

*Quite a few bottles, some large pots and a video
(in that order).*

Something I've learnt, talking to Jake whilst he put his beer together is that yeast is everywhere, all the time - in the air we're breathing now - something I find both fascinating and slightly repulsive. Culture is everywhere and invisible, wild. This wild yeast can be caught, cultivated, processed and each crop of yeast has its own 'character' of microorganisms, meaning that each crop could potentially produce a particular character of ale according to the locality of the harvest, as a province might produce a particular character of wine. Hovea, a suburb in the northeast hills bordering the John Forrest National Park, is responsible for this particular yeast, which Jake harvested from the workspace he shares with Greg Crowe, where the pair build kilns and stoke fires in the hillside. The bottles that hold the ale can also trace their heritage to these hills: the clay was once part of them, somewhere up near Glen Forrest. The ash in the glaze too, was pulled from the firebox of one of the Hovea kilns, although Jake stressed that the hyper locality of his product was a matter of convenience, rather than significance: what is integral, instead, is the process of building each element of the ale, container and contained.

Jake has previously catalogued the numerous ways in which pottery and its historical baggage as both a functional and symbolic object finds itself manifested in popular culture, compiling snatches of clay cameos in cinema and television (*Ghost*, etc.) We have used clay for as long as we have been humans, so its appearances are many and varied: ceramics are there for ceremonies of tea and trade, the silent guest at the dinner table and at the other, more private end of eating, the pride of dynasties or ubiquitous at coffee breaks. Clay is, in many ways, the first 'everyday' material. Whilst this term is usually generically applied to materials outside the spectrum of 'traditional' art-production regardless of their actual presence in the lives of the audience, ceramics are, in some form, likely to appear in anyone's day to day lives, able to mediate between disciplines of art and design or between functionality and aesthetic experience long before such dialogues have been pertinent to contemporary art.

These relationships play a key role in *Hovea Pottery Ale* – whilst the bottles are functional, they also conflate the artist's edition or series, prevalent in the dialogues of Modernism and minimalism, with industrial production and distribution, albeit substituting clean lines and industrial materials with hand-formed irregularity. The bottles exist as a uniform group of individuals. Jake considers the larger pots sculptural, crudely formed 'ideas' or caricatures of pots, although these too provide a service in the gallery space, holding grain or cups or collecting overflow. Use and 'experience' in the aesthetic sense are deliberately confused, as is the production and consumption of artwork and ale.

Something else I've learnt, watching Jake brew his beer over the 5 or so months it has taken him to perfect its dark, fruity flavour is patience. The ale took a few goes to perfect, or even to become drinkable, however the slow process of making plus time plus risk is familiar to a ceramicist, if not to someone used to the speedy sale and consumption of shop bought liquor. Working with clay and its bone, glass and chemical powders, its de-flocculants and firing schedules is as elemental as cooking, or brewing. The raw matter and mathematics of each processes must be known inside out; the maker must trust that the time spent in the fire will produce results, must be content with an extended process of experimentation, must be willing to wait to see what happens and to occasionally be content with failure. In each case – clay and beer – the processes of making and the particular characteristics of the raw materials used are implicit and integral in the experience of the final product. At the core of each process is the manipulation of raw matter according to and sometimes disregarding rules laid down over centuries. *This is how we do it*, and this is how it has been done forever.

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