



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, *Idol*, 2014, red terracotta, 89 x 60 x 46cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran: Clay iconoclast

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Working in an art school places me in an incredibly privileged position. Everyday I meet young and energetic creative students who bring their talent and imagination onto the campus. I often wonder which one of these fabulous young people will be ‘the next big thing’. And every once in a while one of those smart, savvy artists breaks out with such a splash that they leave in their wake a campus trying to catch its breath and marvelling at its own creation.

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran is one of those ‘break-out’ artists. To say that he is smart and savvy is an understatement. He is fluent in the language of art – so much so that he rejects its exclusivity; his work is founded in intense research of his subjects, including Hindu and Christian mythologies, and he works incredibly hard building his pieces. He is also generous with his time and practice, often helping others by providing them access to art and technical skills – especially those who have had such privileges denied them.

With the ongoing march of digital art technology, more and more young artists are turning to the computer to explore their creative imaginings. Ramesh, though, is exploring a traditional and ancient medium in a brand new way. Sitting with him in his ceramic studio in inner-city Sydney and watching him work is an experience that once had is not soon forgotten. The pure physicality of his work demands a purely physical approach to its creation.

Ramesh builds his pieces with an outcome in mind, yet the path to that outcome is left open, allowing the medium of clay to inform him. He is intimate with the medium and has great respect for it. The Melbourne-based contemporary ceramic artist Vipoo Srivilasa says that

Ramesh’s ‘understanding [of the medium] is demonstrated by the large physical size of his work. His ability to control complex forms allows him to create work that looks simple and naive, yet is complicated to construct.’¹

Is Ramesh an experimental artist? I would argue that experimentation is a guiding principle of his practice. He is always looking for new ways to explore his ideas through ceramics, initially through his drawings and then sometimes working with layering different clays or glaze upon glaze in the hope that something magical will happen in the kiln. At other times this experimentation takes the form of pushing the physical boundaries of size and shape of a single work and developing new ways ceramic works can be built.

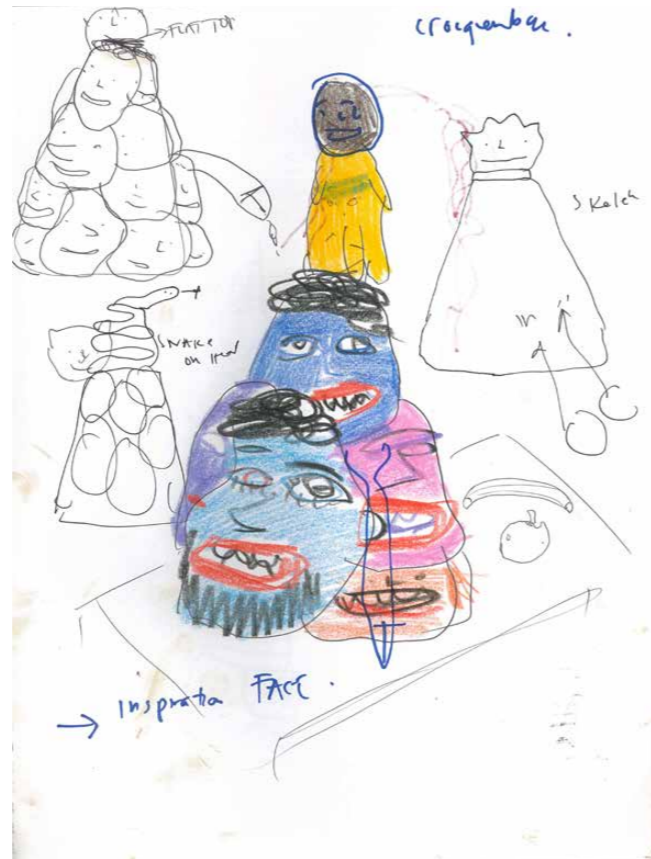
Vipoo sees Ramesh as ‘fearless’, saying that he is ‘not afraid of playing with the traditional medium of clay using a diverse range of working methods. This enables him to create his own unique contemporary art language. His unconventional approach to clay breaks down the barriers of ceramic tradition.’²

Indeed, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran is a contemporary art revolutionary whose work can be viewed as iconoclastic – he really does challenge the long-held beliefs that ceramics is merely a ‘craft’, as he uses the medium to enter and engage with the domains of political and contemporary art paradigms.

1. In conversation with the author, May 2015.

2. *ibid.*

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran’s exhibition ‘Archipelago’ is at the Shepparton Art Museum as part of the 2015 Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Award from 22 August to 22 November 2015.

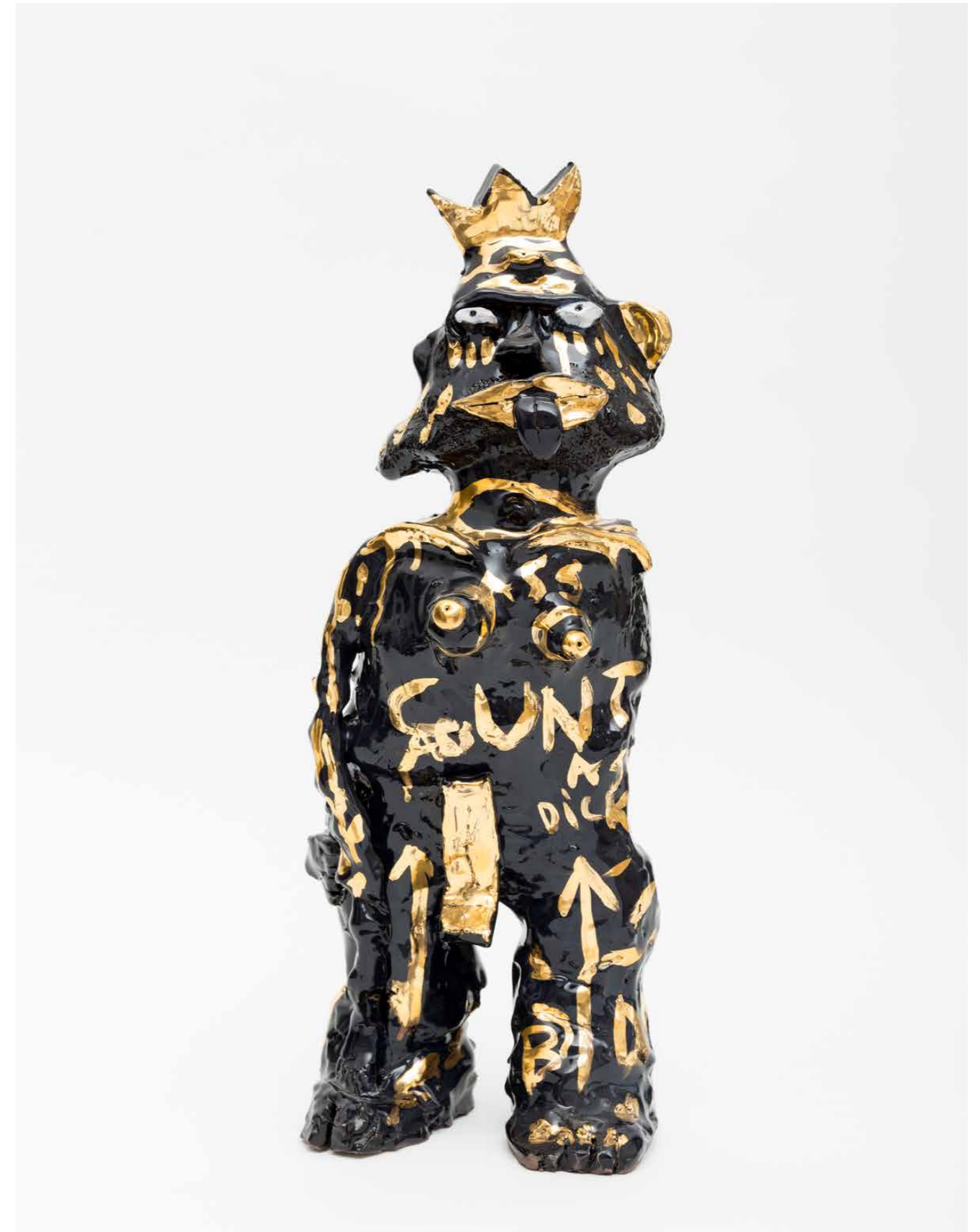


Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, excerpt from visual diary, 2015; image courtesy the artist

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Shithead, 2014, earthenware, red terracotta, glaze and gold lustre, 60 x 49 x 50cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Pewter Dickhead, 2014, earthenware and glaze, 49 x 16 x 15cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Black And Gold Dickhead, 2014, earthenware, glaze and gold lustre, 45 x 16 x 16cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, *Self Portrait (Birthing)*, 2014, earthenware, red terracotta, glaze and gold lustre, 40 x 23 x 17cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, *Yellow Dickhead*, 2014, earthenware, red terracotta, glaze and gold lustre, 38 x 22 x 16cm; image courtesy the artist and Gallery 9, Sydney; photo: Simon Hewson