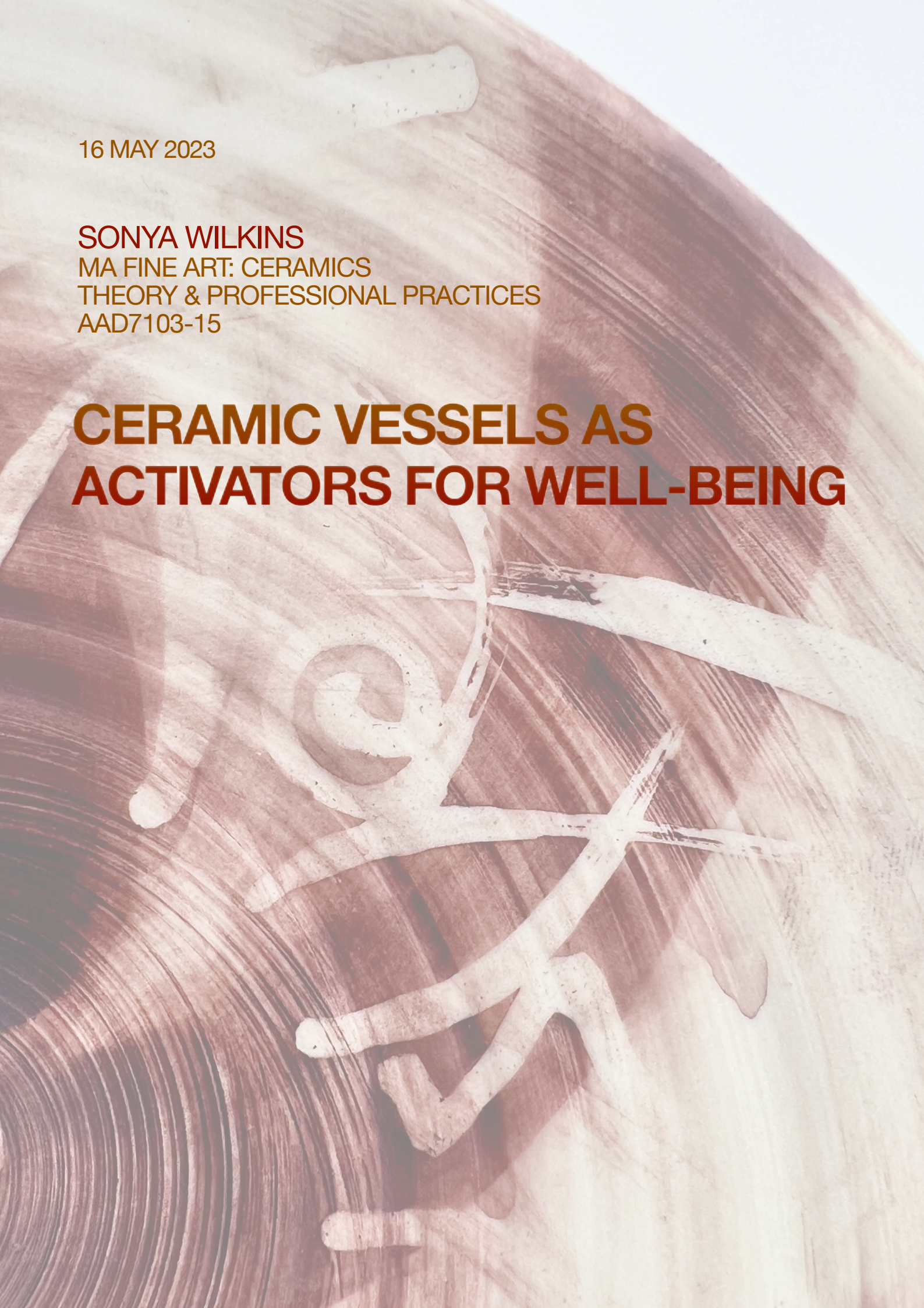


16 MAY 2023

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AAD7103-15

# **CERAMIC VESSELS AS ACTIVATORS FOR WELL-BEING**



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### **[Front Page Image]**

Wilkins, S. (2022)  
Spontaneous Icons  
[Digital Image]  
Bath: Artist's own Collection

# Introduction



Climate change, ecology and sustainability, are all pertinent topics related to our survival. But what about the invisible world of energy? How does this relate to our survival and well-being and how might it relate to the healing power and wisdom of nature?

I ask these questions because they have been, and always will be, at the heart of who I am; someone who never really felt they belonged in this world, but found refuge in nature; someone who was introduced to clay from a young age and found it strangely healing; and someone who later on in life, discovered the invisible world of energy healing. All I can offer you and the world is my own authenticity - what I came into this life with...my innate skills, motivation and the essence at the centre of my being. So I invite you to come with me to discover how clay, nature and energy may form an alliance and ultimately be useful to others and our planet.

Firstly, I will explore the rhythm of science and spirituality in the western world, in order to see where we might be heading next and what might bring balance to our chaotic inner and outer worlds. Then I will go on to explore my relationship to Mother Nature and clay as part of my research practise - what it 'unearths' within me. I will investigate ways to translate icons from Mother Nature onto and 'into' vessels, creating an alliance or visual 'bridge' for people to connect and relate to. Finally, I will share how high resonance energy can be absorbed by clay and ceramic material, increasing it's 'vibrancy' or well-being potential.

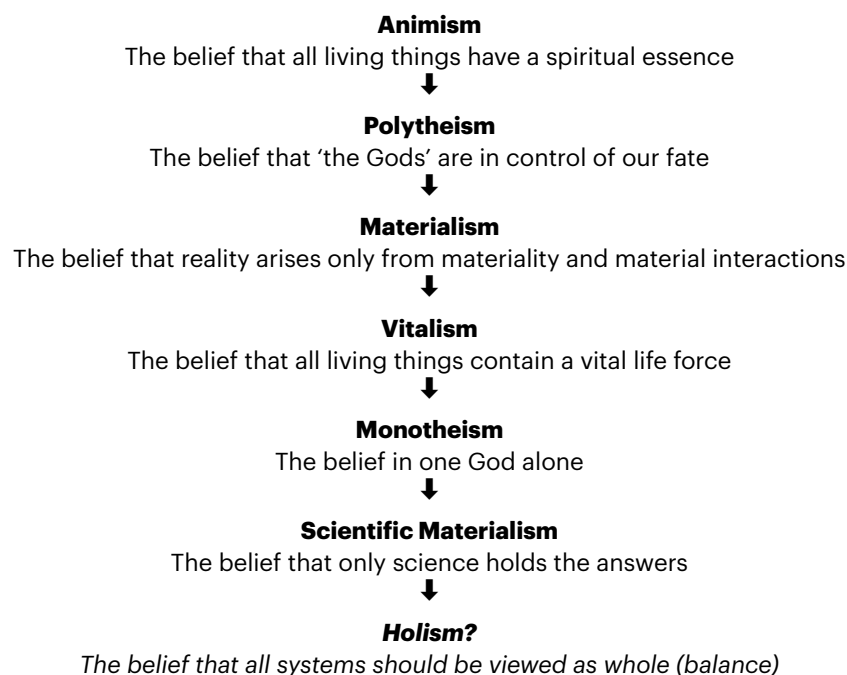
# Main Body

## 1. Cycles of Life: The dance between science and spiritual belief systems towards 'Holism'

First of all, I would like to invite you to see through a different lens so you can understand why I wish to form an alliance between two fields of enquiry, that of ceramics and well-being. In order to put this alliance into context, I will first draw on Bruce Lipton's knowledge of historical science and religion to explain why this potential alliance is pertinent to me (and us all in the Western world).

Lipton, (TCCHE, 2022, 35:00) explains that if we use history as an existing pattern, we can predict what may happen next in our evolution. Crisis ignites evolution, so the ecological fragility we find ourselves in, may in fact offer a profound change in direction for humanity.

As a planet, world and race, we are cyclical by nature. The historical evolution of belief systems and their impact on Western civilisation is no different. Lipton, (2022) says that we build civilisations by trying to answer two questions: 'How did we get here' and 'Why are we here'. Our attempt to answer these questions is demonstrated in the historical, fluctuating belief systems below.



As societies in the Western world evolve, they constantly shift between materialism and spirituality, influenced by the scientific discoveries and religious beliefs of their time. In the past, prominent figures contributed to these shifts, such as Democritus, Socrates, Charles Darwin, John Baptiste Lamarck, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Isaac Newton. Each one acting as a 'magnetic pole' in the dance between science and religion and the notable dominance of man versus Mother Nature. This dance of power is intertwined by how societal class often played a role in the acceptance or rejection of scientific theories. This dance is still happening today, albeit with a new set of prominent figures and the welcome rise of ecofeminism, not forgetting how indigenous wisdom is starting to filter back into our consciousness. A significant change is afoot where at long last, indigenous peoples' voices will be heard at the UN's biodiversity conference - a new polarity is starting to influence the way we see our relationship with Mother Earth and our human race.

Essentially, how we choose to adapt to our environment shapes our understanding of the world. The Human Genome Project, the emergence of Epigenetics and the influence of Quantum Science, all suggest we are now moving away from mainstream scientific materialism and towards a new paradigm shift. We are beginning to take a more holistic understanding of our existence, encompassing both scientific knowledge, spiritual beliefs and the wisdom of our planet and indigenous peoples.



This new approach, called 'Holism' (first coined by the South African statesman Jan Smuts in his 1926 book, *Holism and Evolution*), emphasises the importance of living in balance with nature, adapting to our environment, and recognising the power of our own thoughts and energy in shaping our lives. As Lipton, (2022) states, "the past cycles and systems were based on taking away your power, but now you can take it back - we need to be more fluid in our thinking, if we are to survive".

My question requires engagement with this new way of seeing, testing the 'Holism lens' as I create ceramic activator vessels for well-being, forging an alliance between different worlds; that of clay (matter), Quantum Touch® (energy) and to imbue meaning inspired directly from my relationship with Mother Nature.

**[Image 1] (above)** Wilkins, S. (2023)  
Connection [Digital Image]. Hutton Wood,  
Mendips: Artist's own Collection

## 2. Vibrant Clay: Nature's conduit for well-being

There exists a conduit in my life which enables me to view the world through the lens of 'Holism', seek balance with nature and brings me back to myself. This conduit is clay. It behaves like my own personal therapist - teaching me where I'm out of balance, then grounding me and calming my mind.

When I paused from making during my career, I hadn't opened a bag of clay for nearly 18 years. When I did, it was like coming home - it spoke to something congruent, coherent and changeless inside me. What's more, the clay felt alive...there was a curious vitality harnessed inside it. Spinoza, in Bennett (2010, p.2) ascribes to bodies having a peculiar vitality, "each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in it's own being...every non-human body shares with every human body a conative nature". Bennett goes on to suggest that this can be described as 'Thing Power' and describes how she too became affected by it, "stuff exhibited thing-power: it issued a call, even if I didn't quite understand what it was saying, at the very least, it provoked effects in me".

I too have experienced this call while foraging wild clay. The act of scooping the vibrant matter from the earth ignited a deep psychological reaction in me; memories came flooding back from my childhood digging for fossils with my father and I took on a ferocious appetite to scoop for more. Furthermore, while coiling wild clay within a recess in the earth, I find myself in conversation with many 'Things' - those within me, touching me, beneath me and surrounding me. The affect inside of me, clay I hold, earth I sit on and elements I'm immersed in, play like an orchestra in tune to something bigger than all of us put together. It's as if I am placed within a new 'tableau'; when I stand back outside the tableau, I find that the final vessels have become congruent with their surroundings - it's as if they manifested each other in some kind of union.



[Video 1] Wilkins, S. (2023)  
Wild Clay. Lyme Regis

Of course clay is not just organic matter and minerals. Water is a key constituent, both chemically and structurally. Water is crystalline, like quartz, and has the ability to create piezoelectricity under pressure. This is the same force utilised in clocks, radios and watches and within our bodies (we have crystals in our eyes, ears, skeletal bone etc). Emoto, (2005 p.44-45) reports water responding to emotion, its frozen crystal patterns as proof. So it begs the question; what happens when we expose our bodies to emotion? - a transformation occurs. Crystalline structures are in fact transformers of energy and hold the potential to be programmed. So when one crystalline 'thing' touches another, it would run true that there is potential for transmission and

transformation. When a water containing substance like clay touches another water containing material (human) a transference occurs.

I wonder what would happen if a 'thing' was given extra energy beyond its own being? What if clay containing water, was sent messages of intention? Would it take on an even more explicit drive or motivation? Moreover, if I am to be an actant upon the thing called 'clay', would I stay unchanged much like a catalyst, or would it change me also? Maybe my presence makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalysing the event. After all, Vernadsky in Bennett (2010, p.11) suggests that "human individuals are composed of vital materials, that our powers are thing power...we are walking, talking minerals". So perhaps in fact we can be both actant and operator - agents of change, influencing the vitality, thing-ness and piezoelectricity of clay. Could we therefore programme clay for well-being? I'd like to find out...

Of course when we break things down to the simplest components of life we see that everything is connected, what is in one, is in the whole (Holism). In 2009 I qualified as a crystal therapist and had the sudden realisation that I've been here before - connecting to minerals. The same fossils I collected with my father, are made of the same minerals found in clay and combine under immense pressure in the core of the earth to form quartz crystals. At that moment, I realised I had been mystified by mineral elements all my life and the curiosity is still deepening. On many levels I would say my material intelligence has increased. As Adamson (2018) says, "Understanding even a simple chair, truly understanding it, is an experiential matter. Googling it will only get you so far. Material intelligence is not just about compiling information....There is an aesthetic aspect to be considered, and a kinaesthetic one too". I would go a step further and say there is a soul aspect to be considered - what is the intent of the object?

So in order for me to truly embody the relationship between clay, earth and Mother Nature I would need to immerse myself in a process which spoke to this 'soulful' material intelligence. With that in mind, I decided to forage wild clays, reunite them with earth and build vessels within made and found recesses in the ground. I would surround myself with Mother Nature, sitting on her, making within her, breathing her, seeing her...all the whispers would teach me to truly connect and reveal an authentic making practise to see if I can make ceramic vessels as activators for well-being.

### **3. My Initiation: Clay excavation, Self excavation**

The more 'Earth Vessels' I made within the earth, the more I realised this was some sort of initiation. Bit by bit Mother Nature was taking me on a journey to release old blocks,

recognise old patterns of behaviour - all of which hindered my clear sight and authenticity.

At the start of trimester one I felt an overwhelming need to ‘prove’ that ceramics could take on the effect of healing energy because I needed the recognition that ‘healing’ was valid. The experiments showed that no matter how I tried, every person’s interpretation would be subjective - something I could never control. Essentially, I was being challenged to relinquish my need to prove not just healing, but **myself**.

In March, I visited Ibstock Brick Works, close to where I spent the first 24 years of my life. This experience not only made me confront how we excavate and pillage Mother Earth for clay, but it forced me to take a really honest look at who I was. It excavated my coping strategies - how I people please, how I rescue, how I strive to fit in. 50 years had passed, yet how much had I really grown? The bare truth was, I am still what I always was. If only I could accept this instead of trying to hide it, mask it or change it. Maybe now is the time.



[Video 2] (above), [Photos 2,3,4] (below) Wilkins, S. (2023) Excavation. [Digital Images] Almondsbury: Artist's own Collection





Another block was uncovered during a group tutorial where the feedback hit me in such a tender place. Another echo from my past where criticism has left a sore wound (one I thought had healed). But I decided to share my vulnerability - the tears poured down my face...and people responded in ways I couldn't have imagined, honest conversations arose and watered our hearts.

Finally I traversed my need for attachment as I watched two of my Earth Vessels reclaim themselves back to Mother Earth. Pieces falling, form collapsing, my hard work dissolving. Yet through the dismay, I started to see that it's the process that is precious, not the final artefact. Four of my 'Earth Vessels' have cracks and fractures running through them - something I was initially disappointed to see, but as Hirsi (2014) explains when talking about her Moon Jars "If the form has no trace or imprint of its surrounding events or it is forced to form on its own, it becomes off-balanced. We and/or unfired clay is an undetermined condition. It absorbs all the information from its surrounding environment. It absorbed all the information such as heat, motions, and even emotions". My 'Earth Vessels' were living and breathing examples of my own excavation process - my unearthing, fragility and vulnerability.



**[Image 5]** Wilkins, S. (2022) Reclamation. [Digital Image] Mendip Craft: Artist's own Collection



**[Image 6]** Wilkins, S. (2023) Earth Vessel 3. [Digital Image] Bath: Artist's own Collection

My task it seemed, was to relinquish every 'law' in which I had grown to believe in. This personal excavation felt harsh, yet it has softened me...so that I can now act from a place of surrender and simplicity. This feeling reminds me of an observation made by de Waal (2016, p.5) in relation to porcelain, "It is a material that records every movement of thinking, every change of thought...what defines you". It therefore feels appropriate that I explore this material as a conduit for thought and healing intention, it's simplicity being an honest canvas into which I can programme well-being. This is not to replace our need to be in Mother Nature, but to offer a companion in our lives - a link to her essence so we can nudge our consciousness back to connection while navigating our busy lives - an accessible chalice for reconnecting with self in the comfort of home or other inside spaces.

#### **4. Visual Bridge: Icons from Mother Nature**

So far, I feel in my bones the need for us to move to Holism and seek connection with each other and all forms of life, even objects around us. I have started the excavation process of self, so a more authentic and honest version of myself can become both an actant and operator in forming this alliance between clay, nature and energy. But how will my offerings be interpreted?

As humans we seek meaning in everything, we can't get away from interpretation because it's how we are programmed to 'read' the world. For example, if I use the word 'healing' it will conjure a unique response in you, based on your belief system and life experiences. Alternatively, if I use the word well-being, it will conjure a different type of response. I'm not able to control how you choose to respond to those two different words. Visual cues are just the same, we respond to them in a unique, individualised way. So the form, colour and markings on a vessel will create different responses in different people. In some ways it's a shame we can't purely see an object for what it is - without the lens of interpretation. In support of this, Ingold (2020, 88:39) admits he is a self proclaimed 'semiophobe'. He prefers to see "the sheer presence of things and objects...as one can get caught up in interpretation loops" and is "against thinking everything we encounter is a sign, because a sign is always a sign for something else, the sign is present, but what it's a sign for, is absent". He doesn't want to interpret everything, he wants to be present and respond to it instead. Maybe art can be a way of co-responding with the world, answering to it and we in turn answer to the art. But in order to do that, we need to stop thinking of art as objects to be interpreted and stop thinking of ourselves as master interpreters - in other words stop pretending to be art critics.

I wish to create a visual bridge through decorative marks on my vessels so people can connect with them and feel the essence of nature. The way they will be interpreted is

out of my control, but like Daintry (2023) says, “it’s an interesting quest to try and achieve a common clarity. Essentially we are ‘pattern makers and responders’”. So if I am to be a pattern maker, I need to learn from a master pattern maker - that being Mother Nature. What’s more, I believe the mark needs to come from feeling - as that way it may surpass the visual interpretation. When something is discernible enough, it opens up the doorway to be interpreted. Yet when something is curiously ambiguous, it may be ‘felt’ more genuinely - it is a fine line. The vessel opposite conjures a response in me, a reminder of a contentious famous icon (even though it’s in reverse) - I wonder what it conjures in you? But now I have said that, you may not be able to see anything else!



**[Image 7]** Wilkins, S. (2022) Spontaneous Icons. [Digital Image] Bath: Artist’s own Collection



**[Image 8]** Abramovic, M. (1988) Shoes for Departure. [Digital Image] New York: Sean Kelly

I live in the knowledge that every turn of the wheel, coil of clay, mark I make, will send some kind of signal, but perhaps the power of intention I use while making my vessels will override this - so that a person can settle within themselves or even loose themselves. My task is much like that of Abramović (2019, 24:37) when she was asked how one can walk in her Amethyst shoes, she replied “these shoes are not for walking. These shoes are for mental departure”. My ‘Activator Vessels’ will be offering mental departure, back down to earth...for grounding, centring and balance. Even though you could also use them to contain, hold, eat from...their true function will be as a mindfulness tool.

Bennett (2010, p. 17) reminds us of Adorno’s view “that objects are always entwined with human subjectivity...what is manifest arrives through humans but not entirely because of them”. So I will be calling on those invisible forces to forge an entwined alliance of communication in, around and through the description, physicality, placement and depiction of my activation vessels. The message will hopefully arrive through me, because of the connection I have acquired by making Earth Vessels, excavating self and listening and watching to Mother Nature’s language. I am seeking a new authentic, mindful and holistic making process.

## 5. Energy Bridge: Entrainment using Quantum Touch®

The modality I will be using to forge this entwined alliance of invisible energy between clay, nature and mark making is called Quantum Touch®. My goal is that this connecting energy will magnify the material of the vessels (clay) and visual cues (marks) on the vessels, so people can not only connect through sight, but also through feeling, sensation and transmission.

Quantum Touch is used in the healing industry to change the frequency or resonance of a person (or part of their body) to induce a natural healing response. It is based on the science of entrainment, examples of which we see in natural phenomena. For example, fireflies light up together in synchronicity and starlings form murmurations in rhythmic patterns. Essentially they are following an energy field and tapping into a dynamic, intelligent network bigger than their individual selves. We can even experience this when we are 'changed' by another person's energy field - we can all relate to how some friends 'lift' our energy and others 'drain' our energy. We are all affected by energy but we can also instruct it.

In order to access and instruct this higher frequency of energy, we can use the power of our mind. As Mc Taggart (2008 p.7) states, "A sizeable body of research exploring the nature of consciousness, carried out for more than 30 years in prestigious scientific institutions around the world, shows that thoughts are capable of affecting everything from the simplest machines to the most complex of living beings. This evidence suggests that human thoughts and intentions are an actual physical 'something' with the astonishing power to change our world. Every thought we have is a tangible energy with the power to transform. A thought is not only a thing; a thought is a thing that influences other things". This message runs parallels with Bennett's findings about 'thing-ness' and the agency of objects, but in terms of quantifying the language of invisible energy. Furthermore, Gordon (2017) shares the positive effects of Quantum Touch® evidenced in two phd



**[Image 9]** Wilkins, S. (2022) Quantum Energy . [Digital Image] Mendip Croft: Artist's own Collection

papers by Tulley (2017) and Walton (2010) where subjects received significant reduction in acute and chronic pain using the power of intention and entrainment.

In order to create this energy bridge, I will use my imagination to tap into my past experiences of joy, love and gratitude while creating my Earth Vessels within Mother Nature. I will emote and embody these memories and in doing so, raise my energy frequency. Because I have physically, emotionally and mentally made the vessels in situ on location, the power of my memories will be even more heightened. I will then use breathing techniques to amplify these memories while focusing on the object of my attention (the marks on the vessels). This will imbue a vitality to the markings, creating a bridge of intention which has been fortified through my own connection to earth and Mother Nature.



**[Image 10]** Wilkins, S. (2022) Activator Vessel. [Digital Image] Mendip Croft: Artist's own Collection

# Conclusion



In many ways I could call this essay 'way finding through clay and energy' because the two topics are so wide and deep. My aim has been to share my thought process and how I have made important connections between the two fields of enquiry, that of clay as a vibrant matter and energy as a new way of seeing, feeling and manifesting. I have referenced many interesting ideologies, yet concluded that my own authenticity in this process is the key. It wouldn't be correct for me to 'prove' anything because I can't control what others think or feel; It wouldn't be correct to influence another person's belief system; It wouldn't be appropriate to rescue them from their own healing crisis and it wouldn't be realistic to try and control how people interpret anything they 'sense'. Yet it would be helpful for me to offer a way for people to increase their wellbeing, if they so choose to accept it.

This decision, (to act freely with authenticity of purpose) is how I will move forward in my 'work'. So often in life we try to be someone else or something else. But, if I listen to my head, heart, hands and higher self, what emanates, will I believe, make a difference to those who are open to it.

My hope is that these vessels can be used as conduits to help us remember who and what we are, so we can connect to our inner most truth through mindful contemplation - even when we aren't able to access Mother Nature outside...we can grab a moment within our busy lives and connect to her in our homes and spaces. By remembering, we may then all start working towards a greater good.

I might even get the chance to hold ceremony with my vessels and guide willing volunteers...to connect as unique individuals seeing the world just the way we each do, through all our beautiful difference; yet all held safe within a 'haven' made from clay, energy and nature's therapeutic offerings.

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