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Romance in Clay  
Performance on the border

MA Thesis Project

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May 2021

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## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, praise and thanks to my supervisors Ingrid Allik and Evelin Saul for their advice, patience and trust. My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the generous support and sharing. They always understood my difficulties and were always able to expand the conversation and provide crucial information along with exemplary artworks, and continuously injected doses of encouragement. Moreover, I wish to tremendously thank my advisor Gregor Taul for professional academic support and help in building a clear structural ground for investigation. He has taught me the methodology to carry out the research.

I cannot express enough thanks to two ceramicists, Annie Wan Lai Kuen and Laura Põld, for valuable conversations and sharings on the topic which is indispensable for the research. I would like to thank the Estonian Academy of Arts, especially the Ceramics department, which provided me with resources, knowledge, space and materials which have been super helpful in the process. I wish to thank Sandor Sinimeri, the woodmaster of Merimeister OÜ, who helped me construct the wheel-on-the-boat and assisted me with my wheel design for the project. Furthermore, I want to thank Peter Kollanyi and Reino Kuber for the video documentation and technical aids. My special thanks goes to Narva Art Residency director, Ann Mirjam Vaikla and House Administrator, Maria Zeleznova who helped me with the execution of the project. Moreover, I want to express my deep and sincere gratitude to the Deep sea captain from Narva Young Marine Club, Vadim Trenin, for the generous help with boat rental and manpower.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my beloved sole-mate Reds Cheung King Wai for endless support and inspiration, who helped me with a lot of the execution and preparation for the whole project, thus making it possible to conduct this research. Finally, I am incredibly grateful to my dear friends, Yufang Wu, Rita Rebane Lonks, for their countless support and love.

## Introduction

Romance in Clay is a practice-based research thesis statement accompanying an independent creative project in the Narva border area that explores the performative elements in clay in a site-specific area.

The following statement introduces a variety of authors and thoughts around cross-discipline approaches in clay related performances and looks into the cultural connotation of oriental ceramic art. Through selected cases from contemporary ceramic art practice, which include elements of performance art in them, it aims to study works by different authors and explore how they re-examine ceramic art in a broader field. For example, London-based visual artist and researcher Clare Twomey's intent to use unfired clay is a crucial part of her concept. Added are in-depth interviews with Hong Kong ceramic artist Annie Wan Lai Kuen and Estonian ceramicist Laura Põld on the thesis theme about performative elements in clay, itself, and some of their cross-discipline approaches in ceramics, relating to site-specific performance.

Apart from the interviews and ceramics works cases, this article is partially supported by the Material Engagement Theory<sup>1</sup> (Lambros Malafouris 2004, 2013) which suggests a way of looking at, and sets out a possible pathway, to approach this in-between space where the brain, body and culture conflate – connecting with the other important aspect of this research, the relationship between creators and materials. I examined the theories mentioned in the text and utilized them to build up my practice-led research. Besides other writings that find a place within it, the more referred ones include Performative Raw Clay Practices and Ceramic Firing Techniques (Agustina Andreoletti, 2019), Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture, (Christine Brown; Julian Stair, Clare Twomey, 2016) and Contemporary British ceramics and the influence of sculpture : monuments, multiples, destruction and display (Laura Gray. 2018).

This master thesis culminates with a documenting video-installation work depicting the site-specific performance at Narva. Other essential content of the paper includes records of the project together with analytical reflections. It carries out the pottery making process – wheel-throwing as a field-specific performance art practice and records the practice's process and results. Time and space elements are under re-interpretation in contemporary ceramics art and are adapted to this practice-based research. The project sets Narva, a city at the Estonian-Russian border as the performance location. It is followed by an analysis of my creative practice, considering how the content of immigration, rootlessness, border and geopolitical aspects are presented in this experimental art project.

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<sup>1</sup> Lambros Malafouris (2004, 2013), How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement

My practical part of the thesis aims to create an artwork in public space to explore performative elements in the ceramics making process. This project attempts to overcome mental agitation and physical uncertainty, to express a sort of confrontation and to find a state of balance and coordination. Attention is paid to the “centering”<sup>2</sup> which is a process of finding a balance point in wheel-throwing, but form and rationality are not regarded with similar focus. It creates a strong contrast to the stable work environment in the studio. By interpreting this unique experience, wheel-throwing is used to point out the meaning of the creative process, which is likened to an unstable environment and mental state.

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<sup>2</sup> A lump of clay must be placed correctly in the center of the wheel and forced by hand into a symmetrical form.

## Chapter 1 – Thoughts on the creative forms of ceramic art

How do we define contemporary ceramic art? What are the differences between the traditional ceramic art exhibition and the ephemeral installation of clay? Author, designer and copywriter from London, Charlotte Vannier (*Contemporary ceramics art*, 2020) mentioned that “ceramics is no longer considered merely decorative, ceramic art has broken free from the dusty display cases to which it was once neglected and is now taking centre stage in contemporary galleries.” The California Clay Movement (or American Clay Revolution)<sup>3</sup> was a school of ceramic art that emerged in California in the 1950s. The movement was part of the larger transition in crafts from "designer-craftsman" to "artist-craftsman". Some decades later, artists are still finding more questions about ceramics art. We now live in an era of information explosion and the digital revolution that changed a lot of things in the world. Artists are continuously trying out different methods in clay, being affected by the huge quantity of cultural exchanges through the internet.

"Ceramics has been reborn in recent years, placed firmly in an art context." mentioned in a book - *Vitamin C: Clay and Ceramic in Contemporary Art* review by London-based writer, curator and editor Francesca Gavin, (Artsy, 2019). "Ceramic art has finally come out of the closet, kicking and disentangling itself from domestic servitude and minor-arts status – perhaps for good." said by New York based art critic and independent curator Lilly Wei (ArtNews, 2019). Even though the history of clay and ceramics is very long, more meaning can be created with it. Clay and ceramics have been studied and examined so far mostly from traditional aspects, functional pottery, ceramic design, technology, more recently also installations and performances. I intend to focus on the performative nuances, as there are more unexplored areas.

I try to perceive performative clay works from the state of contemporary ceramics art. "Time" and "space" are integral elements to examining contemporary ceramics. If the clay is not being fired, the form will change according to the time and depending on the surroundings. Making clay work can be looked at as a mysterious process where there are some aspects we can control, and at the same time, something out of control. In this sense, clay may be regarded as non-perpetual, short-lived, temporary, ephemeral and experimental. Clay will be stabilized after being fired through the kiln – anything out of expectation will be considered as an accident or failure. Whether creating installations, performances, sculptures or imaginary abstract forms, ceramicists nowadays subtly blur the border between art and craft, by stretching the boundaries of the raw clay, playing with different conceptual ideas and the use of new platforms. The material does not necessarily need to be durable to keep the artistic value. When something is going to pass off, be diminished and vanished, the presence of beauty is even more unique and treasurable at that moment.

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<sup>3</sup>Art: The Clay Movement ; Time, August 23, 1963. Retrieved 2012-08-07

I am looking to use clay as a material that can be transformed into different representations, no matter if they are temporary sculptures or non-perpetual art installations. In order to investigate the material and performative approaches within ceramics art, I've looked into several artworks that involve clay as a material in performances. In my perspective, there are two crucial elements in performance art – site and sense of ritual. All the elements, conditions and unexpected changes should be taken into account as part of the work.

## 1.1 Practice approach in oriental ceramics art

I am a ceramicist who was born and also received art education in Hong Kong. Since I was young, I longed to study in Europe. Now I am studying in Estonia, continuing to develop my ceramic art practice and related knowledge. In my art study background, apart from being influenced by Western art history, I was also influenced by Eastern aesthetics related to Zen Buddhism. The aesthetics of oriental ceramics art, for example, emphasizes the effect of introspective cultivation in the artist, through his artistic creation. Even my early works tended to be repressive, focused more on exploring the form and mastering of the craftsmanship. Hong Kong ceramicists who studied in my generation group, mainly focused on the ideal form of the works, meanwhile acquiring skill-based approaches within different art institutes. Hong Kong ceramicists think very little of how to engrain conceptual ideas into the representation of artworks. Most of them follow the path and consider themselves to practice as a crafts master.

When I was studying visual arts in the university, I was inspired by Annie Wan Lai Kuen, my professor, and embarked on her oeuvres that showed possibilities in ceramic art, mixed with different mediums and concepts. In a certain sense, Annie's practices expanded my horizon in ceramic art. Since then, I think ceramic art's value can be more thoroughly embodied and re-interpreted by examining ceramic art through a cross-disciplinary approach. In oriental clay artists' approaches, more attention is paid to the spiritual part, in order not to disclose too much of the emotion. I believe it is about the justification of being restrained. I have always used ceramic art as the primary medium in my creations. When practicing and studying ceramic art in the East, I found some oriental traditional characteristics and their limitations. In the field of contemporary art development, the general pursuit of Hong Kong ceramicists focuses on the final state of ceramic artworks, and most of them do not regard the process important in the final presentation of the work, and there are very few ceramic artists who talk about performance art.

Ceramicists in Eastern countries tend to use ceramics as the objects for spiritual or religious usage. When comparing Eastern ceramic artists with Western ones, I think the latter think more about the installation and presentation of the entire work and the relationship with the setting of the overall space or environment. In my opinion, it is more common there to witness the use of performance or cross-media art. Ceramic art contains superstitious and mystical meaning. In my art appreciation experience, Eastern aesthetics is mostly related to Zen Buddhism. It accentuates the value of introspective reflection of the artist through artistic creation, which deemphasizes the actual physical manifestation of the work. For example, some countries like China and Japan have spent almost thousands of years enlightening the value of tea wares for tea ceremonies. Chinese traditional tea culture is mainly about Confucian culture<sup>4</sup>, but art and literature were

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<sup>4</sup> Confucianism, also known as Ruism, is a system of thought and behavior originating in ancient China. Various described as tradition, a philosophy, a religion, a humanistic or rationalistic religion, a way of governing

also influenced by it. It contains a lot of moral standards and limitations due to etiquette *Lai* (Cantonese: 禮 *lai5*). Negation and criticism are forbidden in most of the situations. All of those behavioural restraints under hierarchy limit critical thinking. Yet, critical thinking leads to a lot of investigation and exploration, also on the form of art. In terms of extending the meaning of traditional pottery, ceramicists have made more attempts and experiments nowadays.

Most of the 16th century oriental pottery works emphasize the Zen-style and ritual training process but generally do not choose explicit methods. Even though different approaches can also be seen in Asian countries in recent years, they are still not the mainstream. The viewpoints of creative behavior tend to be closed to practice rather than discussed together. Craftsmen spend tremendous time in the studio and sculpting works. I try to use behavior as an artistic point of view, thinking about presenting this worthy behavior in my work. Creative behavior<sup>5</sup> is used as a practice and has the potential to be applied to the expression of performance art. Most of the East's ceramic art creations emphasize introspection rather than nonverbal improvisation. Artists engaged in pottery creation often define themselves as craftsmen. Potters who have been involved in pottery creation for many years, emphasize the silence and loneliness as elements accompanying the process. By limitation from the cultural context, artists utilize freedom in the frame of Confucianism. When they cannot be critical about many social aspects, the content of the artwork tends to be narrowed.

The essence of Eastern pottery lies in the spiritual level. It pays attention to the charm of the pottery, where the clay being used is produced by the rivers and mountains, instead of focusing on scientific and chemical analysis. The way of presenting works also tends to be humble and frugal, rather than magnificent and explicit. The philosophical view involved in the Japanese ceramic art culture, there is also an appreciation of the process of making pottery and its imperfections. For example, the word fingerprint (Japanese: 指の跡<sup>6</sup>) shows their aesthetic view, and the fingermarks on the finished product will not be regarded as flaws. Instead, it reveals the potter's image, who directly dipped the pot into the glaze with his hands, while also appreciating the beauty of wabi-sabi.<sup>7</sup>

To look at performance art's materiality as practice-based art research, I start by analyzing the orientation of my past creative works. The creative orientation before coming to Estonia was the pursuit of the final form of the work. Later, I gradually thought about how to bring the process of making pottery to the outdoors to bring it closer to the people and the land.

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<sup>5</sup> Cawelti, S., Rappaport, A., & Wood, B. (1992). Modeling artistic creativity: An empirical study. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 26, 83–94

<sup>6</sup> 指の跡 means the fingerprint left during glazing when the potter dip to the jar by hand. <http://www.studioss.com/utsuwa/otona.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Wabi-sabi is a beauty of imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. The Japanese aesthetic about the extinction of beauty.

## 1.2 Pinpoint the approach of ceramics art with performance

How do the performative elements in contemporary ceramic art change the insights into ceramic art? Analysing inspirational, controversial and enchanting artworks, I found it is a high time for an appealing overview of a blooming field of clay performative works. I would like to list out and talk about several cases, then interpret their intention and direction of clay art creation.

An independent researcher, writer and curator Laura Gray stated in her Phd paper, “At a time when the boundaries of contemporary ceramics practice are often stretched, it is worth considering. Despite widening the boundaries that encompass significant diversity including for example performance and film alongside clay, for many ceramists, the history and associations of their material remains an important intellectual framework.” (Contemporary British Ceramics and the Influence of Sculpture, 2018, Chapter 1, P14)

Since there are not many examples with clay related performances being documented, I chose to focus on selected work examples from after the 2000s. “Only in 2004 was playful performative clay work recuperated, in the important Tate Liverpool exhibition *A Secret History of Clay*. Perhaps this is unsurprising. Performance pieces are not collectable, same as film or photography; and studio ceramics have remained particularly firmly rooted in the material realm.” (Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture, 2016, P.45) There is a new area of practice forming a new angle. In the enlarging field of contemporary ceramics practice, representation in museums and art galleries becomes progressively significant in encouraging and reassuring new areas of clay practice. The documentation of the performance or short-time installation will be shown as film or videos for future access from the museums’ point of view.

“Perceptions of the discipline are shaped by temporary exhibitions, which are less constrained by the practicalities of taking an object into a ‘permanent’ collection. Temporary projects such as the Victoria & Albert Museum’s event *Clay Rocks* (2006) and the exhibition *Possibilities and Losses* (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, 2009) have provided a platform for an area of contemporary ceramics practice that is characterized by physical and conceptual ambition, dynamism and ephemerality.....Each performance or event was sited in a prominent part of the building: Twomey’s *Trophy* in the Cast Courts, Harrison’s *Last Supper* in the Raphael Cartoon Court, and his *Orbital* bridged the John Madejski Garden and the adjacent gallery space at the center of the museum.” (Contemporary British Ceramics and the Influence of Sculpture, Laura Gray, 2018, Chapter 2, P15) These ephemeral exhibitions inspire me a lot, a certain moment of the performance somehow contains great value for the concept behind the artworks. Thus, I intend to create one-time practice in a particular place as an attempt to question the boundaries of ceramics art.

“In the context of fine art there has long been an anti-studio tendency. From the late 1960s onwards it could be identified as what the art critic Lucy Lippard (1973, p.5) described as ‘a “dematerialisation” of the art object’. Lippard identified a reaction against “uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness”. By deconstructing the clay as a material in my artwork, I start to examine the original meaning of it, where does it come from? Does it carry a lot of value belonging to the land? How can I treat the local clay as a medium in my art practice? I finally put the clay back to the river bed, let it diminish and merge to the ground. The whole practice was caused by an anti-studio tendency.

Comparable ceramics activity in this area has been neatly chronicled in Edmund de Waal’s 20th Century Ceramics in a section entitled ‘A Field of Possibilities: Politics, performance and environment’ (2003, pp. 175-183) .....But we can group these counter-intuitive activities under two overlapping headings - the performance and the installation.” (Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture, edited by Christie Brown, Julian Stair, Clare Twomey, 2016)

Raw clay practices play a crucial role in contemporary ceramic art, since the material can be characterised as time-based, performative, relational and responsive. When we compare raw clay to other mediums, clay is comparatively sensitive and responsive to the maker, especially the body temperature, environment's humidity and the subjects' pressure. Ceramicists grasp this potential character and imply the conceptual thoughts of art creation.

### 1.2.1 Case studies from selected artworks

The case findings in this thesis are not aimed to persuade the utilization of raw clay as a medium. However, we can interpret the ceramicists' motivation and possibilities of using cross-media discipline, and multiplying the ways of representation, to somehow go beyond the objects' functionality, to alternate toward obfuscation and amalgamation. "Ceramics has always incorporated performance. The transition from clay to ceramic at the moment of firing allows freedom from any certainty about how the work would emerge. This process of change has the potential to be opened and shared. Rituals that address the uncertain alchemy of firing, have been enacted since ancient times, and the transformation from raw clay to cooked ceramic still excites a sense of wonder, in practitioners and audiences alike."<sup>8</sup> (Agustina Andreoletti, 2019) By studying the cases in the ceramics field, we can generate a more comprehensive understanding of the ceramicists' approaches from all over the world.

London-based visual artist and researcher Clare Twomey's intent to use unfired clay is a crucial part of her concept. Her work field includes performance, serial production, and site-specific installation. Applying clay in different physical states and transformation processes is an integral part of her performance art practices. In *Consciousness;Conscience* the fragile state of clay is being used. Audiences are guided to participate in the process along with the change of the materials' physical state.

All of the selected cases become a trigger point for my reflection on the conceptual practices. Although their works convey different content, they point to a similar perspective, which is to disclose the moment where the material changes and deal with correlative topics - deconstruction and construction, to test the boundaries of ceramic art.

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<sup>8</sup> Performative Raw Clay Practices and Ceramic Firing Techniques Agustina Andreoletti, Academy of Media Arts Cologne, 2019

i) Clare Twomey, *Consciousness; Conscience*, 2001-2004 ; *Piece by Piece*, 2015

*Consciousness; Conscience* is a ceramic installation that comprises several thousand hollow unfired Bone china tiles laid out on the floor of the gallery space.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 1. Clare Twomey, *Consciousness; Conscience*, 2001-2004

Related Genre: Participatory Art ; Installation

Materials: Raw Porcelain

Clay making process: Moulding

Keywords: Performative; Time specific; Site Specific

I selected Clare Twomey as one of the case studies because while creating her pottery works, she also takes time and the field itself into consideration. When conceiving the work, she also considers the space for audience participation as she invites the visitors to appreciate the subtle evolution of the clay material. She does not intend to focus on the endurance and eternity of the final pieces. Thousands of hollow unfired clay tiles provide a unique tactile sensation for the audiences. Visitors are unexpectedly sagging and sinking into the ground. The deconstruction of the porcelain triggers the complex feeling of destroying pieces of precious artworks, meanwhile creating a scene of the beauty of the flaw. Man-made duplicated tiles endure the meaning of mass production. And the whiteness of non-decorative porcelain takes out all the distracted details of tiles, giving a very pure association to square tiles, creating a sense of silence and calmness.

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<sup>9</sup>[http://www.claretwomey.com/projects\\_-\\_consciousnessconscience.html](http://www.claretwomey.com/projects_-_consciousnessconscience.html)

ii) Amy Lee Sanford, Full Circle, 2012

Performance artist Amy Lee Sanford breaks and then reassembles 40 Kompong Chhnang clay pots, is at once a reflection of her endeavor to return to her family's past and reassemble the pieces of individuals' memories and an artistic endeavor in itself.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 2.<sup>11</sup> Amy Lee, *Full Circle*, Courtesy of the artist

Related Genre: Performance ; Installation

Materials: Bisque-fired Red Clay

Clay making process: Repairing

Keywords: Performative; Time specific

I selected her work because of her attempt on the process of repairing. She tries to explore the intersection of introspective feeling and the meditation process. The action of breaking and fixing are in big contradiction which is making the audience curious. She exposes the process of repairing as a performance, meanwhile prolonging the time of the feeling and healing.

<sup>10</sup> <https://hannahsender.wordpress.com/category/art/performance-art/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://amyleesanford.com/full-circle-2/>

iii) Alexandra Engelfriet, *Tranchée*, 2013

The film follows the process of the making of “Tranchée”, a monumental sculpture, now part of Le Vent des Forêts. During a physical performance lasting for 4 days she shaped the clay. The film concentrates on the performative process of the making and shows the final result. For images of the construction of the kiln and the firing see under projects: *Tranchée*, 2013, the making.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 3. Alexandra Engelfriet, *Tranchée*, 2013 Still image from the Artist Video

Related Genre: Participatory Art: Performance

Materials: Raw White Clay

Clay making process: Sculpting with body

Keywords: Performative; Time specific; Site Specific

I intend to research some documentation about clay performance. This is the one who stimulates my thoughts on the way of filming and recording a performance which will only be done at once. Moreover, it is a significant site-specific example to show the process of making sculpture. The site matters and so the performer chose that particular area.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.alexandra-engelfriet.nl/projects.php?Album=Tranch%C3%A9e&PhotoSetId=72157635200267134>

### 1.2.2 Gain from Artist interviews

Added are overviews of interviews done with Hong Kong ceramic artist Annie Wan Lai Kuen and Estonian ceramicist Laura Põld about performative elements in clay and about some of their cross-discipline approaches in ceramics, relating to site-specific performance. The whole in-depth interview transcripts are attached in the appendix, more details can be found in it.

I am more familiar with Hong Kong ceramic arts. In this thesis, I explored more examples of clay works that involve performative elements in them. I chose Annie Wan Lai Kuen - my university tutor, for the interview since she influenced me profoundly. At the same time, she is also a significantly developed ceramicist in the field of contemporary Hong Kong ceramics. Although she started out mainly exclusively using the medium of ceramics, she has also experimented with many different aspects along her way. Listening to her thoughts led me to understand more about the openness that needs to be preserved when performing. In addition to her skills and familiarity with the characteristics of clay, she also knows how to adjust the degree of retraction and integrate keen perception in different fields. That generous dialogue inspires me a lot on the practical part.

Annie Wan talks about how she perceives clay as a material, how it responds to her. She was being affected a lot in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, experiencing the transition from an old teaching system with a traditional aesthetic to a more critical thinking from the western art history theories course. She was triggered by teacher's feedback in the very beginning artist stage while studying. She started to think about the communication between art and audiences, not only on the pure subjective experience. She identifies clay as a time-based medium, and mentions the performative characters in itself, mainly related to the material transformation. Not having enough time to process the firing surprisingly triggered her intention to deepen and intensify the potential of raw clay's self-changing features. She recognizes that she has learnt more about the extraordinary elements in clay from different performance experiences.

She said that launching a performance needs huge man-power, the collaboration and cooperation can only be done through group work. An artist can be an expert in every field, this kind of art show allows the artist-group to work as a unit. The performance can provide a different sensory journey for participants. At a certain period of time, Hongkonger carries a lot of emotions and struggles within. The project also shows the situation of Hong Kong recently, where many citizens are thinking about leaving Hong Kong, going into exile.

Reviewing back to 2018 Contemporary Clay Seminars, Annie Wan Lai Kuen points out the sequence of the entire creative process. She talks about her views on deskilling. She feels that many works in contemporary pottery art are not the pursuit of superb and complex skills and decoration, but some simple creation methods. However, the focus lies in fully grasping each stage of pottery – clays' characteristics, understanding and predicting the changes of clay in different environments, which is another ingenious fusion. If there is no skill requirement, it does not make sense. When the concept is generated, the crucial part is how to extract the aesthetic aspect and consider the displays. The audience and the natural environment become part of the work.

Annie Wan Lai Kuen is very sensitive to the things, objects and people around her. Another work, "I think it rains", involves weather, air and sunlight. Is the work diminished or completed when the audience will never see the art piece again? The clay used is not fired at high temperatures, which means that it is fragile, and it will fall apart if it rains. The clay tiles are made from different kinds of clay, creating a strange juxtaposition of the site. She utilized the timeliness and waited for the rain to come, and while making it, she imagined the clay to disperse and disappear.

Unexpectedly, the rain comes coincidentally precisely at the opening time. During the exhibition opening ceremony, the works were washed away at once and dissipated faster than expected, the kind of dissipation that everyone regrets. 'Uncertainty' and 'expected not as expected' have become valuable and interesting aspects in contemporary art.

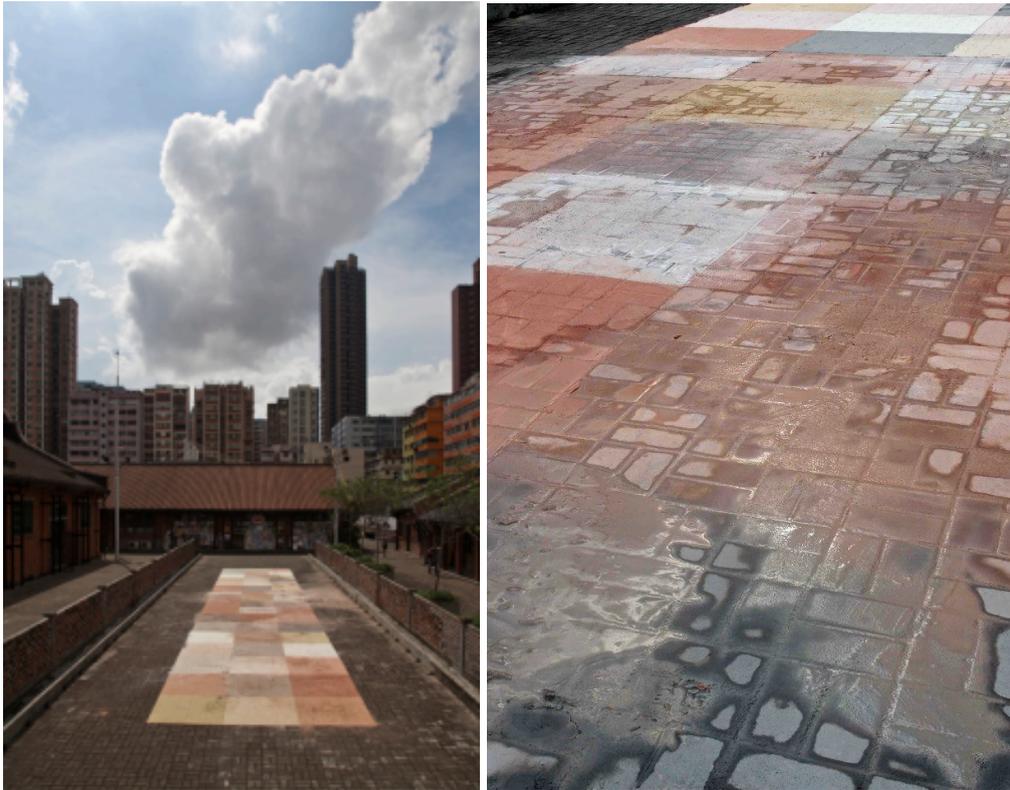


Figure 4 & 5. . Annie Wan Lai Kuen, If it rains, 2013<sup>13</sup>

Related Genre: Installation

Materials: Mixed of Raw Red and Yellow Clay

Clay making process: Slip Painting

Keywords: Performative: Time specific; Site Specific

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.china-art-management.com/exhibition-of-the-burger-collection-in-hong-kong-i-think-it-rains/>

Annie Wan took the exact 18 x 10 feet dimensions of the vanished double-storey houses and made very thin tiles, installed at Cattle Depot Artist Village with plants growing in the middle. When it rains, the clay will diminish, it depends on the weather which is uncertain.



Figure. 6, 7 Annie Wan, Please walk slowly and water the plants, 2013



Figure. 8 Annie Wan, Please walk slowly and water the plants, 2013

Related Genre: Participatory Art; Installation

Materials: High-fired Porcelain

Clay making process: Moulding

Keywords: Performative: Time specific; Site Specific

A pot of flowers and a bottle are placed in the center. It seems to invite audiences to go forward. While pouring the plants, they are stepping on the tiles, the whole picture is full of poetry fragments. In the beginning, no one dared to step on it. Other people then slowly joined in. Annie said, "While destroying, at the same time, we are building something." The whole picture becomes very poetic, it is full of fragmented pieces. When someone started to do something, it might have seemed like destruction, but at the same time, it also formed a beautiful picture.

Second interviewee Laura Põld is an Estonian artist who uses different mediums for her creation. When installation art becomes her art language, I am also curious about how she, who has studied oil painting, art and pottery, grasps the focus within her creation. She is interested in the subject of locality and people from different cultural backgrounds. Whenever she participates in an artist residency project, she investigates the possibilities of doing relational art.

Laura firstly replied to the questions from the personal studied background, reflecting how the experience of studying ceramics at the Estonian Academy of Arts, painting at the University of Tartu and sculptural conceptions and ceramics at the University of Art and Design Linz<sup>14</sup> influenced her, saying that it's given her a lot of freedom. Cross-discipline curricula allow her to acquire many different skills in the beginning stages of studying arts, while her family background in textiles and personal memories from it enhanced her interests in trying mixed media and cross-discipline approaches.

Because of the experiences in distinct residency programmes, she has had a lot of communication with artists from different countries and backgrounds. Due to the limitation of verbal languages, she started to use bodily expressions and trials in her works, sometimes with collaborations. Laura also shared part of the thought process why she started to use unfired clay. She regards herself as an experimental ceramicist but not a commercial artist, so that she can think out of the box while making some ephemeral clay works. She is very sensitive and sentimental, always involving poetic language in the collaboration with her artist friend - Johna Hansen.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 9. Shedding Skin, 2020

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Põld studied ceramics at the Estonian Academy of Arts, painting at the University of Tartu and sculptural conceptions and ceramics at the University of Art and Design Linz

<sup>15</sup> Johna Hansen b. 1982 in Linköping, SE, based in Copenhagen, DK. She works site-specific with installation, sculpture and performances, around concepts of functionality, form, matter and interactivity.

She points out the intrinsic value of clay. “Clay is a natural material that everybody knows of. It carries the intimacy of touching. When artists perform in the present, it is always easy to open a dialogue between the audience and the artist.”



Figure 10. Guest, CC. art space Isfahan, Iran April 28 – April 30, 2017<sup>16</sup>

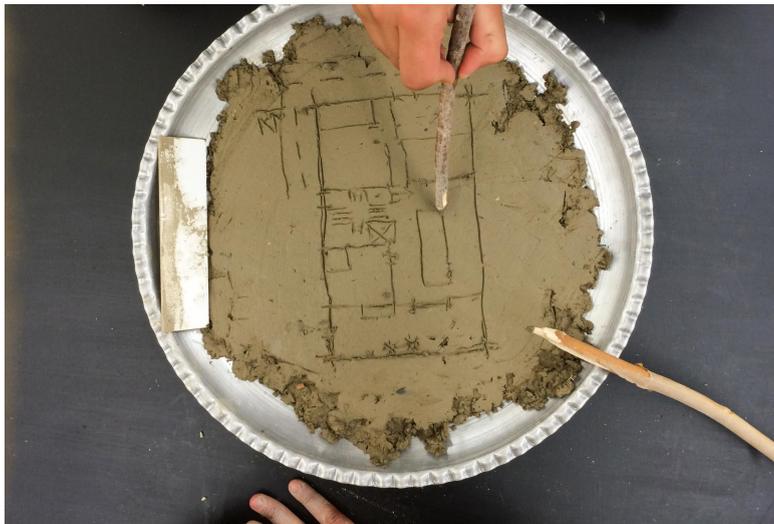


Figure 11. Guest, CC. art space Isfahan, Iran April 28 – April 30, 2017

After the relational art performances, there are some new perspectives or thoughts that were generated for Laura. Participants in Tallinn and Japan were totally different. Considering the cultural background of audiences and visitors is also important, but it is still unavoidable somehow to face some unknown happenings during the process. The experiences in residencies also give a chance for artists to see something

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<sup>16</sup> <https://laurapold.com/works/guest/>

they are not really familiar with. Laura shared stories about the swallows she saw in Kunda<sup>17</sup> who were building their nests under the roof. Observing the process of building some objects by non-humans attracts her a lot. She equally always takes materiality into account. She mentions that she really has respect for all these raw materials and that it is very important to watch what the birds are doing now. Our conversation where I learnt about her thoughts and experiences in performing arts, made me rethink about the relationship between ceramics and performance.

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<sup>17</sup> Kunda Cement Museum / Kunda Tsemendimuseum in Estonian

## Chapter 2 – Background about the practical work

### 2.1 Cultural context

Hong Kong is a city fabricated with different immigrant groups, including Chinese immigrants like my parents. Their immigration background has shaped my identity of being a Hongkonger. Living there, I have witnessed waves of immigration caused by different political factors. In 2019, Hong Kong experienced a mass protest, the freedom of speech was drastically shrunk, triggering its people to emigrate again. As such, immigration, rootlessness and national borders become the themes of this thesis and are reflected in the creative practice.

In the past few years, I have strongly identified myself as a Hongkonger. But at the same time, when I was trying to defend and protect this home, many of my friends and family members were planning to leave. I wonder how a Hongkonger thinks about roots and home? Growing in a place where immigrants are constantly evolving, a sense of belonging is hardly established.

At this moment, I am considering continuing my future life in a nomadic way. The drastic increase in population movements, exiles, and epidemics has scattered Hongkongers in different places worldwide. Still, we are trying hard to preserve the quality and mentality of a Hongkonger even though some of us do not physically stay there.

When I examine what boundary means to people, firstly the sign referring to 'boundary' (Cantonese: 界 *gai3* symbol: 𠵼), we can see that the upper part of the sign means a field used for farming, and the lower part refers to the separation line that is used to divide the land. Usually the boundary is set around mountains or rivers, which makes it easier to recognise the landmarks. I'm also thinking about the country's borders, the distance between me and the authoritarian country, and Hong Kong people's situation in exile. By performing on the river, I bring out the feeling of instability, wandering for the rest of my life, and finding a home. The process requires calmness, shows the inner struggle to overcome the conflict between calmness and confusion. Responding to the current uncertainties artistically, having faced a particularly chaotic world in the past two years, I experience a sense of isolation and tranquility through ceramic art. This artistic creation's attempt is purely to express this kind of confrontation, find a state of balance and coordination, and let go of a bit of attachment from form and reason.

2019-2021 has had a great impact on artists. Art creation cannot be too far from world issues. The world's

significant events affect our thinking. When facing inevitable social problems, we can't leave our minds alone and turn a blind eye. When I first came to Tallinn, I already felt that these two places (Hong Kong and Estonia) have subtle similarities. The land is not big but people are still longing for freedom and independence, neighboring countries are totalitarian, Narva is a border city; citizens have long been in a coexisting environment, apparently living harmoniously.

I chose to create this specific site as a metaphor. I still have to withdraw from instability and fear, feeling lonely while being independent. This approach is somehow syncing to the spirit of Zen but differentiates from it. Still, different cultural factors urge me to create this creative project, such as the artistic conception of the isolated boat and independence surrounded by nature. I have been affected by film, literature, calligraphy, and painting, which all have contained the spiritual Zen conception for many years. I can strongly feel the beauty of loneliness. So I present the final work as a short film which has an artistic style.

## 2.2 Location & Site Specificity

To a large extent, the way how the performative works are being shown, affects the context a lot. That is why I want to focus on the work's place of origin, as the site itself already formed the first frame and first limitation. French conceptual artist Daniel Buren has said that “The definitive place of the work has to be the work itself.” Those works allow one to question the physical space. Similar topic has been addressed by a Korean Art writer Miwon Kwon in an article which was published and modified for the book *"One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity"*. She mentioned that the more we travel for work, the more we are called upon to provide institutions in other parts of the country and world with our presence...the more we give into the logic of "nomadism". Site-specific works are site-oriented art that valorize the nomadic condition. I found exile artists like me always tend to catch the fluidity in artworks, to such an extent that a kind of romanticism has occurred.

By ‘situated’, we refer to those artistic practices for which the ‘situation’ or ‘context’ is often the starting point. ....it is concerned with ‘context’ as an impetus, hindrance, inspiration and research subject for the process of making art.” (Claire Doherty, *Contemporary Art from studio to situation*, 2004, pp.7-12)

When I determine to present work on the Narva River, I start to take the land itself and the boundaries into account. The form of clay may not be the essential part of the work, but the sense of ceremony I try to create around the making and the process, is important. I found my specific language by researching my own past work; the use of metaphor plays a critical and decisive role most of the time. Some of the characteristics of raw clay were being inspected and investigated. When we think about art as memories, art as objects, art as a place, it is not difficult to find the strong relationship between the locality of clay and the artist.

## Narva

When I planned to do this project, I needed to find a place to practice. At first I tried to find all the rivers or lakes on the map, but doing so I discovered that my eyes focus mostly on the borders of this country along with the flowing rivers. Narva particularly attracted my attention because she was sitting on the edge of two countries. After a round of data collection and research, I unexpectedly discovered that the name of this place has a special meaning. Narva<sup>18</sup>, the Etymology of the toponym name means stream or waterfall which comes from a Vepsian word. It also contains a meaning of limen, like threshold. For me, this metaphor sounds pretty, like the situation as a border city. There is always a line or boundary. It is also the first place where pottery was unearthed in Estonia. This coincidence happened to make me remember it in my mind a year ago, and step by step I implemented this subconscious idea. Over history, a town alongside a river always enriches the clay minerals, thus enhancing the fruitful resources.

Clay is a material related to the surrounding environment as it comes from land; that is why the locality plays a critical role in the making processes of ceramics, locality can be looked at as the physical origin of where the clay comes from. Also, in social and cultural terms, it refers to the local space influencing how the clay work is being perceived, and of course, even who has made it.

I endeavour to investigate the bonding relationship between humans, materials and space. As a ceramicist, I try to apply this idea into my art practice. I bring the pottery making process to the outdoors at a site-specific context - the Narva River, which forms the Estonian-Russian border, at the same time the border between East and West. It helps to confront the situation I am facing – somehow lonely, lost, unstable, nowhere to go. I'm however telling myself to remain calm, to even overcome those obstacles and uncertainties, such as wheel-throwing on the boat. I have to find the centre point to stand for. I transform this stage to a metaphor inside my performance work.

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<sup>18</sup> The Narva we know today has been built twice, once as a magnificent centre of trade in the second half of the 17th century, and as an industrial city built from the rubble after the Second World War. Late mesolithic narva stage in Estonia: Pottery, settlement types and chronology; *Estonian Journal of Archaeology*, 2017, 21, 1, 52–86 <https://doi.org/10.3176/arch.2017.1.03>

## 2.2.1 Process Difficulties and Uncertainties confronted

Doing a performance on the border area means that I have to handle a lot of procedures and regulations. Recording the process has made me feel the tension between the authorities and the border area. Every time I mention my upcoming work in a conversation, Estonians start to worry about the many difficulties I will face.

### Email conversation with different members of the photography crew

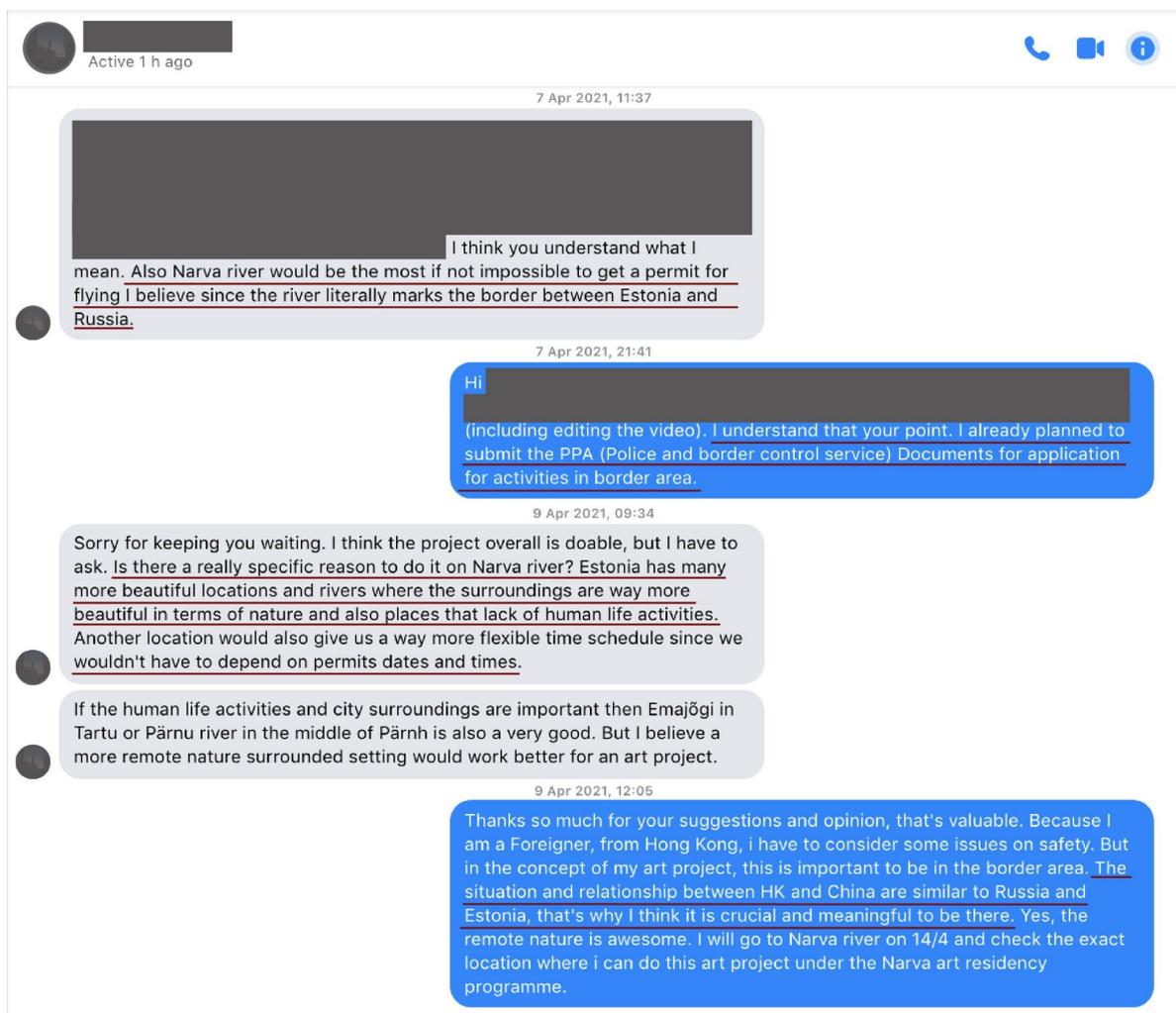


Figure 12. Messenger conversation with photo services company staff, 2021



## 2.2.2 Material and Making Process

### Theory Groundwork for Art-practice (Material Engagement Theory)

I analysed the relationship between the article *Negotiation between the Maker and Material: Observations on Material Interactions in Felting Studio*, Bilge Merva Aktas and Maarit Makela and my master thesis' interests. The theories<sup>19</sup> related to a material agency suit me for building a basis for my practical work. The text inquires about the crafting processes and discovers how they emerge through physical movements and material transformations. My thesis work is mainly related to the clay practice as a performance, making a wheel-throwing machine on a boat in order to create a new artistic experience.

The authors pointed out that the craft making is the outcome of a negotiation between the material and the maker, and bodily movements of practice occur from the dialogical act. Most importantly, the observation methods are about collecting distinct kinds of data, such as diaries, field notes and videos, in order to record some non-verbal movements. From that thorough analysis, they investigate the movements of the maker's body and the material in the felting processes. The examination enables the reader to understand how bodily movements occur in each contact between the maker and the material.

To understand what theories are mentioned holistically in the article, I quoted some crucial viewpoints from the authors, and reviewed the arguments and conclusions. They cited an archaeologist and material culture researcher Lambros Malafouris (2013) saying that the MET enables thinking between brains, bodies, and things. To understand how it happens, we should consider three critical concepts: extended mind, enactive sign and material agency. Human minds are extended and influenced by people, artifacts, space and time. Upon these four elements, I found that it is strongly relevant to my master thesis, especially the art practice project – wheel-throwing clay on a boat as site-specific work. Concerning the craft process during the performance, I should take the space and time into account as they are the main elements for the designated situation. The unexpected happenings on site may change the way I think and shape my actions.

Philosopher Mark Johnson (2007) stated that meanings appear from "deeper explorations into the qualities, feelings, emotions and bodily processes". In both Malafouris and Johnson's approaches, these elements are

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<sup>19</sup> Material Engagement Theory suggests a way of looking at, and sets out a possible pathway to approach this middle in-between space where brain, body and culture conflate (Malafouris 2004, 2013)

hard to separately discuss. However, I believe that I can take the bodily movement in a designated environment (e.g. unstable wheel-throwing situation on the river) for examination as compared to a standard studio setting. It's more challenging to predict the next steps or expect shapes from past experiences. Tools are also being mentioned as one of the role creators between the medium and maker. Experienced makers can combine tools and raw materials to internalize the materiality in a way that transforms the makers themselves into material. In my case, the boat was designed as a tool to experience a new way of wheel-throwing for a potter. The instability would affect the emotion, feelings and bodily reactions. As an artist, concerning the constant interaction with materiality and understanding how we engage with the material world are the utmost important parts in my work.

Another useful term I learned from this article was the "reciprocal co-working" between humans and non-humans from a sociologist Andrew Pickering (2005). This interrelationship not only results in the co-emergence of a particular artefact, but also by overcoming material resistances in various conditions with various methods (p. 175). During the creative processes, anthropologist Tim Ingold (2010) proposed that although makers may begin with preset ideas, the form is the result of following the flow of the material. He also claimed that communicating with the material allows the maker to translate the material's movements and properties into the practitioner's knowledge (p. 434). I may say I perceive the clay as a performing material, as a primary medium which can be transformed by the artist reciprocally. It's more like a metaphor that the material resistances are causing unexpected uncertainties to happen in our daily lives. Sometimes, things are out of control even if we have prepared for it.

### Chapter 3 – Review on the practices

- a. Performance at Narva on 11/5
- b. Artwork documentation show at TASE exhibition on 28/5 - 18/6

When I think about arranging the performative elements in my work, I have understood that there are factors that can be controlled. At the same time, I also predict that uncertain factors will inevitably occur in the process. Therefore, creators such as me need to embrace many unknown factors of psychological preparation. The critical part is how to embrace this contingency at the moment and follow each step of the occurrence to complete the entire project.

Border is the keyword I want to keep in mind during the whole practice. As a creator, I consciously take the initiative to add self-care issues - rootlessness and geopolitical problems into the artwork. In this chaotic world, everyone is inevitably forcing themselves to adapt and change, step by step, and be cautious. There are metaphors implied in this work, but I did not deliberately use an obvious and straightforward statement, hoping that this may be experienced empirically.

Finally, by recording the work in a video format, different audiences can see the documentation through the moving images, hopefully understand the concept, and grasp various aspects of appreciation. *Fuzziness* is the proposition of this work. At the same time, in addition to the physically unstable experience, it talks about a kind of a doubt about the unknown future.

### 3.1 Shifting the role of performance artist and ceramicist

#### Preparation

When this performance project idea popped into my mind, I participated in various art and design fairs, trying to find friends who could help me complete the creation. After all, the project would not happen without sufficient assistance from different experts.

In September of 2020, I met a craftsman familiar with woodworking in an exhibition venue. While looking at my work, he began to talk about his background, and I naturally mentioned the project. He wanted to help with the implementation and gave me his contact. Soon he assisted me in finding a second-hand old boat with the name of Ave. I was amazed and pleasantly surprised when this happened.

Then we began this unknown journey.

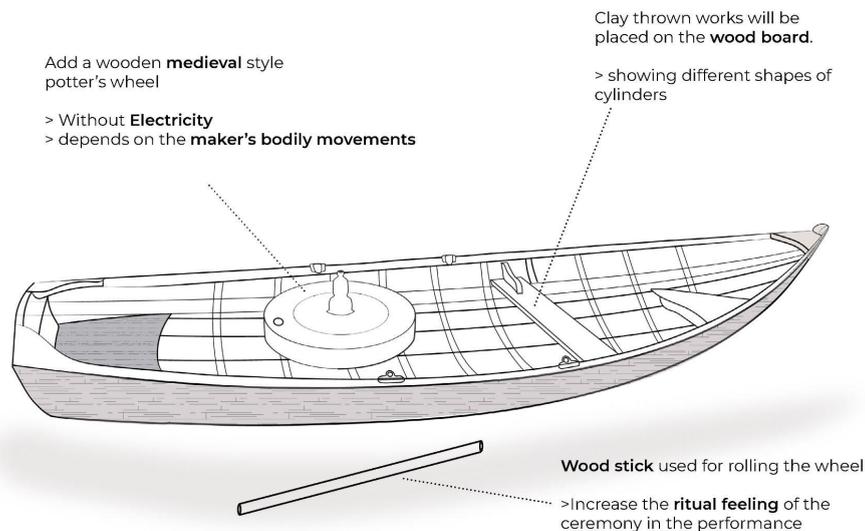


Figure 14. Illustration of the details of boat

In preparing for the performance, I have always received uncertain replies. For example, the contact person of Narva Art Residency also stated that they are unsure whether things will happen because nothing similar has been tried before. In the process, I have thought that since the project is not involved in any destructive or harmful actions, it is better to do it without informing them. Yet, I also received a warning from the local helper Maria: "Don't pretend you don't know the facts, and reply with silly eyes and smiles, then there will

be problems. Everything should have written permission." Regarding the location of the performance venue, it was argued whether vehicles can be parked in the area for a longer time.

Finally, I found help from a local sailing school - Narva Young Marine Club, and the deep sea captain assisted me in the name of education. They learned that I am a visual artist and that I was going to make an art film, after which they started to relax and not worry about it. They were willing to let me put the boat down in front of the border bridge, which was close enough to my performance's location. Yet, of course, in order to get to the specific site, I still had to move there by myself by riding the boat.

### About the wheel

While most modern potters' wheels are powered by electricity, the first ones were pumped by foot. Some ceramic artists still enjoy using human-powered wheels today. Using the wheel without electricity empowers the meaning to nature, the clay and natural environment. One of my past experiments involved using a mobile kick wheel<sup>20</sup> which ran without electricity. For that I investigated the throwing technique, which was inspired by the natural environment and involved outdoor creation. This type of wheel was already used for producing pottery thousands of years ago. I reused the old-fashioned wheel for a community art project. Ceramic art focuses not only on the final product but also on understanding the process and seeing it as a behavioural approach. The final product seems to show the shaping of the soul.

Mobile wheels don't have to rely on electricity, in other words, it provides freedom to the maker. I perceive the boat as a symbol of freedom, even if I am floating on an unstable river.



Figure 15. Still image from documentary film by Peter Kollanyi

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<sup>20</sup> A kick wheel is rotated by pushing the wheel with a kicking motion of the foot.



Figure 16. Identity Code of the boat. Photography by Reds Cheung

The painted code on the boat is a proof of registration, which is needed to get the permission for riding the boat in the border area. For me, learning about safeguarding is quite interesting. The border guards always keep an eye on the registration numbers of the boats moving around in the river border area. Thus the size of the numbers should be of high readability. They even warned me that the police will arrive within five minutes if I move across the designated area.

### Mentality

I am not familiar with boat riding, and I am not good at swimming, so I was a little afraid of sailing on the water. But I, who am good at wheel-throwing, seemed to feel slowly settled down through the process of making pottery. In the process of practicing wheel-throwing on the river, I gradually let go of the tension at the border. The weather in Estonia is always unpredictable, gloomy weather can last for a whole week or the whole month. Thus, I already predicted that I may perform in a rainy situation. Yet, the weather was surprisingly nice and sunny on the performance day. In that calm environment, I was actually still carrying a lot of worries and anxiety within me.

During the practice I realized that many cameras in the area were set up for observing people's activities or behaviors. I understood that this level of border protection and observation would inevitably be there. It is normal. However, it was reasonable for me to feel that there was still a strong tension from the geopolitical aspect within that otherwise harmonious atmosphere. Because part of the boundary is on the Narva river, it becomes complicated and hard for the human eye to define the line. It is necessary to understand and see the laws on all borders beforehand. Whether it is clear or vague, I can try to understand as much as possible.

Anxiety appears mostly because of the unknown.

In the process, I kept thinking about the audience. So, except for the fishermen and ordinary people who were watching from the shore, I invited different crew helpers and photographers who helped the performance to sit on the same boat. While watching from a short distance, they also felt vacillating when I started rolling on the wheel. I found a sense of intimacy on the river at that particular moment. Before I started wheel-throwing, I chatted with only one audience while rowing the boat. Then, after reaching a specific location, I could focus on the wheel-throwing while the viewer kept staring very closely. This experience reminds me of another kind of relational art aesthetics. I never thought of it before conceiving the performance.



Figure 17. Practicing Photo by Amie, Chan Nga Man

### Countercurrent

In the process of going upstream, I was controlling an old boat that moved backward. In the process of wheel-throwing, I kept rolling against the current, rowing to the middle part of the river, trying to find a calmer place where the flow of the water was not too strong. Then, unexpectedly, only a few minutes later, I discovered that while I had been turning the wheel, the propelling force also drove the boat to rotate itself, and in a blink of an eye, it would float back to the shore. Since all of my concentration was on the wheel, I unwittingly returned downstream, went back and forth, and needed to push harder to get to the appropriate place on the river. I had to be very calm and clear minded, otherwise my hand on the paddle would have touched the clay and ruined the piece. The process was constantly affected by various unstable factors.

## Clay

How do I perceive the materiality of performance art? In the project I chose to use clay from Estonian soil, and I put the clay back into the river bed straight after the performance. Thus, there were no so-called final pieces produced. Before the performance, I tried my best to control the moisture of the soil at just the proper conditions, and wedge the soil so that the process would go smoothly. However, the weather was unexpectedly hot that day. I used river water to wet the clay from time to time, but it was difficult to stop the clay from hardening quickly under the sun.

I constantly fought against the vacillating situation and faced an uncontrollable shaping process. Therefore, I concentrated on the values to stabilize my mind, instead of hoping to create a perfect and rounded pot. In contrast to the studio-based wheel-throwing conditions, I jumped away from that comfortable framework and set the pottery-making environment up on the river, instead. The field and tools were also different from the normal and stable one. To adapt to the fluttering and the rhythm of the river, I needed to adjust the familiarity of daily creation. I realised that the environment was somehow affecting the relationship between me, as a maker, and the material.



Figure 18. Still image from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi

### 3.2 Narva Performance documentation

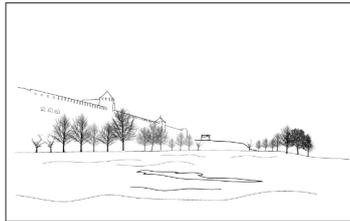
I decided to make a documentary video recording the artistic practice process, since I want the representation of the performance to be shown together with an installation which combines the physical boat and the video where some shots are accompanied with sounds of soft music and a short project description from me. It is also crucial for me to look back on the whole process and see how I reacted to the instabilities.



Figure 19. Still images from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi



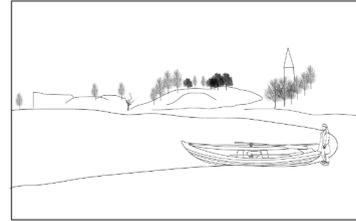
Figure 20. Still image from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi



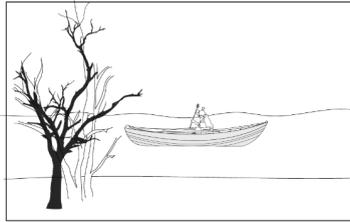
Remarks: Opening [Empty shot]  
Shot Size: Long Shot



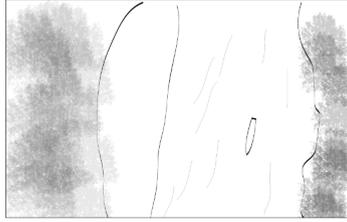
Remarks: Wedging clay ; Preparation  
Shot Size: Close-up



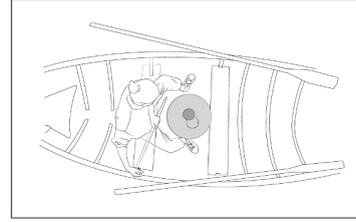
Remarks: Ready to go on the boat  
Shot Size: Long Shot ; Wide Angle



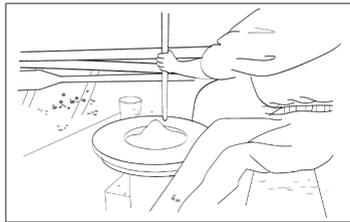
Remarks: Slow movement of the boat [PAN]  
Shot Size: Medium/Long Shot



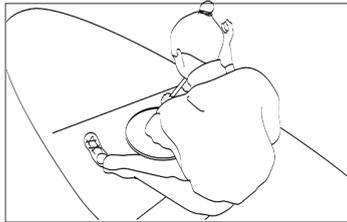
Remarks: Bird-view [Drone]  
Shot Size: Long shot



Remarks: Top-view ; [Drone]  
Shot Size: Medium shot



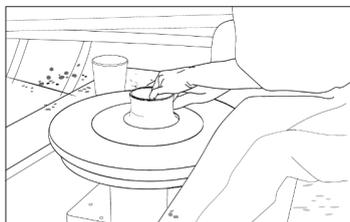
Remarks: Action of rolling the wheel [Hand-held]  
Shot Size: Close-up



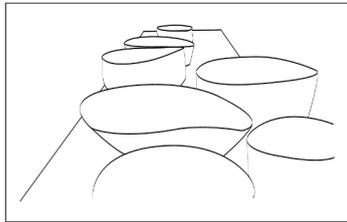
Remarks: Over-the-shoulder  
Shot Size: Medium shot



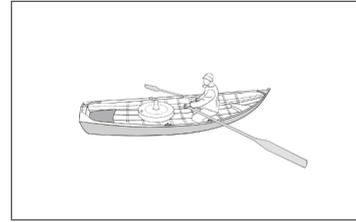
Remarks: Front-view  
Shot Size: Medium shot



Remarks: Action of Pulling up the clay [Hand-held]  
Shot Size: Close-up



Remarks: Thrown pieces ; Irregular shapes  
Shot Size: Close-up



Remarks: Side view  
Shot Size: Medium shot

Figure 21. Illustration of storyboard for documentation

## Conclusion

*"Romance in clay"* is completed as a master thesis combined with text analysis, artist interviews, and a creative performative project. It reflects on the performative elements in ceramic art and looks at it from different aspects. How can artists apply clay characteristics to assist in the expression of ideas, meanwhile, seeing the limitations and possibilities in creative reflection as an artist?

After examining different articles, authors' claims, and artworks' studies, I found that there are undoubtedly inevitable differences between Eastern and Western ceramic art in terms of presentation and creative motivation. Although it is difficult to draw a clear line between East and West, connotations and implications can still be found through the trace from the history of origin, religious reasons, and the clay movement in art history. Furthermore, the circulation of information arouses the cultural exchange and conceptual inter-related influences between the West and the East. Through artistic research, I analyzed the cultural, psychological, and clay-making habitual collisions of me as a performer. One is the personal aspect of introspection and reflection, and the other is the manifestation of the European style. Material Engagement Theory provides me with a theoretical background for analysing and questioning the relationship between the maker, materials and tools. I can review the unstable situation through the documentation, text and video recording.

Artists' interviews assure part of the earlier assumptions about performative elements in clay. For example, Hong Kong artist Annie Wan Lai Kuen mentioned that she received art education in Hong Kong and felt the inherent limitations of the aesthetic appreciation by the expert from the previous generation. As a result, the creation is mainly related to the spiritual level, limiting the diversity of expression to a certain extent. Later, when she studied at the University of the Arts, she was able to explore worldwide. Her exposure to different Western critical theories led her to rethink the possibility of making pottery, whether the old religious color and abstract concepts have established a strong sense of distance from the audience. Another artist, Laura Pöld, also pointed out the performance characteristics that exist in the clay. The materiality in it cannot be ignored whether the artist is present or not. The interaction with the audience does exist. Even if there is no verbal statement, the audience still connects to the creator in thought.

Lastly, the preliminary preparations of the creative performative project have forced me to reflect on the boundaries of ceramic art constantly. How do I, as an artist-researcher and performer, reflect on the ambiguous areas in ceramic art? I was born in Hong Kong, a land where Chinese and Western cultures blend and where the boundaries are not clear. I was born and educated during the British colonial period, and

English is a significant language globally. Therefore, most of the ceramic art knowledge came from the more experimental places such as Britain, Europe, and the United States. Meanwhile, another side contained solid religious colors from Asia countries, for example Japan, Taiwan, China and so on.

In the creative process, I am wandering around the boundary, trying to preserve the inner meaning of loneliness and reflection, and at the same time add the Western outwardly and expressive approaches in pottery. I find the value of one's nomadism in the floating, unstable and also chaotic world of rivers, enjoy the freedom of the flow, and confront the anxiety by facing the rootlessness. Thus, it is irresistible to talk about border issues at the present time, whether it is about the boundaries of ideological and cultural thinking in the macroscopic world, the edge of identity, or the country's periphery.

## Kokkuvõte

Romanss Savis on iseseisev loominguline projekt Narva piirialal, mis uurib performatiivseid elemente kohaspetsiifikas ning mida saadab praktikapõhine uurimustekst. See hõlmab endas tekstianalüüsi, intervjuusid ja ülevaadet kohaspetsiifilisest *performance*'st “Hägusus”. Olulise osa moodustavad ka projekti ülestähendused ja analüütilised peegeldused. Väitekiri jaguneb nelja ossa. Esimene neist sisaldab tekstianalüüsi idamaise keraamikakunsti kultuurilistest tähendustest ja *performance*'i elemente sisaldava kaasaegse keraamikakunsti praktiseerimisest. Teise osasse on paigutatud intervjuud Hongkongist pärit keraamiku Annie Wan Lai Kuen'iga ja Eesti keraamik-kunstnik Laura Põlluga, vestlused keskendusid muuseas performatiivsete elementide kasutusele savis. Edasine käsitleb kohaspetsiifilist *performance*'i kunstipraktikat ja käesoleva kunstiprojekti protsessi ja tulemuse, loomingulise praktika analüüsi.

Magistritöö kulmineerub videoinstallatsiooniga, mis dokumenteerib kohaspetsiifilist *performance*'it Narvas. Antud töö kasutab ühe protsessi osana treimist - keraamikas tuntud protsessi, ning paigutab selle valdkonnapõhisesse tegevuskunsti praktikasse, dokumenteerides samas selle arengu ja tulemi. Vaatluse all on aja ja ruumi elemendid kaasaegses keraamikakunstis. Narva kui Eesti-Venemaa piirilinn on seatud *performance*'i asukohaks. Sellele järgneb mu enda loomingulise praktika analüüs, milles vaatlen immigratsiooni, juurtetuse, piiride ja geopoliitilisi aspekte, mis moodustavad olulise osa käesolevast eksperimentaalsest projektist.

Peale intervjuude ja keraamikakunsti tööde näidete kaasamise toetub antud tekst osaliselt “materiaalse seotuse teooriale” (Material Engagement Theory, (Lambros Malafouris 2004, 2013)), mis annab vihjeid sellele, kuidas käsitleda võimalikku vaheala, mis ühendab või ajab omavahel segi aju, keha ja kultuuri mõisted – suhe tegija ja materjali vahel on teine oluline antud uurimustöö aspekt. Tekstis mainitud teooriad on kasutatud oma praktikapõhise uurimuse ülesehitamiseks. Peale teiste siin mainitavate kirjutiste on enim viidatud “Performative Raw Clay Practices and Ceramic Firing Techniques” (Agustina Andreoletti, 2019), “Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture”, (Christine Brown; Julian Stair, Clare Twomey, 2016) ja “Contemporary British ceramics and the influence of sculpture : monuments, multiples, destruction and display” (Laura Gray. 2018).

Töö tutvustab mitmeid autoreid ja mõtteid, mis on seotud meediaüleste meetodite kasutamisega saviga seotud *performance*'ites ja uurib idamaise keraamikakunsti kultuurilist tähendust. Läbi valitud kaasaegse keraamikakunsti praktika näidete, mis hõlmavad tegevuskunsti elemente, on uuritud eri autorite töid ning nende suhtumist keraamikakunsti laiemas perspektiivis.

Praktilise töö osa loob avalikus ruumis kunstiteose, uurimaks performatiivsete elementide kasutamist saviga töötamise protsessis. Tähelepanu pööratakse tsentrisse ajamise tehnikale, mis on treimises kasutatav väljend, näitamaks keskse tasakaalu leidmist. Projekt loob tugeva kontrasti stabiilse studio keskkonnaga. Protsess oli oluline vaimsest rahutusest ja füüsilisest ebakindlusest üle saamiseks, teatud vastasseisu väljendamiseks ja tasakaaluseisundi ning üldise koordineerituse leidmiseks.

## Appendix

1. Interviews Transcripts - Annie Wan
2. Interviews Transcripts - Laura Põld
3. Wheel design with boat ; Technical part of the construction
4. Artistic project documentation video (*Fuzziness*)
5. Artist book

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## List of Images

Figure 1. Claire Twomey, *Consciousness;Conscience*, 2001-2004, Photo found on [http://www.claretwomey.com/projects\\_-\\_consciousnessconscience.html](http://www.claretwomey.com/projects_-_consciousnessconscience.html) accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 2. Amy Lee, *Full Circle*, Courtesy of the artist. Photo found on <http://amyleesanford.com/full-circle-2/> accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 3. Alexandra Engelfriet, *Tranchée*, 2013 Still image from the Artist Video

Figure 4&5. Annie Wan Lai Kuen, *If it rains*, 2013, Photos provided by artist

Figure 6&7. Annie Wan Lai Kuen, *Please walk slowly and water the plants*, 2013 <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/china/hong-kong/articles/contemporary-women-artists-in-hong-kong-finding-poetry-in-wan-chai/> accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 8. Annie Wan Lai Kuen, *Please walk slowly and water the plants*, 2013 Photo provided by artist

Figure 9 *Shedding Skin*, 2020 Photo found on <https://laurapold.com/works/shedding-skin/> accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 10. *Guest*, CC. art space Isfahan, Iran April 28 – April 30, 2017 Photo found on <https://laurapold.com/works/guest/> accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 11. *Guest*, CC. art space Isfahan, Iran April 28 – April 30, 2017 Photo found on <https://laurapold.com/works/guest/> accessed on 23 May 2021

Figure 12. Amie, Chan Nga Man, Messenger conversation with photo services company staff, 2021

Figure 13. Amie, Chan Nga Man, Messenger conversation, 2021

Figure 14. Illustration of the details of boat

Figure 15. Still image from documentary film by Peter Kollanyi

Figure 16. Identity Code of the boat. Photography by Reds Cheung

Figure 17. Practicing Photo by Amie, Chan Nga Man

Figure 18. Still image from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi

Figure 19. Still image from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi

Figure 20. Still images from documentation video by Peter Kollanyi

Figure 21. Illustration of storyboard for documentation