



CinBA

Creativity and Craft Production in
Middle and Late Bronze Age Europe

LIVE Project

Contemporary Craft Inspired by
the European Bronze Age

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Exhibition design by Ian Kirkpatrick and Hembo Pagi

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Introduction

This exhibition showcases the outcomes of an exciting collaboration between the HERA-funded project **Creativity and Craft Production in Middle and Late Bronze Age Europe (CinBA)** and Higher and Further Education Institutions teaching contemporary crafts subjects. The collaboration has been facilitated by and developed with the Crafts Council, the national development agency for contemporary craft in the UK, to offer contemporary craft students a unique opportunity to engage with and explore the roles they may play in understanding and interpreting Bronze Age artefacts.

The CinBA Project offers important insights into the fundamental nature of creativity by exploring a part of European history not influenced by contemporary concepts of art - the Bronze Age. The research examines developments in craft production and design that we take for granted today that have their origins in prehistory, with a focus on pottery, textiles and metalwork. It also explores the potential impact these objects may have today as a source of inspiration and means of creative engagement for different groups, including contemporary makers. Explicit investigation of how craft makers today may find inspiration from engaging with prehistoric objects is unique to the CinBA Project. Responses of makers and artists to prehistoric objects, the inherently valuable, have not traditionally been given much attention within Heritage and Museum Studies where the focus tends to fall on the experience of visitors and the public at large. Crucially this shift in focus may provide the basis for new types of heritage experiences in which the creative potential of objects is more imaginatively explored, offering inspiration to and suggesting new roles for the contemporary craft sector.

The Crafts Council is supporting the CinBA Project as a non-academic partner to bring innovative, international and interdisciplinary opportunities to contemporary craft makers. By exploring the role that the contemporary craft maker can play in archaeological enquiry, both as practice-based researcher-investigator and as interpreter of meanings within handmade objects, the partnership in the CinBA project offers new and exciting ways to articulate the nature and value of contemporary crafts practice.

“The CinBA project embarked on a previously unexplored avenue of enquiry – that of utilising the creativity and material knowledge of contemporary craft makers to interpret and respond to historical objects. We hope this project will encourage the use of a wider range of methods, techniques and people to engage the public with historical sites and projects.”

Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director, Crafts Council

A Live Project for Contemporary Crafts Students

In the academic year 2010-2011 the CinBA Project invited course leaders of contemporary craft subjects at Higher Education and Further Education level to become involved in the research through a Live Project opportunity for their students. Using Bronze Age objects as sources for their own research-based practice, participating students were asked to design and develop new contemporary craft objects in response to the prehistoric material. They were not limited to the media that are the archaeological focus of the project (ceramics, textiles and bronze) but were also invited to develop ideas in other materials, focussing on motifs, design elements, complete objects, or any combination of these.

Dr Jo Sofaer (CinBA Project leader) visited participating institutions to give an introductory seminar on the Bronze Age and the archaeology of craft, and to provide an object handling session. Students were also provided with a project brief, an on-line Bronze Age resource pack and a list of references to kick-start their research. The project was met with huge enthusiasm from course leaders, who used the opportunity to inspire field trips to prehistoric sites and Bronze Age collections in local and national museums, to produce student-led blogs for the exchange of ideas, and to develop new topics for critical writing assignments exploring the role of the past in contemporary craft.

Over 150 contemporary craft students from 5 UK institutions had contact with the CinBA project. Those who went on to use the project to develop new work were invited to submit their sketchbooks, supporting designs, and completed objects in competition for representation in an online exhibition curated by Professor Janis Jefferies. The work of 12 outstanding students is presented in the exhibition. Their work represents several different media, styles and sources of inspiration. Some of the students have drawn upon Bronze Age making techniques, whilst others have found inspiration in the sensual qualities, shapes or motifs of prehistoric objects, and many have been intrigued by the meanings and interpretations of objects from a prehistoric past. Statements and design sketches by each maker included in the exhibition allow us to trace these diverse jumping off points from Bronze Age material culture that inspired and informed the making process of the exciting and intriguing new craft objects presented.

We would like to thank the all the course tutors and students who embraced the idea of exploring Bronze Age artefacts from the perspective of contemporary craft practice.

Dr Jo Sofaer
CinBA Project Leader,
University of Southampton

Rachel Brockhurst
CinBA Project Liaison
Crafts Council

Curator's Notes

Creativity and Craft Production in Middle and Late Bronze Age Europe offered an exciting opportunity for students in UK institutions studying contemporary craft subjects. The CinBA project provided access to a number of objects through a resource pack produced by Dr Jo Sofaer and object handling seminars. The students were able to gain insight, “into the fundamental nature of creativity by exploring a part of European history not influenced by contemporary concepts of art.” (Sofaer, 2010).

Then as now there was unprecedented flowering of craft activity with developments in decorative motifs, techniques and skill. Can we say that craft is shaped by its perception as an accessible form, often preoccupied with the ordinary, the everyday, the repetitive, the functional, the decorative and the mundane? If so, one of its functions is to make us look twice at what seems everyday, through the dedicated application of skill, the tactile and the material. Objects, things we carry with us, are markers of complex personal histories and it is in this sense that they take on the cultural markers of memory and of time. Objects tell stories of our relationship to the world and to others and they offer a material base not just in terms of production – hand, industrial or even electronic media – but in relation to how we consume them, long for them and even obsessively collect them. Objects can be ‘possessed’ by the self in many surprising ways. A specific example of this historically might have been the knife that a person has carried around and used for many years, killing, cutting, protecting which through its use will have gained a specific ‘hand shaped’ wear, information carried about who used it and how it was used. So because of the knife’s materiality, the fact that as a hard object it is relatively stable, it “can preserve information about ‘how to cut’ for tens of thousands of years.” (Flusser, 1990).

Material is of prime importance since the very matter of the object has to represent and even exceed other kinds of economic value in order that it may perform an alchemical role in soldering the reality of things to their spiritual equivalent and the preservation of its memory use in life. Objects remain significant; its very material ‘thingness’ is tangible but any security, which is offered in one moment, is undone by a traumatic shift that directs us to mortality. Several student works reference the possible stories behind the Bronze Age objects, where they came from, what they were used for. For example, “The blank unknown areas gave me scope to make up a story”, memorial tokens that enable the grieving process, or how the relationship with symbols in modern western society are articulated through new forms of crafted objects relative to the individual throughout life and also in death.

However, and as explored in 'Curating, Craft and New Technologies' (Craft Curators Forum, a networking and discussion event from the Crafts Council, London 23-24 September 2010), capturing the richness of heritage practices through digital curation can be challenging. How do social media reframe our understanding and experience of heritage? What are the new possibilities for opening up ways of interacting with heritage objects and concerns? In this instance, CinBA provided an exciting collaboration offering new ways of articulating practice-based research in the crafts in an inter-disciplinary and international arena. Using Bronze Age objects as sources for their own practice (motifs, design, whole objects or parts of objects), students developed work from within a range of materials and inspirations thereby engaging in how new types of heritage experience maybe generated through imaginative interpretation of prehistoric objects. The challenge is how to mediate the qualities of the prehistoric world with the contemporary present through on-line experience. This gives insight into the process of production but we will not be able to 'touch' what we see. Once we have a natural haptic display we will be able to touch objects that are either too delicate or too distant to touch directly. The access provided by touch can be extremely intimate and evocative. When we have integrated touch into the digital interaction with historical collections and catalogues, contemporary works, and makers' stories we will have fundamentally transformed museum visitor's (both physical and web-based) relations with objects and between each other.

The on line exhibition, which remains until the end of the CinBA Project in September 2013, has been drawn from photographs of the work that the students have produced alongside sketches and notes that tell the story of how the Bronze Age objects have inspired them. What we can see is a diverse cornucopia of intriguing, classically produced and hybrid creations that reflect contemporary issues and concerns.

Prof Janis Jefferies

Professor of Visual Arts
Goldsmiths University of London
On line curator, Live Project
March 2012

Ann Kelcey



Institution: University of Wolverhampton

Course: MA Art and Design (Ceramics)

My primary research began with Dr Sofaer's introductory talk in Birmingham, where a sherd of burnished pottery with incised concentric circles and other marks struck me as being incredibly feminine. Subsequently I was able to handle Bronze Age pottery, tools and weapons at Ludlow Museum and Rowley's House Museum in Shrewsbury, and pottery at Blythe House, the British Museum store. I viewed Bronze Age artefacts in the collections at the British Museum, the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, and The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Detail from Figures I & II, two of a group of figures in porcelain, with marks made using 'found' objects.

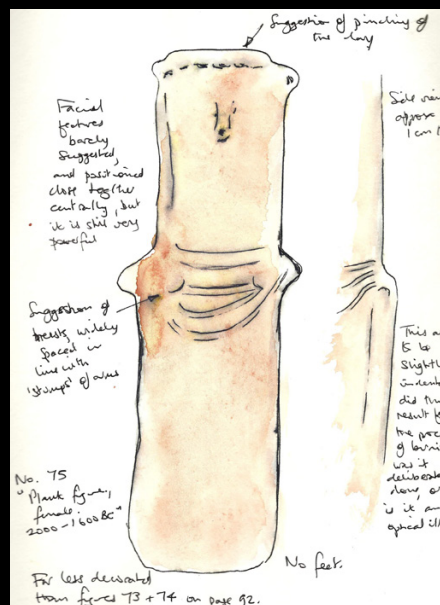
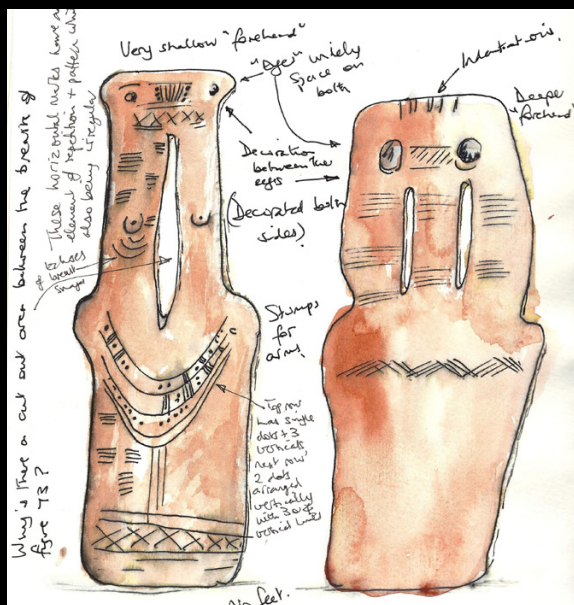
210 to 260 mm high x 50 to 80mm wide



The artefact which had greatest impact on me is in the British Museum. I have long been fascinated by the Cycladic figurines, but it was on a visit to the museum after a handling session at their store in Blythe House that I came across a single terracotta “plank-shaped” figure described as an “idol”, from ancient Cyprus. I discovered other examples in The Ashmolean museum. These were to inspire a new direction in my work. The simplicity of form with the merest hint of gender, and the use of incised marks (akin to those on pottery vessels, tools and weapons) to denote facial features and clothing in particular, were powerful devices that seemed to cross the boundaries of time. I assume that these marks were made with found objects (sticks, stones & flints perhaps) or crafted tools, and I have done likewise, using my own contemporary found objects.



(Above): Bronze Age plank figurine, 2000-1600 BC
Image © The Trustees of the British Museum



(Left): Museum sketches



Caroline Allen



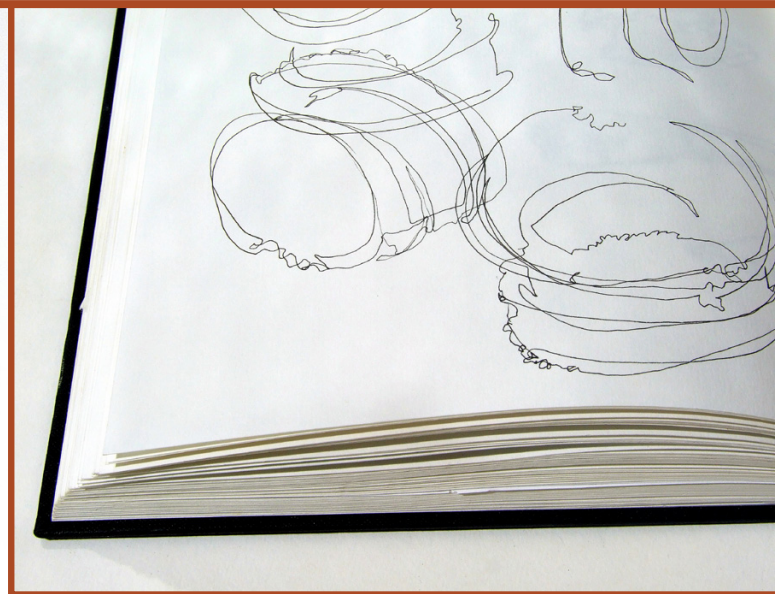
Institution: University of Brighton

Course: MDes. 3D Materials Practice

An investigation into the ambiguous nature of prehistoric artefacts, the speculation and understanding of such objects' functions and the material culture embodied within them.

Functional objects are universal; produced to serve our most basic physical needs they transcend time, geography and culture. These artefacts facilitate an unspoken human connection with the maker. The display of the prehistoric artefacts in a museum context removes any intended function, resulting in a selection of objects that hold their own aesthetic value, while provoking intrigue and speculation. Through the exploration of utility, intention, aesthetic, context and display, the value of non-functional objects is called into question. Viewers are invited to define and apply their own meaning to the ceramic outcomes, allowing them to develop their own biography.

Four green loose stacked rings
Diameter 90mm x height 80mm
when stacked



Preliminary sketches



(Left and opposite page): Hand thrown
deconstructed ceramic vessels reassembled
using eathernware and lead free tin glazes.

Each approx. 240mm diameter x 11mm high

Ginny Puzey



Institution: Birmingham City University,
Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, School of Jewellery

Course: National Diploma, Design Crafts



*Bronze Age arm ring from Meiersdorf, Austria. 1500-1200 BC.
Image courtesy Natural History Museum, Vienna.*

This pendant was inspired by the many spirals seen in Bronze Age artefacts, specifically the arm ring found at Meiersdorf, Austria and the bronze belt from Winklarn, Austria now in the Natural History Museum in Vienna. I loved the raised ridges and the spirals at each end of the piece, echoing the band spiralling around the arm. My pendant uses this ridge effect along the length of the pendant, ending with a spiral at the top to hold the pendant onto the chain. The pendant is dynamic and rotating so that it is interesting from any angle. I have included garnets to add interest and colour. Although stones were not set into metal during the Bronze Age their colour is reminiscent of some Bronze Age objects and compliments the yellow gold. The pendant was entirely handmade, using techniques which Bronze Age craftsmen would also have used.



Gold Spiral Pendant

An 18 carat gold pendant, fold formed and forged, and set with garnets. The top of the pendant spirals around itself to form a loop to hold the chain

Approx. 55mm x 15mm

Helen Reeves



**Institution: Birmingham City University, Birmingham
Institute of Art and Design, School of Jewellery**

Course: National Diploma, Design Crafts



Spiral Pendant

*Hand forged 18ct yellow gold spiral
pendant with aquamarines*

60mm x 20mm

My inspiration came from the Scandinavian Bronze Age. During my research I visited Copenhagen and Stockholm. I discovered the spiral imagery and its particular significance. The spiral represents the continuum of the sun's rising and setting every day. At this magical and mysterious time in history, people were in awe of the golden orb which controlled them and this was reflected in their belief systems.



*Gold arm ring from Niløse near Holbæk, 1500-1100 BC.
Image courtesy National Museum of Denmark.*

Taking designs from the many examples of Bronze Age jewellery I chose to produce a piece in contemporary form. The spiral was made using the traditional technique of forging and this enabled suspension on a wire.

Although it is a contemporary piece I wanted the design to relate back to the original inspiration and prehistoric origins. My design features simple stone settings in aquamarine to represent the sea with the yellow gold symbolising the sun.



Images of development

Lyn Leadbeater



Institution: University of Wolverhampton

Course: Design and Applied Arts

The corset is a piece of clothing that has a long historical background yet still remains contemporary. It translates into the female adornment and male body armour which was so prominent in the Bronze Age, like the cuirass found at Marmesse in France. I felt that cast in the unyielding material of ceramic this softly curving yet severely commanding form achieves a curious aesthetic.



Title: Bronze Age Corsets

Length 370mm x width 370mm x depth 270mm

Repoussé style corsets, slip cast in porcelain. One is shattered into pieces, biscuit fired to 1000c then glazed in silver nitrate and fire-flash. The corsets are then rakued using sawdust to produce a heavy reduction and iridescence. One is pieced back together using resin and gold leaf. The technique of knitting wire wool and dipping in porcelain slip is also used. it is then placed in a mould and fired to 1250c in an electric kiln.



The repoussee found on the Mold Gold Cape and the spiral motifs found on so many items inspired the cast corsets as well as the Sprang weaving methods which led me to weave wire wool. Together the casting, weaving and incorporation of metal (by means of glaze and wire wool) sums up the diverse and progressive technology of the Bronze Age.

*Cuirass from Marmesse, France, 900-700 BC.
Image courtesy Musée d'Archéologie Nationale.*



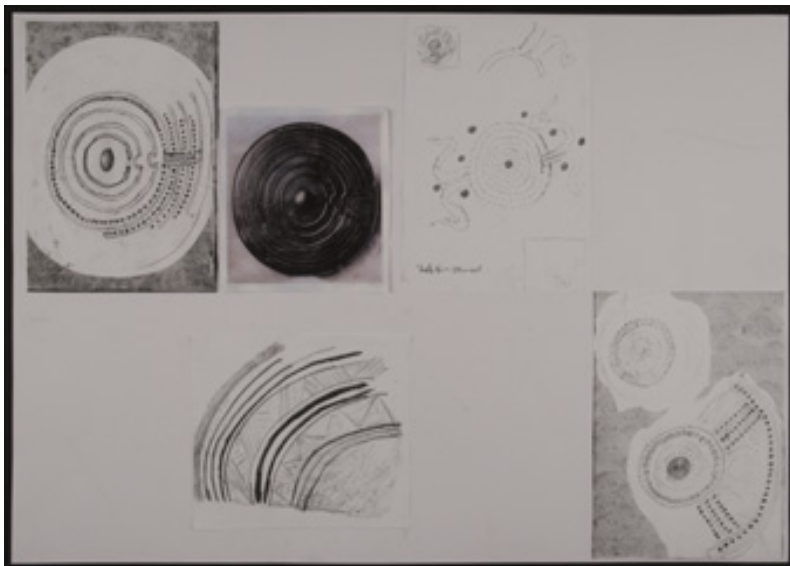
Sarah Bellavia



Institution: De Montfort University

Course: Design Crafts

My piece is a mixture of both glass and ceramic. Having researched and attended the lecture about the Bronze Age I became inspired by the specific technique of casting, which was used in the Bronze Age to cast swords and other weapons. As an artist my main interest is in glass and so I wanted to use this opportunity to explore the idea of glass casting. As well as exploring this I also wanted to explore through ceramic as ceramic is also a material I find interesting to use. Through researching I became interested in the shields of the Bronze Age, the patterns and techniques used to create them, and repoussé as a decorative technique.



Preliminary sketches



*The shield from Svenstrup, 1100-700 BC.
Image courtesy National Museum of
Denmark.*

The piece I have created is a mixture of both glass and ceramic, supported by a wooden frame. I have used the wax glass casting technique to produce the glass piece. For the ceramic piece I have used earthenware clay, with brown slip and the burnishing technique on one side and white inlay slip decoration on the other side. I wanted to bring these two pieces together and so I created a wooden frame in order to do this, allowing the pieces to sit together as one.

Each piece is inspired by the design on a Bronze Age shield. I wanted to use the design of the shield and incorporate it in a 2D and 3D piece which could be brought together as one final piece, as a decorative artefact, which involved using ancient processes and techniques as well as ancient designs in a new contemporary way.

I wanted to take this idea into ceramic trying to create a repoussé effect in the clay. The stages of the clay at leather hard were very important in the process in order to get the description to stand out as in metal repoussé. I also used the burnishing technique and inlay using white slip. I took the idea of the repoussé technique into glass, impressing the motifs into a solid clay mould which was then used for the making of the cast glass sphere.



*Title: "a part" of one.
Height 260mm x width 300mm x depth 220mm.*

Michele Coxon



Institution: University of Wolverhampton

Course: MA Ceramics

I was very close to my mother and stayed with her during her illness and death. It was an extremely emotional period and from the drawings I did of her while she was dying I created a sculpture of her. I added some of her ashes to the clay, the rest of her ashes were placed in a pot and buried on Broniarth Hill, in Powys, Wales. She lies next to her youngest daughter, my sister, Anna. On a recent trip to The British Museum, we were able to handle pottery beakers, some more than 4000 years old. They are associated with burial sites and many were found to contain human ashes. These clay beakers are particularly powerful, knowing that they have been made by people to honour their dead. I found the fingerprint impressions in the clay incredibly moving and wondered if my ceramic work would ever survive that long!



Sculpture of My Mother. Porcelain with ashes added to the clay. Height 240mm x length 520mm x width 210mm.



Broniarth Hill, in Wales where my mother is buried

From these early burials I began exploring the ways other cultures remember and bury their dead. During my stay with my mother my dog slept on her bed and I added him to the sculpture. He died later and is also buried on the hillside next to my mum. There is a treasure trove of artefacts that have been buried with the dead. In the pot containing my mother's ashes I have placed her gold locket, which contains a photograph of her mother. I know that paper will not last and if the locket is dug up thousands of years later, the archaeologists will be clueless to its contents. But who knows, perhaps this Bronze Age project will survive and give them the missing information!



*'Bell' beaker. From Rudston, Yorkshire.
Bronze Age. 2300-1900 BC.
Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.*



Miriam Jones



Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University

Course: National Diploma, Design Crafts

Necklace

280mm x 285mm

The inspiration behind the final neckpiece was neckwear such as the Shannongrove gorget (neck collar) and the Mold gold cape. These were worn during the Bronze Age by individuals to showcase status and importance. I realized that today in modern society, this notion still exists, with only the rich and wealthy able to afford and wear valuable and expensive jewellery, again to showcase status within society.

I came up with the idea of a detachable necklace, where you could build up your status by hooking various layers of metal onto the plastic if you wish, to add colour and pattern to the neckpiece. By creating various layers inspired from patterns and swirls of the Bronze Age this added variety to the final piece, and the use of material such as plastic made it contemporary.

I experimented a lot on the fly press, where I would put mundane objects such as nails, ball bearings and hooks to indent onto the metal when hit by the force of the fly press. I discovered that the most successful pattern was made by farming hooks, taped onto the back of the metal with masking tape, along with ball bearings, using thin sheets of brass, which made the indent more prominent. I also pierced some elements out with a piercing saw, and oxidised copper to give variety and contrast in colour.

It took me a few attempts to perfect the mechanism for the detachable necklace; what worked best was laser cutting hooks that looked like decoration on the black plastic, placing it in the oven to soften the material in order to push two hooks out to perform as hooks to slot the metal onto the plastic, but also trying to get them to look as a part of the necklace.



*Shannongrove gorget, 800-700 BC.
Image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



Using the Shannongrove shape within samples, combining materials, and experimenting with mark making in brass

Patrik Hiley Thorne



Institution: University of Brighton

Course: Craft and Design



*Title: Sun and Water,
Survival and Entertainment*

My research for this project saw me foraging and gathering as a simple means of survival. For the finished object, I wanted the foraging to be a choice for you to make, something that would get you involved in a very old and necessary pursuit for survival, as in the Bronze Age.

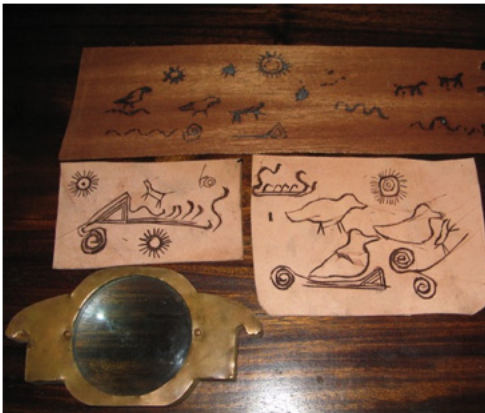
Knives between 120mm-420mm

These pieces are all about self-reliance, although they could be used as a symbol to show the level of skill involved in gathering your own wild food, and the dedication needed to excel at this kind of lifestyle. I have tried to replicate or suggest materials that would have been relevant to Bronze Age people; native deciduous woods like ash, oak and chestnut, wild growing plants that would have been easily harvested, using the land as it may have been used in the Bronze Age. Fish may have been important to life then, as it came from wild bodies of water (rivers, streams, lakes and the sea).



*Bronze Age razor, Thingøj, North Jutland. 900-700 BC.
Image courtesy National Museum of Denmark.*

My work is also a response to the symbols and recurring patterns which showed the sun and the water in Bronze Age artefacts. This project was completed on site in Dartmoor, Devon. Fast food and entertainment were two things I missed during various expeditions around the moor and woodland where I live, so I also made two objects to pay leisure time homage to the Bronze Age gods.



Basic survival implements, made in green ash, flax rope, forged steel, copper foraging box, made in found box, bone and resin composite, forged steel, sycamore, bone powder and bio resin lenses, found magnifying lenses, flax rope, ash and copper, on leather and cedar veneer.

All objects found, inspired by, or made on site in Grimspound, North Bovey and Haldon forest, Teign valley, Devon.

Fish finger box: 310mm x 220mm x 80mm

Holly Inglis



Institution: University of Wolverhampton

Course: Design and Applied Arts



This piece consists of five cosmology-inspired objects. All are burnished, sawdust fired and beeswaxed.

After attending a talk by Dr Jo Sofaer and a Bronze Age pottery handling session at the British Museum, I developed a great interest in Bronze Age cosmology. My research focused on depictions within Scandinavian rock carvings, the Trundholm Sun Chariot, the Nebra Sky Disc, and generally the narrative of the sun's journey. Extending this focus I decided to look at more contemporary objects to do with how people today understand and explore the universe: satellites, space craft, as well as the Large Hadron Collider.



*Nebra Sky Disc (c. 1600 BC) after restoration.
Image courtesy LDA Sachsen-Anhalt
(State Office for Heritage Management and
Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt)
Photo credit Juraj Lipták.*

My primary contemporary inspiration is the Phoenix Mars Lander, as from making a few test pieces and designs, the hexagonal solar panels really appealed to me. By applying contrasting approaches to cosmology I developed the design of three discs with a stand. The stand or four 'legs' and the round disc appear from a certain angle like a horse. This was originally unintentional but was purposefully maintained as a design feature. The remaining two discs were hexagonal, and placed as a platform or 'landing discs' underneath the other disc and stand. Upon the discs are line carvings depicting the patterning of solar panels, astronauts, the International Space Station and the Large Hadron Collider along with 24 dots representing time as a response to the 32 dots on the Nebra disk. It was surprising how the contemporary and Bronze Age designs merged very smoothly. The use of red terracotta clay helped remove more of the contemporary metallic association with space but the use of burnishing and sawdust firing helped encompass the shine of what could be bronze due to the flashes of raw clay and oiled black.



*Sun Lander Discs
Each approx. 60mm x 20mm*

Rini Layden



Institution: De Montfort University

Course: Design Crafts

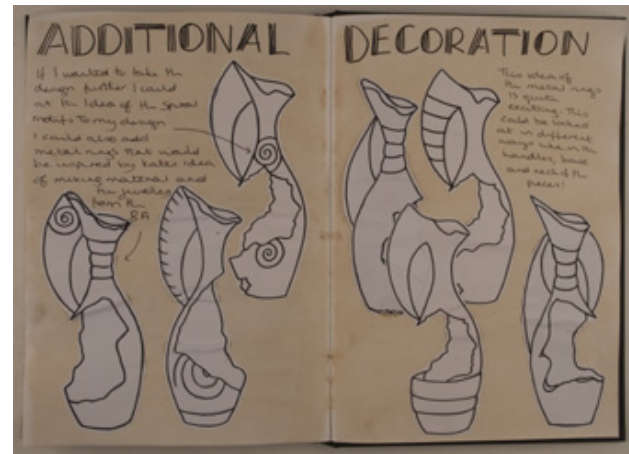
I used craft crank clay to create a non-functional jug. Three main features stand out; the large handle joined with a hinge, the open mouth, and the large piece missing from the centre. The glazes used have been hand mixed. A metallic oxide black to highlight the idea of mixing media and an earthy brown which would have been common in the Bronze Age. The large break in the middle represents where the sherds would have been. As they were lost it just leaves the negative space.



Title: Found

*250mm handle to spout
125mm bottom body
85mm circumference*

I was inspired by the lecture given by Dr Jo Sofaer and the sherds that she brought. This was the first time that I had handled ancient pieces and it made me question what the forms would have been like when they were whole. Also, what would the form look like with empty space where the sherds had been? This led me to look at broken surfaces found on archaeological pieces from the Bronze Age and I chose a collection of small elements from the lecture to research. One idea was that during the Bronze Age the processes were quite simple and that techniques for working with other materials were sometimes used for making pottery. Jo showed us an example of ceramic cups with handles attached using woodworking and metalworking techniques and I chose this idea to develop further. I used metal in my piece to create a hinged handle.



Notebook sketches



Ceramic sherds from the Bronze Age settlement at Százhalombatta, Hungary shown to Live Project participants as part of an object handling session. Courtesy Matrica Museum.

April Wernham



Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University

Course: Three Dimensional Design

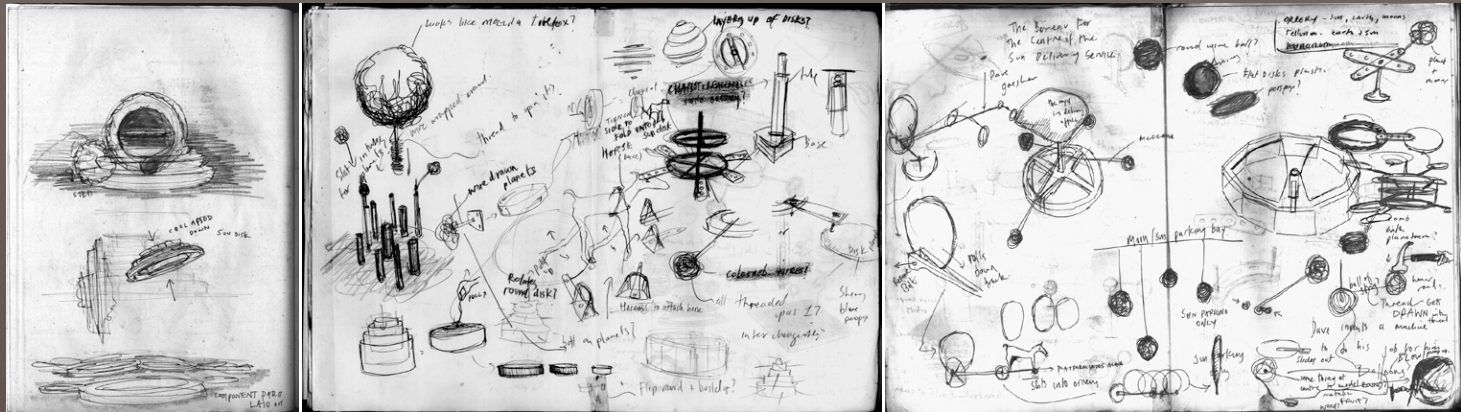
The aesthetically quirky Trundholm Sun Chariot is said to represent Bronze Age religion; it was believed that the sun was pulled across the sky each day by a horse. Charmed by this story I began exploring the solar system, discovering the 18th century miniature mechanical device, the Orrery.



*Title: Orrery & Star
Delivery Service*

each approx. 100mm x 100mm x 100mm





Sketches of work in progress

I aimed to create an Orrery which modelled the solar system according to Bronze Age conceptions of its existence but which presented itself as a simple and beautiful kinetic object for interaction. Alongside this a narrative emerged. Inspired by the horse's tale, but most importantly, and quite subtly, by our belittling modern response to it; viewing it as daft and ridiculous. The witty narrative places the story in a modern day context, highlighting how our modern culture can also be seen as ridiculous and daft. Taking these ancient beliefs, representing them in a 'turn of the century' scientific instrument, and reinterpreting that using modern day materials and design aesthetics was both challenging and fun. It also allowed me to gently defend our ancestors, studied by archaeologists with awe and surprised fascination, but really just as daft, just as wise, and just as surprisingly human as us.

Trundholm Sun Chariot, c.1400 BC. Image courtesy National Museum of Denmark.



Rosemary Chell



Institution: De Montfort University

Course: Design Crafts

The Bronze Age brief allowed me to view archaeological ceramics. At first I was particularly interested in deconstruction by thinking about sherds and my first intentions were to break my work once made and photograph it. However, through further research into Bronze Age symbols (the water bird, the sun, and horse), I began making my own symbols by looking at family photos. These symbols included a beach, sunset, my dogs, the canal boat, my sister and cousin. I was inspired by the motifs and symbols because I liked the idea of a hidden meaning and having to discover a meaning interested me. In samples I cut out sections to represent this concept.



Title: Bronze Age

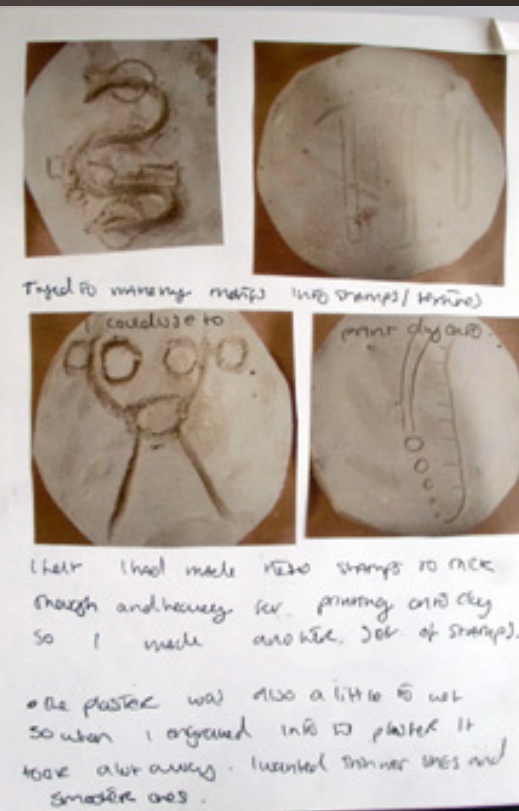
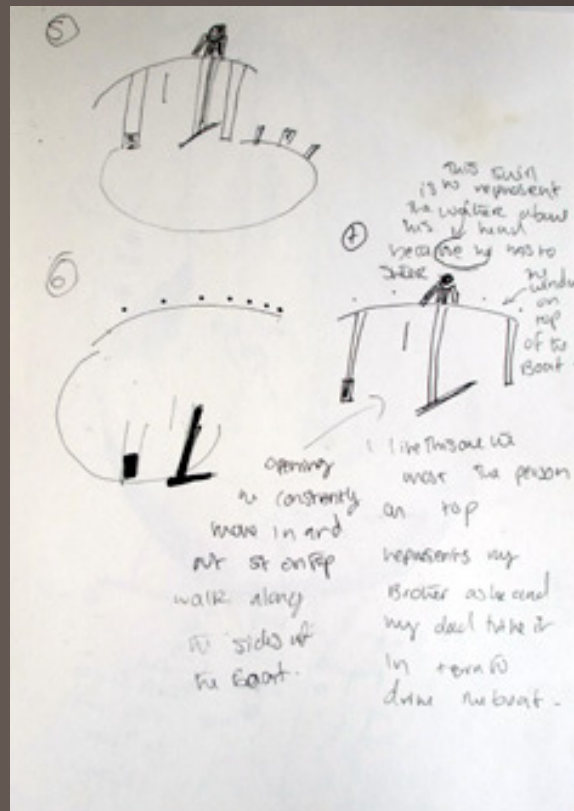
The final pieces were created from stoneware using white clay. The ceramic containers were designed to have a basic function and I used press moulded sprigs and coiled my ceramic forms. Sprigs and press moulds were made from clay models' gourds and then casting plaster. I used earthy coloured stoneware glazes. I intended to have an uneven glaze surface by altering the overall thickness of glaze. This was to represent object erosion over time. I was interested in thinness and practiced this concept in my work by taking away clay layers with a serrated kidney when it was leather hard. Edges were uneven in places - this was not deliberate although an effect I liked. In making I wanted my ceramic containers to be somewhat tactile with decoration that you could touch and feel. The symbols I designed were quite personal and used to create plaster samples to press into clay.

Dimensions:

Bowl 1: width 160 mm x height 120mm

Bowl 2: width 150mm x height 160 mm

Notebook sketches showing conception and experimentation



*Detail from bronze bucket showing water birds, 1400-1300 BC.
Image courtesy National Museum of Denmark.*



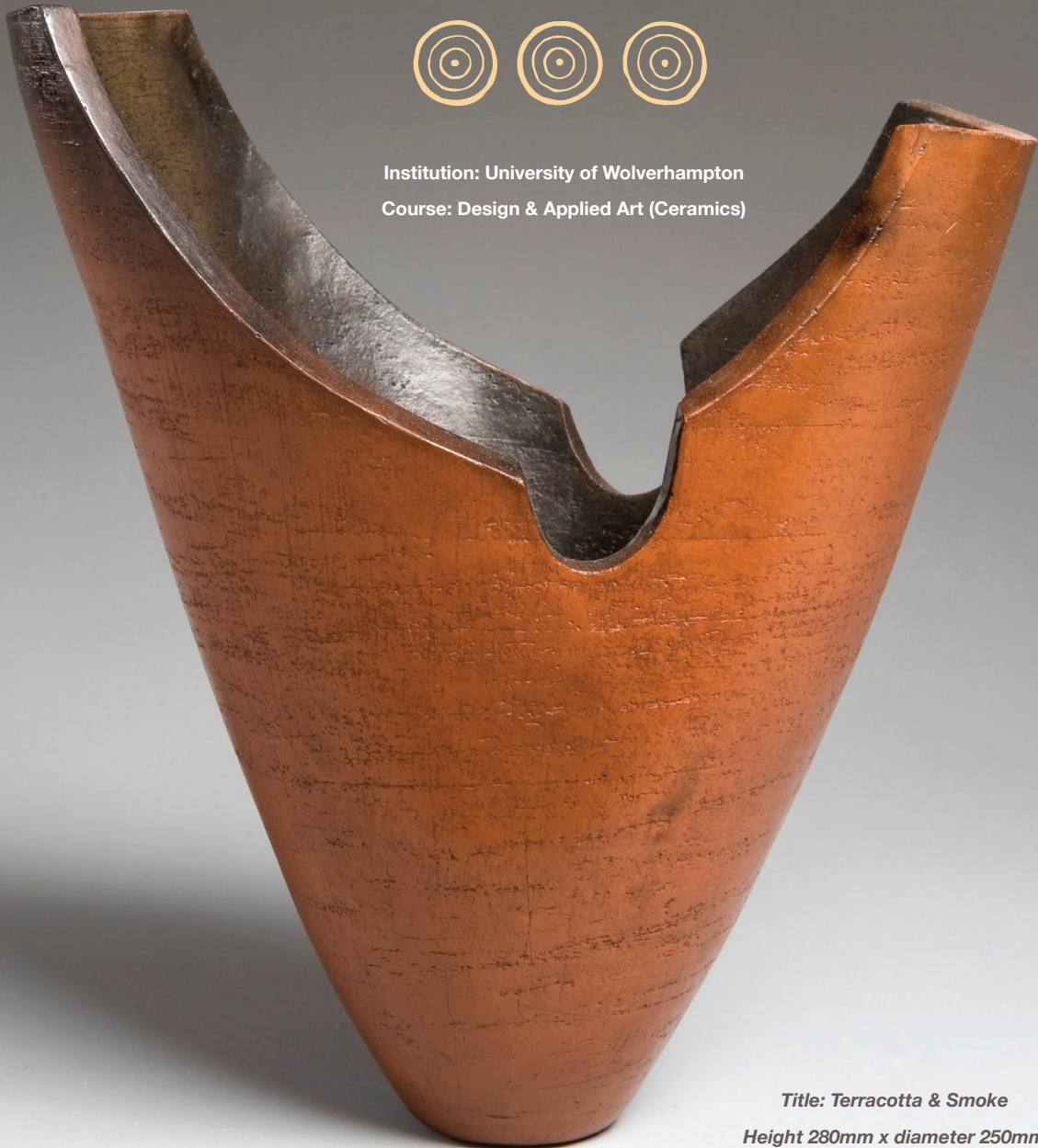
I first incised the designs using a pin tool and progressed by using plaster first to incise into the plaster squares and press them onto clay with these clay stamps. I then cast plaster on top giving a more refined linear decoration. As a designer/ maker a lot of my ideas/development are very 'hands on' and my ideas change as I make. Later in the project whilst making I created low relief by connecting small coils to produce my symbols. I decorated with uneven glaze thicknesses to represent erosion over time and decomposition.

Vivienne Saunders



Institution: University of Wolverhampton

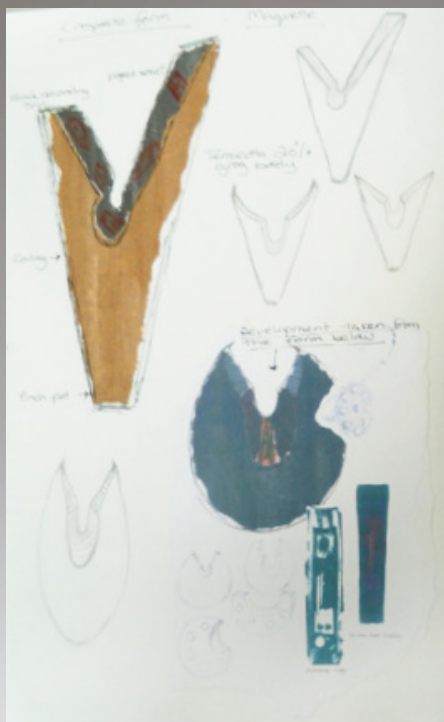
Course: Design & Applied Art (Ceramics)



Title: Terracotta & Smoke

Height 280mm x diameter 250mm

This Bronze Age project has given me the opportunity to research this fascinating period of history; a time of great change in the development of materials and culture. I have been particularly drawn to the mystery of the Lur, a bronze ceremonial horn, and its purpose within Bronze Age society. Lurs have been discovered in bog and marshland which were considered sacred places; rock carvings depict the Lurs in religious rites and most probably in funeral processions. I have been further inspired by burial images that show the belongings that accompanied the dead and wonder at the life stories these must hold. The handling session of Bronze Age pots at Blythe House and the visit to the British Museum has been invaluable; it has provided me with the stimulation to design, develop and hand build contemporary abstract ceramic forms that reflect the importance of these grave objects and rituals within the Bronze Age society.



Sketches of work in progress



Lur, c. 1000 BC.

Image courtesy National Museum of Denmark.

My abstract ceramic forms were inspired by the decorative plate of the Lur (a horn made of bronze) and the patterns on the forms were developed from burial images and metal implements found within Bronze Age graves. The forms were made using terracotta clay and my processes included pinching and coiling, methods used in the Bronze Age. I have applied images to the forms using paper resist and black decorating slip. The whole form has then been burnished using a smooth stone.

I was also inspired by the gold and bronze arm rings, axes and daggers often found within Bronze Age graves. My twisted rod design and oxidised copper decoration included within the ceramic form were developed from the shapes of these grave items. The holes in the copper plate represent the eight protrusions usually found around the trumpet end of the Lur.

In preparation for firing in an electric kiln, the form was wrapped in newspaper, and placed inside a sealed aluminium foil container called a saggar. The temperature was then raised high enough to burn the newspaper and provide a smoke atmosphere which darkened the abstract form. Polishing with beeswax completed the process.

Acknowledgements

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Jenny Walker and Sharon Blakey, Manchester Metropolitan University

Gwen Heeney, University of Wolverhampton

Learn more about the CinBA Live Project at

www.cinba.net/exhibition



Front cover image:

Necklace

Miriam Jones

Back cover image:

Hand thrown deconstructed ceramic vessels (detail)

Caroline Allen



“This exhibition tells the story of how the Bronze Age objects have inspired young craftspeople today.

What we can see is a diverse cornucopia of intriguing, classically produced and hybrid creations that reflect contemporary issues and concerns but inspired by the creative flowering of their experience of European heritage”.

*Prof. Janis Jefferies
CinBA Live
Project Curator.*

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