

# strum arts

with Fran Voss

## Vessels proves to be anything but empty

By JO McINTYRE

**V**essel — Spaces was the title of Bettina Baumann's recent impressive ceramic exhibition at the Powerhouse Gallery.

Born in Switzerland, Baumann gained degrees from the Universities of Zurich and Wales in 1992 and 1999.

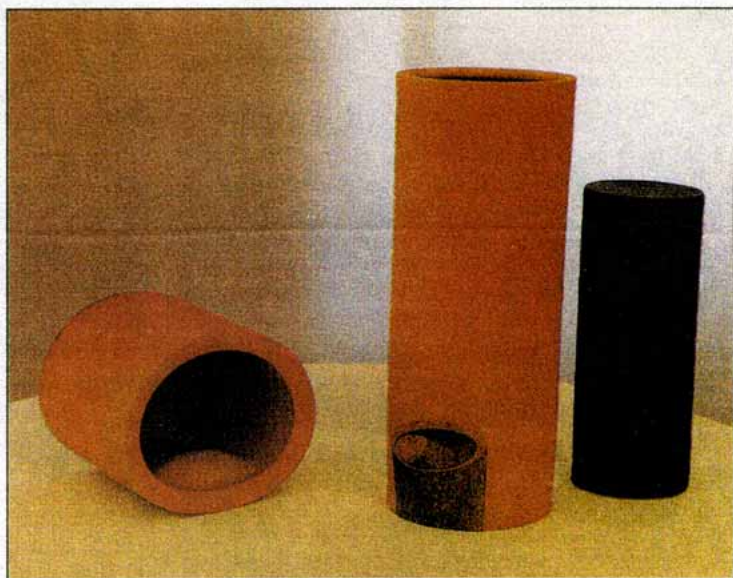
She has exhibited internationally as well as in Australia since 1997.

Heidegger's words; "The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as the holding vessel," pertain to Baumann's "space" — that which is contained by the clay, pipe, body, mind, plant or building.

Historically, vessels have defined the life of human beings, and have been conducive to communication and interaction.

For Baumann, the vessel serves as a membrane between the inside-outside dichotomy, the external, changing surface and the internal, invisible self or body.

She explores the organic and the constructed, the smooth and the rough, their inter-relationship, harmonies, contrasts and tensions, using the form as a canvas onto which impressions are projected. Using stoneware and raku



● Bettina Baumann explores the function and form of vessels.

clay, which is "good for throwing", forgiving and which achieves the desired, seamless form quickly, she manipulates it before it is leather-hard.

Forms are multifired, with oxides, glazes or decals which have been made from other vessels, applied to the surfaces. The three-dimensional forms, onto some of which two-dimensional digital images have been applied, may lie, stand on their bases or sit upon one another — a connected group.

Pressure exerted equates with inner energy, as in one's body or that of a plant. Some forms erupt, polyp-like, some resemble fabrics, foam or felt, in the intricate surface applications of glazes.

Earthy or apply greens, yellow or cream ochres link them to the land, the supreme vessel, while the discreetly screened blue form alludes to the ultimate form of life energy. Beautifully presented and lit, this professional show was a joy.