

Insights^{oo}

Sharon Bertram

Insights Tutor

The world of ceramics and pottery has a reputation for being a pretty white, middle class creative field. But things are changing; other voices are being heard.

Sharon introduces us to some ceramic artists who are using this creative medium to represent a duality in their identities.

Before we explore the theme, 'the duality of otherness' we need to describe the concept of 'otherness' and what it means in today's society. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as:

"Being or feeling different in appearance or character from what is familiar, expected, or generally accepted".

There are different aspects to otherness; race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, class and culture are to name a few. The duality of otherness focuses on two of these aspects; 'race' and 'culture' when expressing a single identity faced with the opposition of otherness. Being creatives, we have the privilege to express our ideas through narratives of personal truths and experiences of ourselves and other people.

Using ceramics to explore this theme through self-expression is a good way to develop a project. The clay material itself has its own sense of duality, it can be either abstract or representational, functional or decorative, conceptual or purely experimental. You can focus on the shape and form and/or the surface design or mark making in the work you make.

As inspiration, I've selected four ceramic artists that address the concept of the duality and otherness successfully in their work.

Roberto Lugo



Credit: 'To Disarm: Theaster Gates and Kerry James Marshall', 2019, courtesy of the artist.

Roberto Lugo is an American graffiti artist, poet, potter, educator and community activist for social justice. His work undeniably carries a message of representing a certain culture and being able to share where he is from by the visual stories told through his pottery. His work persuades the viewer to confront his pots and provokes conversations of race, culture economics and class.

Ceramics has a history of making objects that are exclusive to the elite and middle class. Roberto uses these relationships to create work that has both the decorative elegance of ceramics made for the rich in contrast with imagery that represents with portraits of individuals whose faces are historically underrepresented in the context of art history.

Roberto's work is sold through the Wexler Gallery.

[Head to the Wexler Gallery online to see more of his work and videos](#)

Sandra Whyles



Credit: 'Afroism' (2019) © Sandra Whyles, courtesy of the artist.

Quarter finalist contestant of the [Great British Pottery Throwdown in 2015](#), ceramic artist Sandra Whyles uses the media of clay vessel making, printing and photography. She researches and experiments with personal and social themes (past and present) in her art practice. Sandra's work brings into view the forgotten against the familiar; obscured imagery and pictograms of African and Caribbean traditions, culture and life. In doing so she raises questions, inviting you to consider the pairing of political and aesthetic elements of her work. Sandra's latest project involves popularising and normalising afro hair and its many interpretations and manifestations, whether past or present, onto everyday tableware such as cups and plates.

You can find Sharon Whyles' book called 'Blue and White' self-published in 2008 at the British Library.

Sharon Norwood



Credit: 'Tea Time' (2018) © Sharon Norwood, courtesy of the artist.

Sharon's work spans several different media including drawing, painting and ceramics. Her drawings on paper transfer comfortably onto her ceramic cups. Her hair drawings are like specimens taken from her two-dimensional drawings and applied to three-dimensional form. She uses lines within her art practice as a way to explore complex relationships and to convey a message that addresses issues of identity. As an artist of Jamaican ancestry, who lives in Toronto, Canada, the subject of her work comes from her own account of social, political and cultural frameworks. Sandra is interested in creating a dialogue that is subtle, thought provoking and presents issues of race, gender and class.

[Discover more about Sharon Norwood's and the power of lines in her work via Creative loafing](#)

Kevin Snipes



Credit: 'La dee da 02', Kevin Snipes, courtesy of the artist.

From very young age artist Kevin Snipes liked to build things from Lego or child construction toys. Kevin is an American artist who was born in Philadelphia, however he grew up mostly in Cleveland, Ohio.

At school he would spend his time drawing until later when he discovered the important development of combining his talent for drawing with his love of building ceramic pieces. Kevin considers his own placement as an artist within the world of arts and crafts as an opportunity to focus his interest in the concept of duality and otherness. His drawings on clay are the canvas for his storytelling. He describes his work as having "multiple sides that come together, a constantly evolving interrelationship, of people and things" that come to play in his work. Kevin explains there are many types of dualities in his work. If you look closely, you will find.

[Find out more about Kevin Snipes on his website](#)