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# On the surface, an outstanding show of ceramics



**REVIEW**  
**APRIL 5, 2024**

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*Some of Moraig McKenna's bowls.*

***Craft / Surfacing – Moraig McKenna. At Canberra Potters Gallery, until April 21. Reviewed by **MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE.*****

**This exhibition of ceramics by Moraig McKenna shows sophistication of form, constraint in surface decoration and considerable control of the clay, glazes and firing processes.**

McKenna has been making woodfired work since 1991, primarily firing it in an anagama style kiln. Working with a range of construction techniques, including wheel throwing and slab construction, it is important to her that there is a point of connection between her as the maker, and that of the user.

This is a large exhibition, and yet there is similarity between the works. The artist has used a limited number of forms, all of which display her careful approach to their surfaces. Slip and glaze, salt and ash are all evident. Through the process of firing some layers are revealed, others are obscured. The limited palette also lends cohesion to the exhibition.



*Moraig McKenna, baskets*

As an example, along the back wall of the gallery is a

shelf with a series of similar sized bowls, all titled Surfacing Bowl. The surface decoration is different on each one, either in the glaze or the walls of the bowls. One has a fading decal and ceramic buttons placed evenly over the surface, another is fluted. The application of glaze on other bowls all give definition and difference to each. Each bowl sits on a slightly curved base, giving them life and energy.

Vases and flower bowls make up another form McKenna has used. Those with handles are frequently fluted, giving height to the form. McKenna uses celadon glazes – luscious pale green – several of which are also fired with salt.

In addition to the tall vase and basket forms, McKenna is showing long, flat forms – which are variously titled Trays, and those with handles Flower Baskets and Trugs.

McKenna is showing two works that she has “repaired” using the Japanese form of repair called “kintsugi”. This is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the broken areas with lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver or platinum. Breakages become part of the history of the objects, rather being hidden. It is similar to the philosophy of embracing the flawed. These were very popular on the opening night.

This is an outstanding exhibition. It shows a commitment to ceramics that we don’t often see these days.

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Ian Meikle, editor



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