

BLACK/WHITE
+
the space inbetween¹

Kate Holt, May 2026

The Oyster Project

Oysters have been a delicacy for indigenous cultures around the world for centuries. Filtering toxins and microplastics from sea water, these self-cleaning bi-valve molluscs represent the smallest of Eco-Warriors.

The remarkable shells are shaped by their local marine environment, and collectively, they provide a permanent record of the geologies and ecologies of threatened coastal environments across the globe.

What began as an initial study of Moreton Bay rock oysters for the Ceramic Exhibition Commune in 2023, has expanded into an enduring fascination over 3 years.

Making

As an architect, design, structure, and process are important to me.

The interiority of ceramics with its end-to-end process, enables one to experiment without risk. With no client briefs, fixed budgets, or time constraints, I found you can do much with little.

A few themes run through the work exhibited here at Markers Gallery:

The first theme is about the **subject**, developing an understanding of the structure, form and composition of an oyster. No matter where they are found, each one is similar but different.

I'm learning about their different ecologies, surfaces and habitats that all contribute to their uniqueness without destroying the essence of what makes an oyster an oyster.

The second theme deals with the **materiality** of clay - understanding what the clay can do, what its limits are, and when it is likely to fail.

Using the Japanese technique of *nerikomi* - I combine two clays - a white porcelain and a black midfire clay that are randomly laminated. Each clay retains its' clarity to a point, before the space between becomes so compressed that the clays begin to meld.

¹Inbetween...is grammatically incorrect as a compound adjective. In-between is preferable.

I have deliberately chosen this form as it concretises the *nerikomi* technique I've used and its' resultant effects of Coalescence

The last theme seeks to gain control of the alchemy of glazing through firing. Here, the **texture of the clay surface** tends to dictate the degree of blending, producing unpredictable landscapes.

The results exhibited here form two distinctive sets: one with clays and one with glazes. While both sets are studies of **landscapes in black/white + the space in between.**² Each piece, no matter how small, is unique and unrepeatable.

The title of the exhibition contracts the words in-between. Although considered grammatically incorrect as a compound adjective, I have deliberately used this contraction to reflect the *nerikomi* technique which is all about coalescence.

In terms of space, I've long held an architectural interest in the Japanese concept of *ma* - (間) which is dedicated to bringing to the fore the space in between.

While *ma* is more easily explored in music, art and cinema, it has returned for me in ceramics through these more abstract landscapes afforded by the serendipity of *nerikomi*.

In this the space, presents a third condition which is visually complex, abstract, and quite unique to each piece. Described in German as *Zwischenraum*, these two clay bodies intertwine; randomly intersecting, colliding or combining to form a manifold cloak of greys.

²I also favoured using the German word – *Zwischen* (preposition) German meaning *between...*and cosequently ***Zwischenraum***, (noun) which refers to the gap or space between objects. Often used in artistic, cinematic and architectural contexts it captures the tension, or metaphorical presence of the space – real or perceived.