

(De)generate Ceramics:

slide 1

So, my final year project concerns a term I've coined as (De)generate Ceramics. It revolves around a concept which looks at degenerative and generative processes, constantly evolving a visual vocabulary that I developed during my B.A. and aim to continue exploring after I graduate.

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*I am using the Definition of **DEGENERATE** as:*

Having lost the physical, mental or moral qualities considered normal, lacking some usual or expected quality, in particular: corrupt or decadent.

& defining **GENERATIVE as:**

Using rules to generate surface forms from underlying, abstract forms.

slide 3

Vitrified ceramics can be seen as an eternal homage to its once living, but now deteriorated organic matter.

This polarity inspires my work to follow a personal journey into the aesthetics of generative & degenerative ceramics.

I use both digital & analogue techniques to explore the themes.

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Analogue & digital is another polarity that inspires my work. The difference is best explained by comparing the physical and the virtual, both can be seen to 'exist' and also reflect each other, however interaction with anything digital requires a computer interface to interpret the data and translate it for our sensory system.

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To investigate the Analogue side of my work I use manual techniques (such as using the wheel and hand painted glaze) to explore the aesthetics of decay; aiming to create permanent interpretations of temporal surfaces, such as mold and decomposition.

slide 6

On the other hand, digital forms (manifested via 3D printing) had only previously existed virtually, now live on two levels; as time based phenomena and also as physical items.

This project aims to unite the digital and analogue by creating hyperreal objects that bridge these two worlds.

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Hyperreality is an inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation, especially in technologically advanced postmodern societies. It is a condition in which what is real and what is fiction are blended together so that there is no clear distinction between where one ends and the other begins.

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Hyperreality allows the co-mingling of physical reality with virtual reality. This postmodern & semiotic concept was contentiously coined by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard defined "hyperreality" as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality".

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The previous slide and this one show photographs of my most recent work interpreting the virtual nature of this subject. These are not photoshopped or digital renderings of my models as were shown in an earlier slide with the 3D printed object. These are ceramic and therefore permanent forms created from centuries of decayed organic matter.

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As a maker I enjoy the challenge and physicality of creating but especially so in ceramics. It is arguably the most malleable of materials to make with and can be formed into anything with the correct application. I enjoy these photographs as bringing the work full cycle back to my topic. For me they depict an almost virtual scene in physical reality.

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This slide shows another stream of my exploration with clay. The tiles are designed on the computer to tessellate & are then 3D printed, moulded and cast. The positive and negative geometry alludes back to the initial polar concepts of generation vs degeneration and also digital vs analogue.

slide 12

Visually I am drawn to decay as an aesthetic and I find the crumbling & decrepit fascinating. It speaks to me of life and ultimately death, an infinite cycle of cross cultural and historical interest. We all look to find some form of meaning to justify life and the individual stories told are unique yet not mutually exclusive.

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My visual research often involves macro photography of surfaces that I find interesting or inspiring. This slide shows a couple of photos of naturally decaying scenes and the others are of permanent surfaces that are my interpretation of this aesthetic that I have made in ceramics.

slide 14

My work also involves a very experimental approach. I use systematical glaze research, recording and re-testing to get results that I can tweak, reproduce and ultimately apply to forms. This slide shows some of the glaze tests I am carrying forward in this way. The test tiles are all on cast of my 3D printed model for continuity.

slide 15

This slide shows a photograph of mouldy porcelain from being kept in a closed bag and a more complex technique I am pursuing of layering different glazes in multiple firings, this process is chaotic and unpredictable. I like the challenge of reproducing such effects, as I was told in my first year; 'once is a fluke twice is a technique.'

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I find that the digital degeneration techniques I've developed are contrasting yet sympathetic to my chaotic glaze testing. I enjoy the unpredictable as much as designing on the computer and getting (almost) exactly what you

see on screen. Despite this it was a strange sensation to hold in my hands what I had only previously interacted with virtually.

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Much like that film “The Truman Show” tells the story of a man who lived in a world he believed to be ‘real’, and later finds out it is entirely a simulation. My work seeks to emulate this illusion & capture the essence of a divided or polarised reality. As modern quantum physicists casually point out; the scientific and the spiritual now converge.

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As modern humans we all know we are made of genetic ‘code’ and that computers create virtual realities from similar bits (or bytes) of code. Mankind has created a new digital world for itself, from games to the internet we can share information with speeds unimaginable to our predecessors that should, or could, speed up our evolutionary curve indefinitely.

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I find all of this endlessly fascinating and attempt to weave my own version of this infinite story into my work. It give me a great source of inspiration and enjoyment to try & simplify these complicated themes into a single polarity, or if if you will, binary concept. I find it difficult but personally gratifying with plenty to think about.

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Thats the end of my presentation. I hope it gives context & that I've somehow managed to convey some of the ideas that drive me to make the work that I do. Thank you for listening!