



Works by British artist Jenny Beavan.

JIMMERWAT/VEZARINA SULLIWA



Works by Pim Sudhikam.

CLAY PLAY

'The Ceramic View Bangkok' at the National Gallery shows the dysfunction in functional everyday items

STORY: KAONA PONGPIPAT

Bowls, dishes and cups are stripped of their original function in the exhibition "The Ceramic View Bangkok" at the National Gallery. Their forms are extorted, and at times, there are no recognisable shapes left at all. Ceramic, a material usually associated with kitchenware or decorative items, is employed in this show, as paint is by painters, to create pieces of art.

Organised by members of International Academy of Ceramics, Kullstrom/Park and Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Architecture, the show features 14 Thai and international artists, and more than 30 pieces are the result of a symposium for modern ceramic arts held at Chulalongkorn University last month.

Considered the first of its kind in the region, the symposium was initiated by Geneva-based International Academy of Ceramics to create a dialogue and exchange ideas between ceramic artists from different regions. After two weeks of public talks and lectures, these artists set down to work at the Faculty of Architecture's Department of Industrial Design and the works on display now are basically those ideas demonstrated in concrete forms.

Participating artists include Jenny Beavan, Ching Yuan Chang, Thomas Cheong, Ane Fabricius

Christiansen, Vinod Daroz, Satoru Hoshino, Nia Gautama, Jacques Kaufmann, Torbjorn Kvasba, Kriksaya Luengnantakul, Hadrian Mendoza, Supphaka Palprem, Suku Park, Madhvi Subrahmanian and Pim Sudhikam.

Pim Sudhikam, a lecturer at the Department of Industrial Design who is also one of the symposium organisers and participating artists, said that unlike in other countries, ceramic art in Thailand is still largely viewed just as craft and decorative work, not in the league of other mediums in fine art.

First and foremost, the works on display now seem a collective statement, asserting how far material such as ceramic can take them. In short, the works are anything but functional. Right after entering, visitors are met with Filipino artist Hadrian Mendoza's piece *Circle Of Friends*. It's a series of head sculptures, with faces simply depicted, put on the wall in circle. Aside from such a figurative approach, abstract and conceptual works seem among the most common ways to go for these artists to experiment with the material.

Works by British artist Jenny Beavan, for example, are paintings and sculptures all at once. One piece of her work, *Fluid State*, is a series of rough-edged curly ceramic moulds attached to the wall, while for another piece, entitled *Fluidity*, ceramic was formed

both as canvas and the painting surface upon it.

For the conceptual, Pim's (*Not*) *All Pots Are Created Equal* comprises a number of cups arranged together on a table. With the work title, together with the realisation that none of these cups are of exact equal size, the functionality of the cups is crossed out and the work is suddenly imbued with poignant political undertone.

Even though the question whether ceramic art can be compared to other mediums in fine art is long over, especially for artists from the West, what's still apparent in this show is how many artists still like to toy with the traditional purpose of the material.

Another of Pim's works, titled *Domestic Ware*, clearly toys with the idea. Again, Pim uses normal-looking mugs but they are buried into a stoneware mould that it has lost its sense of practicality. Likewise, Indian artist Vinod Daroz's sculptures on wall, *Black Sea*, features cup-shaped moulds but they have become an element of the overall composition rather than otherwise.

"The Ceramic View Bangkok" is taking place at the National Gallery, Chao Fa Road, until July 31. The gallery is open daily, 9am-4pm (except Mondays and Tuesdays). Call 02-281-2224.