, practice and theoretical framings resulting from the research

My research applies theoretical frameworks not usually considered pertinent to works in clay and, from the outset, the research has positioned itself in a dynamic that shifts traditional ceramic thinking. The starting point for the research was the paper page, an archetype external to the discipline, and it is contextual settings external to clay that have provided the most insight. For example, when analysing and interrogating my thinking about the operation of the edges of the clay page, it was Derrida's theory of the parergon and the framing of the artwork that was essential. In turn, this understanding led me to Marin's process of framework and its action on both the surface of the clay page and the surface design of plates. When seeking to understand and contextually frame the elevation of the ordinary and everyday paper page and the language experienced through wayfaring – that which is overlooked – I drew on the theory and language of rhopography from a fine art context. Equally, de Botton's analysis of a Ben Nicholson painting provided contextual information regarding the arrangement and rearrangement of the clay pages.

This externality is balanced by the firm, and even militant, use of traditional techniques and ceramic studio practice in my research. The construction of the research is a narrative about small-scale working, domestic facilities and self-sufficiency, and only uses readily available commonplace commercial materials. It is a study focused on elevating materials, techniques

and processes, of taking that which is ordinary and everyday and giving it the attention that enables it to be shown off to its fullest extent.

The research offers an alternative metaphor for the self. The clay page is not figurative; it is not a vessel with elements referencing parts of the body, such as lip, belly, foot or neck. The clay page is not a container – as one might typically understand a ceramic vessel, in terms of holding volume – yet it contains. The clay page can communicate a feeling of emotion, character and behaviour. It participates in a community of pages. It contributes to the language of repetition that can be understood through the language of the brick, the tile and the vessel.

What emerges from this dynamic of studio practice and traditional techniques, external theory and academic research, is a new ceramic metaphor for the self, outside of traditional forms such as the vessel and the figurine.

Research impact: constituencies for the research; future directions

The audience for this research includes the ceramics community and those in the wider visual arts with an interest in working with materials such as clay and paper. It will also be of interest to those whose concerns relate to landscape and the city, colour, repetition and the grid, as well as those concerned with an expression of the self and how we relate to the space around us.

Future directions

I have developed the research practice in a self-sufficient, self-sustaining manner. A new dynamic could be developed by working in partnership with a commissioner or by collaborating with an artist or institution with a particular story to tell or space to fill. There is the potential for clay pages to respond to, and tell stories about, a particular location, a specific building or an individual journey. Compositions on a larger scale could be built given sufficient time and space.

My research used two paper sizes – A6 and an adjusted arrangement of A5 – each having similar proportions (their sides having a ratio of 1:1.4). A future direction could involve expanding the range of sizes and proportions used. For example, ‘bird paper’ (9.1 x 6.1cm),

previously used for communicating via carrier pigeon, is smaller than the dimensions used in this research.¹⁷⁸ Such dimensions would offer the possibility of an even thinner and lighter page-based form. An alternative direction for further exploration would be to build upon the research's use of the dimensions of the A6 postcard in the research and to explore more fully the connotations of the postcard with travel, time and place, memory – in the gathering of wayfaring material.

The last two tests of the research investigated the idea of building a library of clay pages, and this could also be explored further. It was exciting to see the multiple compositions that could be constructed from the evolving series of clay pages, but also to realise that each composition was unique in time and place.

Other ways of using the clay page could be purposefully investigated. One of the tests in my research looked at, but did not investigate further, the cutting out of lines of clay at the greenware stage from the body of the clay page.¹⁷⁹ Such cut-outs can have an interesting relationship with the clay page surface. A further investigation could consider the use of both sides of the clay page – recto and verso.

Other makers may wish to build upon this research in different ways. The clay page in this research was derived using porcelain paperclay to make a page that utilised that clay's high rate of shrinkage, but other paperclays could be used to achieve different outcomes depending on the maker's intention. Other artists might choose to use the surface of the clay page in an illustrative manner, for a more literal form of storytelling.

This new dimension to the language of ceramics, with its language of repetition and variation, offers limitless possibilities for composition and storytelling.

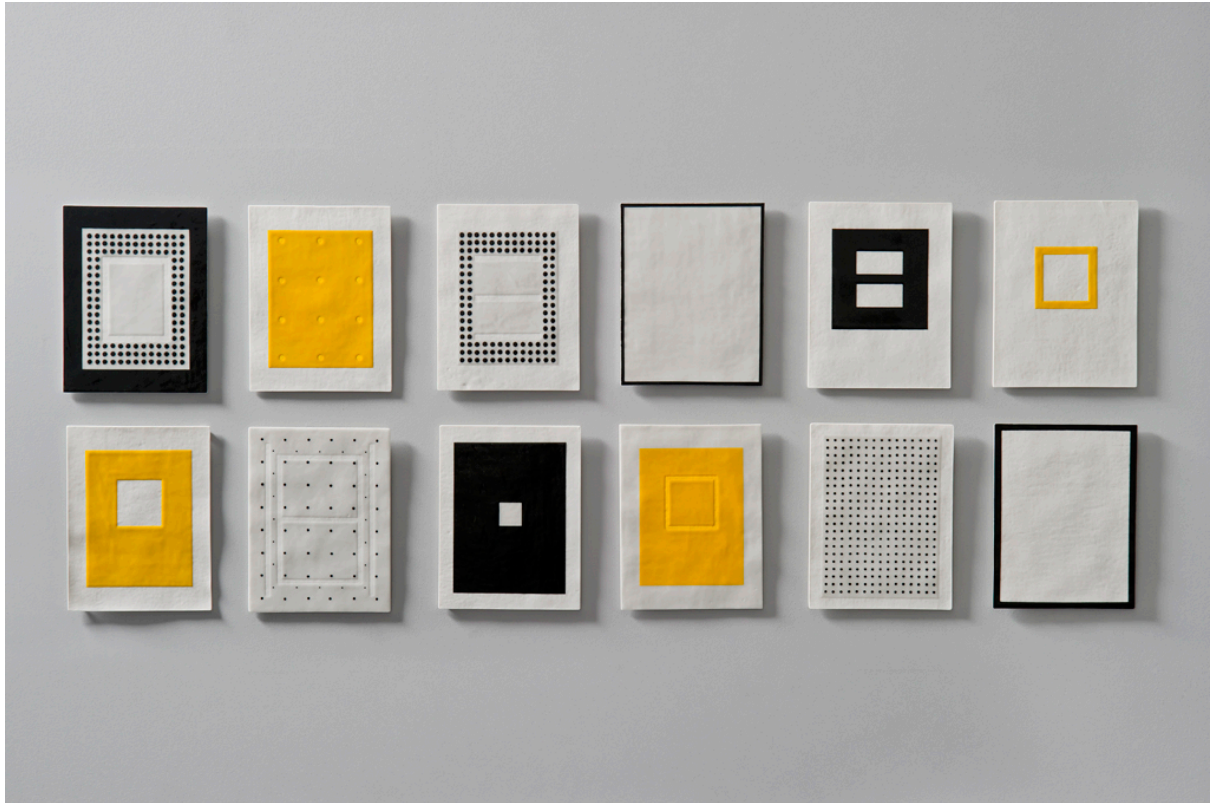
¹⁷⁸ Müller, *White Magic: the Age of Paper*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix, Part B: Practice-based investigations, Test 11 – Clay body cut out investigation.

Appendix: Documentation of the Research Practice

Part A: Clay Page Compositions

Twelve Porcelain Pages



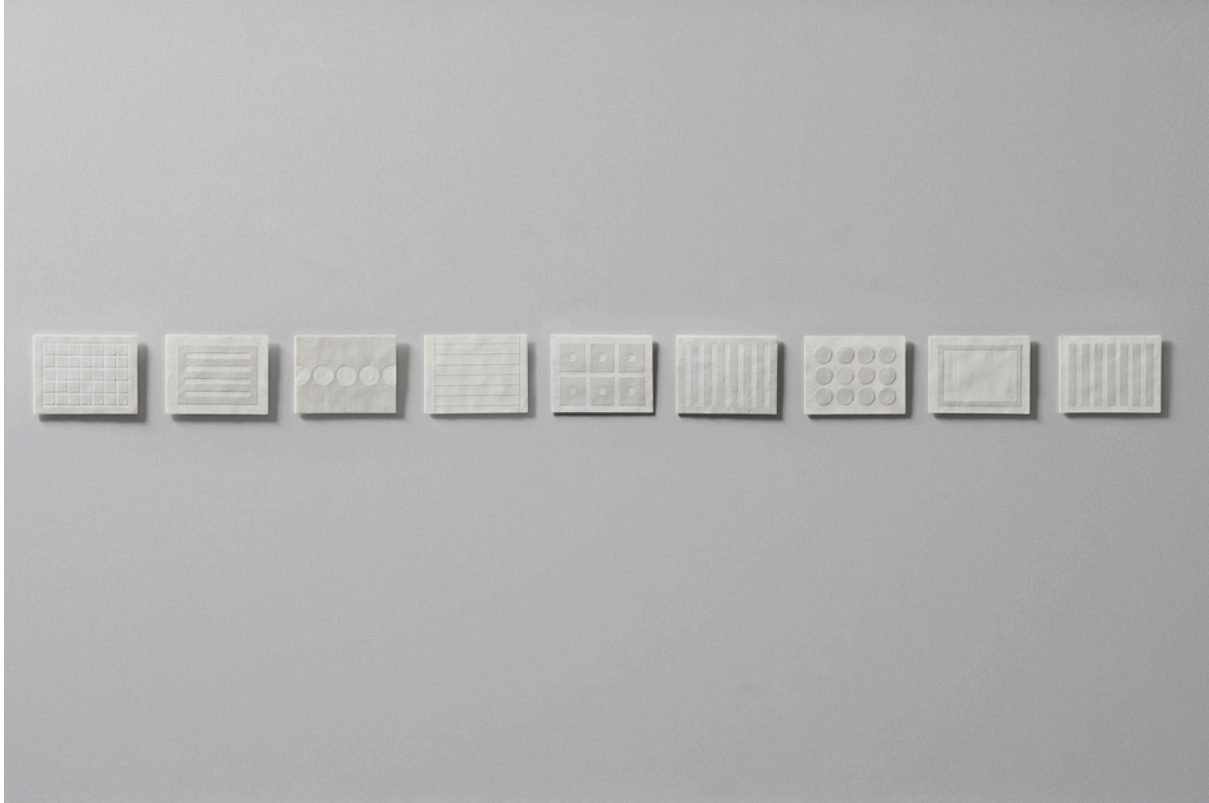
Date: 2017

Dimensions: 122 cm x 46 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 3.)

Not Absent, But Present



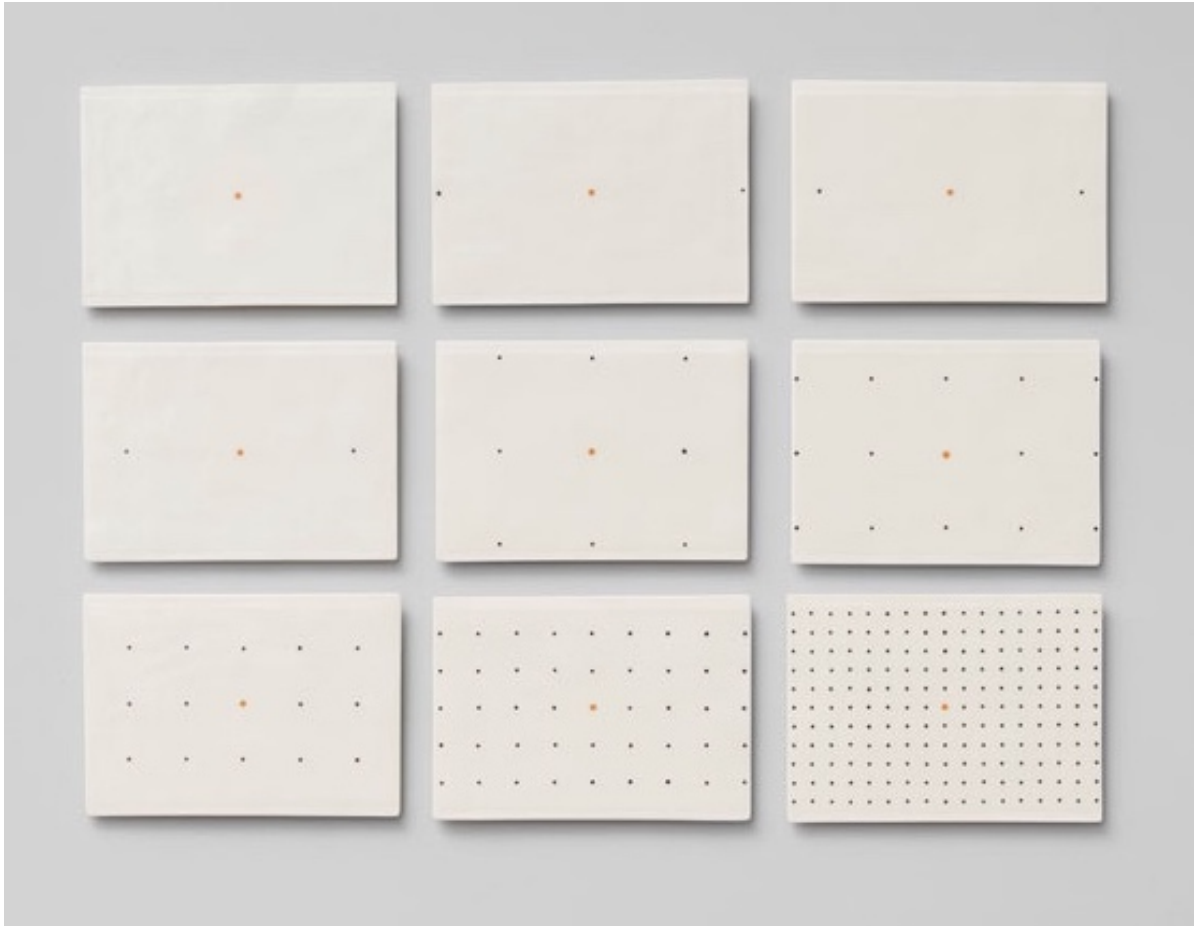
Date: 2017

Dimensions: 221 cm x 17 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 4.)

All At One Point



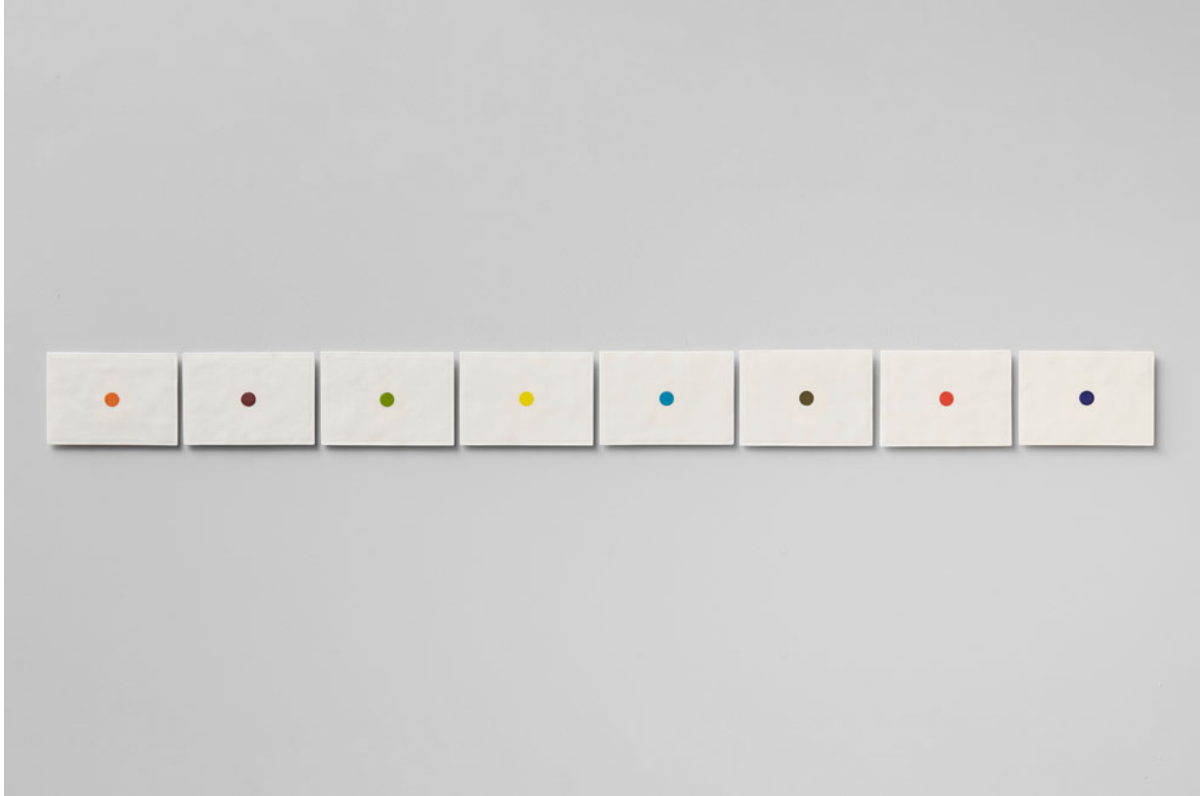
Date: 2017

Dimensions: 48 cm x 36 cm (A6)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 7.)

Graffiti Spot



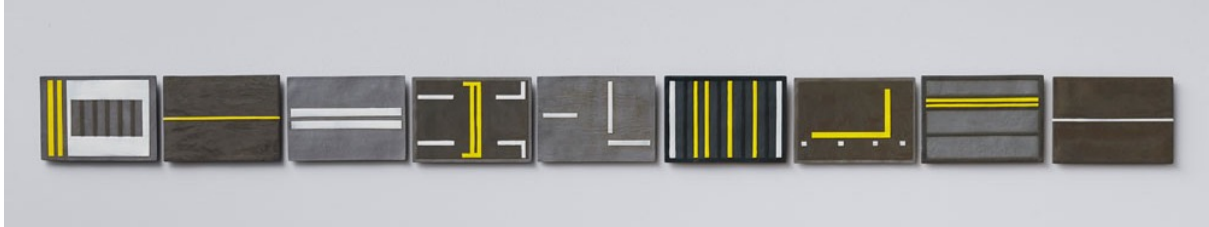
Date: 2018

Dimensions: 124 cm x 11 cm (A6)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 8.)

On the Road



Date: 2018

Dimensions: 140 cm x 11 cm (A6)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 12.)

Tip Toe I



Date: 2019

Dimensions: 70 cm x 57 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 13. (i))

Tip Toe II



Date: 2019

Dimensions: 145 cm x 11 cm (A6)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 13. (ii))

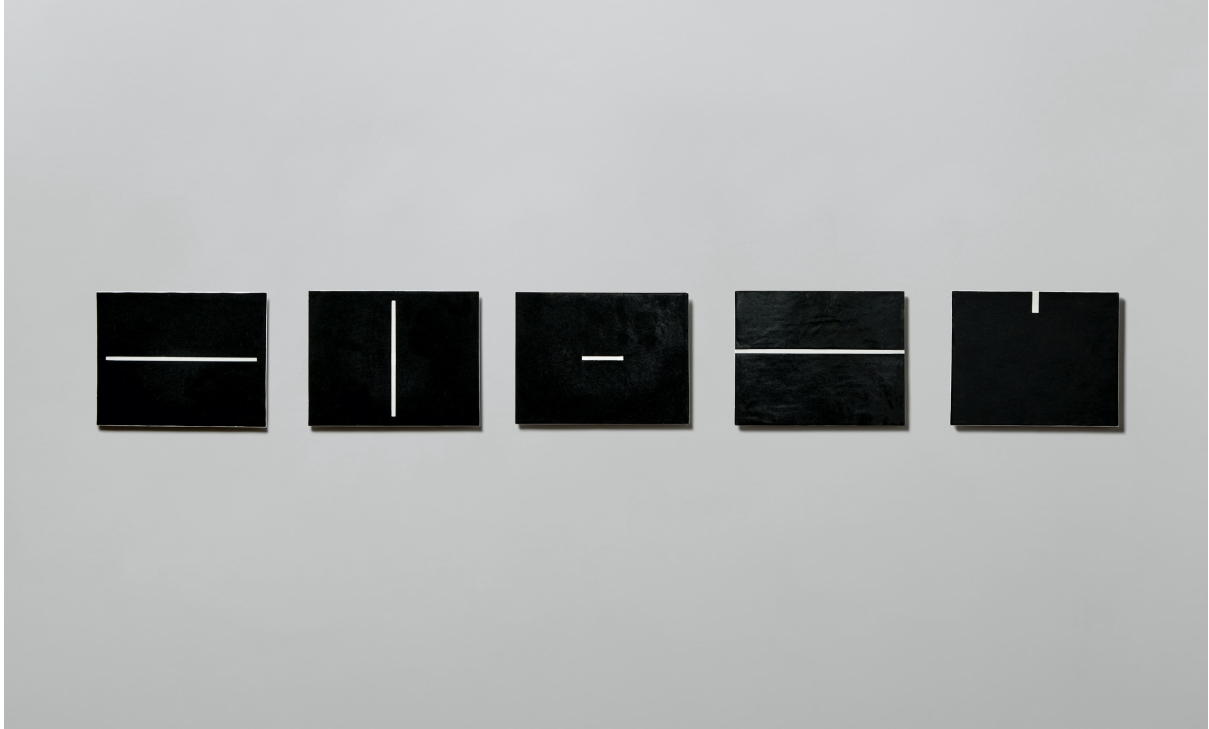
Alternative presentation.



Date: 2019
Dimensions: 50 cm x 36 cm (A6)
Photo: Alick Cotterill

(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 13. (ii))

Enclosure I



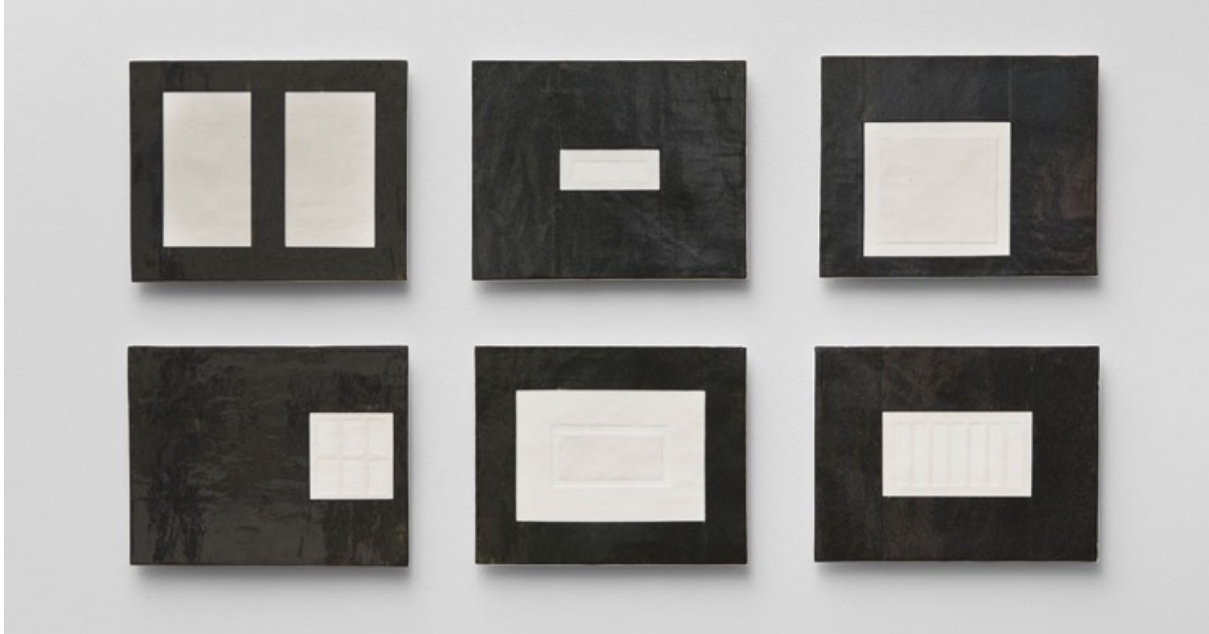
Date: 2019

Dimensions: 121 cm x 17 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 14.)

Enclosure II



Date: 2019

Dimensions: 88 cm x 37 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 15.)

Enclosure III

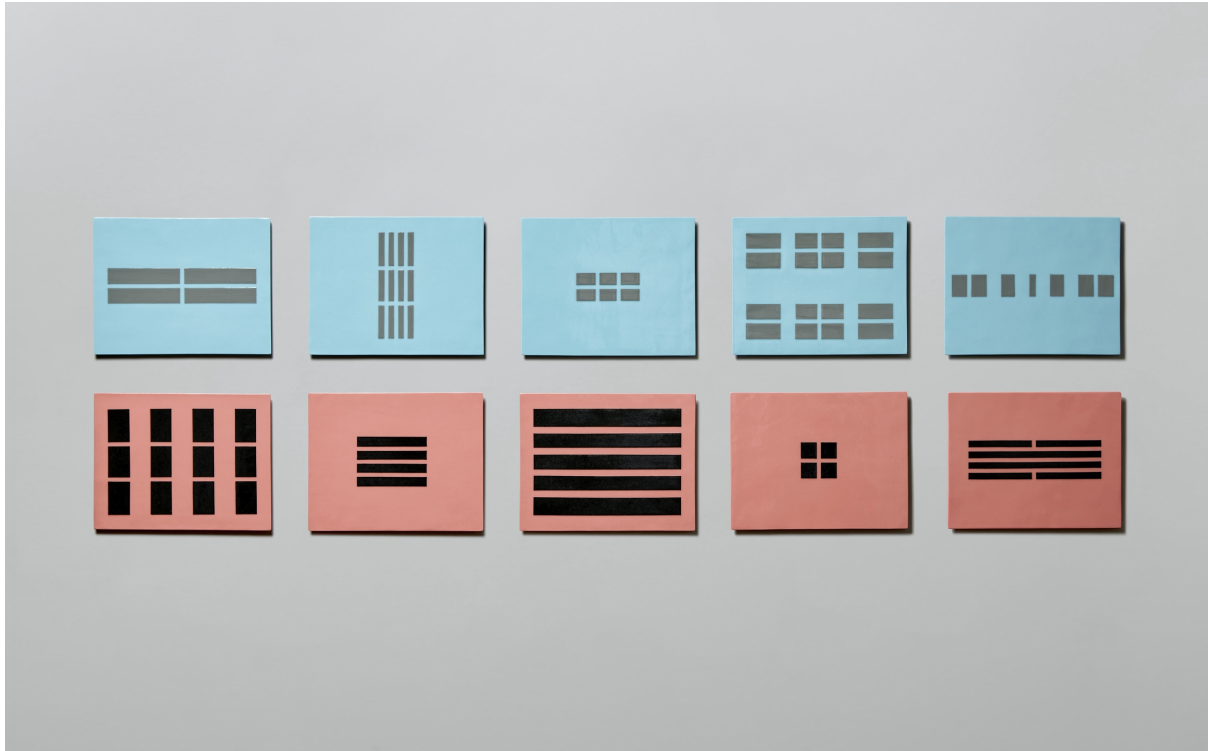


Date: 2019

Dimensions: 96 cm x 37 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 16.)



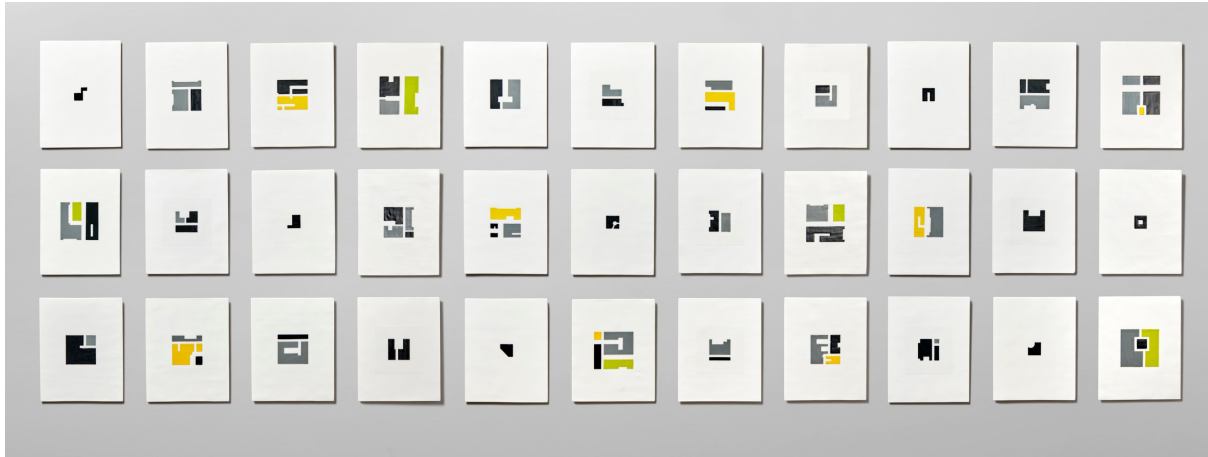
Date: 2020

Dimensions: 121 cm x 37 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 18.)

The Library of the Wayfaring Self



Date: 2021

Dimensions: 220 cm x 70 cm (adjusted A5)

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(This composition is formed from the clay pages made in Test 20 (ii) and Test 20. (iv) to (vii))

Part B: Practice-based Investigations

Technical information and notes

The documented tests use the following materials:

Scarva FLAX Paper Clay ES600 Porcelain

Scarva P20 Special Porcelain

Potterycrefts stains: P4189 Yellow; P4146 Red; P4129 Jay Blue; P4139 Grey; GS14 Black

Potterycrefts glaze P2048 leadless transparent

Bath Potters' Supplies wax resist

1. All tests are oxidation fired on kiln sand, in a Nabertherm Top60 kiln.
2. Kiln shelf diameter 35.5cm.
3. First firing to 1000°C; second firing to 1260°C with a 20 minute soak.
4. Slip colour saturation for P4189/P4146/P4129, individually or in combination, is 40%.
5. Slip colour saturation for P4139/GS14 is 10%.
6. All references to A5 in the tests which follow, refer to the dimensions of A5 as adjusted by this research (documented in Chapter 1).
7. All images in this section are © Alison Rees (All Rights Reserved) unless otherwise stated.

Test 1. Clay page size investigation

Date 2017

Summary

- This test asked: what size should the page in clay be?
- Porcelain paperclay was rolled and cut to varying dimensions.
- A6 (105mm x 148mm) and an adjusted arrangement of A5 (167 x 210) were chosen.

Materials

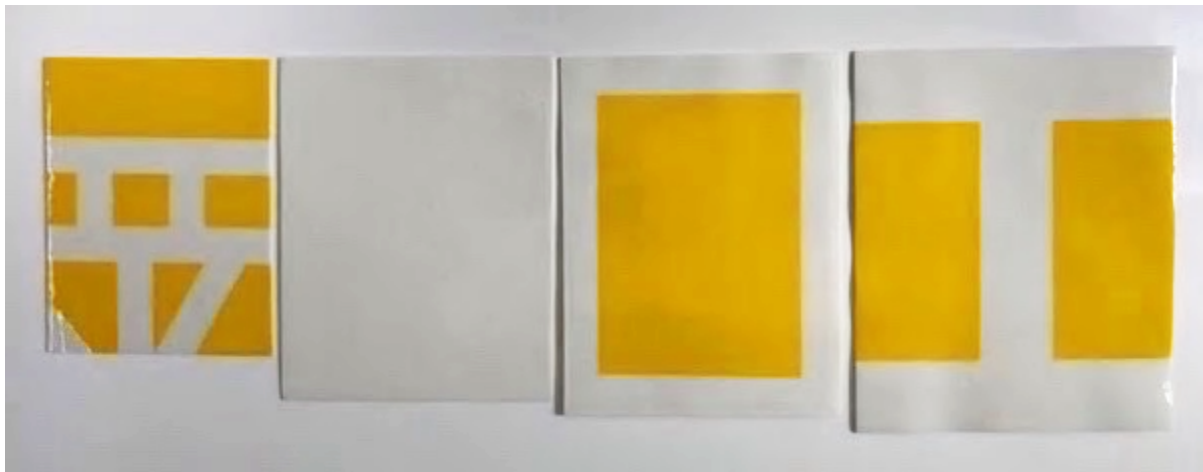
- Porcelain paperclay; yellow porcelain slip; transparent glaze; wax resist.

1

2

3

4



(W) 14.0 x
(H) 18.3 cm

(W) 16.8 x
(H) 21.3 cm

(W) 17.1 x
(H) 22.2 cm

(W) 19.0 x
(H) 23.4 cm

Detail

- Four clay pages were cut and fired to the dimensions given in the image above. Those dimensions were determined by eye and by what felt intuitively right.
- The slip patterns on the surface of the clay page are not relevant to this test and should be ignored.
- Clay page 4 represents the maximum dimensions that fit in a Nabertherm Top60 kiln.
- Glaze was applied to the whole surface of clay pages 1, 2 and 4.
- Glaze was applied to the surface of clay page 3 but set in from the edge of the clay page.
- Clay pages were fired on kiln sand to allow the pages to shrink without resistance from the kiln shelf.

Observations and outcomes

- There is a dialogue between horizontal and vertical clay page dimensions and depth, or thinness – the larger the clay page, the thicker it must be.
- I instinctively wanted to make the clay page in the space in front of the body. This is not an exercise in working out of comfortable reach.
- The dimensions of clay pages 2 and 3 seemed the closest to what I felt a clay page might encompass.
- A decision was made to look at international paper sizes as a guide for making.

Test 2. Glaze placement investigation

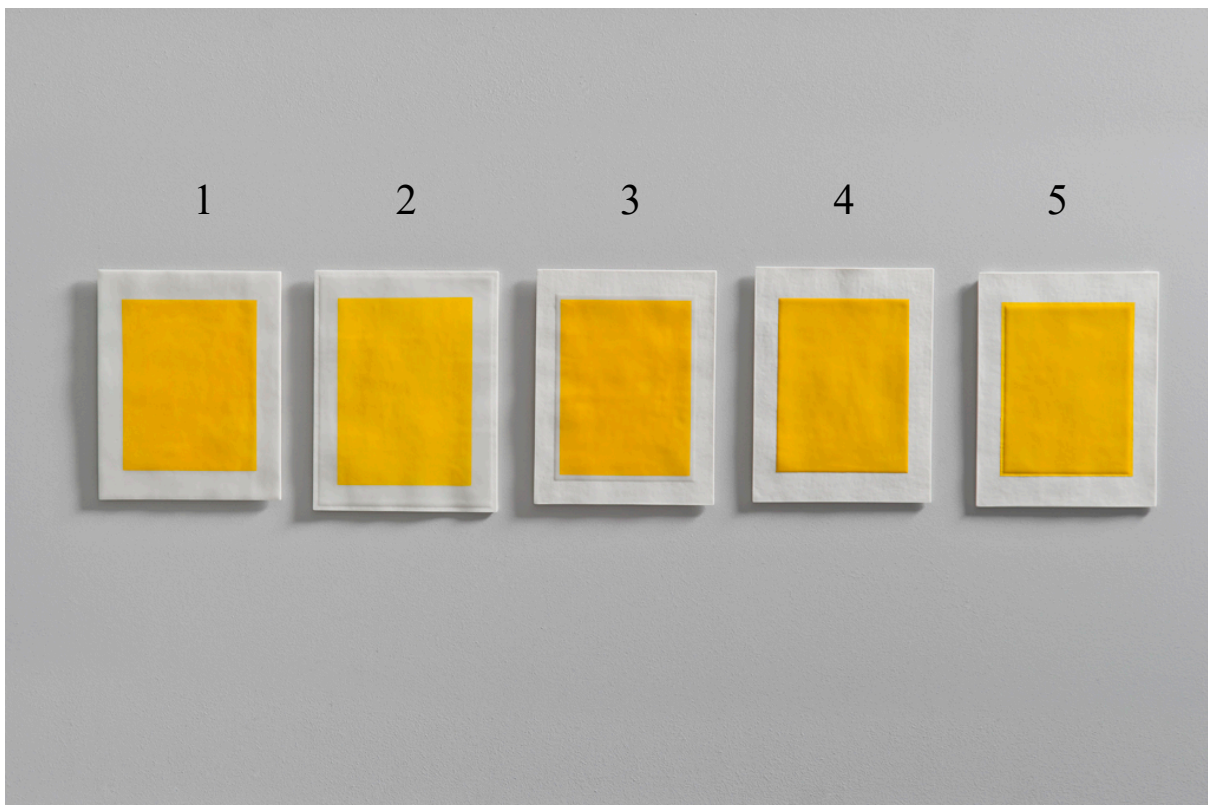
Date 2017

Summary

- In *Test 1*, clay page 3 had an unglazed border – the glaze finished inside the edge of the clay page.
- This test examined glaze placement on the surface of the clay page and asked: what is the effect of varying the glaze placement on the surface of the clay page?
- A range of haptic and visual outcomes were produced.
- A language of frames and borders emerged.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; yellow porcelain slip; transparent glaze; wax resist.



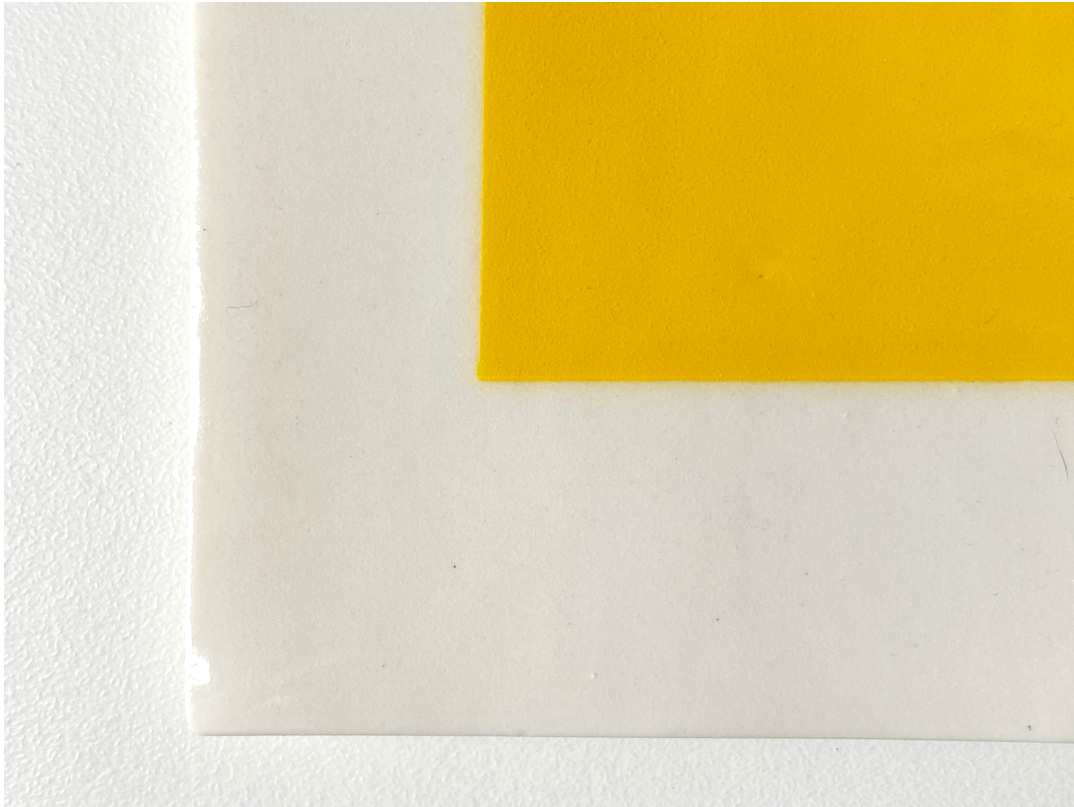
© 2018 Ester Segarra. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

Detail

- Four A5 clay pages were cut.
- Each clay page had a rectangle of yellow slip painted on its surface at a set distance from the edge of the clay page (to match clay page 3 from *Test 1*).
- Glaze placement was varied on each clay page relative to the edges of the clay page and the rectangle of slip as detailed below.

Clay page 1

- Glaze was applied to the surface of the clay page ending at its edge.



Clay page 2

- This is clay page 3 from *Test 1*. Glaze was set in from the edge as shown in the image below.
- This had the effect of creating a border of unglazed clay and by default a border of glazed white clay.



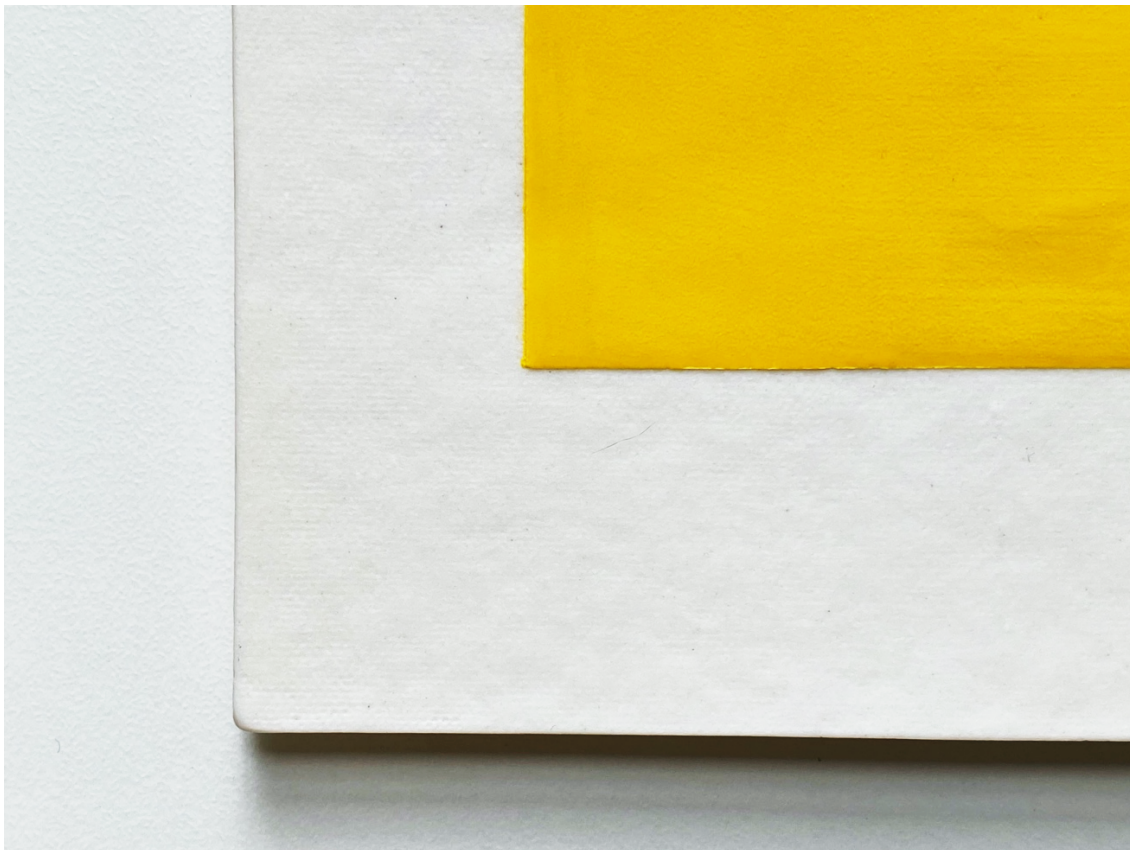
Clay page 3

- Glaze extended just over the rectangle of yellow slip as shown in the image below.
- Again, two borders were created.



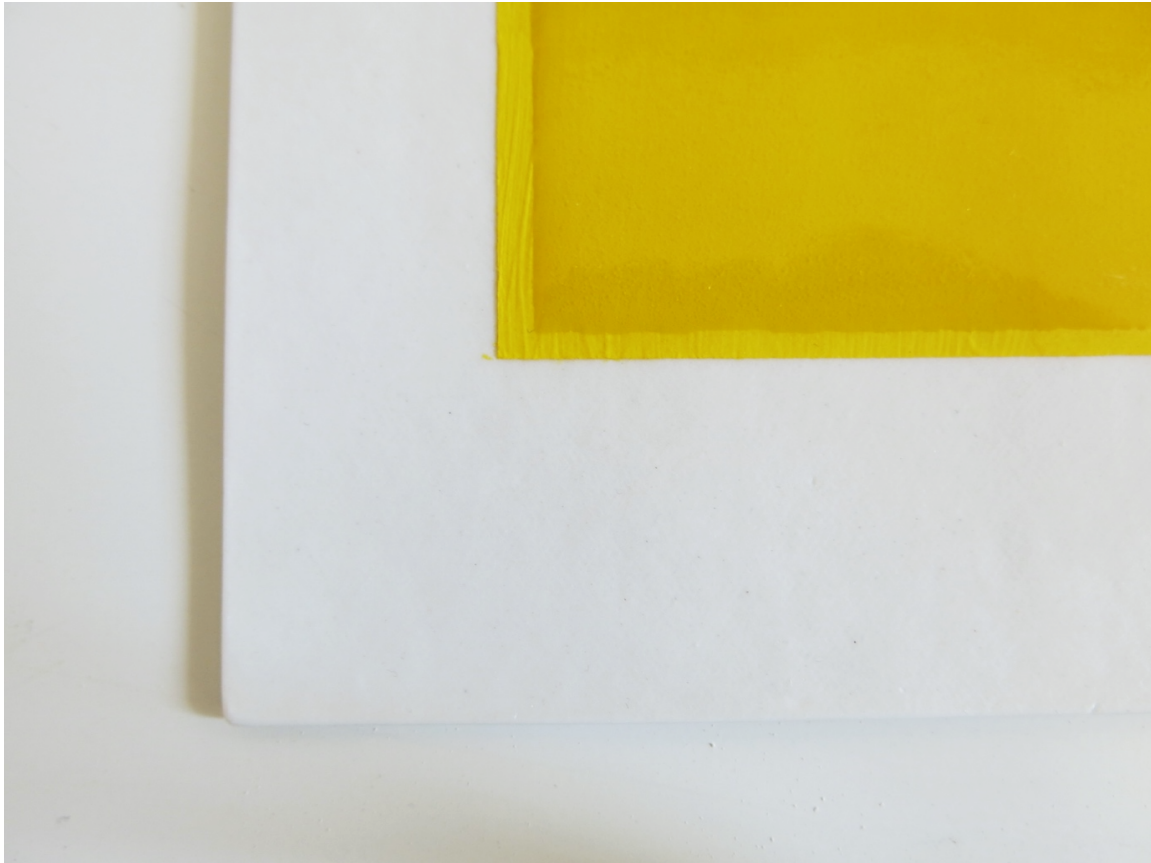
Clay page 4

- Glaze was coterminous with the edge of the yellow slip rectangle.
- The coterminous slip and glaze produced a shoulder and a distinct change in levels.
- There was an effect of seeing yellow glaze as opposed to seeing separate layers of slip and glaze.



Clay page 5

- Glaze was set in from the edge of the yellow slip as shown in the image below.
- Unglazed yellow slip produced a difference in texture; brush stokes are visible.
- There was a colour variation between the unglazed and glazed yellow slip.



Observations and outcomes

- The varying of glaze placement produced a range of haptic and visual outcomes.
- A language of frames and borders emerged.

Test 3. Glaze and slip placement with variation

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Date 2017

Summary

- This test took the glaze placement results of *Test 2*, and asked:
 - how can the results of *Test 2* be used on the surface of the clay page?
 - what further variations can be created?
 - can a composition, consisting of a number of clay pages, be created using the results of *Test 2*?
- Twelve A5 clay pages were made, and their surfaces experimented upon.

Materials

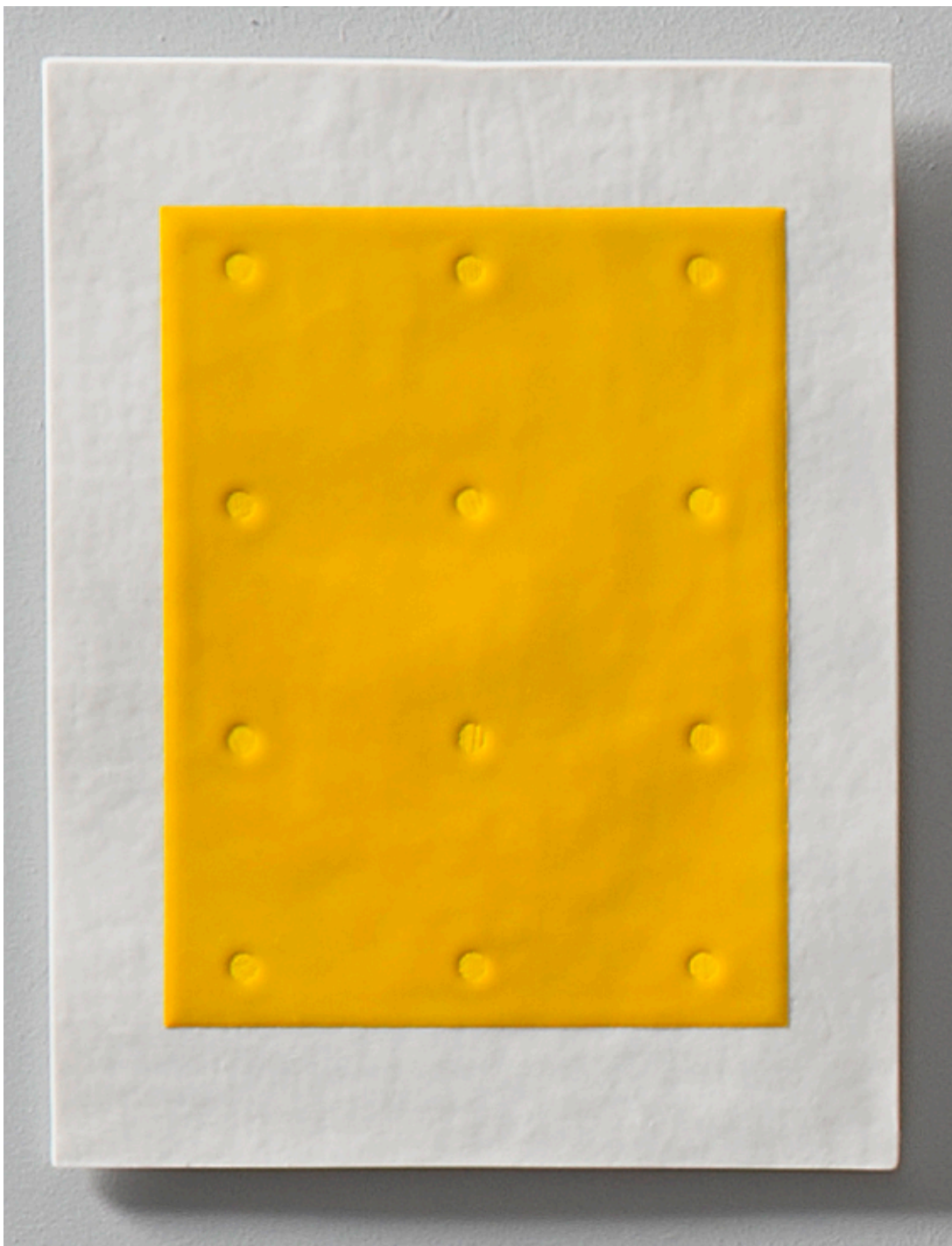
- Porcelain paperclay; black and yellow porcelain slip; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

Clay page 1

(a) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 5*, a grid of dots was cut-out from the glaze using wax resist.

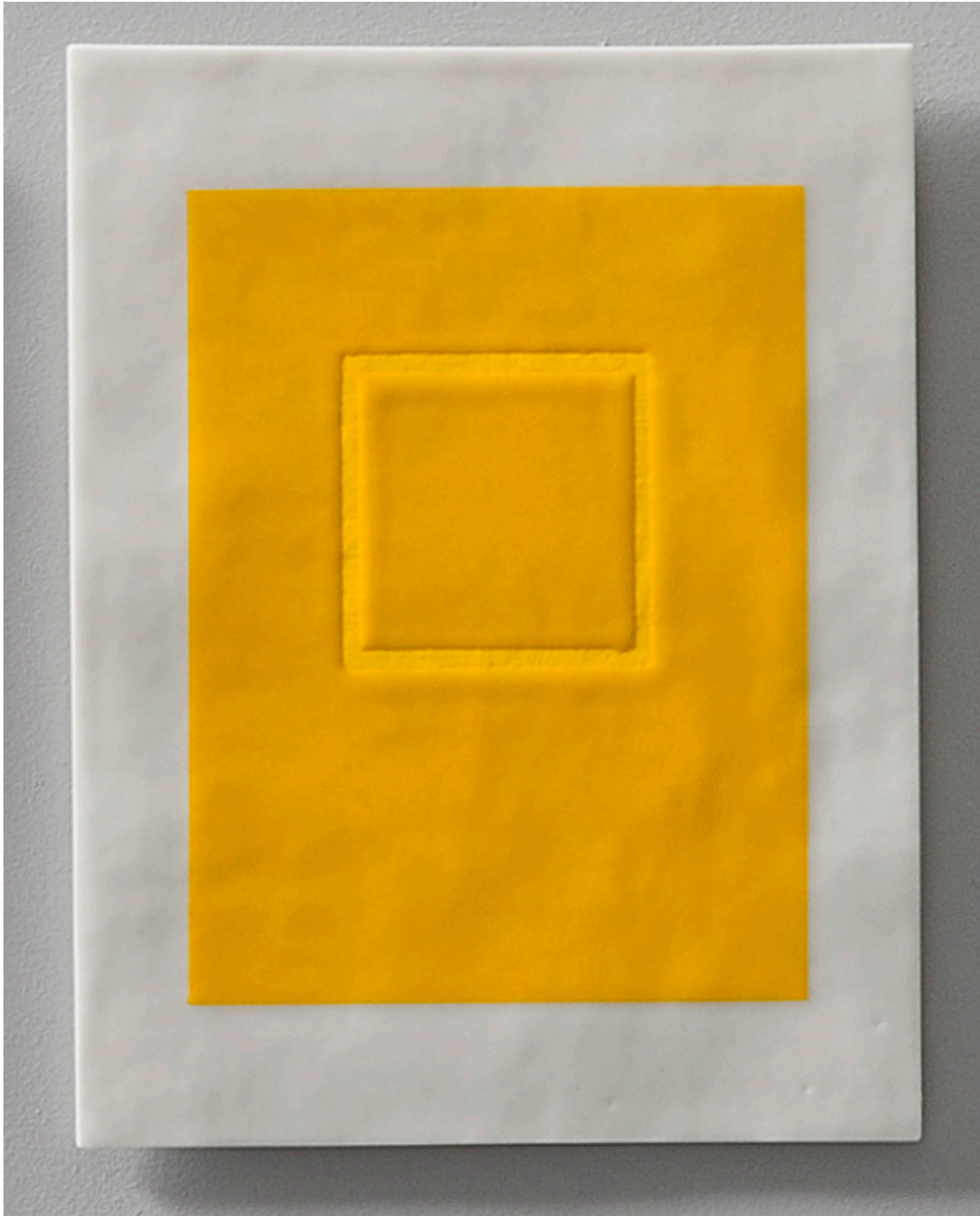
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 4*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the slip rectangle.



Clay page 2

(a) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 5*, a square outline was cut-out from the glaze using wax resist. This is placed towards the upper edge of the slip rectangle.

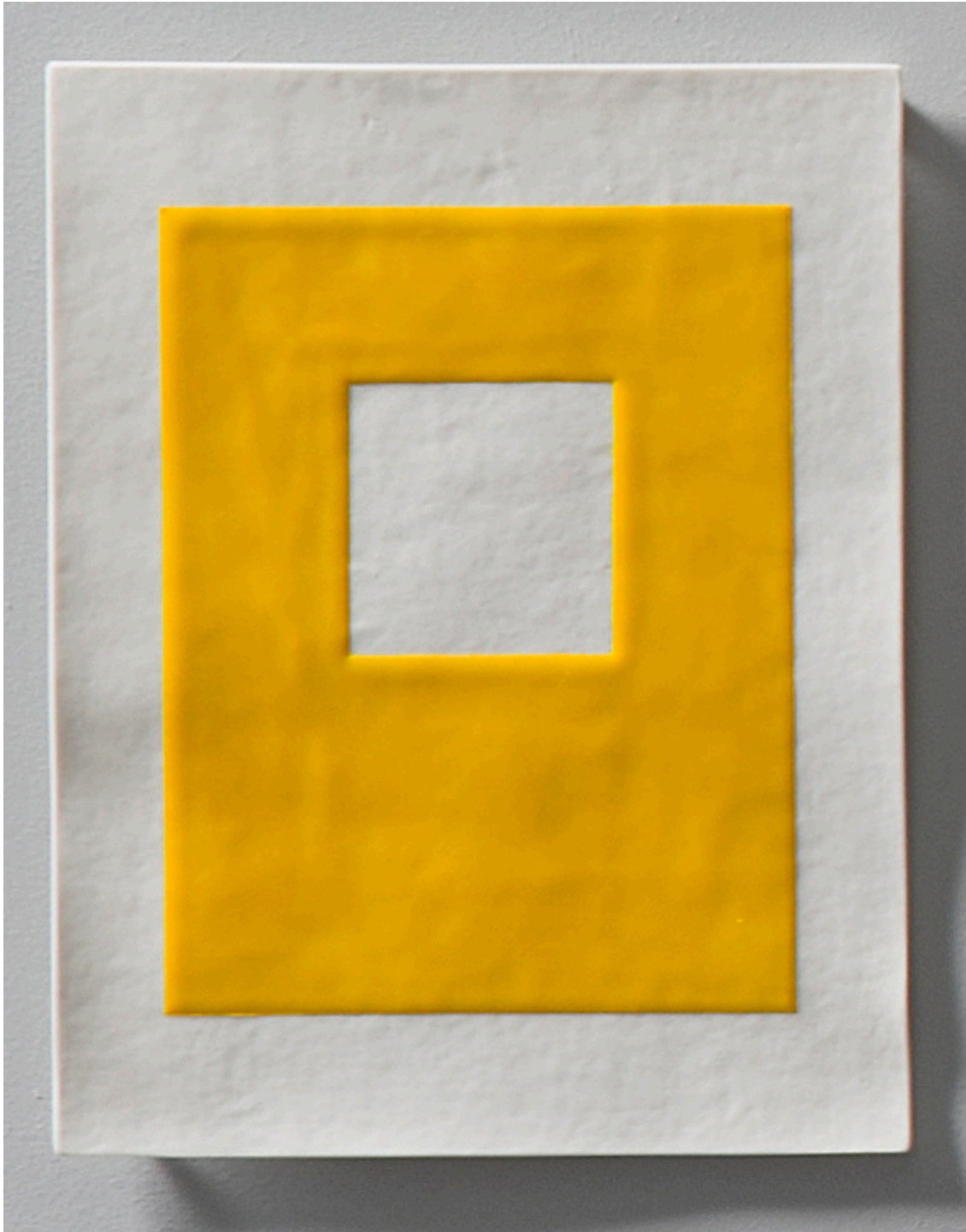
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 1*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the clay page.



Clay page 3

(a) following on from clay page 2, a square of slip was cut out where previously the glaze had been cut out. This was placed towards the upper edge of the slip rectangle.

(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 4*, glaze was coterminous with the interior and exterior edges of the slip rectangle. The centre square and white border was unglazed.



Clay page 4

(a) following on from clay pages 2 and 3, more of the slip rectangle was cut away leaving a square line of slip. This was placed towards the upper edge of the clay page.

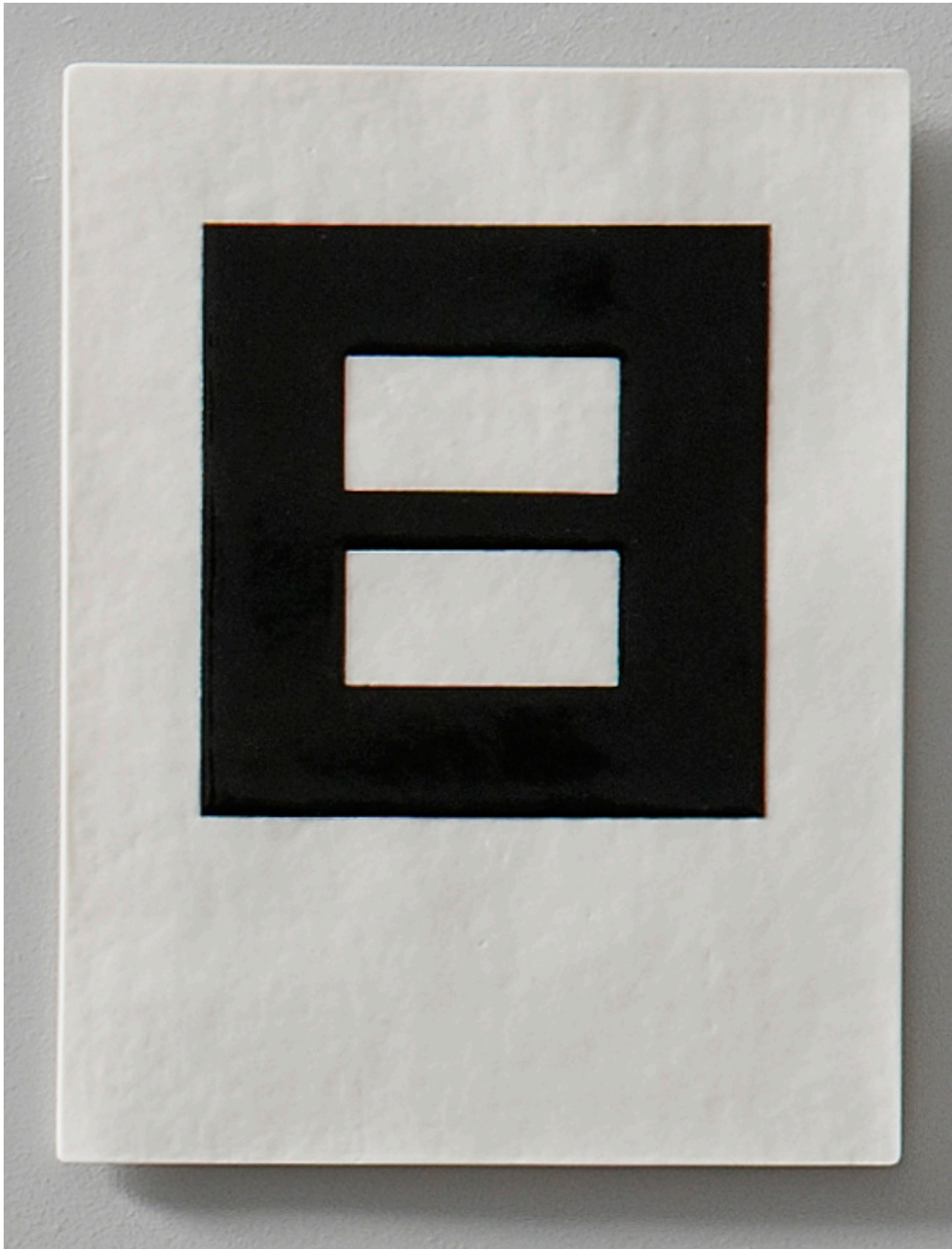
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 4*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the slip.



Clay page 5

(a) using the language of clay page 4, the slip colour was changed to black, the line of the slip was widened, and two slip cut outs were created. This was placed towards the upper edge of the clay page.

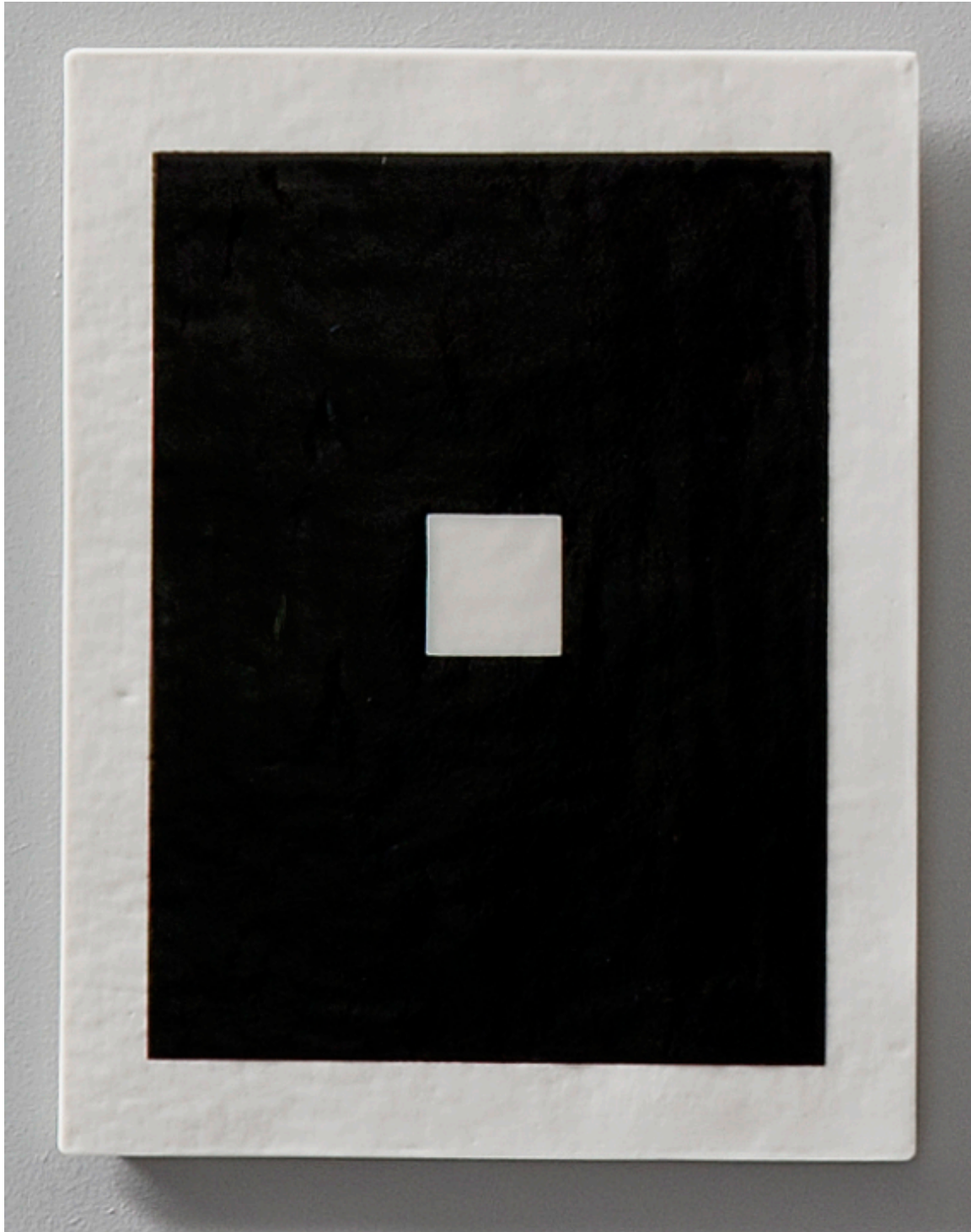
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 4*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the slip.



Clay page 6

(a) returning to clay page 3, a smaller square of slip was cut out, this time it was placed in the centre of the clay page.

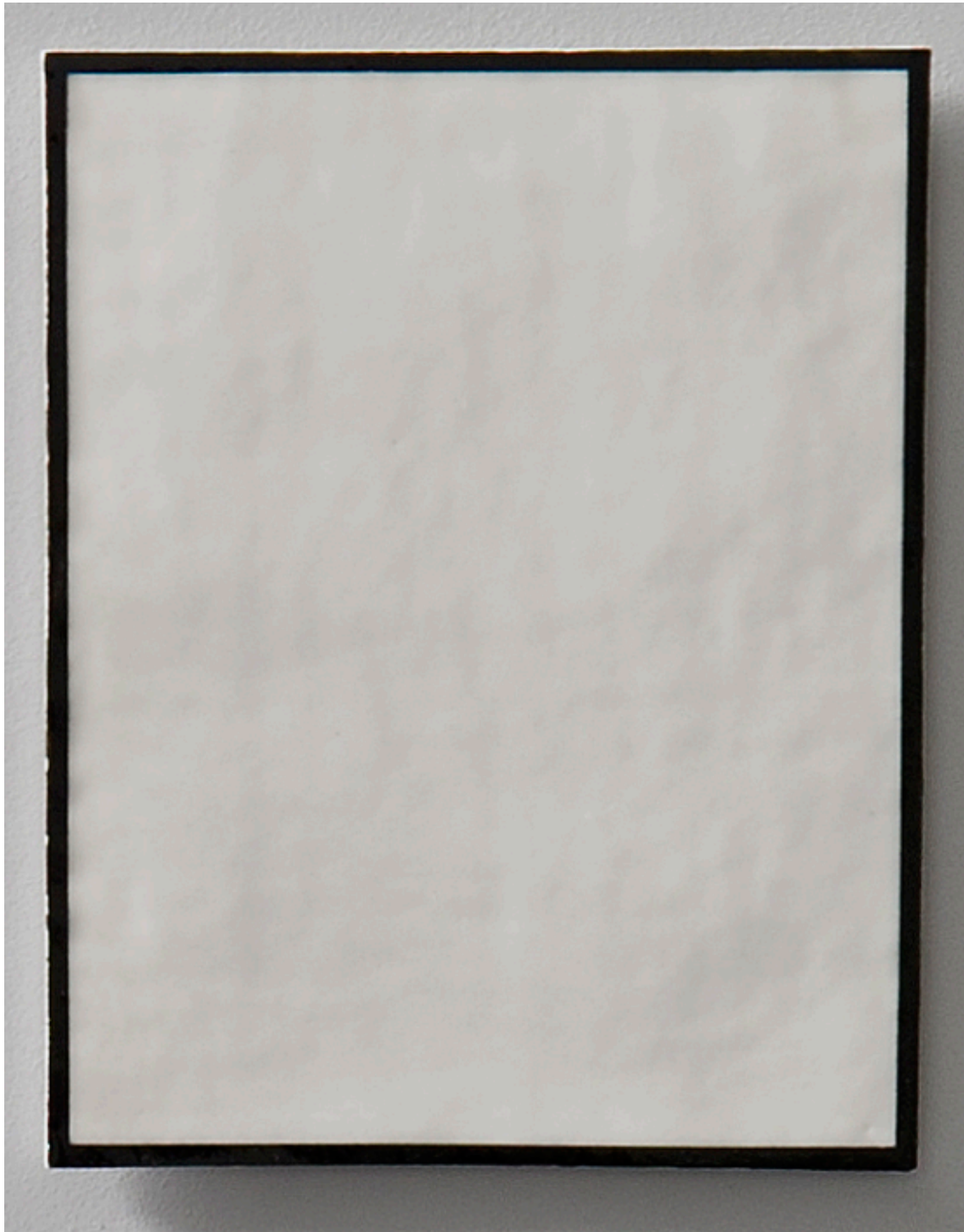
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay pages 1 and 4*, glaze was coterminous with the outer edge of the slip rectangle and flowed over the cut out slip square in the centre.



Clay page 7

(a) returning to clay page 4, the line of slip was pushed right to the edge of the clay page.

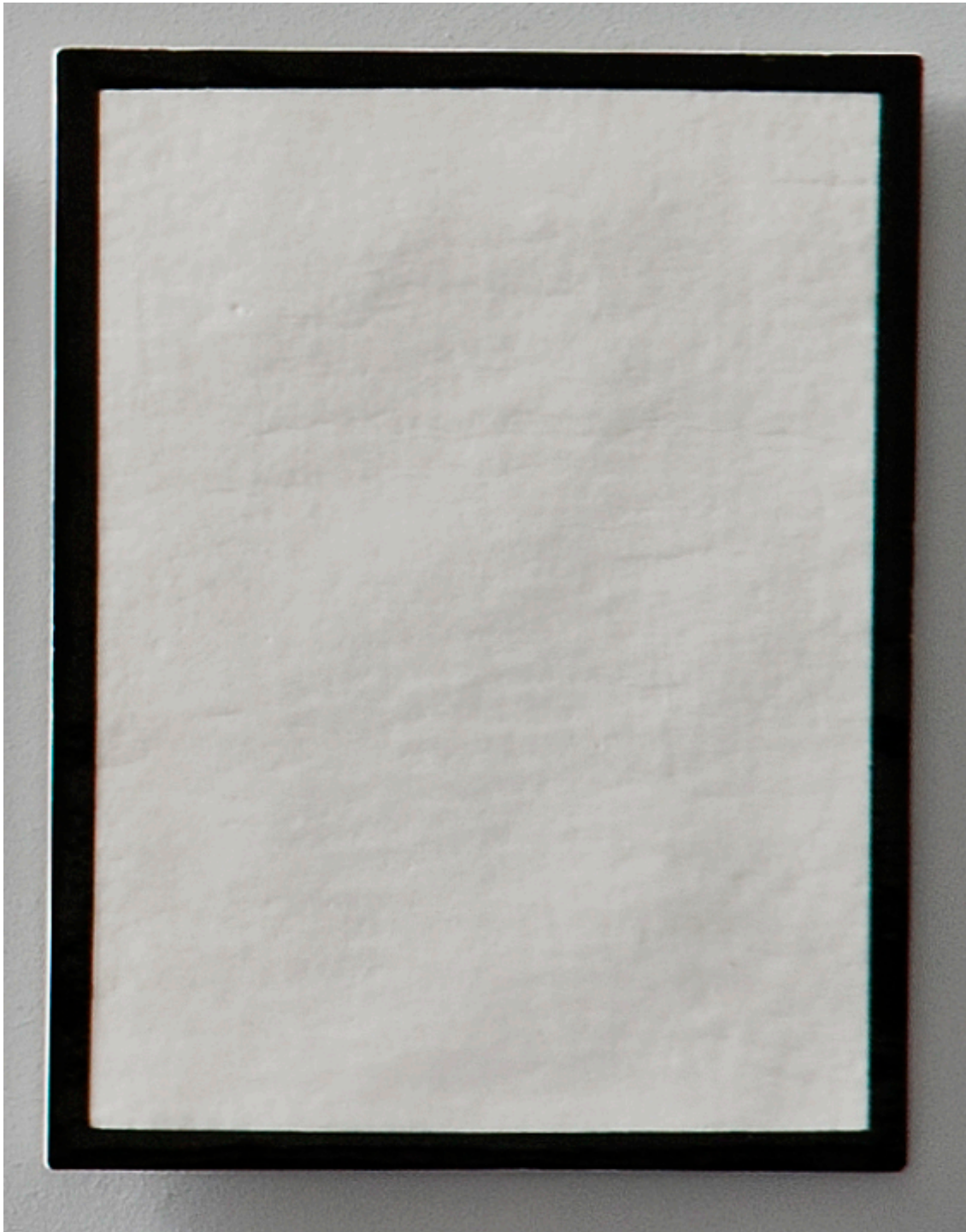
(b) using the surface language of *Test 2 – clay page 1*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the clay page.



Clay page 8

(a) following clay page 7, the line of slip around the edge of the clay page was widened.

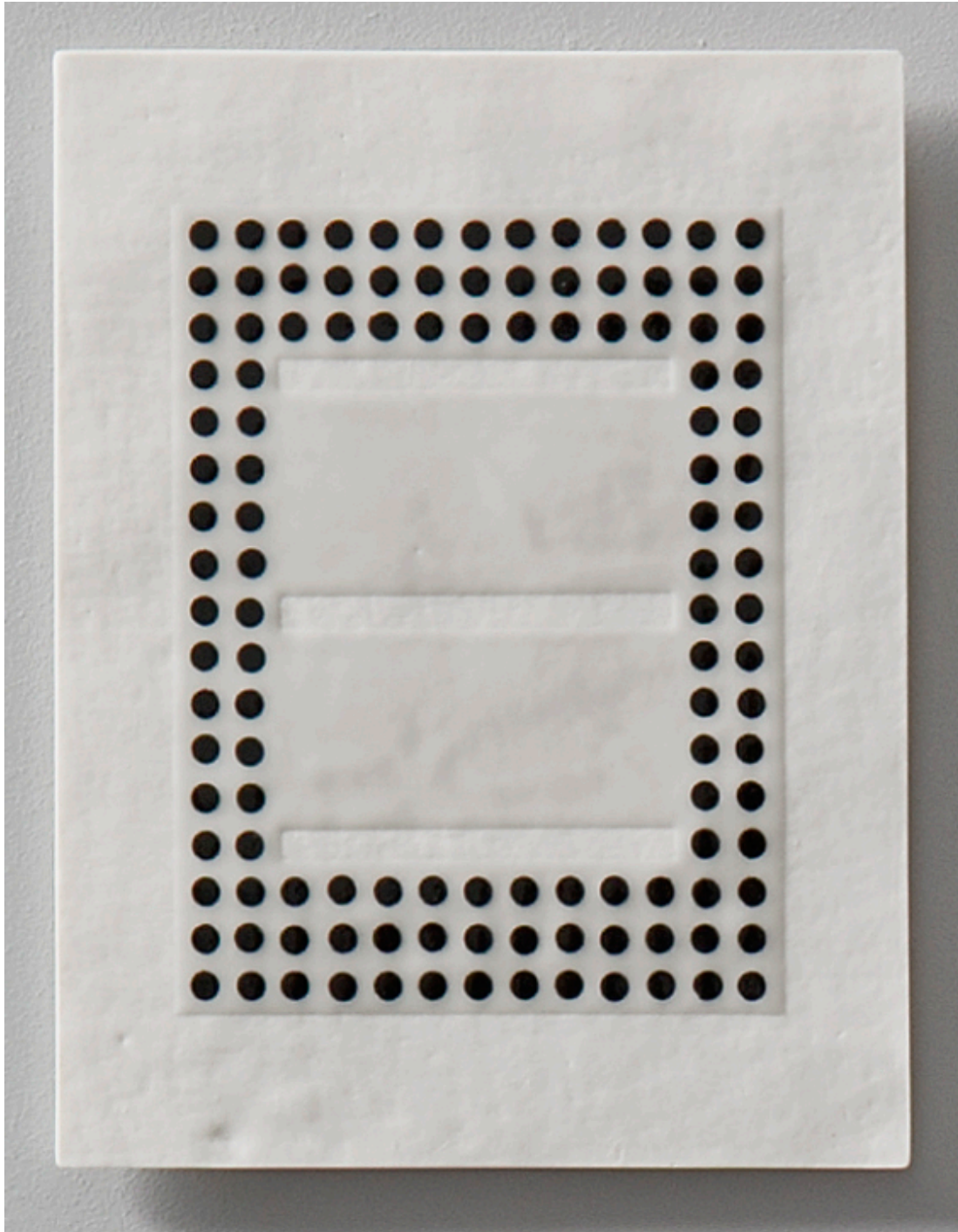
(b) using the glaze language of *Test 2 – clay page 4*, glaze was coterminous with the edge of the slip.



Clay page 9

(a) returning to clay page 1, the idea of cut out dots was used again. Dots were punched into a newspaper to create a mask through which slip was painted. The dots echo the outline of the slip rectangle.

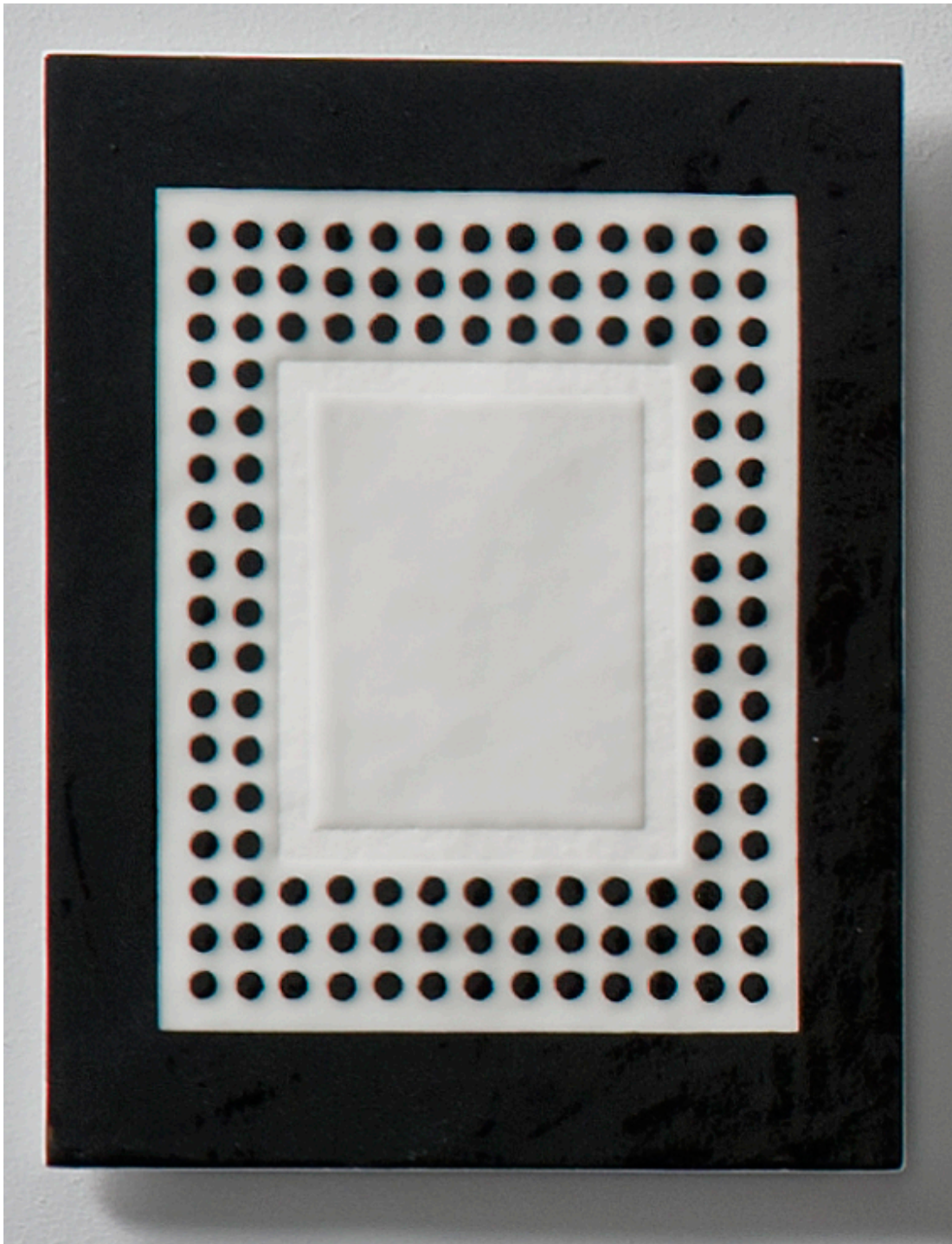
(b) glaze was used to frame the dots and three horizontal lines were cut out of the glaze.



Clay page 10

(a) following clay page 9, the same arrangement of dots was painted, this time framed by a border of black slip.

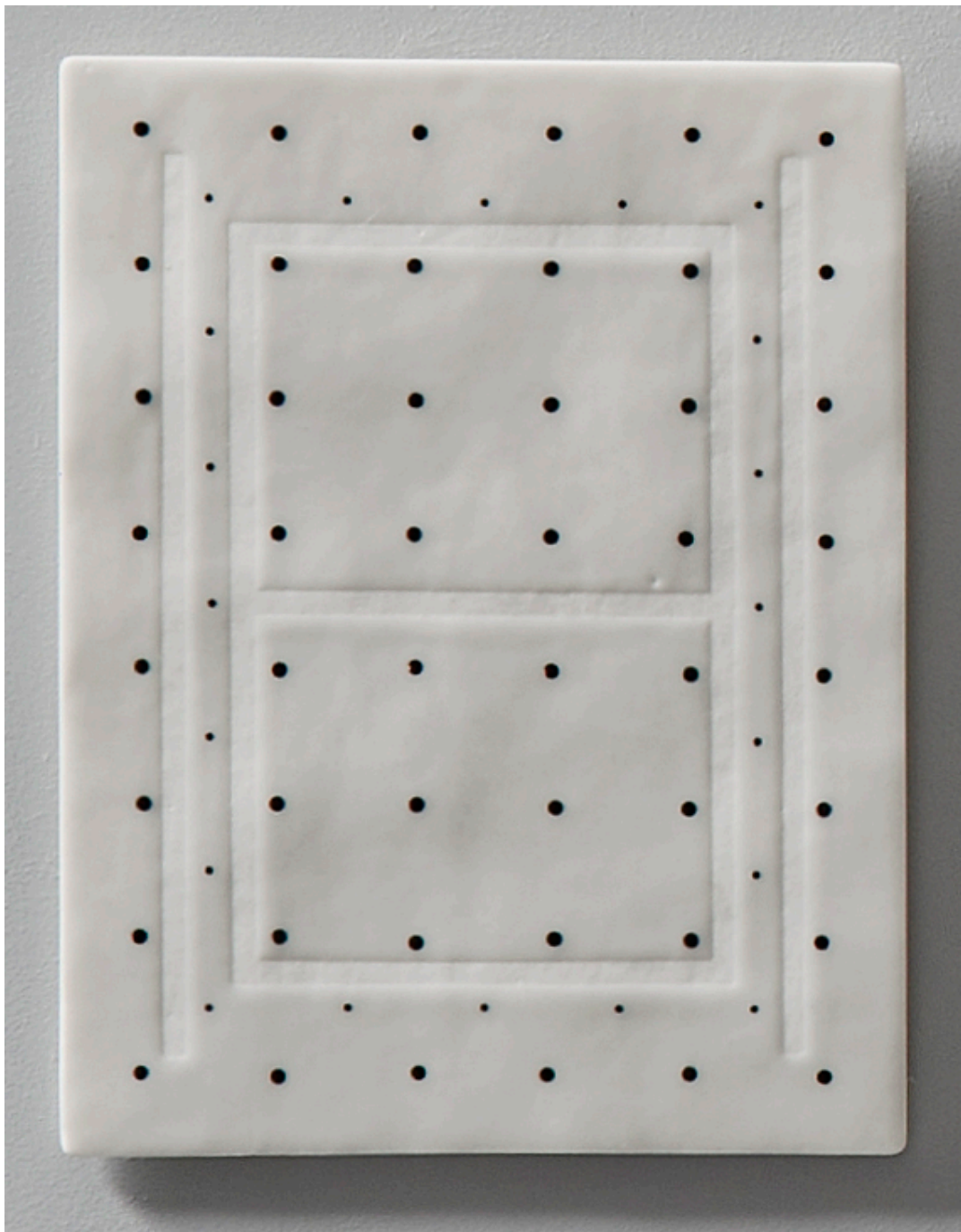
(b) following clay page 2, glaze was applied in the same fashion with a glaze line cut out just inside the dots.



Clay page 11

(a) continuing the idea of the dots, a different arrangement was punched into newspaper. This time the dots were smaller and placed further apart. One line of dots was smaller still.

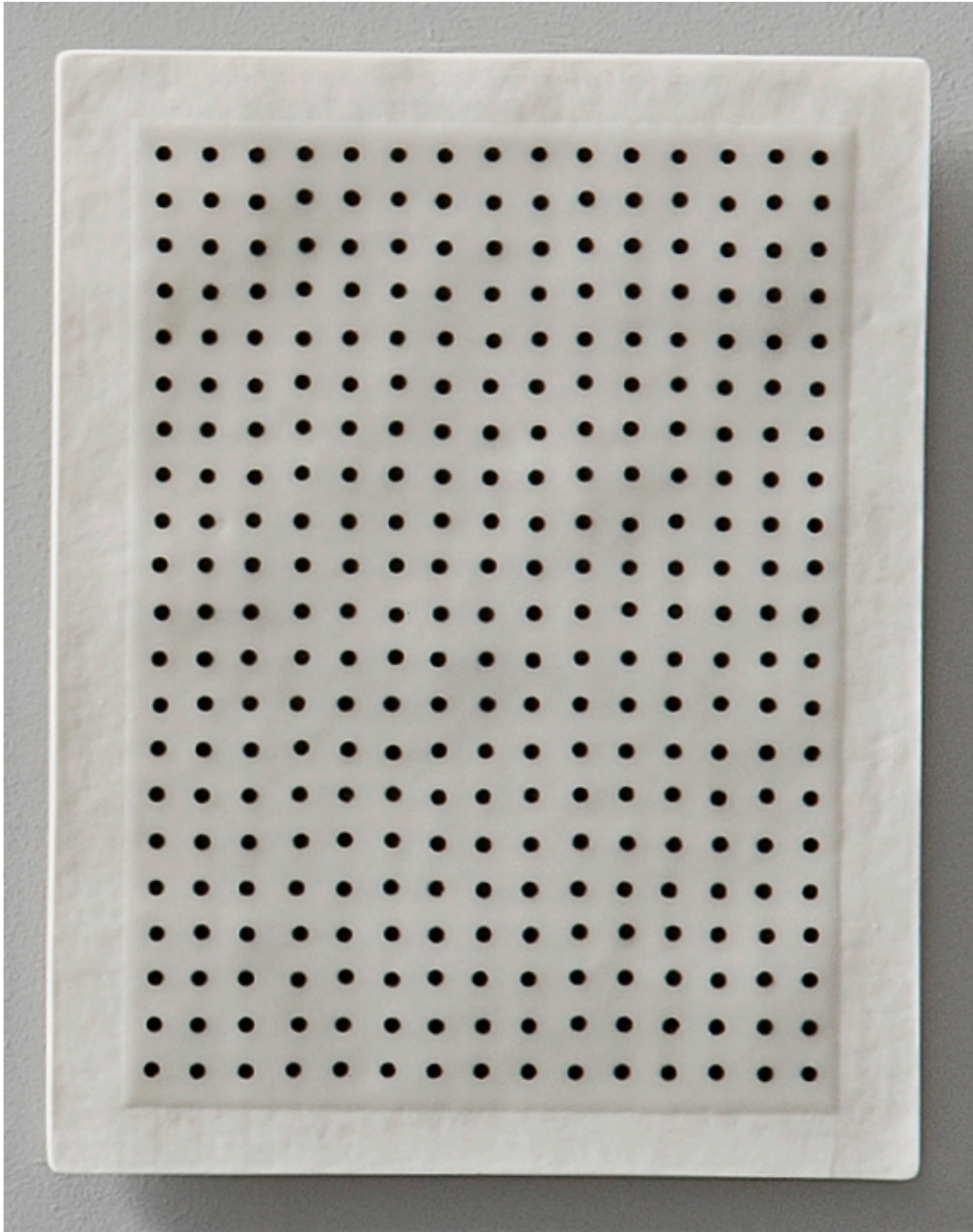
(b) following clay pages 10 and 11, glaze was applied to the whole of the clay page but with line and rectangle cut outs.



Clay page 12

(a) again, continuing the idea of dots, the arrangement was more compact and covered the clay page leaving a border of white porcelain.

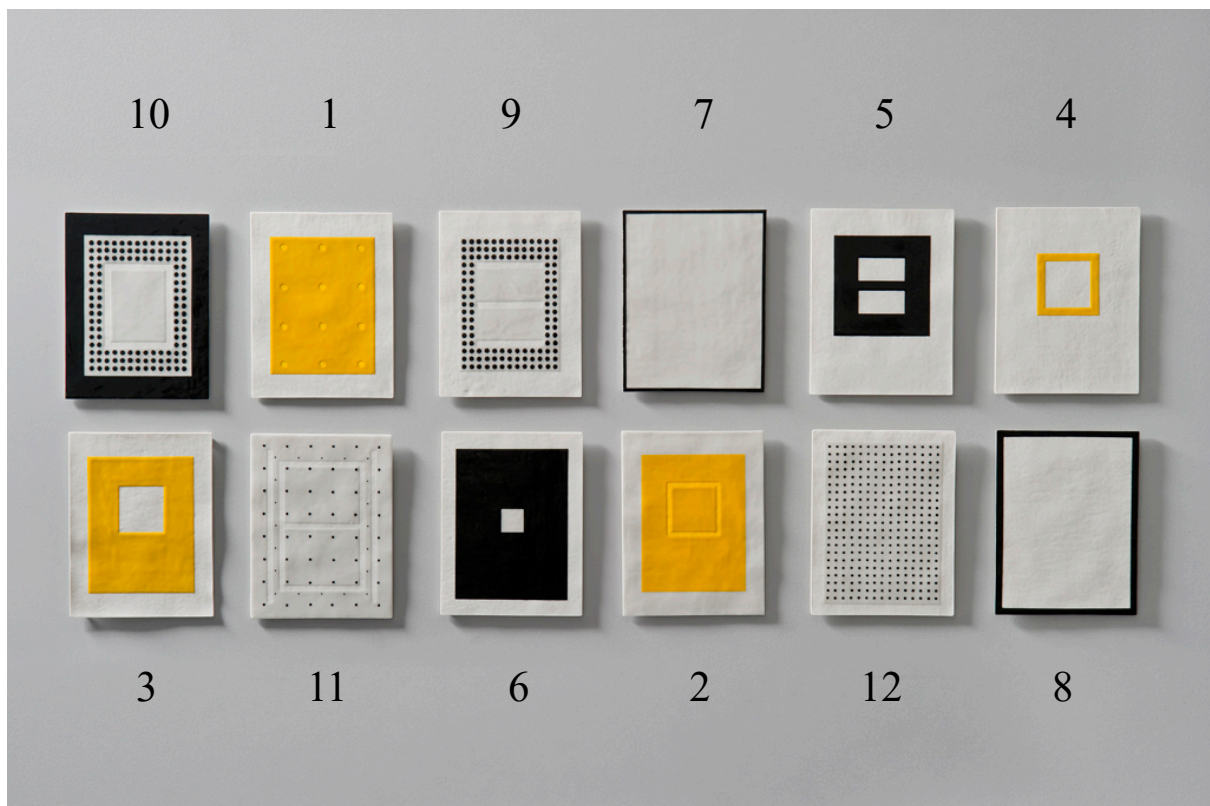
(b) Glaze was used to frame the dots.



Observations and outcomes

- Emerging from this test was a language of:
 - borders and frames in porcelain clay, slip and glaze.
 - cut-outs both in glaze and slip.
 - repeat and variation.
 - restricted parameters.
- The variation often responded to the prior page. For example, clay page 4 was a response to 3; clay page 3 was a response to 2.
-
- The clay pages, whilst cut to the same dimensions, varied in small ways from each other in size.
- The pages were made in a specific order, but at the end of the test the order of making was disregarded, and the clay pages were arranged into a final overall composition (see following image below).
- The final composition was created by a process of arrangement and rearrangement.
- This process was repeated until a satisfactory balanced relationship was established between all the clay pages.
- The final composition worked overall because all the individual surface compositions were the result of a series of repetitions and variations and because the material parameters were minimised – only two colours of slip were used.
- The small variations in size between the clay pages was both hidden and revealed by the grid.

Clay pages 1 to 12 in this test were reordered and rearranged to form the following composition, *Twelve Porcelain Pages*.



Test 4. Surface composition using only transparent glaze

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Date 2017

Summary

- This test took the idea of the glaze cut-outs seen in *Test 3* (clay pages 1, 2, 9, 10 and 11) and asked:
 - using glaze cut-outs, what surface variations can be created?
 - what happens without colour?
 - can the making inputs be pared down to a minimum – just porcelain paperclay and transparent glaze?
 - can a composition, consisting of a number of clay pages, be created?
- Nine A5 clay pages were made, and their surfaces experimented upon.

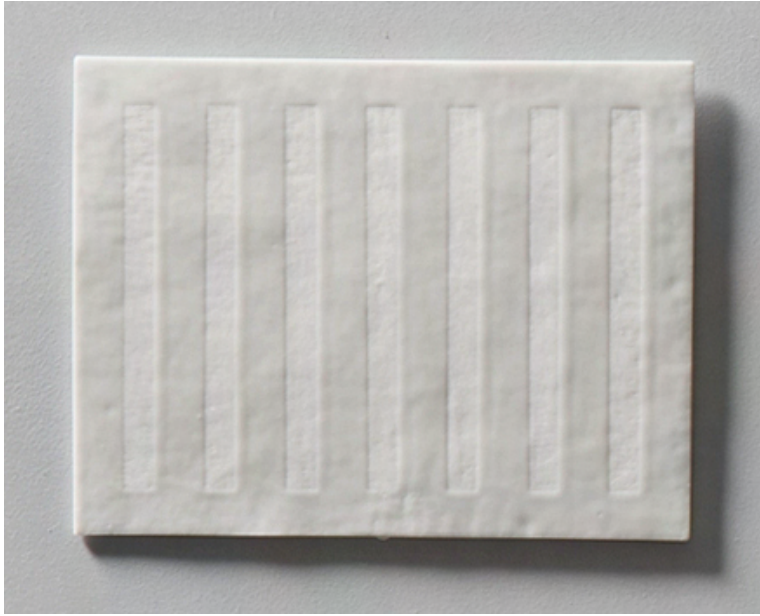
Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

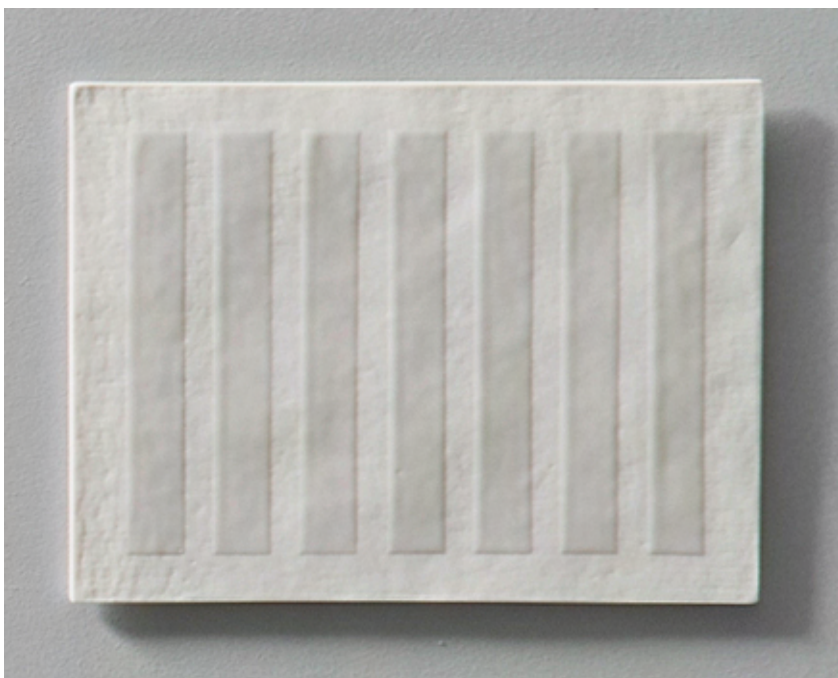
Clay page 1

- Glaze was applied in vertical lines emulating a grille or drain cover.



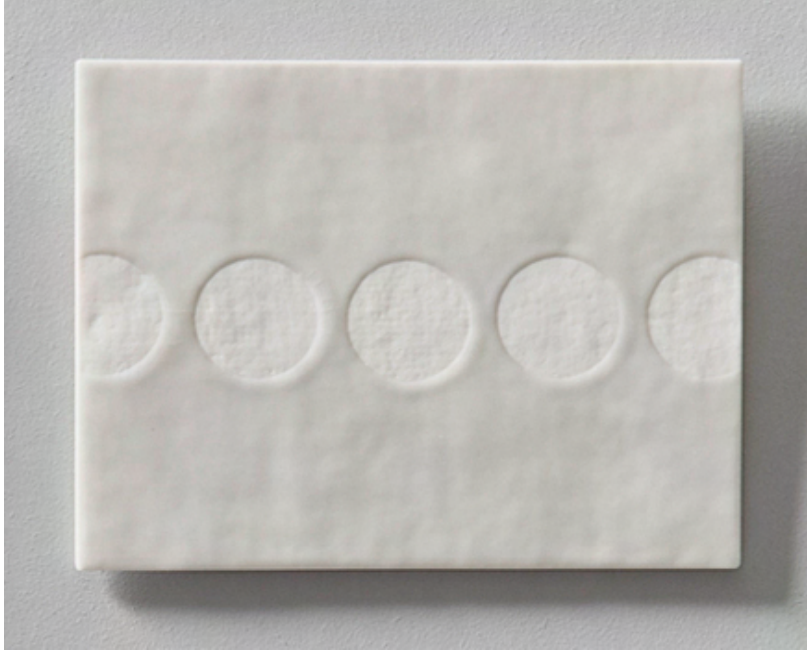
Clay page 2

- This responded to clay page 1 and was its inverse.
- Again, this emulates a grille or drain cover.



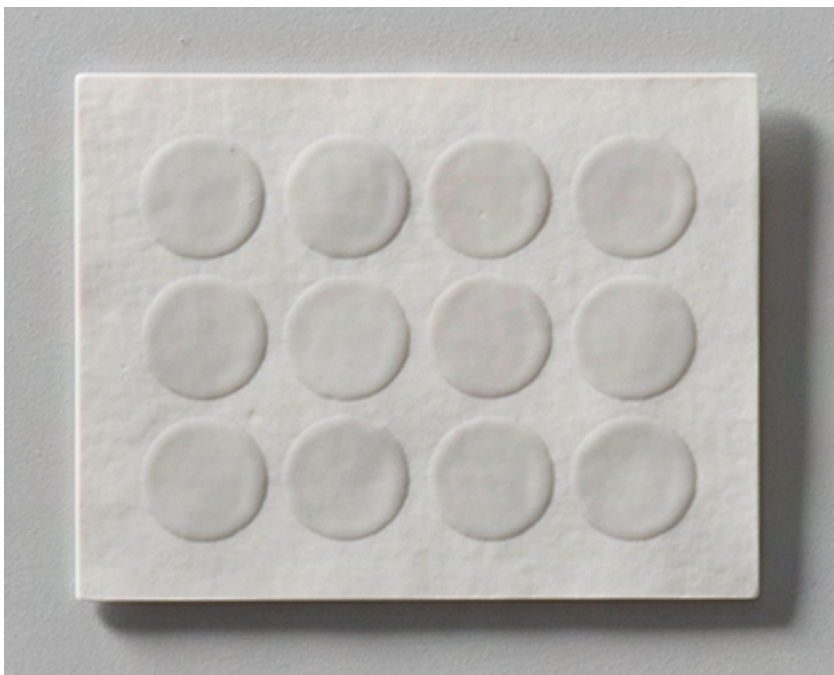
Clay page 3

- Taking the idea of the cut-out dots in *Test 3, clay page 1*, the dots were repeated but enlarged.

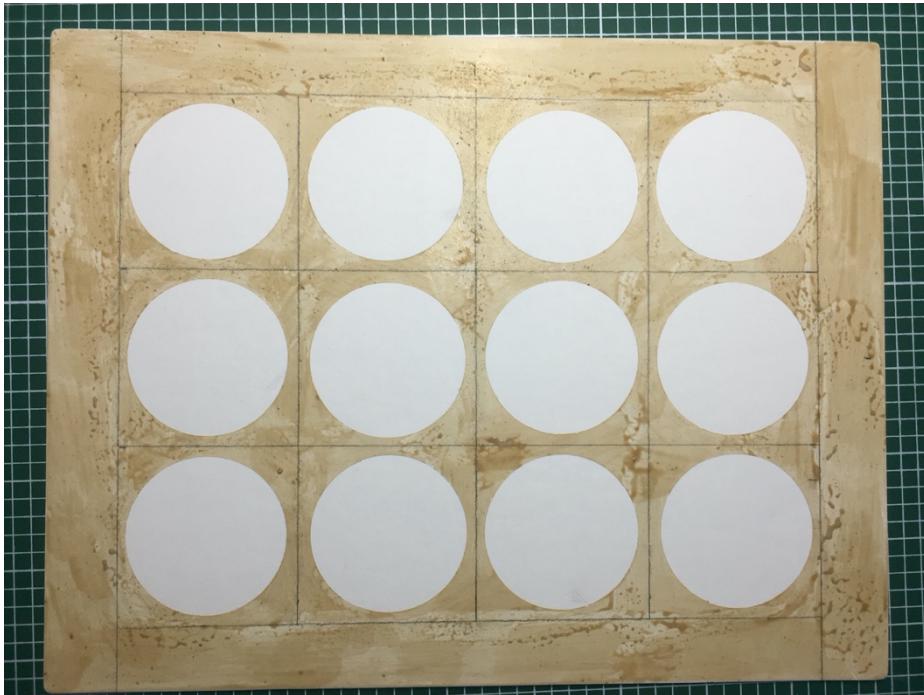


Clay page 4

- This responded to clay page 3 and is its inverse. This time the dots were in glaze and placed in a grid arrangement.



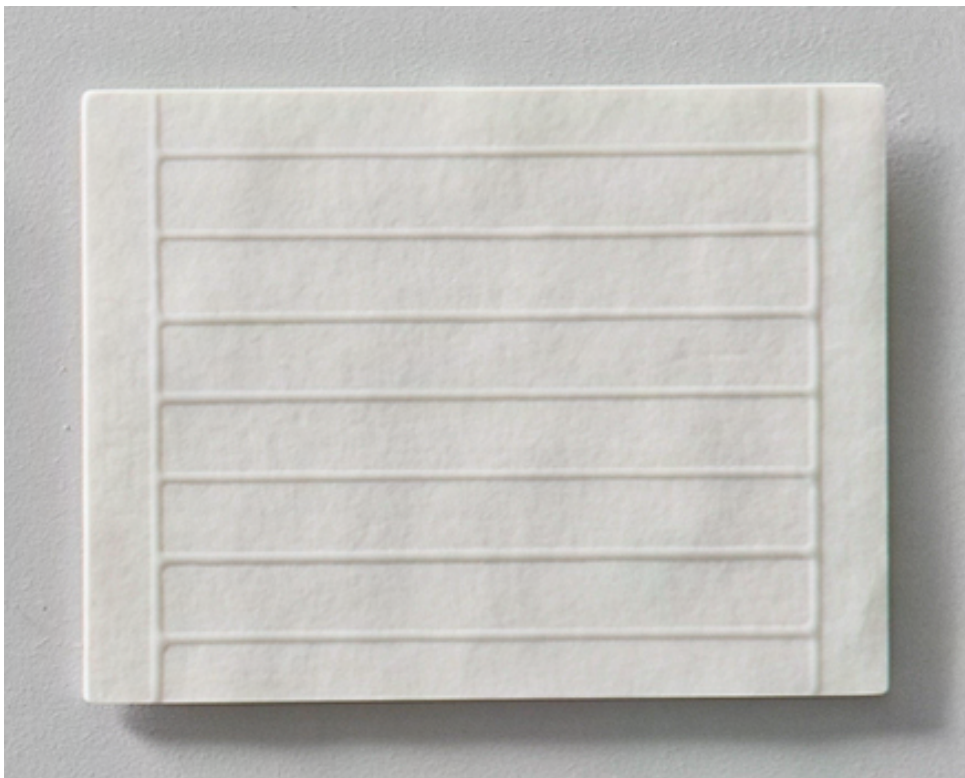
- The image below shows the process of using wax resist on bisque. Glaze adhered in the unglazed spaces.



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Clay page 5

- This clay page responded to clay page 1. Glazed lines were thin and placed horizontally.



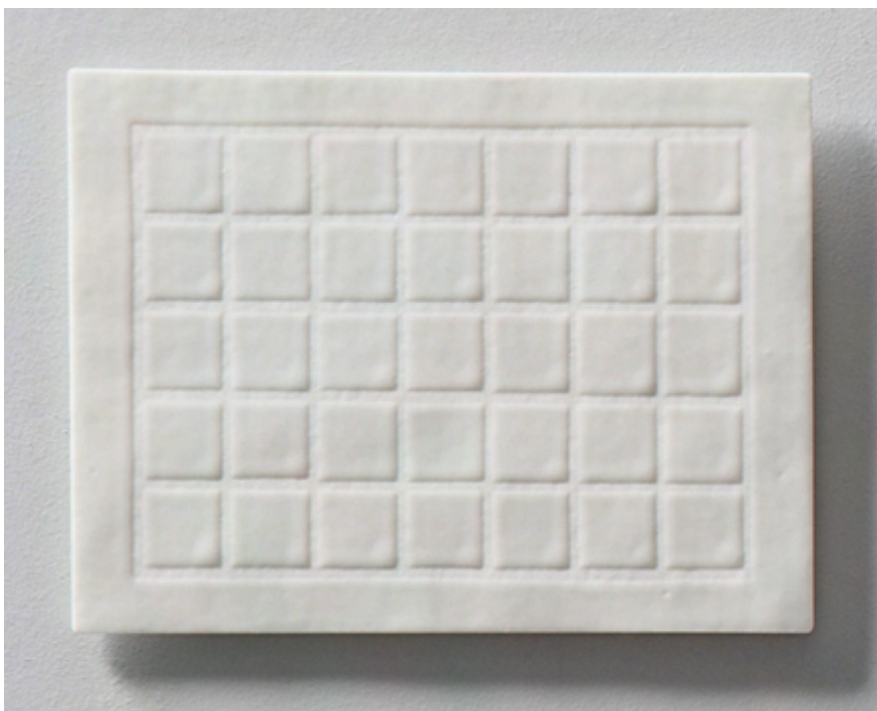
- The image below shows the process of using wax resist on bisque. Glaze adhered in the unglazed spaces



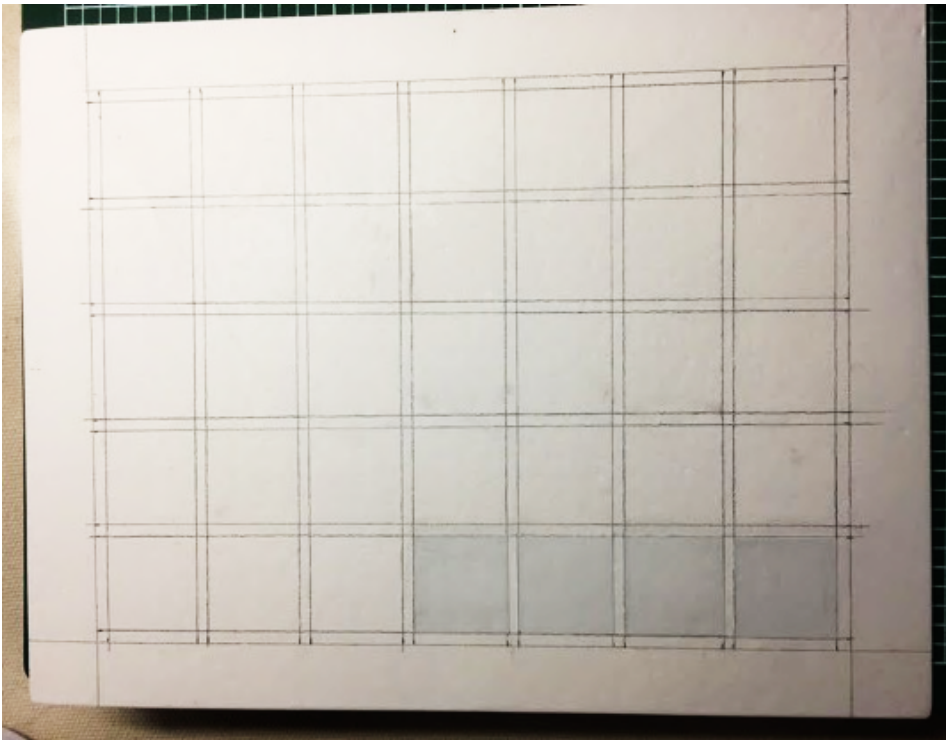
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Clay page 6

- This responded to clay page 5: thin, vertical and horizontal unglazed lines.
- The image again emulates a grille or drain cover, this time as a grid.

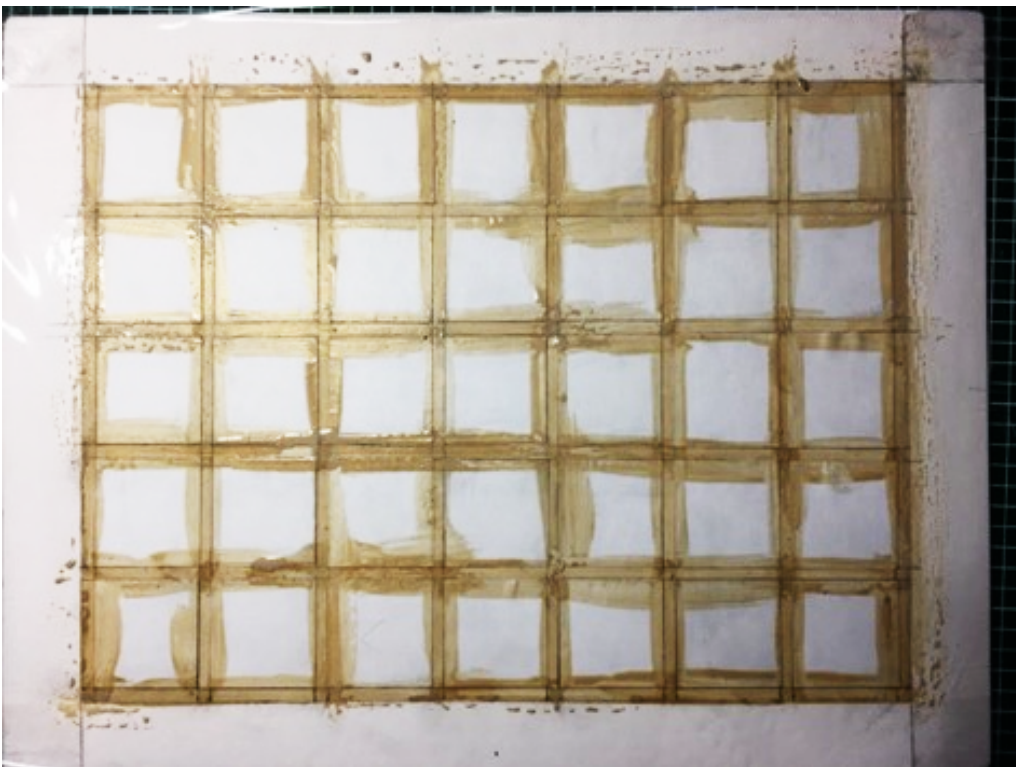


- Process: preparatory pencil grid and paper mask.



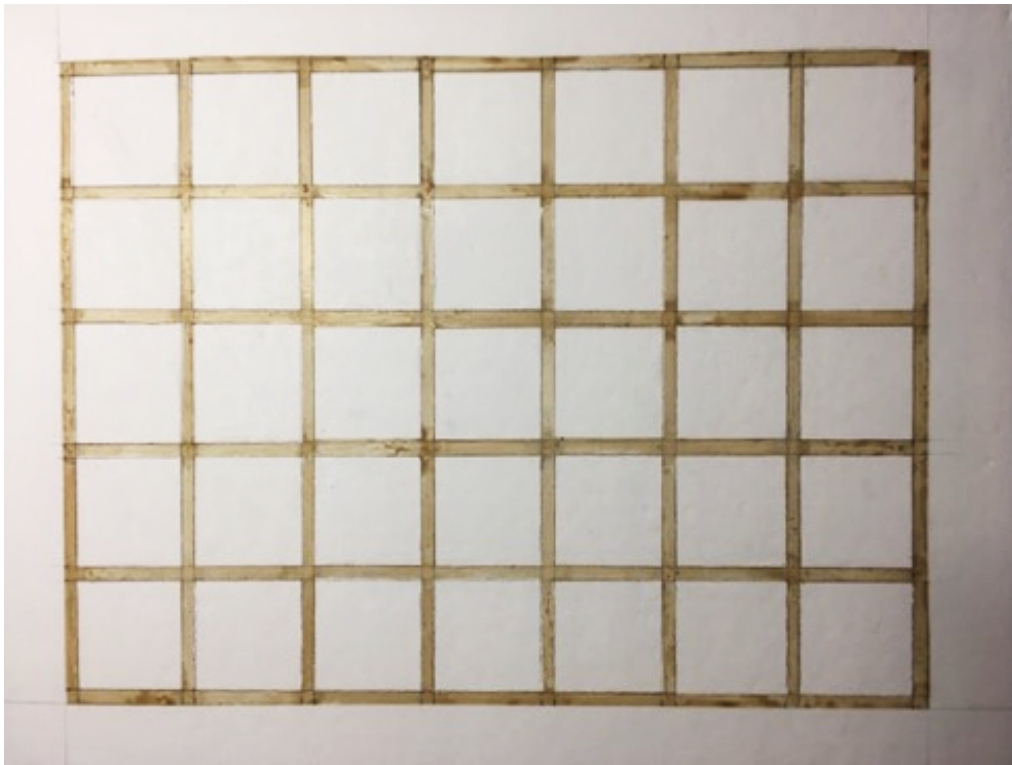
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- Process: preparatory wax resist grid.



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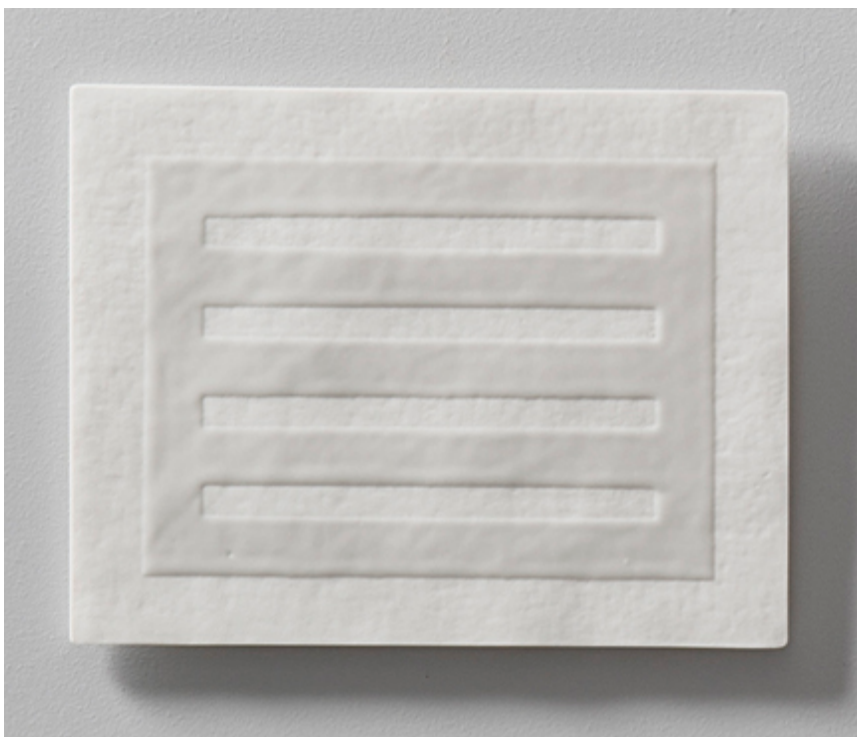
- Process: finished wax resist grid.



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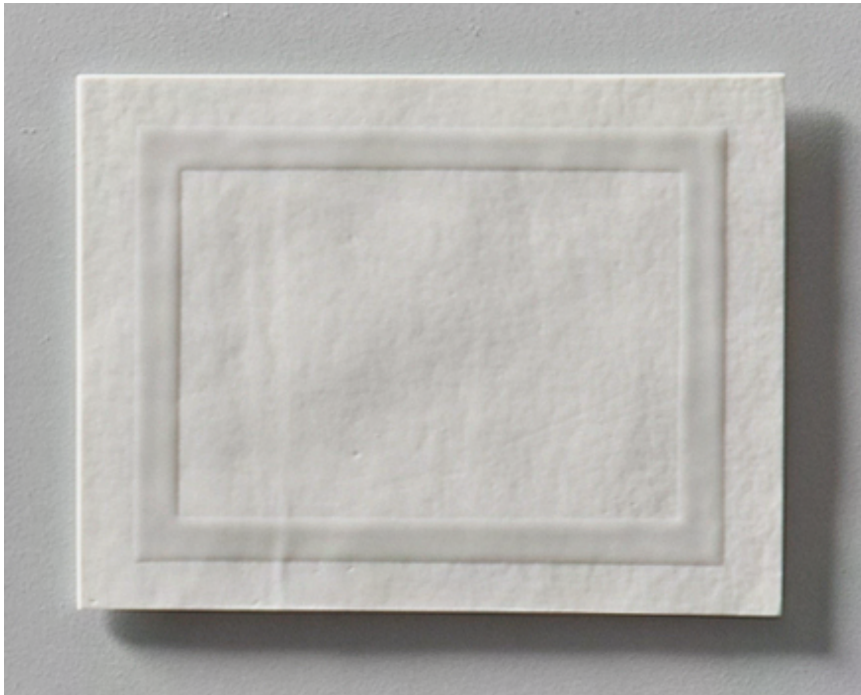
Clay page 7

- Responded to clay page 1.
- The lines were vertical, and an unglazed border was left around the edge.



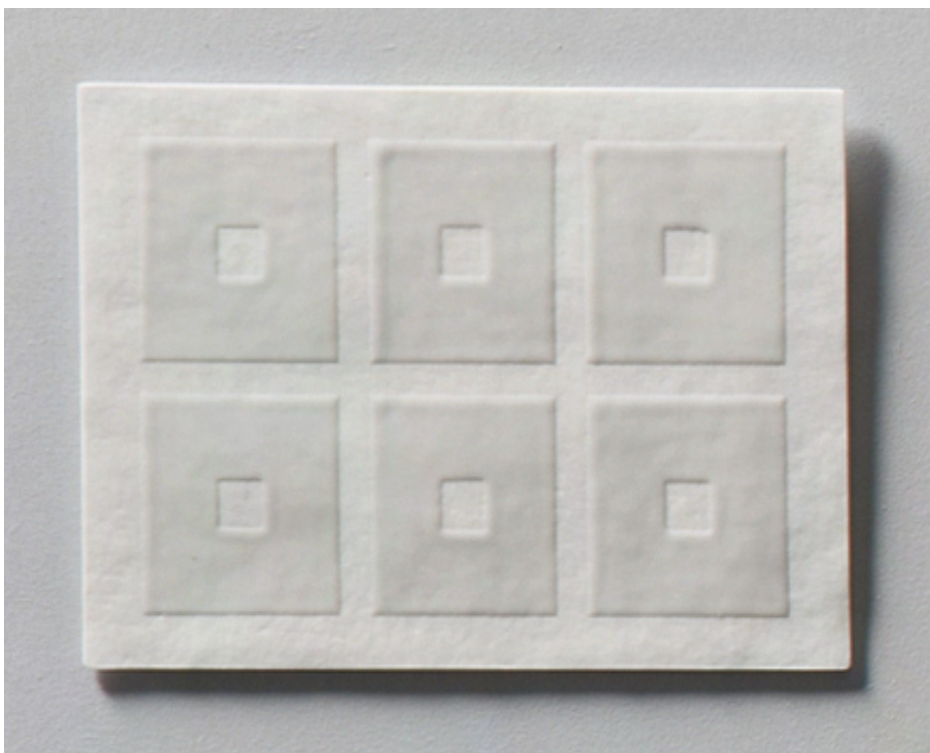
Clay page 8

- Responded to clay page 7.
- The interior lines were omitted leaving just a glazed border inside an unglazed border.

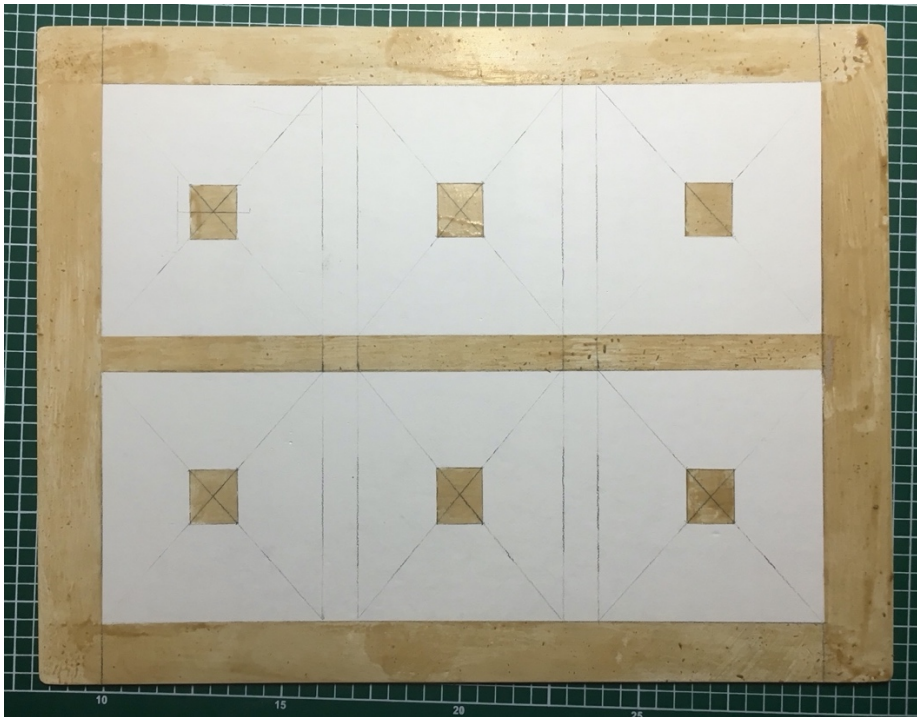


Clay page 9

- Responded to clay page 4.
- Squares were used instead of dots. Each square has a smaller square cut out of it.



- Process: preparatory wax resist mask.

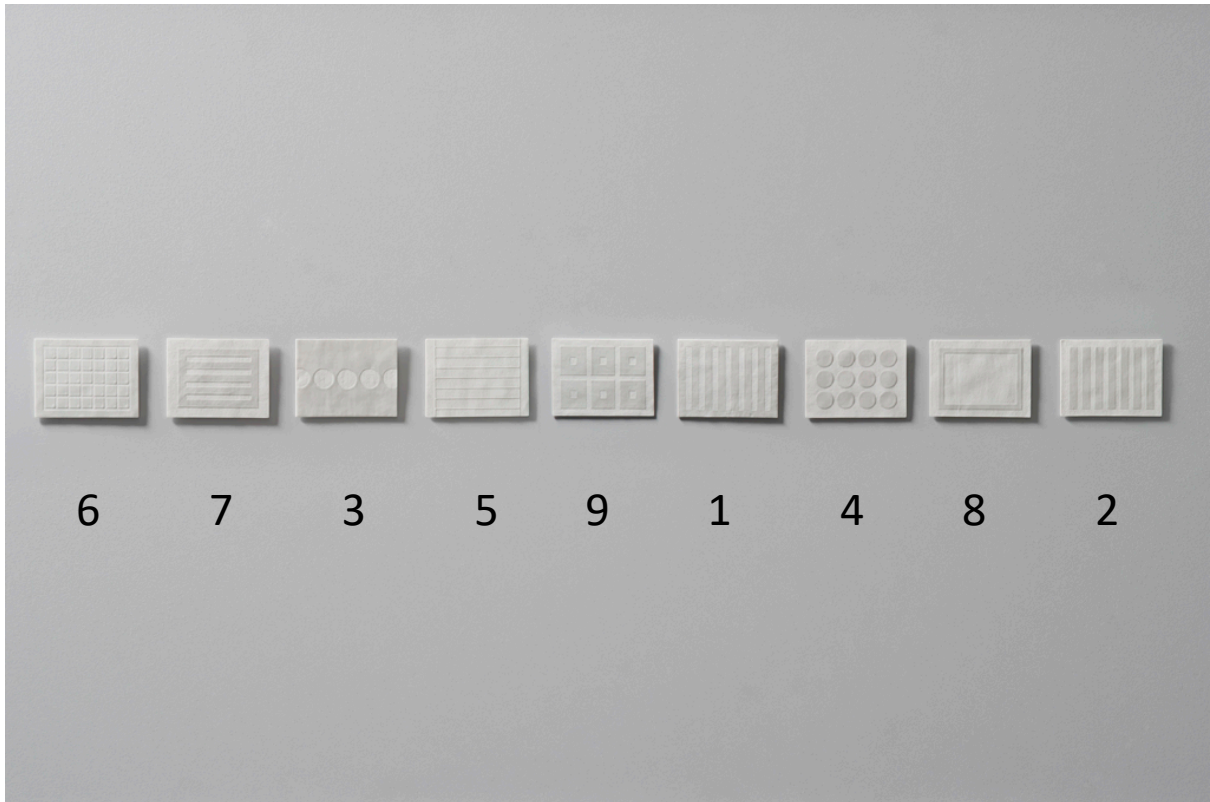


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Observations and outcomes

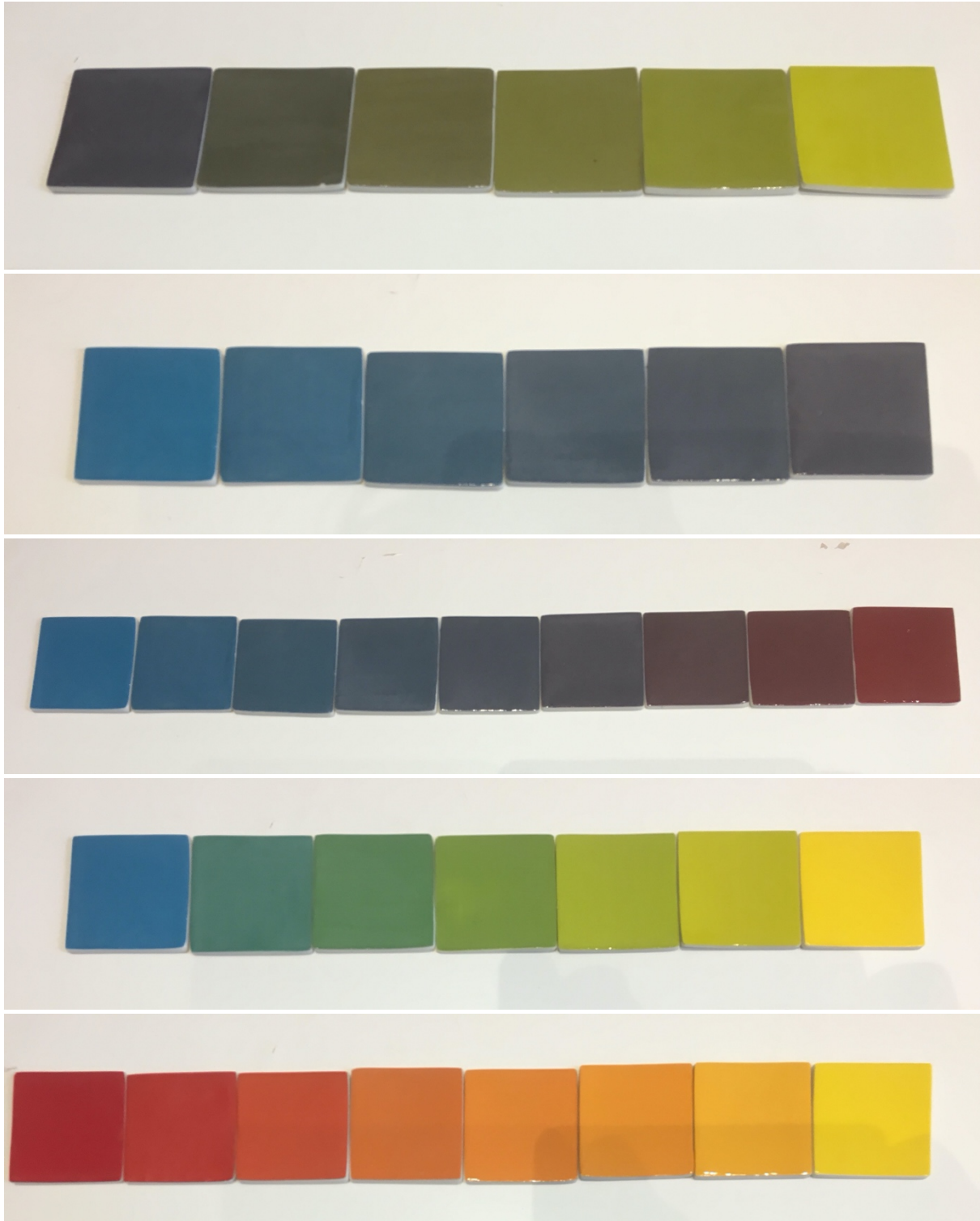
- Glaze cut-outs produce a varied language.
- One page responds to another. As before, there is repeat and variation.
- The reverse image of the final image must first be produced in wax resist.
- Depending on the light and the position of the viewer, the composition can be either invisible or clearly seen.
- Limited parameters do not limit the outcomes.
- The making order was disregarded in creating a final composition.

Clay pages 1 to 9 in this test were reordered and rearranged to form the following composition, *Not Absent, But Present*.



Test 5. Triaxial colour investigation – porcelain slip and clay body

Porcelain slip



Date 2017

Summary

- The test asked: what colour variations can be created from limited parameters?
- Three stains – P4189, P4146 and P4129 – were mixed in a triaxial test to develop a range of colours.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze.

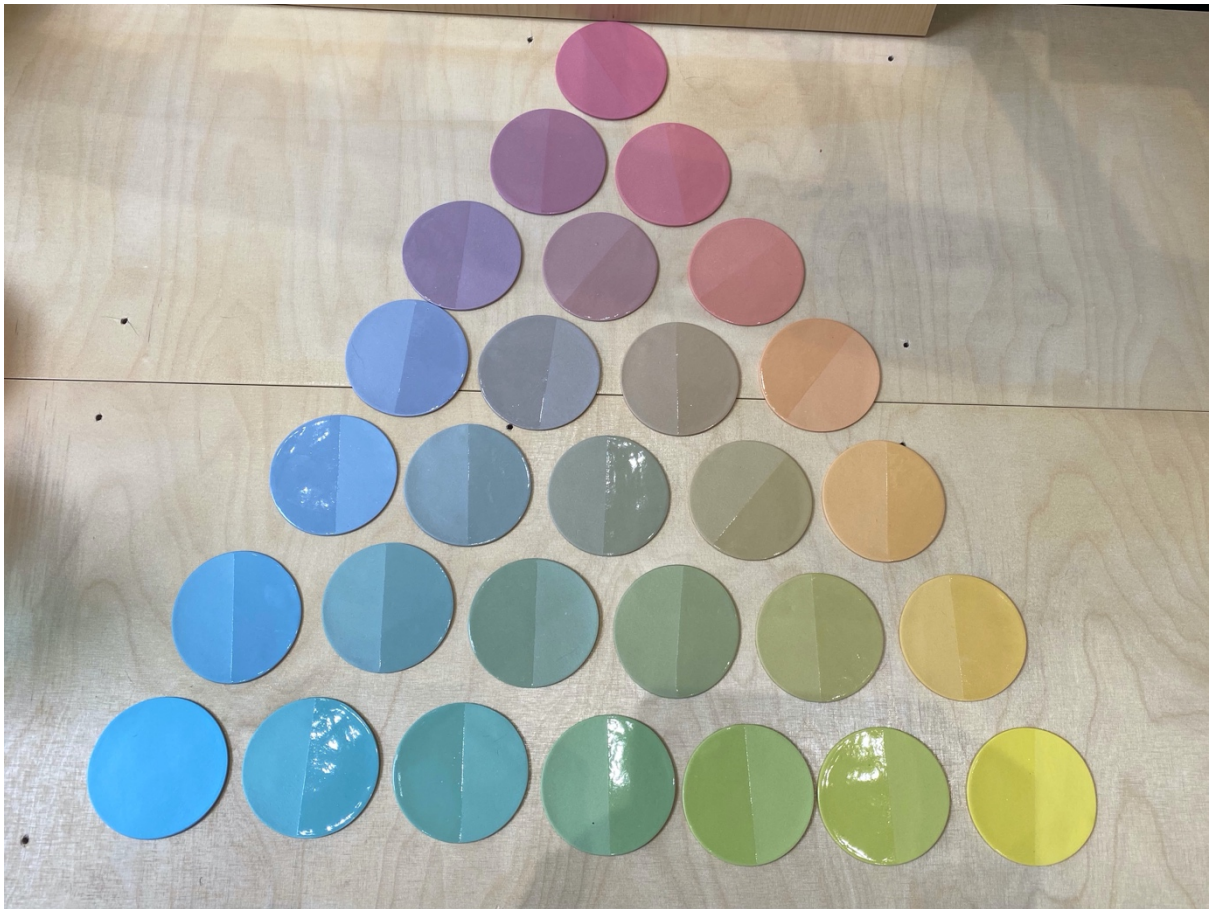
Detail

- Stains were mixed to a 40% colour saturation with porcelain slip in a triaxial blend and applied to greenware porcelain paperclay test squares.

Observations and outcomes

- A vibrant range of colours was produced to be used in future compositions.
- These colours can be lightened by mixing to a lower percentage; intensified by increasing the percentage, or darkened by adding a grey stain.

Clay body



Summary

- The test asked: what colour variations can be created from limited colour parameters within the clay body?
- Three stains – P4189, P4146 and P4129 – were mixed in a triaxial test to develop a range of clay body colours.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; coloured stains; transparent glaze.

Detail

- Stains were mixed to a 2% colour saturation with porcelain paperclay in a triaxial blend.
- A good colour response was achieved
- The test was then repeated with lower percentages to achieve paler colours.

Observations and outcomes

- A range of colours was produced to be used in future compositions.
- These colours can be lightened by mixing to a lower percentage; intensified by increasing the percentage, or darkened by adding a grey stain.

Test 6. Gestural stroke investigation

Date 2017

Summary

- The tests performed to date responded to the edges of the clay page and to the grid – the surface of the clay page was laid out in a organized manner.
- This test asked:
 - what happens if gestural strokes are used on the surface of the clay page?
 - are they meaningful within the research?

Materials

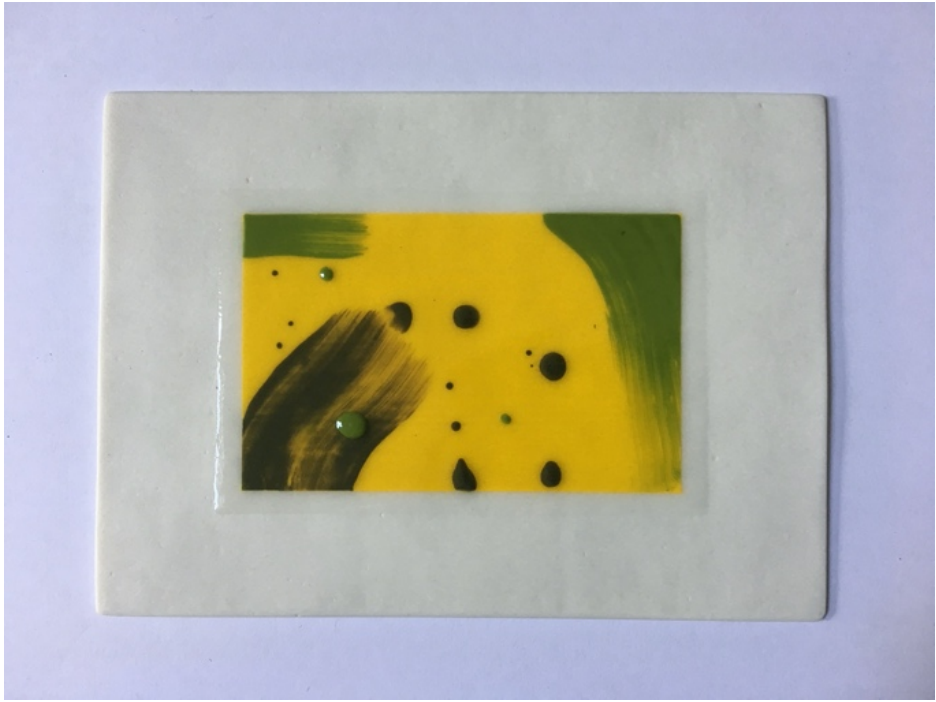
- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain coloured slip; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Slip was applied gesturally to the clay page (A6).
- Framing devices of newspaper masks and glaze were used.

Observations and outcomes

- Even when using gestural mark making, this was contained within a boundary, and a frame was created.
- The gestural strokes felt purposeless and meaningless in their motivation.
- Gestural strokes are not the language of this research.



Test 7. Translating a story investigation

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Date 2017

Summary

- Italo Calvino's short story *All at One Point* reimagined the universe's big bang but in reverse. It imagined everything in the universe returning to one point of origin.
- This test asked: can this story be represented on the surface of the clay page? And what is revealed?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

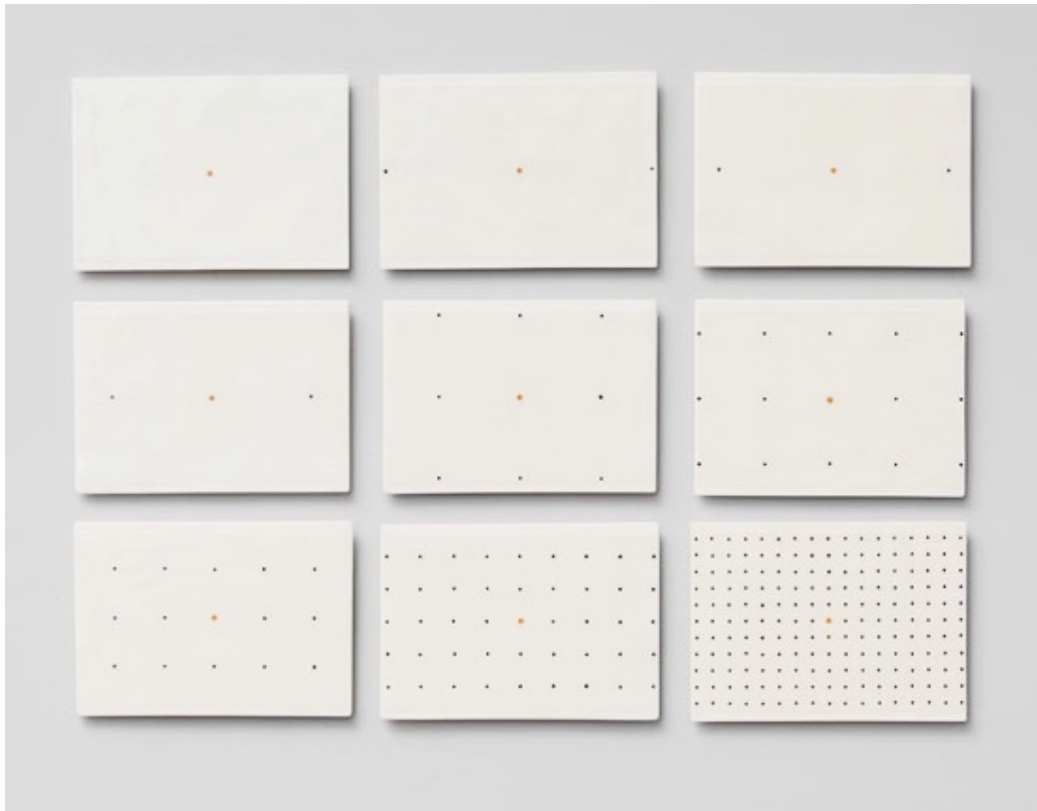
Detail

- The motif of a contracting grid was chosen to represent the contracting universe.
- Over nine A6 porcelain postcards the grid contracted 1cm at a time prior to firing.
- The grid was represented by a series of dots to represent all the things in the universe.
- An orange dot appeared at the centre of each clay page to signify the point to which everything returned.
- This series picked up on *Test 3, clay pages 11 and 12*, and the way in which the dots were structured and applied.

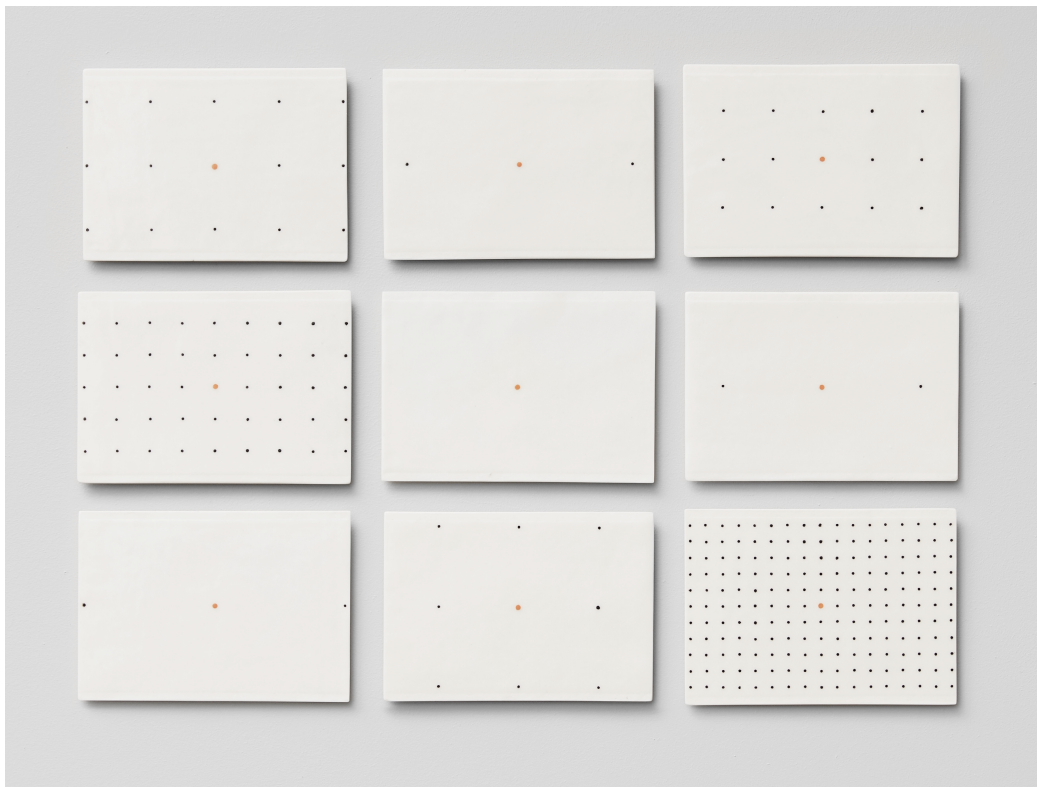
Observations and outcomes

- Calvino's story was successfully represented by the grid.
- As the test progressed, the idea/motif of the grid and the dots became more important, more dominant than Calvino's story.
- The clay pages were arranged in a grid echoing the grid device on the surface.
- They were minimal in appearance.
- The series could be presented in order or reordered as shown below.

The series presented in order generates the composition *All at One Point*.



Series re-ordered: 6, 3, 7, 8, 1, 4, 2, 5 then 9



Test 8. Minimal repeat and variation investigation

Date 2018

Summary

- This test took the motif of the central dot from *Test 7*, and the minimal appearance of *Test 7*'s final composition and applied the principle of repeat and variation.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

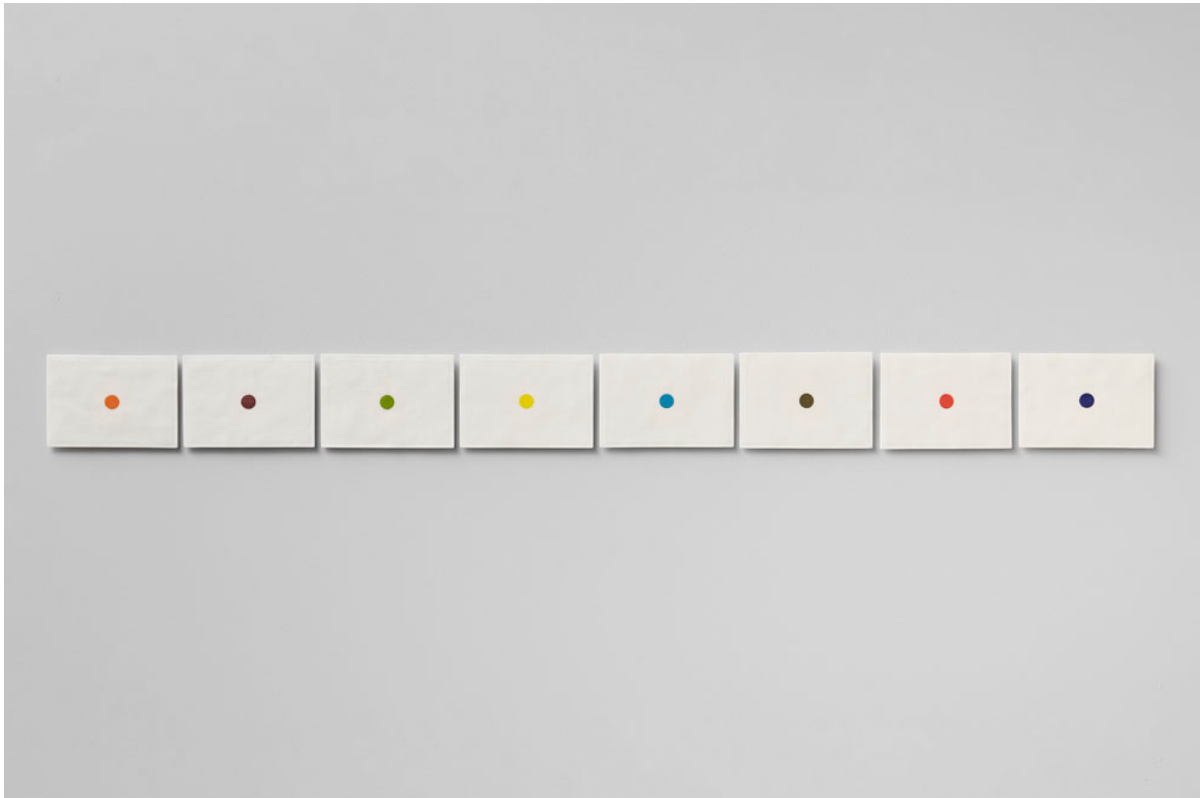
Detail

- Eight A6 clay pages were made.
- The repetition was represented by the central dot and the variation was represented by the colour which changed from page to page.
- The colours are the bright city colours of graffiti.
- Glaze is set inside the edge of the clay page, leaving an unglazed border.

Observations and outcomes

- A minimal composition is achieved with colour, repeat and variation.

Clay pages in this test were arranged to form the composition *Graffiti Spot*.



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Test 9. Clay body colour investigation

Date 2018

Summary

- To date, the clay page tests have used porcelain paperclay without the addition of coloured stains.
- This test asked:
 - what happens when colour is added to the body of the clay page?
 - how does this relate to colour on the surface of the clay page?

Materials

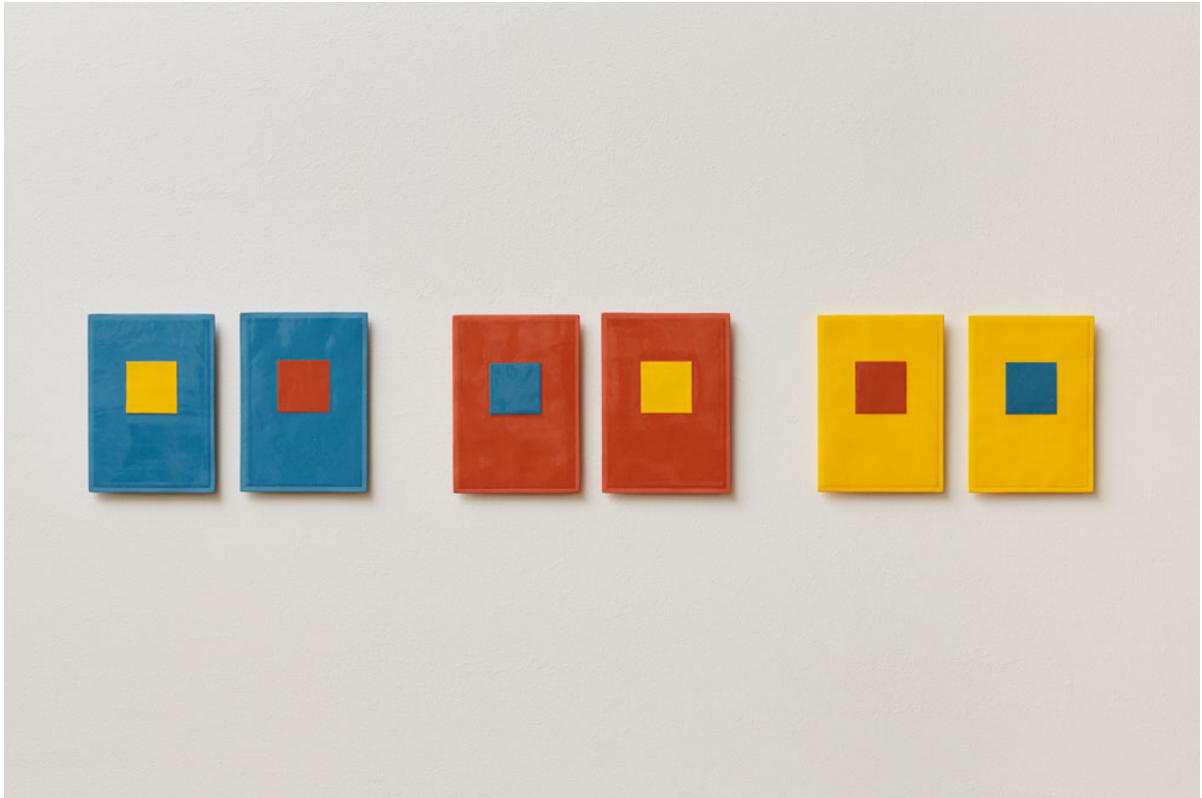
- Porcelain paperclay; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Primary colours were selected for contrast.
- Clay page A6.
- Stain was added at 10% saturation to dry porcelain paperclay.
- A square of slip was applied to the surface in the remaining two colours.
- Glaze was set inside the edge of the clay page, leaving an unglazed border.

Observations and outcomes

- The colour in the clay body gave the clay page an increased feeling of presence.
- Like a Josef Albers colour study, different colours recede and approach.
- The slip applied to the clay page surface had to be thick enough to counteract the effect of the stain in the clay body acting on the slip.
- Colour in the clay body offers further opportunity for repeat and variation without expanding the range of resources used.



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Test 10. Slip abutment investigation

Date 2018

Summary

- To date, all the tests had used coloured slip on the surface of the clay page in separate, discrete areas, that is, areas of slip did not touch or abut.
- This test asked: what happens when slip is abutted; when colours are joined together? And how could this be executed?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; black and yellow slip; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Inspiration was taken from hazard tape which I had been photographing when wayfaring.
- Clay page A6.
- Glaze set in from the edge of the clay page.

Clay page 1

- Yellow slip was painted first in diagonal lines using newspaper masks.
- Carefully, black slip was painted in between the yellow sections.
- When glazed, sharp edges were felt where the slip abuts.

Clay page 2

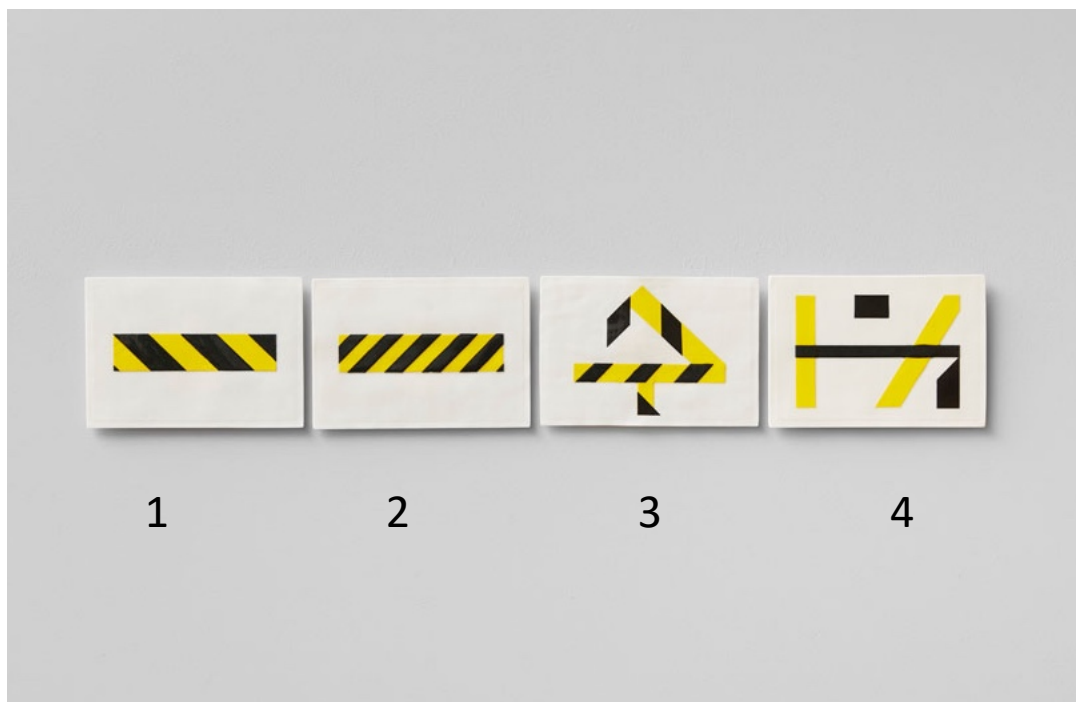
- Yellow slip was painted first in a horizontal rectangle with no gaps.
- Black slip was painted over the yellow slip in diagonal lines.
- When glazed, the edges of the black slip were smooth.

Clay page 3

- Slip applied as per clay page 2.
- The composition starts to deconstruct.

Clay page 4

- Slip applied as per clay page 2.
- The composition further deconstructs.



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Observations and outcomes

- Fiddly process to carry out. For example, in clay page 1, the yellow slip had to be dried before the black could be painted. Again, in clay page 2, the yellow slip rectangle had to be dried in order to apply the black slip.
- There is colour contamination risk.
- By drying the slip applied first, the application of the second slip re-wets the clay page, subjecting it to unwelcome changes in tension.
- In clay page 4 where the black slip passes over two yellow verticals, the black slip widens out. This is because this section of the clay page is higher than the rest of the clay page (two layers of slip) and is pushed outwards in the drying process.
- Overall, the simplicity and clarity of the previous tests is diminished, and the awkward and time-consuming nature of the process is less practical.

Test 11. Clay body cut out investigation

Date 2018

Summary

- To date, the tests had investigated both glaze and slip cut-outs on the surface of the clay page.
- This test asked:
 - what happens when a cut-out is applied to the body of the clay page?
 - how could this be executed?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- A6 clay pages were rolled as thinly as possible whilst maintaining stability.
- A 5mm wide cut-out was made to each clay page.
- After bisque firing the edges of the cut-out were sanded.
- Glaze cut-outs were painted in wax resist to interact with the clay page cut-outs. For example, glaze cut-outs ran in the opposite direction to the clay body cut-out and a dynamic between the two was created.

Observations and outcomes

- The centre of the clay page is thicker than the outer edges.
- The cut-outs work well with the thickness of the A6 clay page.
- The cut-out at this scale does not destabilise the clay page in the firing.
- The paper fibers within the clay body are more difficult to cut through because the cut-out opening is very narrow.



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Test 12. Wayfaring visual information investigation

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Date 2018

Summary

- This test looked at:
 - Colouring the clay body.
 - Visual language gathered during wayfaring.
 - Repetition and variation.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Porcelain paperclay was stained with small percentages of black and grey stain.
- A6 clay pages were cut.
- Images of road markings were abstracted and re-composed on to the surface of the clay page.
- Glaze placement was varied and responded to slip lines and the edges of the clay page.

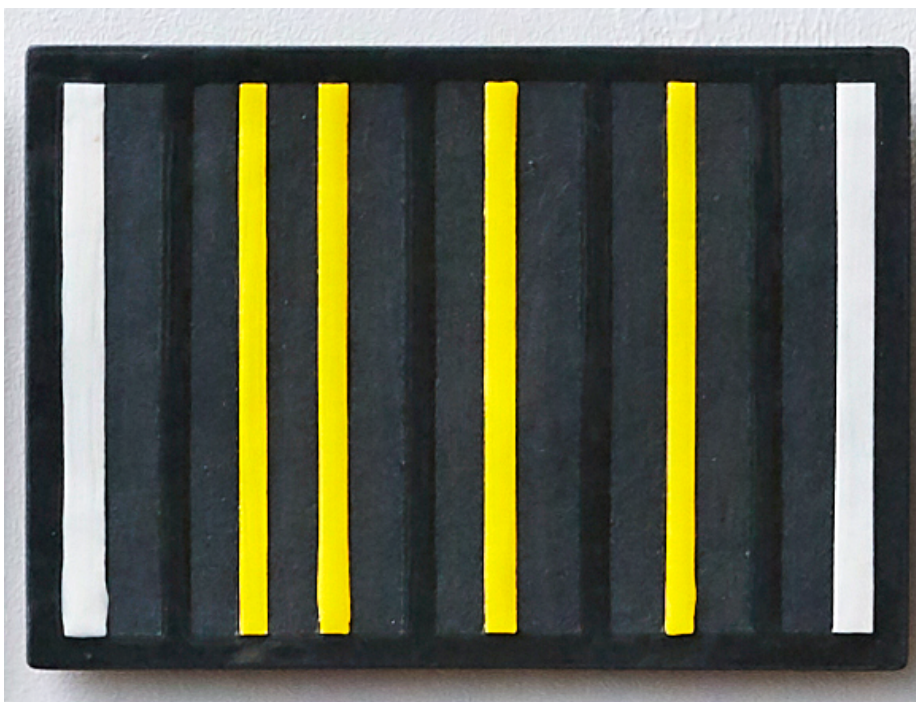
Clay page 1

- Yellow slip was painted in two horizontal lines.
- Glaze was applied in a grille motif.



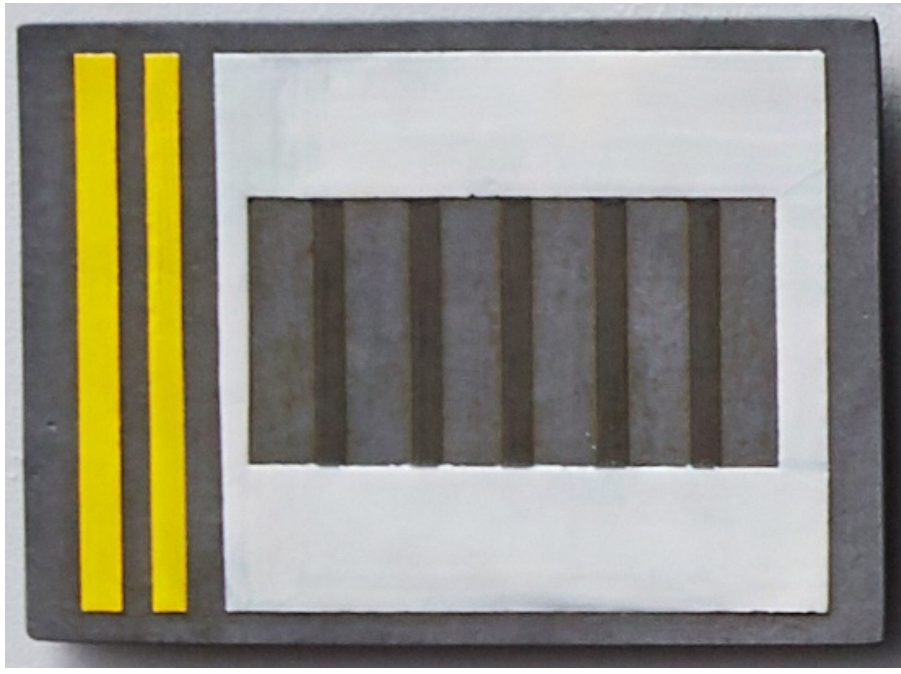
Clay page 2

- Responding to clay page 1, yellow and white slip was painted in vertical lines.
- Glaze was applied in a grille motif.



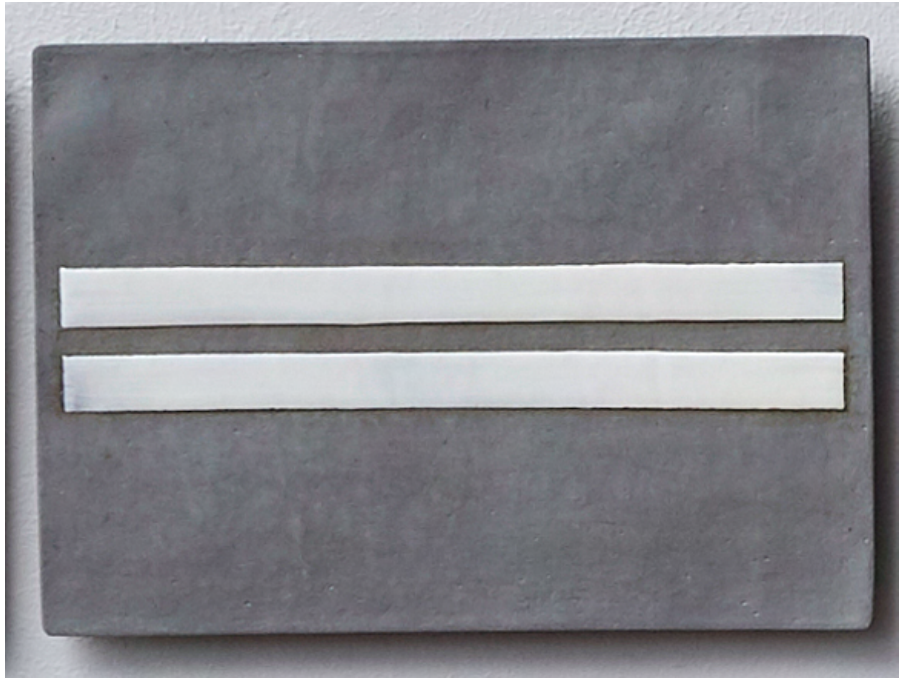
Clay page 3

- Responding to clay pages 1 and 2, yellow and white slip was painted in vertical and horizontal lines.
- Glaze was applied in a grille motif.



Clay page 4

- Responding to clay page 1, white slip was painted in two horizontal lines.
- Glaze was applied only to the slip.



Clay page 5

- Responding to clay page 4, yellow slip was painted in a thin horizontal line.
- Glaze was applied to the whole clay page.



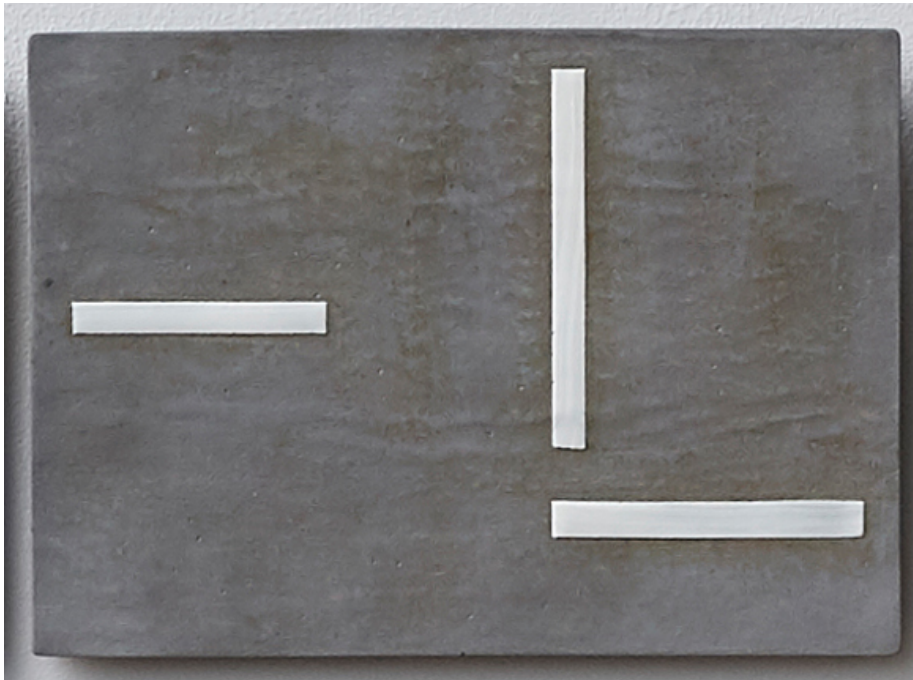
Clay page 6

- Responding to clay page 5, white slip was painted in a thin horizontal line.
- Glaze was applied to the whole clay page.



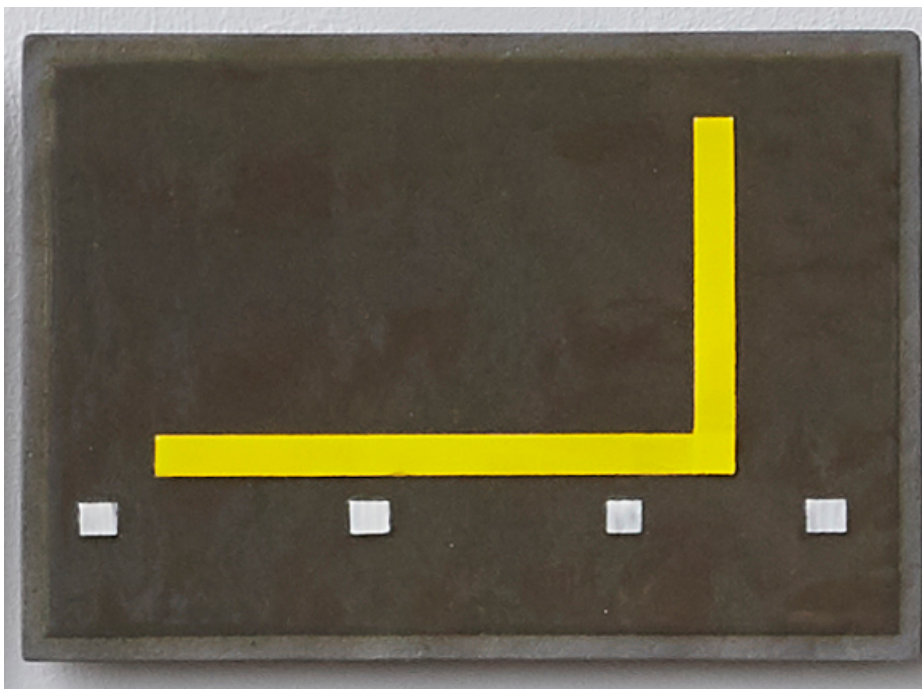
Clay page 7

- Responding to clay page 4, white slip lines were broken up and rotated.
- Glaze was applied only to the slip.



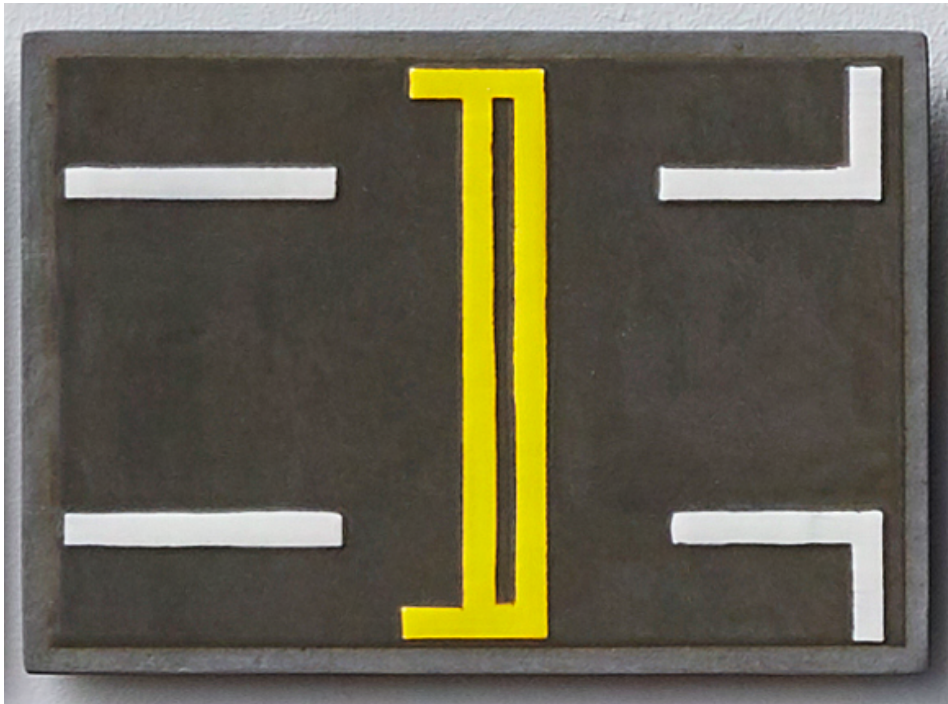
Clay page 8

- Responding to clay page 7, yellow slip was painted with small white blocks.
- Glaze was applied to the clay page, leaving a small unglazed border.



Clay page 9

- Responding to clay page 8, yellow and white slip were painted in lines.
- Glaze was applied to the clay page, leaving a small unglazed border.



Observations and outcomes

- Each clay page responded to a previous clay page but also responded to visual material gathered during wayfaring.
- Different tonal responses were generated by varying the percentage of stain in the clay page body and by using lines of glaze.
- Where the clay page was unglazed, it was sanded smooth with a diamond pad.
- At the time of performing the test, the language felt abstracted from the source material. But on later reflection, it wasn't. I could see that it too closely resembled the road markings I had seen.
- The clay pages were re-ordered and rearranged – looking for juxtapositions and harmonies – until a composition was arrived at. This is shown below.

Clay pages 1 to 9 in this test were reordered and rearranged to form the composition *On the Road*.



3 5 4 9 7 2 8 1 3

Test 13. (i) Series and progression investigation

Date 2019

Summary

- This test explores repetition and variation, asking:
 - Can a series be constructed from a planned incremental progression?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; coloured stains; transparent glaze.

Detail

- Nine A5 clay pages were cut.
- The upper point of a triangle progresses incrementally across the clay page from left to right. Each triangle has an identical base and surface area.
- The order of colours was decided in advance.
- The whole clay page was glazed.

Observations and outcomes

- The clay pages were placed in order in a grid formation.



- There was some warping noted where the slip along the base of the page pulled up the edge of the clay page slightly.
- When displayed this was less noticeable.
- Once, when unpacking the clay pages, the composition below occurred: an accidental re-ordering. Clay page order and rotation (arrow indication orientation) below.

6↑	2↑	8↓
1↑	6↓	3↑
5↓	4↑	9↓



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- The re-ordered, reorientated composition has more of a dynamic. Each page is related to the others, which gives a visual consistency.
- Gives the composition *Tip Toe I*.

Test 13. (ii) Series and progression investigation

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Date 2019

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 13(i)*.
- It asked:
 - Can the same motif and progression be rescaled?
 - What effect does this have?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; coloured stains; transparent glaze.

Detail

- Nine A6 clay pages were cut.
- The upper point of a triangle progresses incrementally across the clay page from left to right. Each triangle has an identical base and surface area.
- The triangles covered less surface area than in *Test 13(i)*.
- The order of colours was the same as *Test 13(i)*.
- Only the slip triangle was glazed.
- Unglazed fired clay was sanded.

Observations and outcomes

- Surface qualities are haptically pleasing – glossy slip triangle surrounded by smooth, sanded porcelain.
- The clay pages were placed in order in a horizontal line.
- They were then placed in the same order but in a three-by-three grid.
- The rescaling of the composition produces something connected, but with noticeably different visual qualities.

When placed in order, the clay pages form the composition *Tip Toe II*.



This work has also been displayed as shown below. The composition is adaptable, depending upon the space available.



Test 14. Contained spaces investigation

Date 2019

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 13(i)*. That test was very open in its visual layout – white space and a central motif.
- It asked:
 - Can the white space be smaller and contained?
 - What effect does this have?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; black stain; transparent glaze.

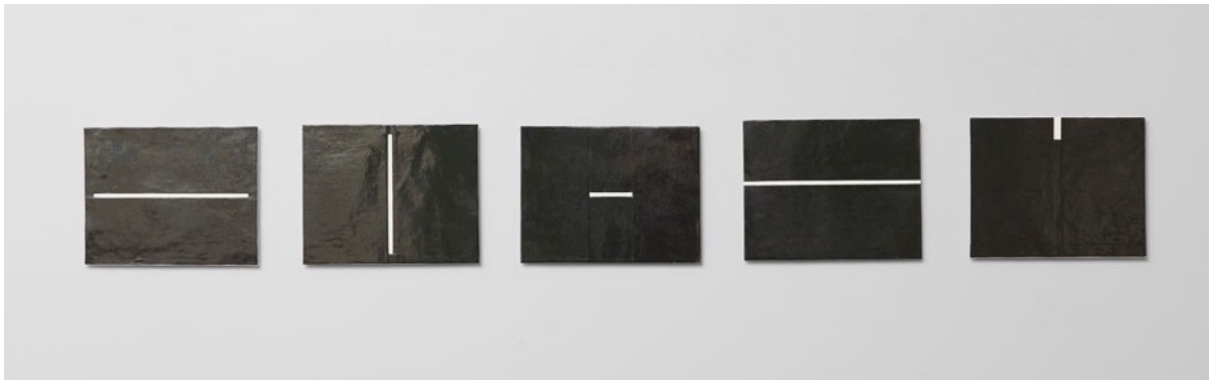
Detail

- Five A5 clay pages were cut.
- Because slip was to be applied over most of the clay page surface, the clay pages were rolled less thinly.
- Black slip was applied, and narrow spaces of white porcelain clay were left.
- Glaze was applied over the whole clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- There is a dynamic between the contained spaces and the sense of a deep black border or frame.
- The white space seems to be trying to break free and make a connection with the edge of the clay page.
- There is repetition and variation.
- The clay pages were made in one order and then reordered to form the composition as shown.

The reordered clay pages give the composition *Enclosure I*.



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Order of making:

2

4

1

3

5

Test 15. Contained spaces, borders and framing investigation

Date 2019

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 14* and took the idea of borders.
- It asked:
 - Can the black border be opened out and the white space varied?
 - What effect does this have?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; black stain; transparent glaze; wax resist.

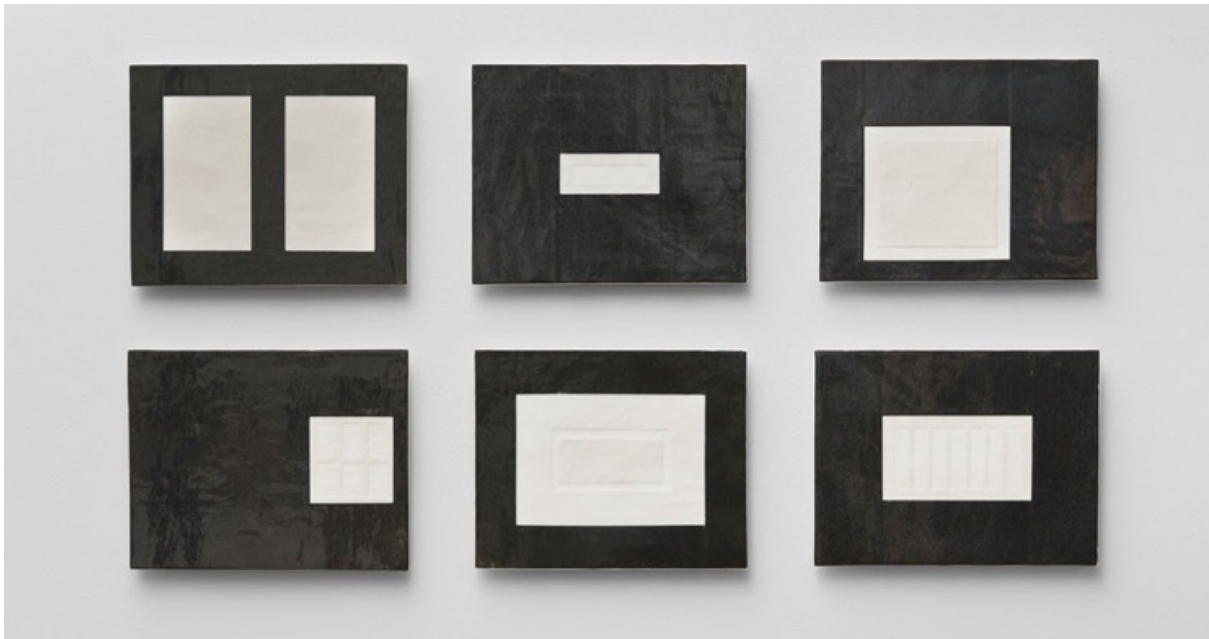
Detail

- Six A5 clay pages were cut.
- Because slip was to be applied over most of the clay page surface, the clay pages were rolled less thinly.
- Black slip was applied, and the balance between in and the contained white space, varied.
- The glaze responded to the slip composition and varied from page to page.

Observations and outcomes

- There is a dynamic between the contained spaces and the changing position of the black border or frame.
- There is an impression of looking at windows and openings. This is enhanced by the use of glaze.
- There is repetition and variation.
- The clay pages were made in one order and then reordered to form the composition as shown.

The reordered clay pages give the composition *Enclosure II*.



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Order of making:

4	1	5
6	3	2

Test 16. Lines, borders and framing investigation

Date 2019

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 15* and took the idea of borders.
- It asked:
 - Can the black border be minimal, like a line?
 - What effect does this have?

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; black stain; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Eight A5 clay pages were cut.
- Black slip was applied, and its position and width varied.
- The glaze responded to the slip composition and varied from page to page.

Observations and outcomes

- As the border narrows, it functions visually as a line.
- It is always in a relationship with the edge of the clay page.
- There is a sense of frames, enhanced by the use of glaze.
- There is repetition and variation.
- The clay pages were made in one order and then reordered to form the composition as shown.

The reordered clay pages give the composition *Enclosure III*.



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Order of making:

5	2	7	3
4	8	1	6

Test 17. **Playing, doodling, lines investigation**

Date 2020

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 16* and took the idea of lines.
- It focused on playing and doodling, working intuitively.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain slip; black stain; transparent glaze; wax resist.

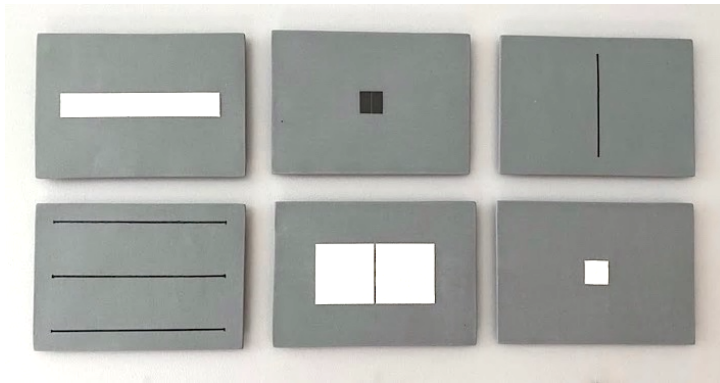
Detail

- A6 and A5 clay pages were cut.
- Lines were painted onto the surface of the clay page in a variety of compositions.
- After bisque firing, some lines were applied using sgraffito.

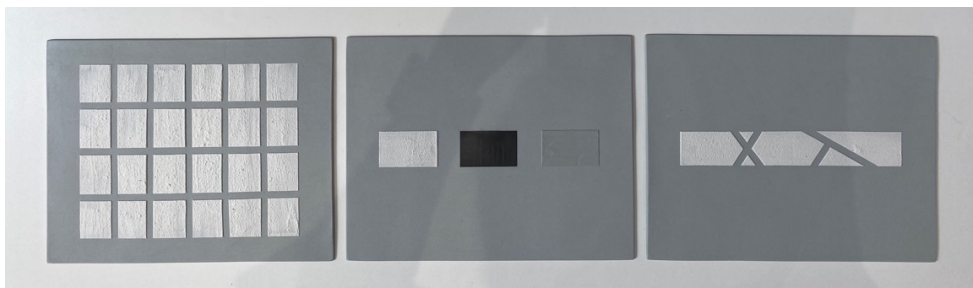
Observations and outcomes

- Different tapes and masks were used to create the lines.
- That gave rise to the next test.

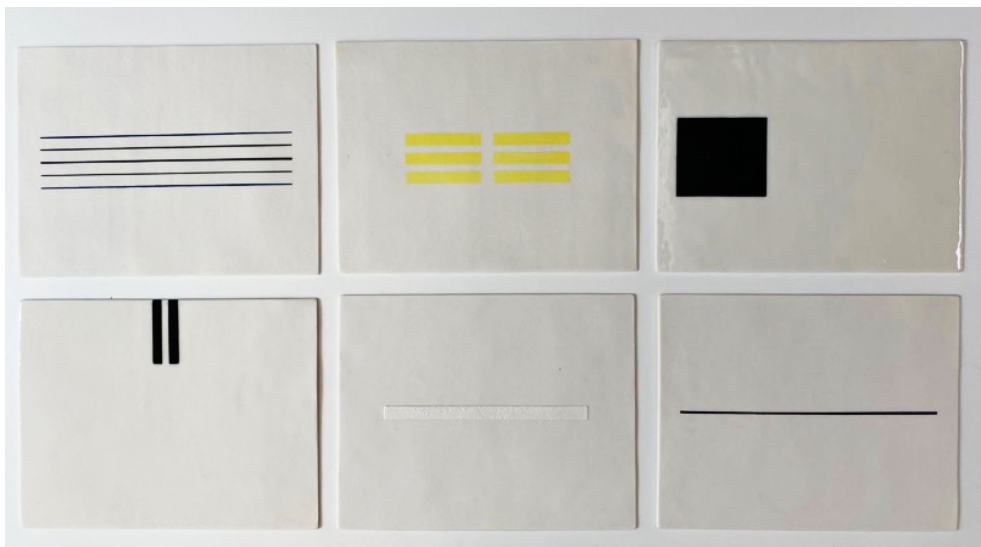
(a) Six A6 clay pages



(b) Three clay pages A5



(c) Six clay pages A5



Test 18. Fixed width investigation

Date 2020

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 17* and took the idea of using tape, of a fixed width, repeatedly as a mask.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze.

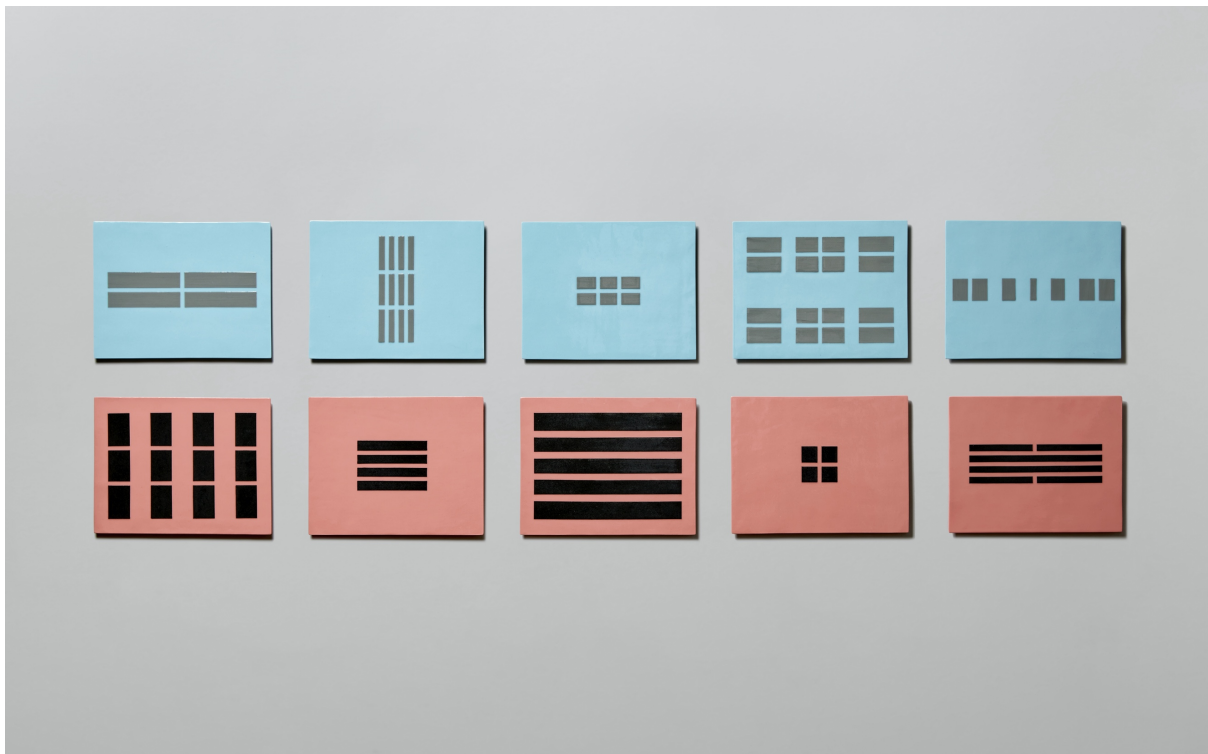
Detail

- Porcelain paperclay was coloured using two stains.
- Ten A5 clay pages were cut.
- Tape was used repeatedly on the surface of the clay page to enclose different areas of slip.
- Two colours of slip were used: grey on blue and black on red.
- Glaze was applied to the whole of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- Limited parameters were used: one tape, two colours of clay, two colours of slip.
- The composition was created within those parameters.
- The composition resembles architectural details.
- The clay pages were made in one order and then reordered.

The reordered clay pages give the composition *Engineered Construction*.



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Order of making:

3	10	2	8	7
9	5	1	6	4

Test 19. Repeating motif investigation

Date 2020

Summary

- This test responded to *Test 18, clay page 10*.
- It investigated using a repeating motif.

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

Detail

- Six A5 clay pages were cut.
- The motif was repeated but with variation using slip and glaze.

Observations and outcomes

- Although the motif was repeated with variation, its overall effect is of similarity.



Test 20. (i) Small surface squares investigation

Notes for Test 20. (i) to (ix)

Date 2020

Materials

- Porcelain paperclay; porcelain clay; coloured stains; transparent glaze; wax resist.

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Summary

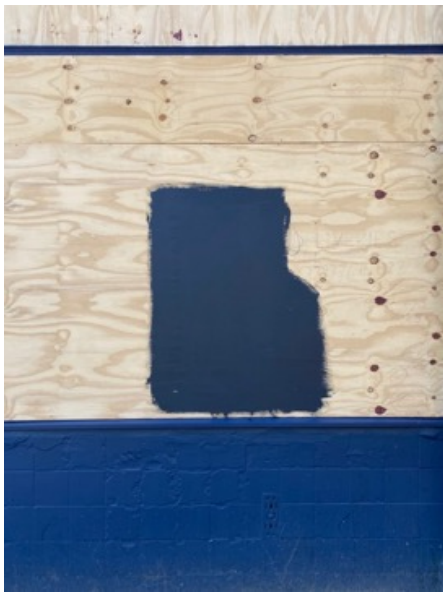
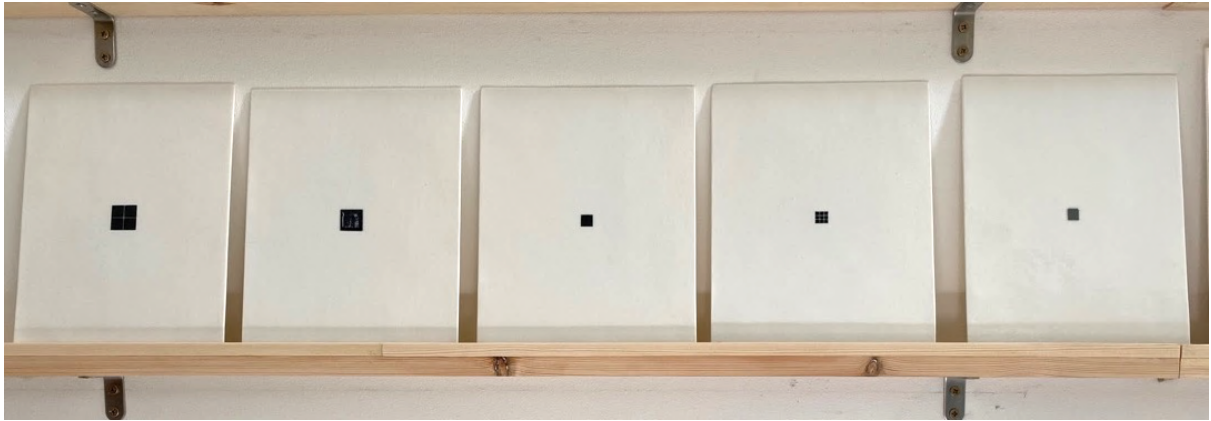
- This test aimed to make a small square repeatedly but with variation.
- After *Test 20* I wanted to do something smaller, more contained.

Detail

- Five A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was repeated but with variations in size using slip and glaze.
- Sgraffito lines were used.

Observations and outcomes

- It wasn't clear what this test was achieving until I saw hoardings (images below).
- This gave rise to the following test.



Test 20. (ii) Squares with something taken away investigation

Summary

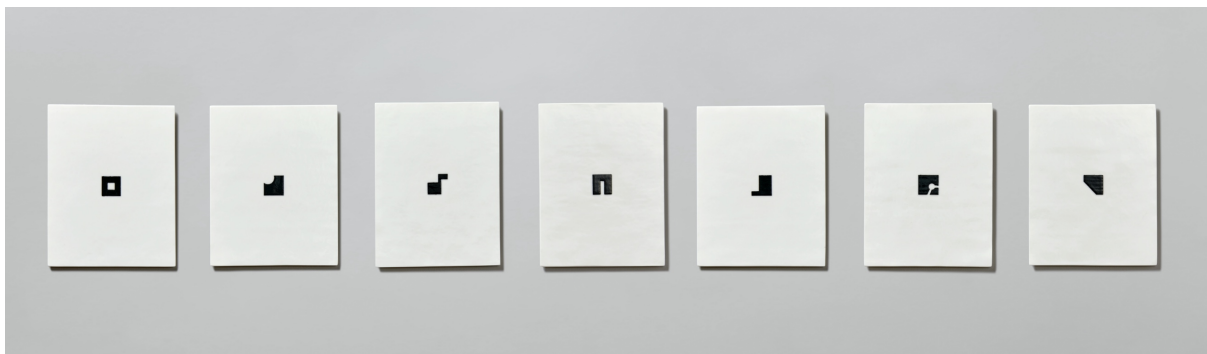
- This test took the idea of the contained central square in *Test 20(i)*.
- This was combined with the idea of something being taken away from the square, like the shapes on the hoardings above.

Detail

- Seven A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was enlarged to 3cm sq. and repeated on each clay page in slip.
- Something was then deducted/removed from each square.
- Glaze was applied to the whole clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 3cm black square – had something taken away from it repeatedly and with variation.
- It offers an interpretation of the visual information of wayfaring.
- The composition is minimal.



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Test 20. (iii) Squares with framing investigation

Summary

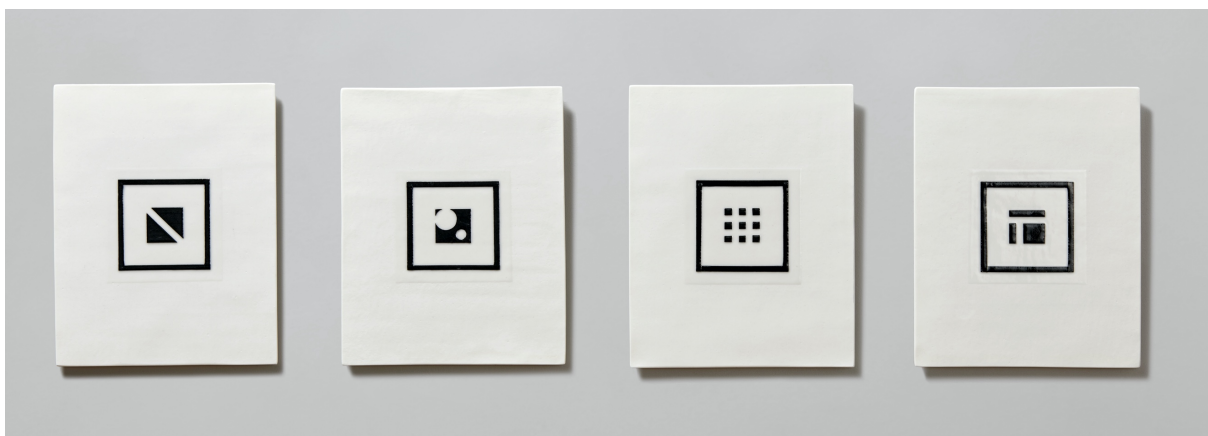
- This test follows on from *Test 20(ii)*.
- The square was enlarged and framed.

Detail

- Four A5 clay pages were cut.
- The central square was enlarged to 3.5cm sq. and repeated on each clay page in slip.
- The square was then divided in different ways.
- A frame of slip was painted.
- Glaze was used to frame the slip composition, leaving a border of unglazed clay.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 3.5cm black square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- It offers a composition of frames – slip and glaze.
- I observed that the composition had jumped several steps away from *Tests 20* and *21*.
- I decided that the next test should pick up more closely from *Tests 20* and *21*.



Test 20. (iv) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

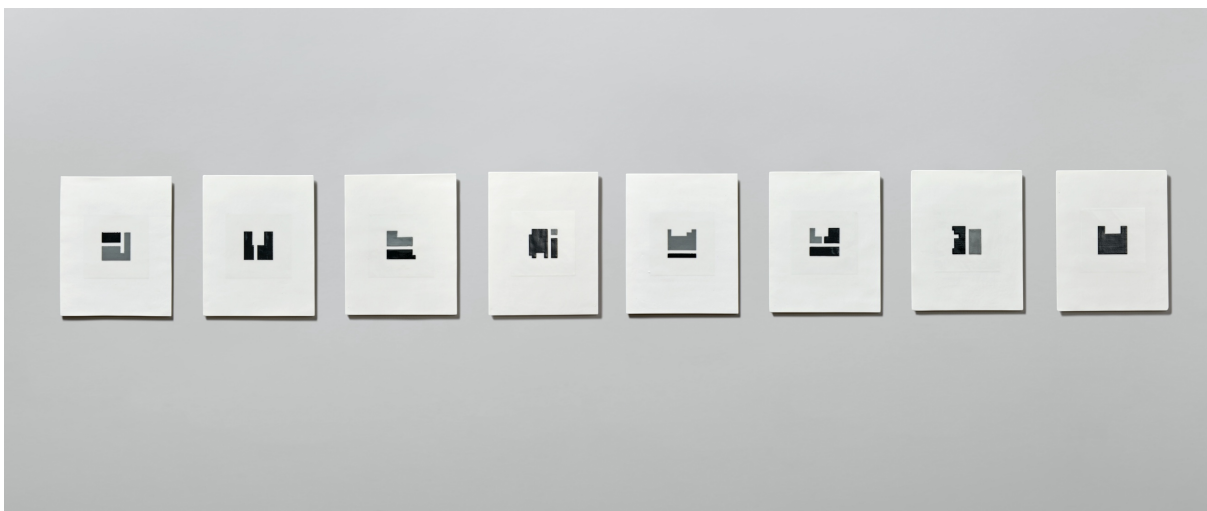
- This test follows on from *Test 20 (ii)*.
- It asks: can an evolving and expanding series be made?

Detail

- Eight A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was enlarged by 2 cm to 5cm sq. and the dimensions repeated on each clay page in slip.
- The square was divided in different ways.
- Grey slip was introduced.
- Glaze was applied to the whole clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 5cm square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- It is a square with parts taken away.
- This test expands and evolves *Test 20 (ii)*.
- This test prompts the next.



Test 20. (v) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

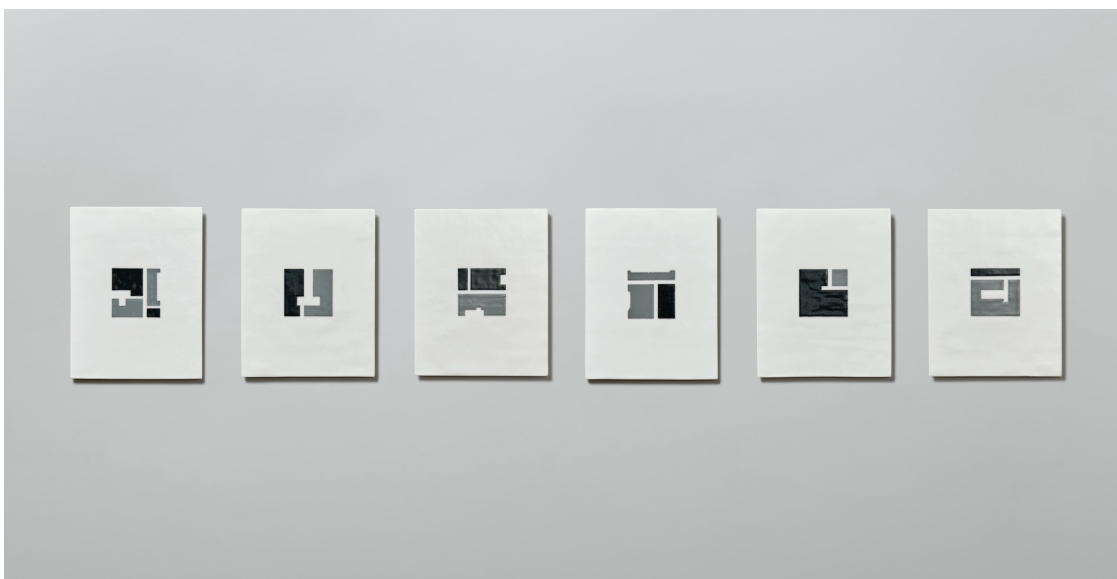
- This test follows on from *Test 20 (iv)*.
- How can an expanding series of repeat and variation build on *Test 20 (iv)*?

Detail

- Six A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was enlarged by 2cm to 7cm sq. and the dimensions repeated on each clay page.
- The square was then divided in different ways.
- Grey and black slip.
- Glaze was applied to whole surface of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 7cm black square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- When the pages have been completed, they are organised into a composition.
- The pages clearly relate to each other: parameters are fixed and repeated – page size, square size, glaze application, grey and black colour – but variations can occur within those parameters.



Test 20. (vi) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

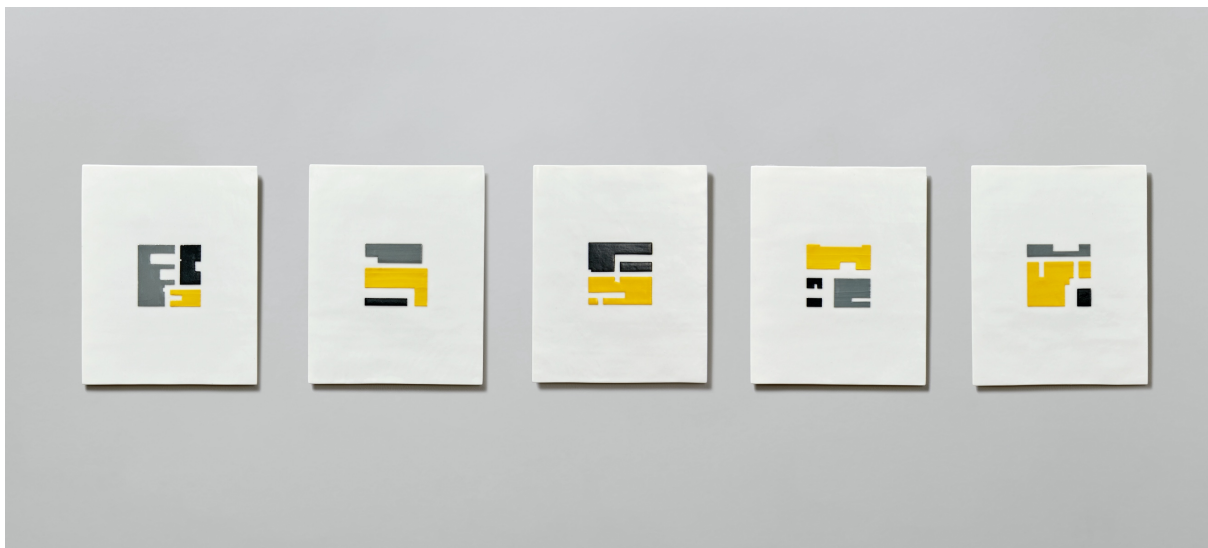
- This test follows on from *Test 20 (v)*.
- How can an expanding series of repeat and variation build on *Test 20 (v)*?

Detail

- Five A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was kept at 7cm sq. and the dimensions repeated on each clay page.
- The square was then divided in different ways.
- Yellow slip was introduced.
- Glaze was applied to whole surface of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 7cm black square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- When the pages have been completed, they are organised into a composition.
- The pages clearly relate to each other: parameters are fixed and repeated – page size, square size, glaze application, yellow, grey and black colour – but variations can occur within those parameters.



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Test 20. (vii) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

- This test follows on from *Test 20 (vi)*.
- How can an expanding series of repeat and variation build on *Test 20 (vi)*?

Detail

- Five A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was enlarged by 2cm to a 9cm square and the dimensions repeated on each clay page.
- The square was then divided in different ways.
- Green slip introduced.
- Glaze was applied to whole surface of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 9cm black square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- When the pages have been completed, they are organised into a composition.
- The pages clearly relate to each other: parameters are fixed and repeated – page size, square size, glaze application, green, yellow, grey and black colour – but variations can occur within those parameters.



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Test 20. (viii) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

- This test follows on from *Test 20 (vii)*.
- How can an expanding series of repeat and variation build on *Test 20 (vii)*?

Detail

- Six A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was enlarged by 2cm to an 11cm square. and the dimensions repeated on each clay page.
- The square was then divided in different ways using black, grey and yellow slip.
- Glaze was applied to whole surface of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a 11cm black square – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- When the pages have been completed, they are organised into a composition.
- The pages clearly relate to each other: parameters are fixed and repeated – page size, square size, glaze application, yellow, grey and black colour – but variations can occur within those parameters.



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Test 20. (ix) Evolving squares investigation

Summary

- This test follows on from *Test 20 (viii)*.
- How can an expanding series of repeat and variation build on *Test 20 (viii)*?

Detail

- Five A5 clay pages were cut.
- The square was replaced by a rectangle 14.5cm by 17cm and the dimensions repeated on each clay page.
- The rectangle was then divided in different ways.
- Dark green slip was introduced.
- Glaze was applied to whole surface of the clay page.

Observations and outcomes

- A constant thing – a rectangle 14.5cm by 17cm – is divided repeatedly and with variation.
- When the pages have been completed, they are organised into a composition.
- The pages clearly relate to each other: parameters are fixed and repeated – page size, square size, glaze application, colour – but variations can occur within those parameters.



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Test 21. Composition investigation – *The Library of the Wayfaring Self*

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Date 2021

Summary

- This test follows on from *Tests 20 (i) to (ix)*.
- What compositions can be created from an expanding series of repeat and variation, as documented in *Tests 20 (i) to (ix)*?

Materials

- Clay pages from *Tests 20 (i) to (ix)* – excluding *(iii)*.

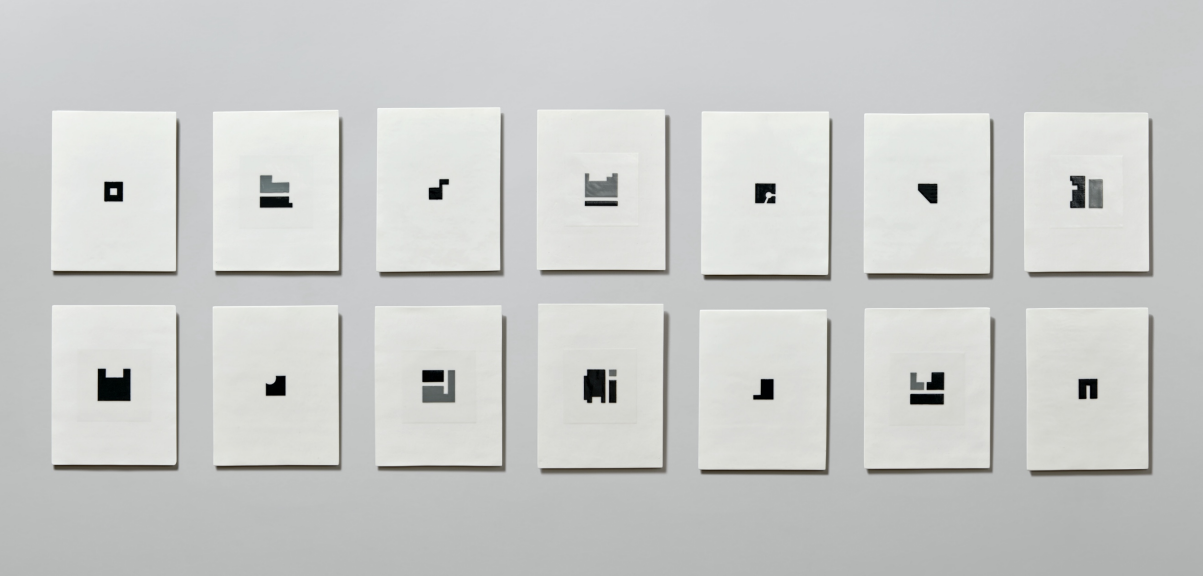
Detail

- Clay pages were brought together in compositions of varying combinations, as shown below.
- They are arranged and rearranged until a satisfactory composition is arrived at.

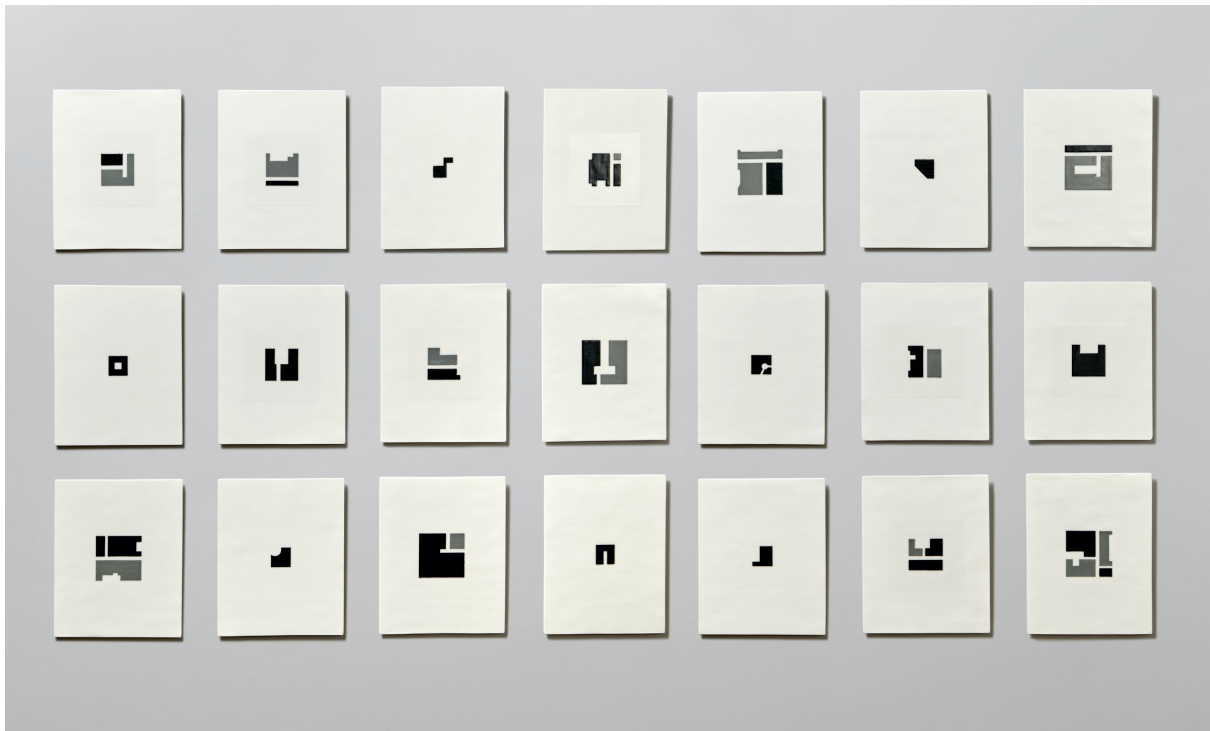
Observations and outcomes

- The clay pages can be used to form many compositions by including or excluding pages.
- Nine possible compositions are shown below.
- The largest composition covers five clay page sequences – (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) – and represents the maximum span of sequences that can satisfactorily be brought together. For example, when (viii) and (ix) are added, they are too far away from (ii) in terms of the evolving sequencing of the squares; they distract rather than juxtapose.
- When the nine possible compositions are added to the nine individual compositions (from the clay page sequences above), Test 20. generates a total of eighteen compositions from an evolving series of forty-eight clay pages.
- The pages in Test 20. can therefore be thought of as a library of pages from which different compositions can be constructed.

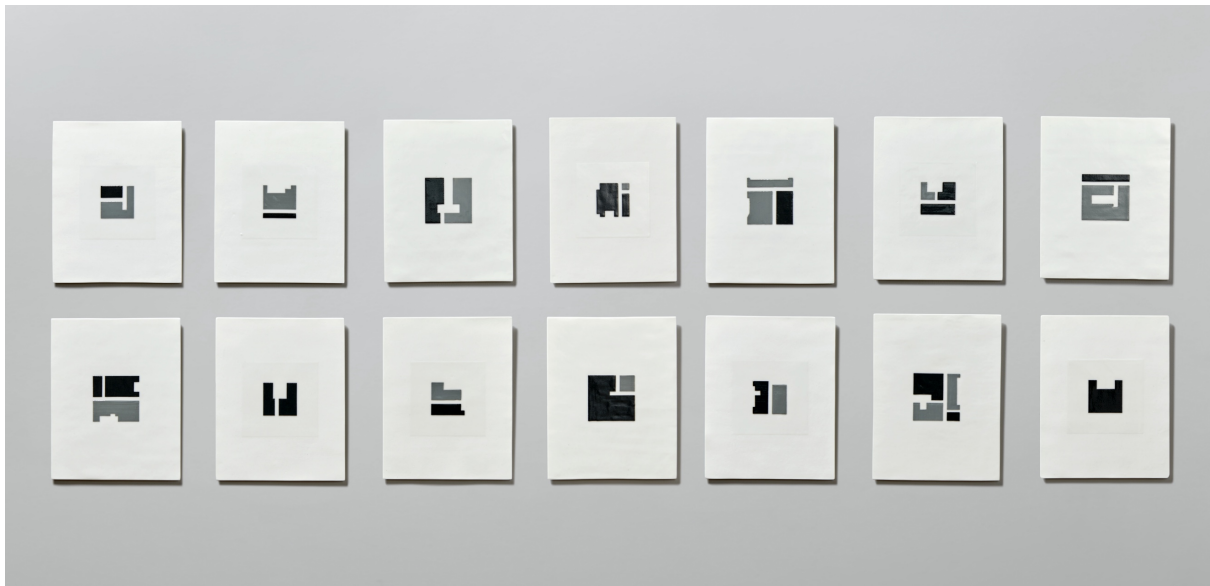
Clay pages from Test 20. (ii) and (iv)



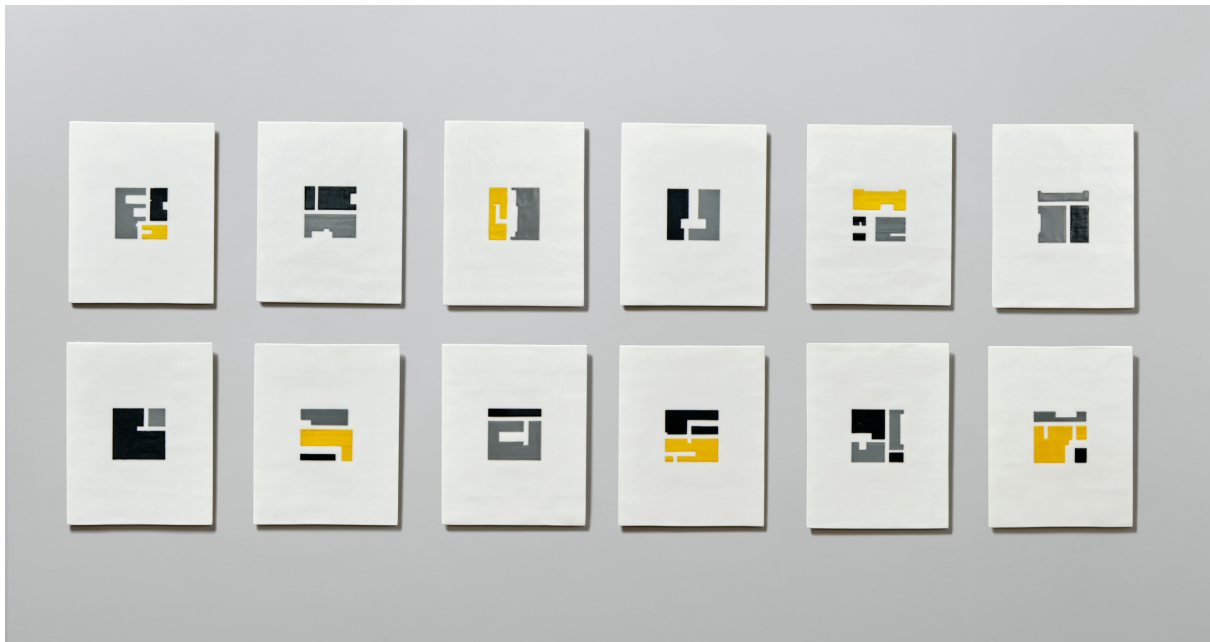
Clay pages from Test 20. (ii), (iv) and (v)



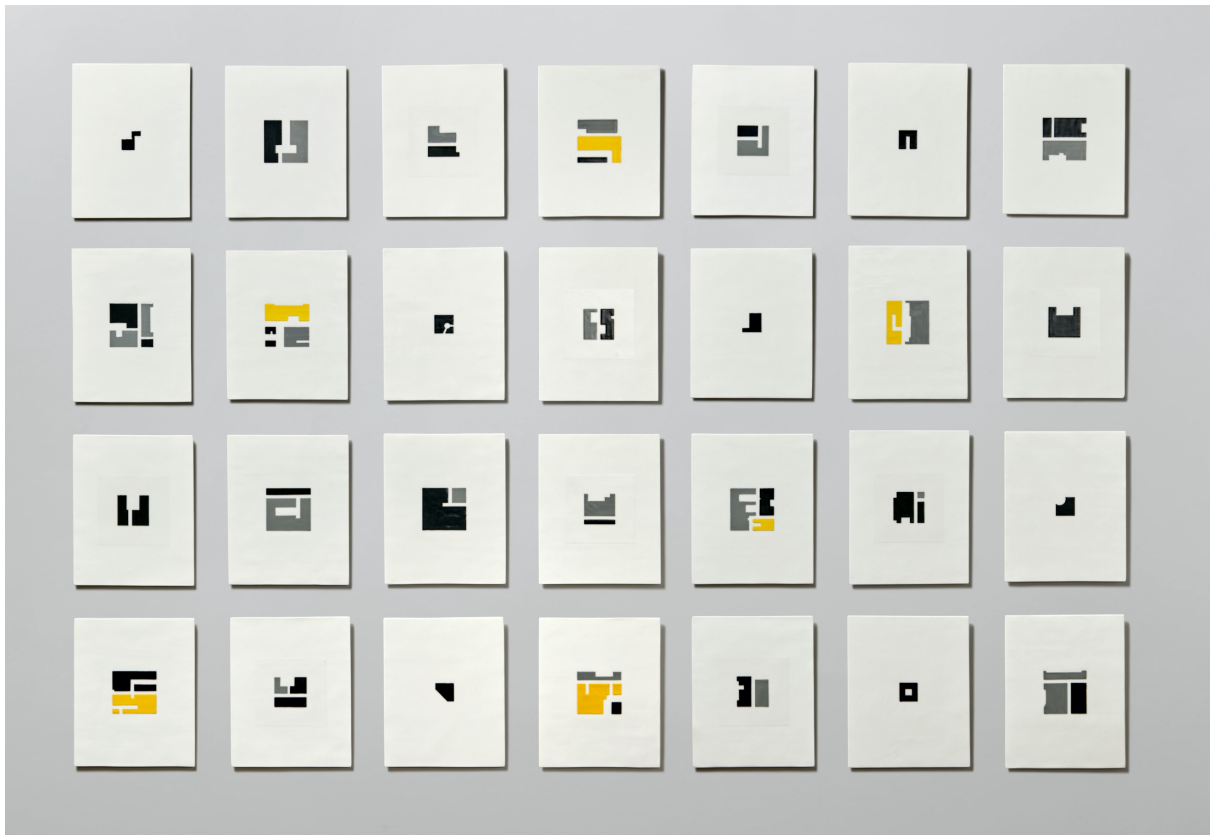
Clay pages from Test 20. (iv) and (v)



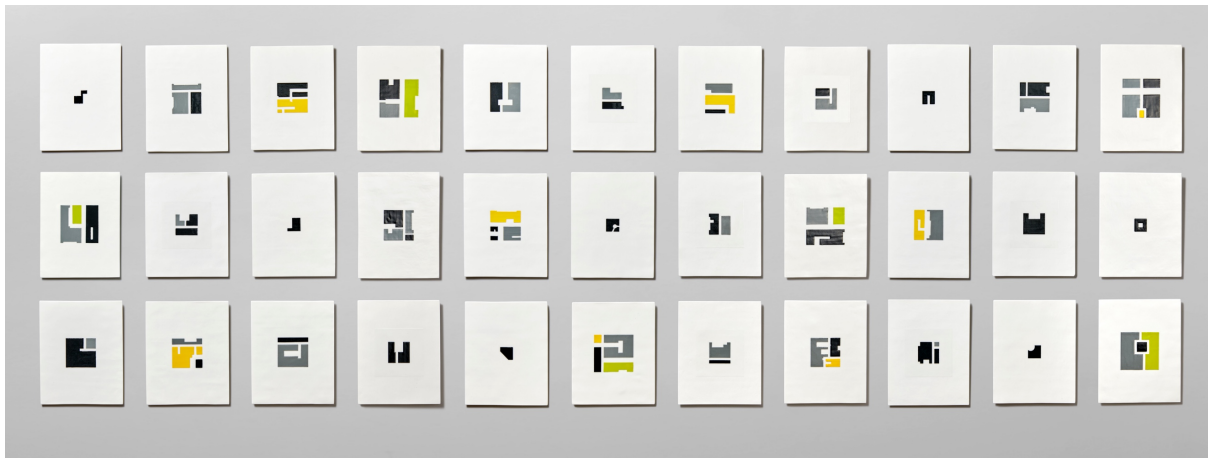
Clay pages from Test 20. (v) and (vi)



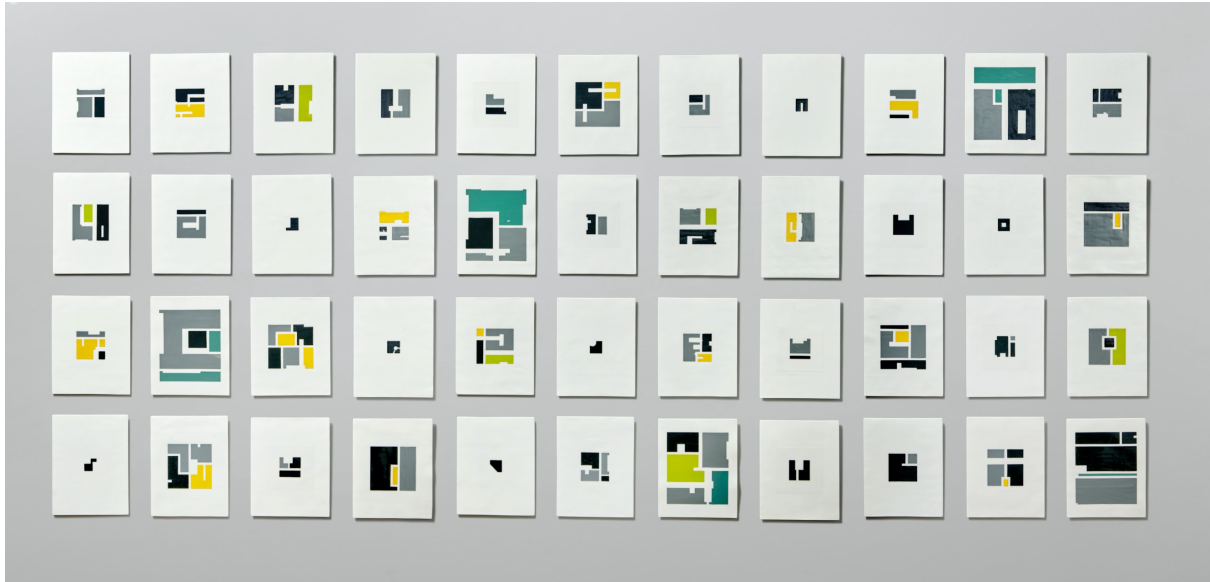
Clay pages from Test 20. (ii), (iv), (v) and (vi)



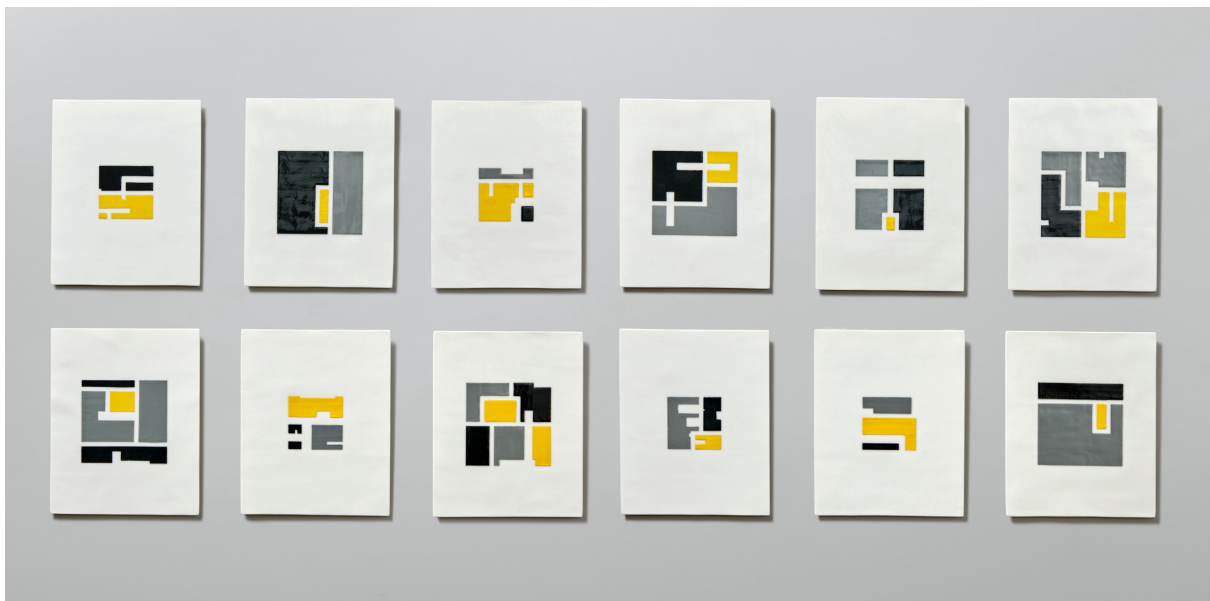
Clay pages from Test 20. (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii)



Clay pages from Test 20. (ii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii) and (ix)



Clay pages from Test 20. (vi) and (viii)



Clay pages from Test 20. (v) and (ix)



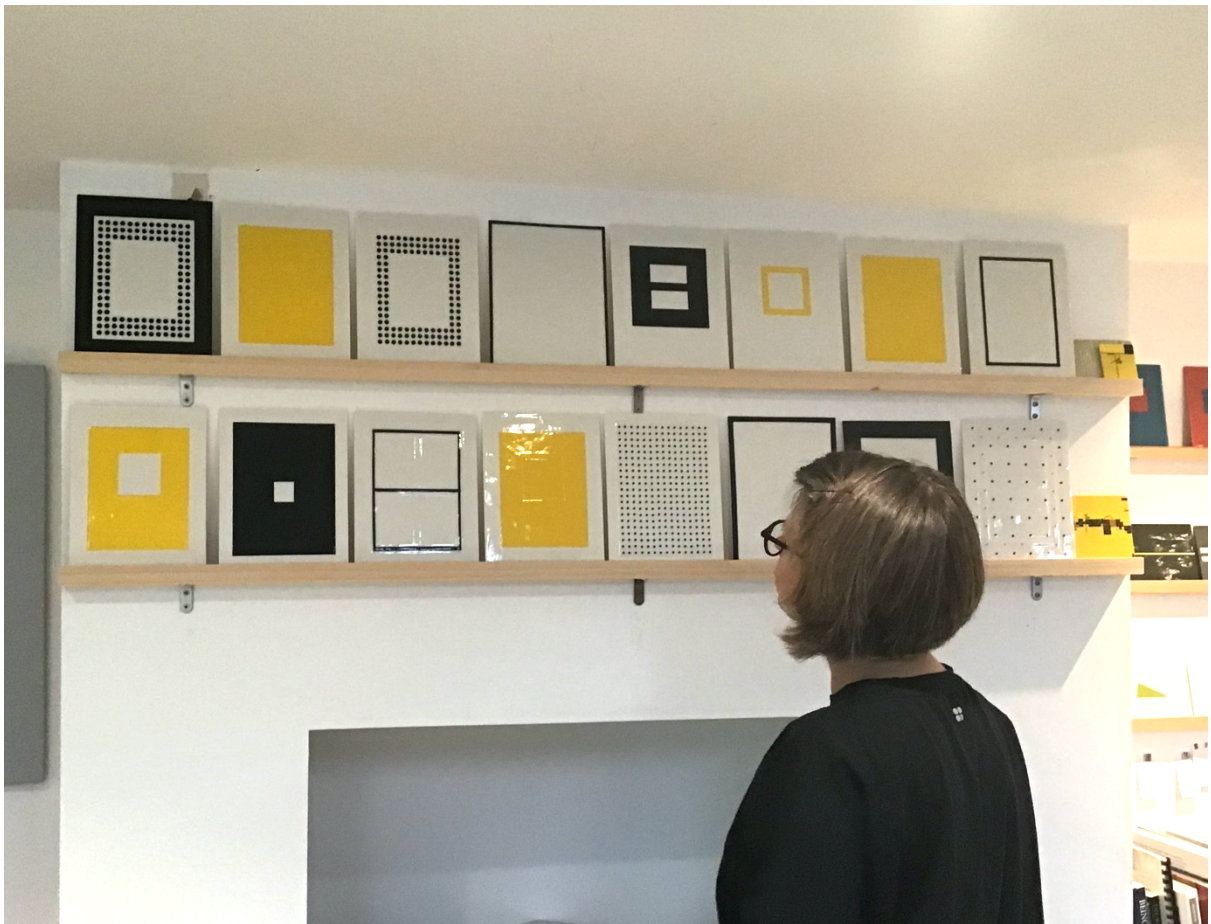
Part C: Studio

The six images which follow show views of the practice-based work in the studio for context and scale (2021).

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The Art of Clay at Yorkshire Museum, York (12 September 2018)

Exhibition guides

Carmen Herrera: Colour Me In. The Perimeter Gallery, London (25 September 2020 – 8 January 2021)

Georgia O’Keeffe at Tate Modern, London (6 July – 30 October 2016)

Exhibitions

At the Edge of Things: Baer, Corse, Martin at Pace Gallery, London (7 June – 14 August 2019)

Andrea Zittel: The Flat Field Works at NewArtCentre, Salisbury (8 July – 17 Sep 2017)

Anna Maria Maiolino: Making Love Revolutionary at The Whitechapel Gallery (25 September 2019 – 12 January 2020)

Anni Albers at Tate Modern, London (11 October 2018 – 21 January 2019)

Antony Gormley at The Royal Academy, London (21 September – 3 December 2019)

Bridget Riley at The Hayward Gallery, London (23 October 2019 – 26 January 2020)

Carmen Herrera: Colour Me In at Perimeter Gallery, London (25 September 2020 – 8 January 2021)

John Carter – On Paper: Surface and Structure at The Redfern Gallery, London (5 June – 6 July 2019)

Lee Krasner: Living Colour at The Barbican, London (30 May – 1 September 2019)

Lucie Rie: Ceramics and Buttons at York Art Gallery, London (22 June 2018 – 3 November 2019)

Olafur Eliasson: in Real Life at Tate Modern, London (11 July 2019 – 5 January 2020)

Pierre Bonnard: The Colour of Memory at Tate Modern, London (23 January – 6 May 2019)

Sam Bakewell: Time for Waste at Corvi-Mora, London (15 February – 23 March 2019)

That Continuous Thing: Artists and the Ceramics Studio: 1920 – Today at Tate St. Ives (31 March – 3 September 2017)

Lectures

Karis Medina, *Anni Albers’s Warp Families* delivered online for the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation (18 September 2020)

Tim Ingold, *Art of Research and Research as Art* delivered online to RCA postgraduate students (8 July 2020)

Symposium

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