

Bricks in the Rain



from
(H).

45/hr up to 250°C
60-70/hr up to 450°C
temp.
50/60 hr.



TIME TEMP COMMENT.

TIME	TEMP
9:15	765
9:30	771
9:45	785
10:00	797
10:15	842
10:30	867
10:45	886°C
11:00	904°C
11:15	926
11:30	942
11:45	965
12:00	984
12:15	999
12:30	1012
12:45	

Mr. Wang Turned down
Bottom Burners + (on) Top L
& Top Right @ Front.

All 6 gas burners up a little
turn air up a little in all burners

11:45 165
 12:00 98.4
 12:15 -999
 12:30 -1012
 12:45 -1025.
 1:00 -1036
 1:15 -1047
 1:30 -1055

All 6 gun barrels a little
 turn air up a little on all barrels

increase upstraw a little on all
 barrels
 CONE GOING DOWN.

* Mr Wong will put top
 barrels on at 10pm ~
 and he did!!! and then Laura left
 and we were sad...

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Bricks in the Rain

Featuring ceramics by

Christine Aschwanden Tina Byrne Sara Flynn Peter Fulop Gabriele Gisi Sinéad Glynn
Frances Lambe Michael Moore Kathleen Moroney

Laura O'Hagan Mandy Parslow Neil Read Elaine Riordan Alex Scott Kathleen Standen
Eva Vogelsang

Interviews: Eleanor Flegg

Film and photography: Andrew Standen Raz

Sound: Eleanor Flegg and Declan ÓCualáin

Curation: Hilary Morley



Foreword

In the autumn of 2011 a group of thirteen Irish ceramic artists, selected by a specialist panel, travelled to Fuping, Shaanxi Province, China to create the founding collection for the recently built Irish pavilion at FuLe International Ceramic Art Museums (FLICAM). Founded by Dr. I chi Hsu and the Futo Industrial Group, FLICAM aims to be a world leader in the field of contemporary artistic practice, and its emphasis on residency, coupled with the resulting exhibitions, gives it an enviable reputation. FLICAM houses more than ten museums from different countries, an international ceramic documentary centre and has collected over 10,000 ceramic artworks. Its aim is to advance the development of the art form world-wide, promote interaction within the international ceramic art community and co-ordinate and promote exhibitions.

Therefore, for Ireland to be chosen as the host nation of its newest pavilion in 2011 was a notable honour. The thirteen selected artists (Tina Byrne, Sara Flynn, Peter Fulop, Sinéad Glynn, Frances Lambe, Michael Moore, Kathleen Moroney, Laura O'Hagan, Mandy Parslow, Neil Read, Elaine Riordan, Alex Scott and Kathleen Standen) had to meet a rigorous set of criteria to ensure that Ireland's pavilion would contain ceramic art of quality and which represented the current state of the genre in Ireland. The exhibition 'Bricks in the Rain' is based on work that was inspired by the Fuping residency. The resulting work is highly engaging and technically as strong as any ceramic art made at the highest level internationally across the various types of ceramic practice, whether vessel, installation or sculptural. Perhaps the exhibition's greatest achievement is the overall coherence of the work displayed, coming out of a five-week residency in which all thirteen artists designed, made, ate and slept in close proximity to each other.

The sculptural work of Scott and Riordan for instance exudes that same sense of curvilinear constructivist form, that almost calls out to the viewer to touch, such is the finely finished surface of both of their sculptural forms. Likewise with the work of Byrne and Glynn, the installation aspect of the work is of crucial significance in terms of its impact on the onlooker. In Sara Flynn's work the replication of the vessel form is executed to a very high technical skill, with an installation-like effect in its final arrangement. In the works produced by Flynn and Fulop in particular, the influence of the Asian continent's remarkable legacy in the ceramic art form is visible to all. The wide platter-like painterly expression of Fulop's work provides a direct link to East Asia's historical invention and development of various clays and associated artefacts in ceramic practice. Other artists such as Lambe, Moore and Moroney continue to draw on the strength of their renowned sculptural works in order to create subtle variations on the same theme. For example, Lambe uses hand-building to create a form not unlike her renowned 'sea beam' sculptural works, but with a variation on the use of perforation. On this occasion inspiration is found in the mapping of townland and landscape, taking precedent over constellation and astronomy. The works of O'Hagan, Parslow, Read and Standen exemplify the primary reason behind an international residency, i.e. the opportunity to build on and enhance an existing skill set and aesthetic ability under unique circumstances and using a different inspirational platform. Underlining the importance of this inspirational background to the exhibited works, 'Bricks in the Rain' also encompasses archival interviews, film and sound recordings, thereby making it an innovative display in the field of Irish contemporary ceramic art. The fact the exhibition will travel on from Farnleigh to Belfast and Cork reiterates the significance of this show. Its significance lies in the work itself and also in the comprehensive benchmarking involved in documenting this seminal moment in the history of clay-based studio practice in Ireland and its reverberation on the world stage.

Dr. Audrey Whitty, Curator – Ceramics, Glass & Asian collections, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks



'I'm blogging the adventure' posted Eleanor Flegg (China residency archivist) on her Facebook page, a year ago this August. Not fond of reading text from a computer screen, I printed out her daily blog and followed the ups and downs of intrepid ceramic artists, some of whom I've known for over 20 years and who travelled to China for a month's residency. I loved reading about the trip and became familiar with the welcome, understanding and humanity of their Chinese hosts and colleagues who worked in close proximity to them.

Little did I know that a seed had been sown for my intimate connection with the group; early in 2012 they asked me to curate their multi-disciplinary response show; how could I refuse?

Along with their resident-writer and film-maker, these artists truly embraced China, despite loneliness, exhaustion, and even heartache. Facing the challenges of starting from scratch, without familiar studio, materials or equipment pushed them into strange but exciting new directions, forcing them to re-invent themselves whilst still achieving quality and excellence.

I really like people who work with clay. I appreciate the unique sensuality associated with their material, whether used to make decorative or functional objects. These ceramicists are technical gurus, teachers, chemists and above all, creative artists. All this comes to light through the level of ingenuity, emotion, colour, humour and tenacity reflected in their work, particularly in this unique exhibition.

I have encouraged them to push the boundaries and have some fun, and I hope that they have enjoyed themselves. I have had a marvellous time.

I am forever in their debt.

I am humbled by their generosity and kindness.

I smile at our shared history.

I delight in our friendship.

Hilary Morley, Curator



Eleanor Flegg 佛勒格 依兰孀

In China, life happens around the edges of the things that you are meant to be doing, in the park at dawn, under bridges, or in the spaces around Xian's city walls. Music and dancing happen in the street, against the noise of traffic which is as pervasive as dust. Frogs sing in the rain and there are fireworks, day and night. Every morning a man plays his flute as he walks in the park at dawn, a hoarse, throaty music. I followed him like a stalker, microphone in hand, but the people in the park already thought us so odd that it made little difference. A group of dancers met there as the sun was rising. They had a little CD player and danced to what was probably 1980s Chinese pop. At first I asked them if I could record the sound but I came back to dance with them every morning; they made me welcome and I felt that I had become part of something. And in Fuping Town, on a dusty night-time wander, we found a quartet of people singing songs from traditional Chinese opera in a hospital toll-booth. I recorded these moments of pure and generous giving.

As a lone writer amid a troop of ceramic artists, my role in Fuping was to document the residency. It was a challenging job. We were all struggling to adapt to a new environment and under pressure to make good work in unfamiliar conditions. Each of us had our misgivings, our own personal demons to contend with, and we were far from home. It is difficult, as a story-teller, to work with living people and to tell their story at the same time as it unfolds beneath them, but it is also more immediate and rewarding than any other type of writing that I know.

This piece is a patchwork of extracts from interviews taken at different stages of the residency. They are conversations, recorded and transcribed, and although they have been lightly edited for grammar most of the language has been left undisturbed to retain the immediacy of the spoken word. From the beginning I saw the residency as more than the work that it produced, it was also the experience of spending a month in a Chinese brick factory, of interacting with the people who worked there, and the unparalleled privilege of exploring the dusty world beyond. I have tried to reflect that breadth of contextual scope in these extracts, selected from many hours of conversation. The interviews were undertaken in many different situations but most of them took place on at a table in a hotel bedroom. There was sound reasoning behind this precarious arrangement. Andrew Standen-Raz filmed the interviews and, in order to get the cinematic background of the endlessly smoking factory chimneys, a little perspective was required.

Extracts from Eleanor's interviews with each of the Irish artists can be found on their individual pages.



Andrew Standen Raz 雷治 斯丹登 安居

I arrived in China after several hectic months in Europe. I was stressed to the point of absolute exhaustion and fever, but I had made a promise to film in China so there was no backing out. Since this was my first trip to this fascinating country, I arrived on the one hand completely open to what I might find there, and on the other completely daunted by the prospect ahead of me: to single-handedly document the residency of 13 Irish artists, in the middle of China, on a less than shoestring budget, and end up with a watchable, professional documentary that would normally cost a lot more and involve several assistants with sound, image etc. And to be responsible for filming and photographs at the same time! How would I choose in each moment if this was a filmic moment, or a snapshot, or a photograph requiring some careful composition? What if I missed some essential step in any of the artists' work process and ruined any chance of creating a coherent story from a huge mess of MOVs and RAW files? It seemed like a miracle was required to make this work out. Not helpful to my daily raging fever were the almost constant damp, rainy, grey weather, the unfamiliar high pollution levels which made it hard for me even to breathe, and having to cope with spicy Chinese food for breakfast when all you crave is a dry piece of toast or a bowl of chicken noodle soup. I felt most badly for the artists, who had expected a healthy documentary filmmaker and photographer to spring into action straight away, and instead were introduced to a wheezing, red-eyed wreck who could barely manage to lift his camera. Which is where things improved very fast. It is impossible to be miserable for long in the company of 13 funny, charming, talented, gregarious, inquisitive, lovely, welcoming Irish artists. I can imagine with another nationality how this might have been very different, but with the Irish resident artists, I recovered fast with donated medicines and fresh fruit. I was also quickly inspired to start filming as I walked around the large complex and work space, observing each artist in the large works space, their minds and hearts intent on producing a miracle of their own: a museum worthy piece of ceramic art in barely a month using unfamiliar kilns and clay. Over the course of the residency, I learned more about ceramics than I ever thought I would, and was even encouraged by the group to try and create a couple of pieces myself. Equally fascinating were the ceramic complex, the friendly and helpful local people and extraordinary sights of Fuping and Xi'an, and the Mad Max-like brick and tile factory, whose smoggy chimneys we all lived next to 24hrs a day. The unfettered access I had to the factory and its workers was a filmmaker's dream, and a wonderful opportunity to contrast the Chinese workers' practical dealings with the clay that passed through their fingers every day, with the Irish artists more complex relationship to that same clay. The freedom to film was so unexpected from all I had learned of China before coming there.

It's actually harder to film in NYC. What did I take away with me from this experience? It's impossible to pinpoint just one thing, but it goes without saying that I developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of ceramic art and also a very strong desire to return to China. As our host, Dr. I Chi said, "There's no way you can prepare until you get here – you have to feel it yourself."



BRICKS IN THE RAIN video installation

(A.C. Standen-Raz)

The BRICKS IN THE RAIN video installation consists of two looping streams of video clips filmed on a 5D Mark II during the FLICAM Irish residency over 5 weeks in 2011. The first stream is drawn from clips filmed while selected Irish artists designed, constructed and completed various sculptural ceramic forms in preparation for a final show in central China in October, 2012. The second stream shows the daily routine of Chinese factory workers as they create the clay used by these same Irish artists from raw materials drawn from the local area near Fuping.

The split screen effect allows the viewer to experience the actual working conditions for the two very different groups of workers: the Chinese workers on the factory side and the Irish artists in their workspace area, existing daily in their respective workspaces for 5 weeks as close as 10 metres from one another, separated only by a brick wall. The wall is far from impermeable - sounds, dust, clay, and the workers and artists move between the areas; the artists in search of the clay they need for their art works, the workers to bring the materials to the artists, or to transit between work and home.

Day and night, the constant flow of creation occurs on both sides of the wall. In the factory, the process is for survival at its most basic level. Subsistence on low wages, in a perpetual motion of repetitive tasks to produce the mundane objects that construct our world - bricks, floor tiles, roof tiles. On the other side, the artists also have a rhythmic flow to their creative process - kneading, firing, glazing - but their work in general has a different value and purpose in our daily lives.

The Chinese workers will remain in their endless motion of producing clay in its most basic forms. The Irish artists will stay just five weeks. But both groups leave permanent affects on each other. Through daily interaction and dialogue (seen in some scenes as artists and workers move within the other's space), the Chinese workers see what their clay can become in an artist's hands, and the Irish artists build a new appreciation for the often-unseen hands that produce the basic materials for their sculptural forms.

The music used for the installation is "Saffron Revolution" by Christian Fennesz, an Austrian electronic composer and musician. Fennesz has created soundtracks for several films, and worked with Ryuichi Sakamoto, Yoko Ono, Keith Rowe, Sparklehorse, David Sylvian, Peter Rehberg, and Jim O'Rourke amongst many others.







Christine Aschwanden

克里斯丁 阿绪旺登

"In the middle of nowhere" is an installation, consisting of multiple white porcelain animals, which are arranged around a somewhat bigger black animal-like object. The white mythical animals seem dead, like tender, frail shells, left behind. They are Embryo-like, parched and starved. The scene is dominated by a slightly bigger black "animal." It is faceless, just a shell in fur.

Is it a place of refuge, place of protection, perhaps a cave? Or is it a menace? Could it be even the source of the others' deaths?

The beholder is free to interpret whatever he/ she wants to interpret from the object: What really happened? Here? Somewhere? Within? Anywhere?

This work is a search for forms that convey a feeling of security, but which turn suddenly into forms that threaten.







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

In my studio, products emerge, that are far from the constraints of mass production. Individual objects that carry my distinctive signature, from the first sketch to the last tweak. Each piece is a new creative challenge; I relish the combination of artistic work and solid crafts.

I wish for a playful approach towards my work and aim for objects that arouse, raise questions and challenge commodities. Furthermore, my objects shall make people smile benignly and shall animate for reflection. My work shall communicate and convey a message Objects telling stories.

Opposite page: Fat Booty series ea: 30cm to 40cm.

This page: Fat Booty series

Photography: Karin Scheidegger



Tina Byrne 拜伦 婷娜

"We're babysitting the kilns because they're run with gas and they need tweaking and monitoring on a regular basis. And I was on the shift from four to eight in the morning with Sara. And about five, in the dead of night, when it was pitch dark in the studio – apart from the few bulbs that exist in that space – this little girl appeared into us, who is normally there during the day, wandering around doing I really don't know what. But there she was, at five o'clock in the morning, half asleep, eyes half closed, really, I think, looking for company. She smiled and she giggled and she sidled up to us and played with my phone for a little while, and sat down and put her hands around a welcome cup of hot water, tea really. She wouldn't drink it, she wouldn't take a biscuit, but it was lovely and warm and toasty for her hands. So she sat quietly for about fifteen minutes and then proceeded to put her head on her arms and fall asleep on the table for about an hour. It was both sweet and disarming as to why this girl was wandering around at about five in the morning in this eerie factory. And, after that, Sara and I started to really feel the cold at about six and we had a game of badminton at the end of the studio. The little girl woke up and came down and joined us. So we had a good laugh and a good giggle and at about seven she tottered off and went about her day. That was that – it was a brief visit".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 21 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

What an adventure! I had the chance to spend five weeks in China making work. It was nearly too good to be true. What an opportunity, spending this amount of time in the studio with 12 ceramic artists from Ireland. It will never be repeated and could never have happened at home, with work and family commitments. It was a very rewarding experience as we shared the journey with the highs and lows of working and traveling together.

I took the time to continue my exploration of organic form, which can be viewed from several different perspectives, as they have no specific base. Some of the work in China was finished with calligraphy ink and this along with form has followed through to this phase of the project with a group of black forms.

China was such a visual feast and I took so many photographs, of the architecture, food, warriors, people and markets. Often we return from trips and the photos stay on the computer, only to be looked at once in a blue moon. I wanted to give life to the images and share the richness of the experience, so have manipulated them to make decals and created a series of 'Postcards from China'. The opportunity to explore image on ceramic for the exhibition has opened up a new way of working for me, which I have really enjoyed!

Opposite page: Postcards from China

This page: Untitled

Photography: Rory Moore



Sara Flynn 来昂 沙拉

"You probably don't have long enough in the interview for the fears I have. But they're good fears. Healthy fears. Not stop-you-working kind of fears. I worry about things like the drying conditions. It's humid here. My working studio at home – the work actually dries very slowly there – so the humidity here could be a good thing, for that reason. But it's hot. The porcelain has a tendency to crack very easily so controlling that could be a challenge, despite the humidity. But I won't know until I get my hands dirty and start to see how it actually physically behaves in the environment here. I think that the fact that we have such lovely accommodation has taken away one of my fears, which was that I wouldn't get enough time on my own, in terms of head space. I really embrace being in the group and I was so looking forward to it, and already I haven't laughed as much in the past three years as I have in the last three days, but know I'll also need to come away from it and have time on my own. That was a fear when I came here, but in the last twenty-four hours that's gone out the window because we have such lovely big rooms to ourselves and we're not dictated to about our time in the studio to any great degree. So there'll be time to get away from each other and have time alone".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 1 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

It would be true to say that the residency in which I took part in 2011 was an unforgettable and rewarding experience. But did it change my work? At first I felt it had not, that the making I did while I was in Fuping was an isolated and separate event and would not have any bearing on what I would make when home again in my own controlled environment.

However, some of my recent work has embraced the application of texture which the freedom of the residency allowed me to play with...while clearly following on from a body of work which had already begun (i.e. thrown porcelain vessels, altered and manipulated to engage with process and material).

This exhibition also acted in a similar way to the residency in that it presented an opportunity to make work which is so utterly opposite to my regular practice, assembling lots of tiny hand-made pressings of my favourite dragon's head (bought for probably a silly price in Xi'an, despite Elaine's superior haggling skills)...I hope it comes to fruition and that I can show him off!

And I shared the experience with a super group of people...

Opposite Page: Dragons, Ghosts and Luck, detail

This page: Dragons, Ghosts and Luck, detail

Photography: Sara Flynn



Peter Fulop 傅罗浦 彼特







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

I have always been fascinated by the old trade route of the Silk Road, and I could hardly wait to be in Xi'an and experience the history around me. This magnificent town sits on an ancient site and there are many layers of cities of different names beneath and around you. The region is very rich in ceramic history; the terracotta army and the sculptural works of the Tang dynasty are for me the most inspiring remains of the old empire.

This body of the work explores specific memories and my interaction with these memories. Walking in the old town of Xi'an and watching at the different calligraphy artists at work, visiting temples and museums created such a visual impact that after my return to Ireland these memories became the impetus of my current work.

The work of the calligraphy artists, where the focus of movement is on the action itself, inspired my free style painting when I worked on the two large tiles. The artist begins with the stroke and theoretically empties his mind through the continuous flow of motion. These motion(s) or emotion(s), are recorded as marks upon the clay surface using a micron layer of glaze providing a holographic effect to brushstrokes. I used a copper red glaze used by the potters in the Tang dynasty, which reminded me of a slightly similar glaze and glass works from the Persian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations.

I was also very much taken by the stillness of the place and the history surrounding me. The layers of culture shifting into each other gave me a freedom of exploration of materials and subjects which are reflected in the works of the 'Thousand Buddhas' and the 'Soldiers & Soldieresses'.

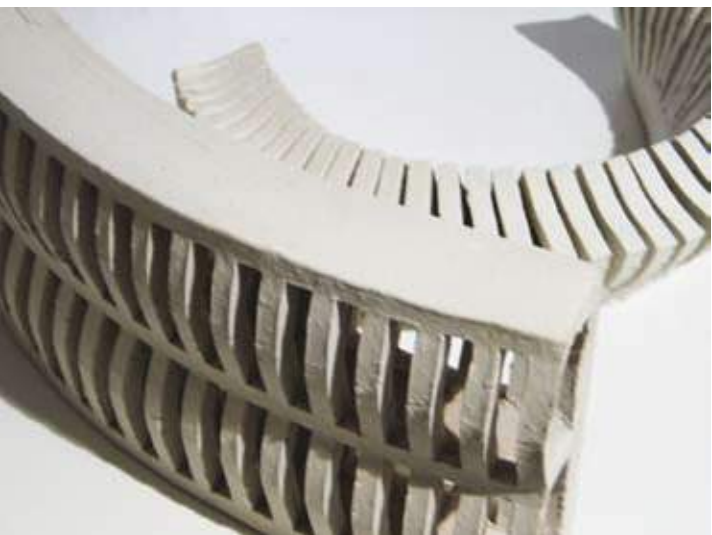
Opposite page: 'Soldier and Soldieress' This page: detail 'Soldier and Soldieress'
Photography: Brigitta Varadi



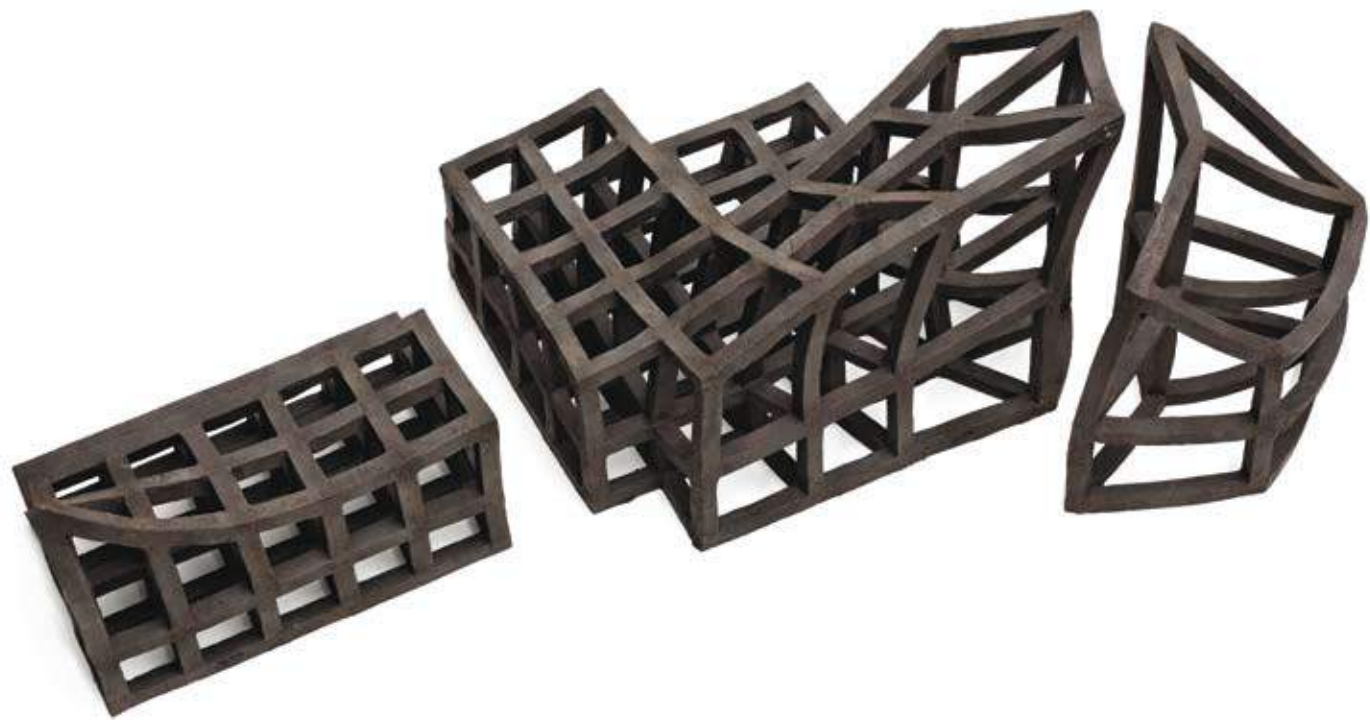
Gabrièle Gisi 吉斯 伽百利

Home

One line finds the other







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

My work is dealing with the architectural growth, with the constructions of the nature and their construction method. The open forms which separate the inside from the external and permit, nevertheless, the look of the object are an important core aspect of my creating.

The skeletal constructions hold together the form and give the clear cover its character, like a play of strength, stability and ease.

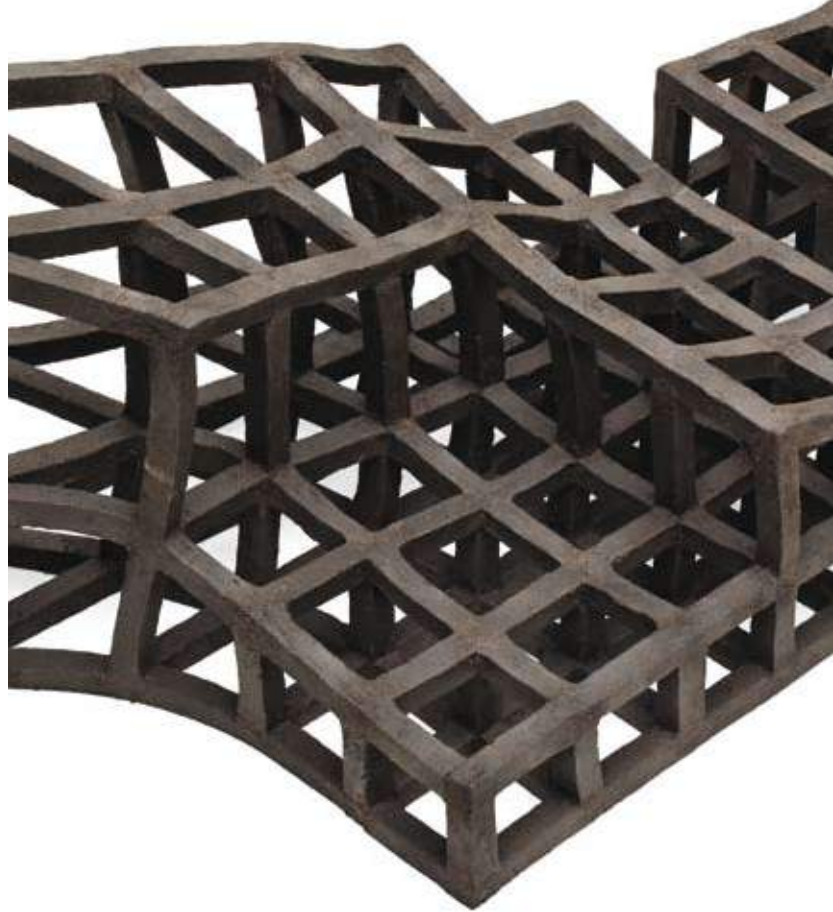
In Beijing I saw a building which looked liked it was made out of foam-bubbles. I was fascinated and saved the picture of foam-framework in my mind. I sometimes recognized the country and its inhabitants as a kind of a big foam-complex as well. The focus on details got lost; sometimes here and there a bubble burst and so created a new point of view.

Foam bubbles, their systems and their design were the first inspiration for my work in China. The pseudo-circular sequence of tetrahedrons up to octagons, kept together by liquid walls under tension, fascinated me. So I connected sticks of stoneware together and built chambers to interact which each others. The forms weren't built but grew by the concatenation of the crossing points between the voids.

Opposite page: Lines #7, 75 cm L, 40 cm W, 22 cm H

This page: Lines #7, detail

Photography: André Albrecht



Sinéad Glynn 葛苓 辛尼特

"I've definitely been influenced by Chinese fashion, which has a lot to do with the weather that we've had for the last couple of weeks. I wasn't prepared for the rain! Coming from Ireland it's a little bit ironic, but I've had to buy warm clothes and runners in Fuping. In terms of fashion, there is a huge difference between Ireland and China. There are flashes of eighties fashion among the younger people here. But I've also been looking at people's clothes, and shoes in particular, focusing on different prints that could be used in clay, and trying to transfer them onto the clay itself. I'm working to capture patterns different from those that would be used in Ireland. And I absolutely love the uniforms. They seem to be really well made. I haven't actually held one or touched one, but even the buttonholes are remarkable! There's a real sense of the country in the decoration on the buttonholes and details like that seem to follow from the traditional Chinese designs, rather than modern fashion. The ladies that do the slipcasting in the factory wear a uniform with a linen jacket and trousers with a lovely cream-coloured buttonhole. It looks very lightweight and easy to work in. I'm sure that the conditions in the factory get really hot and uncomfortable, so light and loose-fitting uniforms seem to work for the majority of the people working here".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 22 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

Local women who danced in the street inspired 'Dancing Forms' my final pieces created in China. In any available space, groups of women would arrange to meet, and with a radio would stand in formation and dance; although the movements were flowing and synchronised it seemed almost military. Was this a social gathering or a kick back to Imperial or communist China. Freedom of movement or the lack of.... which pushed people out into public spaces?

I needed to continue with this idea of movement and restriction and this new work is a direct response to that. China has so many links and contrasts between old and new, east and west, traditional and modern. My inspiration for this form came from numerous sources. During various museum visits as well as village potteries I began to see this form in many guises: from rice wine jars in the studio space to reproductions in pottery shops and original Song Dynasty vases. The vividness of colour that emulated from everywhere in China was another element that I wanted to capture.

This has led me to develop these ideas through the medium of slip casting and ferric firings. The form is cast repeatedly representing the women in formation while the firing technique captures the movement of the dancing and the individuality of each dancer. The random and seemingly uncontrollable effects of these firings excite and challenge me; this process also allows me to create a unique surface finish with a myriad of colour. Through the process of ferric firing, which is a firing technique using ferric chloride, various combustibles and tin foil saggars, it is impossible to repeat the same surface finish. The patterns and colour differences are created by smoke, fumes and heat moving up and around the form penetrating the clay body, while being restricted by the tin foil saggars that enclose the form.

Opposite page: Gatherings. This page: Gatherings, detail. Photography: Rory Moore



Frances Lambe 篮博 法兰斯

"The interaction with the factory is revealing itself over the time that we're here. The space that we're working in was initially cold and forbidding but we've all settled in and found our way around working within the space. And, as we pass through the factory, we see workers from the factory doing their various jobs, and that's very interesting. People are very warm and greet us with eye contact, and then they come to visit our work spaces during the day. They're most respectful. Nobody would ever touch a piece that you are working on. They're interested in finding out what we're making and in seeing that everybody in each of the work stations is doing something totally different. You have this non-verbal communication with people. One man visited me last week when I was working on a piece, and I brought out some other pieces to explain the work that I was doing. Then I took out my tool box and put the tools that I was using out on the bench. When I had finished he took the tools then and put each of them back into the box for me. So there's this non-verbal interaction, a lovely sort of poetry that happens without language, and I'm enjoying that".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 23 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

In China I had the privilege of visiting Museums in Shanghai and Xi'an. A wonderful array of objects were expertly displayed allowing for close scrutiny. Particular objects caught my attention and have remained in my head since. They have inspired my work for the 'Bricks in the Rain' exhibition.

'Six Pure Gold Dragons' were hand-sized pieces displayed as if on a collective journey. They reminded me of brass greyhound ornaments that resided on my Grandparents' mantelpiece. Small in scale and very slender, the gold dragons looked like they were recently hatched. Since returning home I have learned that this is the Chinese year of the 'Water Dragon'. My work on the residency afforded me the opportunity of experimenting with smoke firing and saggar firing and this will inform my new work.

Ceramic sculptures called 'Equestrienne', featuring female riders astride large horses, were exhibited in the Chinese Museums. Examples can also be found in the Bender exhibits at the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks. These pieces beautifully capture the magical relationship between horse and rider. My daughter rides and enjoys the discipline of 'Dressage', where she has to communicate with her horse to perform designated movements with poise and fluidity.

Opposite page: 'Clutch Dragon Eggs' 22x9.5x9.5cm

This page: 'Fire Dragon Egg' 47x19x19cm

Photographer: Rory Moore



Michael Moore 摩尔 梅可

"It's been an interesting experience, strange to a degree, because I arrived two weeks before everybody else in the group. So I arrived as a solo artist, a lone resident and quickly, in the first few days, did everything that I could to understand the characteristics of the material and the systems and processes that the factory employs. I've done a lot of these residencies over the last few years and I have wanted to work here for a long, long time. So I was very excited to arrive and have enjoyed the three weeks in terms of the facilities and the staff who've been just superb. I've had some difficulties with the weather, oddly enough; even though it's boiling hot here, my clay has dried very slowly. It's been like waiting for a kettle to boil, so that's been a challenge. But that gives you time to make more work so I have no complaints in that sense. I think that there's a universal language, which is the material. And, wherever I go, I think that there's a shared sympathy and a shared understanding of the needs of people who use it. With lots of pointing and lots of nodding and very good interpreters it only took me a short amount of time to understand how the factory and the systems work here. So in terms of a material and a studio experience, I felt very happy with how smoothly that occurred. We have to remember that this residency has been running for a very long time, so they're more used to us, I think, than we are to them".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 4 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

I am interested in building objects by hand. My inspiration is drawn from visual sources such as coastlines and geological markings in landscape, exploring the shifts and changes marked by time. Less overtly, but as importantly, I am interested in the anticipation of form and surface, trying to gauge how the eye travels over sculpture, perhaps searching for a conclusion.

I try to quietly challenge that and explore the unease or uncertainty that challenge may create as I seem more fluent as an artist in the realm of abstraction.

Opposite page: Double Walled Form, 12h x 47w x 28d cm

This page: Double Walled Form, detail

Photography: Michael Moore



Kathleen Moroney 牟龙尼 凯色林

"Before I came to China I had read about the Terracotta Warriors and the emperor's quest for immortality. I was drawn to how the whole underworld was built on his obsessive belief that he could live forever, and would bring all these possessions with him into eternity. I was drawn to the idea of fighting against time. After seeing the Terracotta warriors I thought I would continue with this idea and see how it would evolve. I had a model of a hummingbird in my studio in Ireland that I brought with me and I decided to use it in the narrative. The hummingbird symbolises the transcendence of time because it can hover in the same position. I did a bit of research into the birds meaning in China, it has quite appropriate symbolism. I read that: 'the hummingbird in China is a symbol of transformation, of powerful energy and joy. This bird symbolises the ability to overcome adverse conditions and to have flexibility in life's difficult situations'. And then, when we arrived in Xi'an, we went to down to listen to the musicians playing under the city walls early in the morning. Beside the singers there were birds in cages, hanging in the trees, and I thought there was something poignant about their being trapped within their natural environment or displaced within what should be their natural habitat".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 5 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

My current work consists of a series of orchestrated compositions, each of which is a dialogue of movement in time. Drawing particular attention to transitional points, motion is often halted or juxtaposed with stillness within mixed media installations that highlight patterns of resistance and flow.

For the exhibition in China, and for the response show at Farnleigh, a hummingbird is translated into clay. The multiple birds are used as a metaphor within a minimally constructed environment to convey a sense of time, movement, pause and pace, its' meaning both personal and universal.

The hummingbird is a symbol of beauty and freedom. Its tiny frame with its unique ability to hover in space, symbolises the impossible task of stopping time, and the ability to overcome adversity. In the first composition 'Anchored', created for the Fule Museum in China, movement of the wheel (100 yr old cart wheel found on site) is restricted, time is temporarily on hold.

In the second composition, 'When Shadows Exhale', created for the response show, movement returns to the work and is juxtaposed with restraint. The pace and atmosphere of the piece was inspired in part, by life in China played out at opposite ends of the work day, when the city is cast in shadows, as it quietly comes alive.

'When Shadows Exhale' follows a narrative that is derived from an old newspaper clipping entitled 'Chinese singing bird', which details the act of enticing a caged bird to sing by creating a decoy, a shadow of a bird on the wall.

Opposite page: Hummingbird detail from 'When Shadows Exhale' installation

This page: Excerpt from Shadow of hummingbird on wall

Photography: Kathleen Moroney



Laura O'Hagan 噢海根 劳拉

"When I went in to the brick factory on the first day, looking for materials, the guy in charge just didn't want to know me. He kept saying 'go away'. And I felt that the interpreter didn't have a good attitude with him. She was from the local village and there were a few levels of authority being exercised. I thought that the interpreter felt that she should be in control, in charge, rather than being nice to the factory workers. I hated her tone of voice and I didn't know what to do. She told me that the staff at the brick factory should want to help us out of a sense of duty. I wasn't comfortable with that and I thought that there could be a different approach, maybe buying a small gift they would appreciate.

So I went back out to the factory and I asked the manager if it was ok for them to have beer. And he said that it was. So I went out to the shop and they couldn't believe that I wanted a whole case of beer, it cost something like three euro. So I went back with a case of beer and two bottles of fizzy drinks and gave them to the people working in the factory, and after that I had an army of people at my disposal. They all followed me back into the studio with whatever clay I wanted, and it was a major breakthrough. Everybody then was able to source whatever clay they needed.

I think the factory workers just needed some respect. I wasn't sure how they were getting paid for their work and I asked somebody and they said piecemeal. So they are only getting paid for what they produce and, when they give us clay, they're not getting paid for it. But it's very difficult to work it out. So I felt a bit uncomfortable and I thought that bringing them a gift would be a nice way to work it. It worked, so that was good. They're just normal people, like the rest of us, and they needed a bit of respect for their time".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 24 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

My work encompasses both architectural ceramics and sculptural forms and the work that I made in China was about the sea, a continuation of the whale forms that I had been making in Ireland. I also explored ideas around motherhood, possibly because I was far away from my own children at the time. Fuping is a long way from the sea, but I began to notice the fluid forms of the dry land, especially where it had been moulded by the river and gradually, the influence of China began to emerge through my work, at first in the form of flowers made of porcelain paperclay. I was impressed by the Chinese recognition of strength and beauty in the most delicate things, and especially the way in which small white winter flowers were traditionally used as a symbol of purity and strength.

The flowers in my work are an expression of human frailty. I felt that the people in China were strong, but also vulnerable. They didn't have a voice unless they had money. Just as we were leaving China I discovered that there are unexcavated tombs of 72 emperors on either side of the Wui River, near where we were staying. Everyone knows that they are there, but the land is under cultivation, mainly sweetcorn grown for animal feed. So that set me thinking about hidden wealth under the ground, that architectural legacy, and about how small a share in that wealth the workers have.

I have made flowers rising from the bricks and dust to symbolise the beauty and graciousness of the ordinary Chinese people. The 72 blue flowers in the installation represent the hidden imperial tombs beneath the fields where people are working every day.

Opposite page: Dragons in the Dust, detail This page: Dragons in the Dust
Photography: Rory Moore



Mandy Parslow 帕斯娄 曼帝

Red lead. It's on the sink, it's on the brushes, it's in the area where people wash up. Because it's bright orange in colour it seems to spread absolutely everywhere. I used it – just for one day – I wanted to get some small pieces into the kiln. I cleaned up very carefully after myself but it was still all over my apron and the other things in my space. Coming from a Western perspective that's really quite daunting because the lead that they use here is raw lead, so it's absorbed into the system through the skin and it doesn't leave the system, it's an accumulative. Even tiny amounts over an extended period are not a good thing. It's a heavy metal and really poisonous. You go out to the factory and see women with buckets of this orange glaze and they're putting it through a sieve with their bare hands. It's such a shocking thing to see; your gut reaction is to go over to them and say –don't be doing that, stop! – or give them a pair of gloves, but we can't impose our judgement on them. They don't see anything wrong with the way that they're working. The red lead glazes give such beautiful colours and such a beautiful finish. It's the traditional glaze that would have been used here; you see it on those golden ridge tiles on all the temples and in the Forbidden Palace in Beijing. The finish it gives is lustrous and really beautiful - golden yellows. The depth of the glaze is quite stunning; it looks almost metallic in places. It's a very beautiful glaze, but it has this evil side as well. So, I have mixed feelings. I'll probably use it again on a few pieces, but very carefully.

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 22 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

Working on the potter's wheel is what first attracted me to clay. It is a technique which continues to seduce and influence the work I make. The tactile and malleable qualities of clay are impossible to ignore when working on the wheel.

While initially wheel-thrown, the pieces are then altered when the clay is still soft to begin to form the finished shape. Ridges and cuts applied with found or made tools enhance the sense of movement in the altered piece and echo the organic orderliness that we see throughout the agricultural landscape.

The pieces are made of white stoneware clay and salt fired to 1300°C in a wood-fuelled kiln. The kiln takes twenty-four hours of constant stoking and attention to reach temperature and a further seventy-two hours before it is cool enough to open and unpack. This is an unpredictable firing technique producing a colour palette which echoes my surrounding rural landscape. Each piece is both caressed and assaulted by the flame, ash and salt vapour as it moves through the kiln in the intense heat of the firing. The surface quality and colours of the finished pieces are a frozen record of this kiln journey.

While in China, the repeat patterns of rural Irish corn fields were replaced by those of golden roof tiles and stacks of steamers. To Irish eyes, even the most mundane details of Chinese life, like wrapping trees and propping them with bamboo, took on sculptural qualities. Since returning to Ireland, wrapping and stacking have continued to intrigue.

Opposite page: Handled tall Ellipticals 35x23x16cm back, 27x18x11cm front

This page: Long Elliptical 21cmx44cmx19cm

Photography: Rory Moore



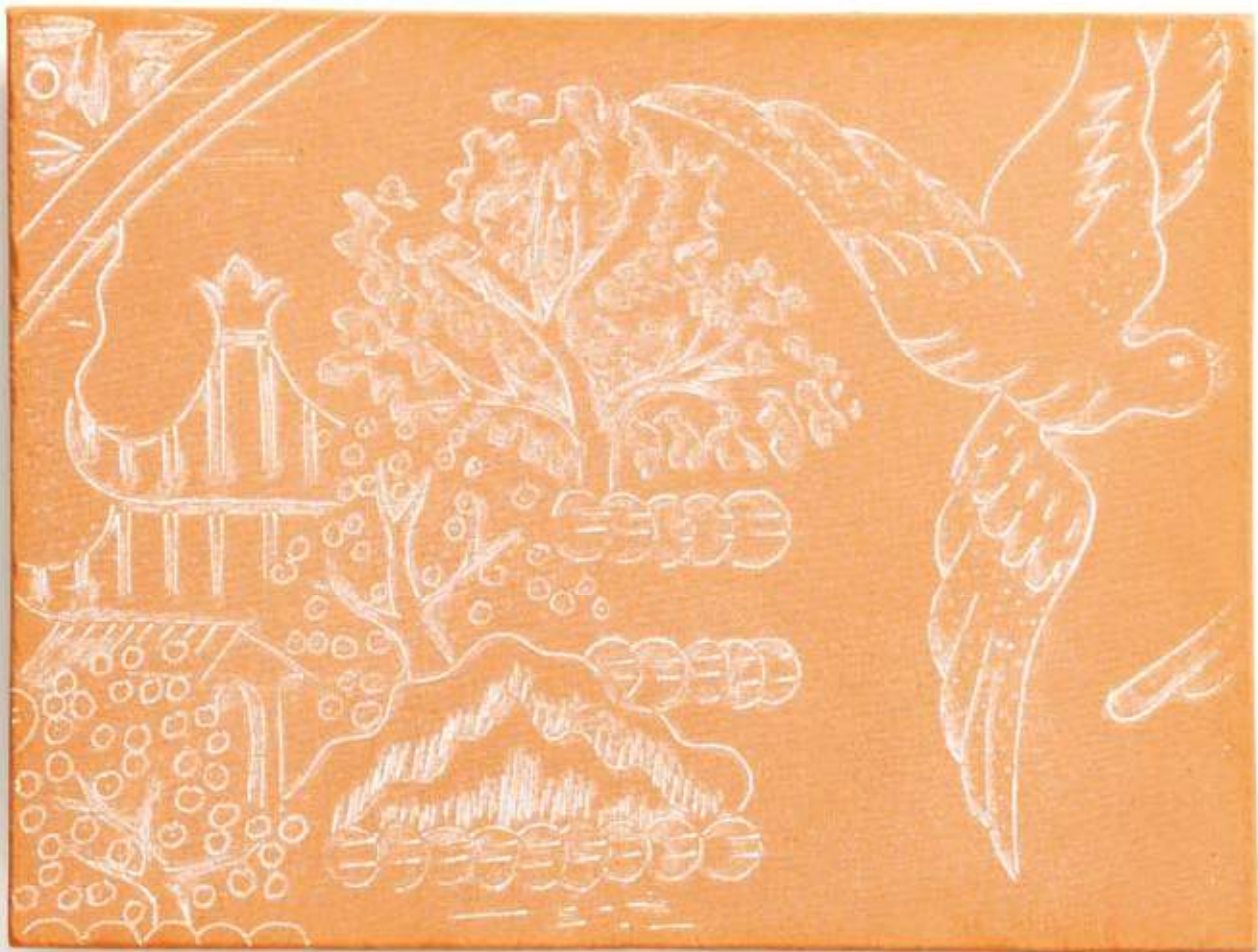
Neil Read 李德 尼尔

"Every now and then we like to take a break from the workshops and studios, to get out into the town and see what is going on. Last night we went to a very old part of the city – a part that people don't seem to talk about very much. We found, I would say, a Ming Dynasty section of Fuping with little streets, houses, carved stonework, tiled roofs, posters, and calligraphy on the walls probably announcing very mundane things, but very exotic to us. As we wandered through these streets, out of nowhere, this guy appeared and beckoned us to follow him. Like ducklings, we followed. We went down a very windy backstreet, past a few beautiful doors with red lanterns hanging out of the brick walls – crumbling brick walls, lovely trees hanging over garden walls – and then he turned into his house and beckoned for us to come in. So we sat down with him, under his pomegranate tree, and had a discussion with him, which wasn't easy because he didn't have any English and we had very little Chinese, but we managed with a few words. When he found out that we were staying here, in the pottery village, he asked if we were potters. And I said yes, all four of us are potters, and his eyes lit up and he took inside, to rooms in an inner courtyard, where he had Qing Dynasty and Ming Dynasty vases. I don't know where he'd got them from but there had been a lot of demolition in that area. Unfortunately I think that area might be flattened in the next few years. So our chances of seeing it again, if we don't go tonight, will be limited".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 22 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

In Fuping, near Xi'an, in 2011 I worked on two large murals approximately 6 foot by 8 and also made several small pieces inspired by visits to the Terracotta Army and pottery shards found at a kiln site near the residency. I have brought the wall mural and terra-cotta soldier theme through to my work for 'Bricks in the Rain'.

As China modernises there is a serious risk that the good of the old will be forgotten. It is this fading memory that inspired my willow pattern murals. They represent a distant and vanishing history that should be preserved. The two tile pieces, one of incised porcelain, the other a porcelain print on terra-cotta give a fragmented and romantic view of Fuping's past. Its old town which, though seldom visited and often overlooked by locals, was explored more than once by myself and fellow ceramic artists.

At Farnleigh the memory is guarded to the left and right by Irish Soldier Vases from the Porcelain Army's Walsh Regiment on defensive wall sconces. Just as the Terracotta Army guards its master, the Emperor Qin outside Xi'an, one hopes the Porcelain Army can, from a distance, help guard and encourage the preservation of sites such as that beautiful old enclave on the outskirts of Fuping.

Opposite page: Detail of Willow Mural, porcelain mono print on rolled terra-cotta 24.5cm x18.5cm

This page: Walsh Soldier Vase from the Porcelain Army on Wall Sconce, slip cast porcelain and rolled terra-cotta, Soldier 35cm tall, Sconce 54cm x 28cm x 20cm

Photography: Rory Moore

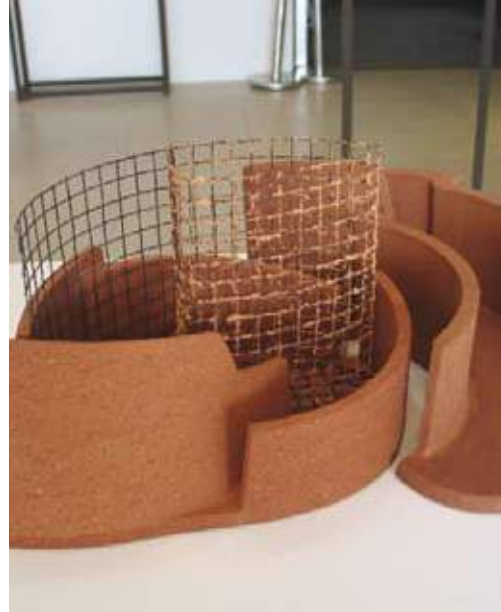


Elaine Riordan 里欧丹 依兰

"There's an obvious hierarchy in the workshop. There's the master, Mr Maa, who runs the whole show and he has four technicians working under him. The one that we have the most dealings with is Mr Wong and he's been brilliant. He's shown us how to fire all three of his kilns. They're at the back of our studio space and, without his help, we wouldn't be getting anywhere. Initially we used interpreters but, once he understood that we needed a slow firing, there seemed to be no need for interpreters. Any questions that we had, we would just go straight to him and wave at him to get him to come into the space. He would gladly come, and smile at you, and throw his eyes up to heaven as if to say 'What now?' And, through various hand gestures and nods, and with fingers pointing upwards or downwards when we wanted the heat to rise or decrease as the case may be, we would understand each other. We'd use gestures to explain what we needed to do, whether we needed more gas, more air, another burner, less burner. He's got this sixth sense about those kilns. It's awe-inspiring the way that he operates around them. He walks in nonchalantly, with a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, and steps into the kiln to light it with the gas blazing in. You can smell the gas as he walks into the kiln. But, he survives. Thankfully, he has all his hair on his head. He has no singed eyebrows. He gets away with it for some strange reason, but I guess it's that he understands those kilns so well. He knows the inherent dangers but he can do it safely – cigarette and all".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 23 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

The challenges we were faced with on the residency in China were many: language, travel, cultural diversity, food, cutlery, environment, weather, people but crucially the main challenge was to make quality work that would represent Ireland and become part of the permanent collections in the International Ceramic Art Village at the Fule, Fupingno pressure!

Our hosts had asked us create work that responded to the experience of the residency. We travelled various routes before meeting up as a group in Fuping. I was part of a group that travelled through London - Shanghai - Xi'an to Fuping. I was amazed by the density and scale of the contemporary architecture in Shanghai's Bund district and how this contrasted with the more historical architecture in Xi'an. While in Xi'an we also visited the Terracotta army. All these experiences combined with the reality of living and working in Fuping for a month formed the basis of the work I would make for the Irish Pavilion.

The work that is surfacing for this China response show has developed out of these sculptures created on the residency and represents my fusion of Shino/Irish cultural diversity. On the whole it was an amazing experience to have shared with a great group of people, Irish and Chinese alike . . . I could do it all over again.

Opposite Page: Réalt Dearg XII 27x27x23cm

This page: Réalt Dearg XIV 31x28x18cm

Photography: Rory Moore



Alex Scott 斯高特 阿里克斯

"I came to China I suppose with a particular practice behind me, a particular way of working, a particular use of tools, skills, aesthetic appreciation and such. My intention was to bring all this to China, but in the hope that I would be inspired to make something new and different. It was a bit nerve-wracking at first but the visit to the museum was a fantastic chance to engage with Chinese artefacts and culture. I was particularly impressed with the bronze gallery and the bells in particular. I discovered a fantastic bell, dating back to the fifth century BC. I suppose what attracted me to it was that it had a presence as a form. It was sitting in a glass case but you felt that it had a spirit and a past and a sort of feeling within it, and it was this that I wanted to bring into my work.

So, when we started the residency, the first thing that I did was make a clay model similar in proportion to the bell. I take a long time to carefully model the form, that's part of the creative process. Even though I make a mould of this, from which I take lots of press mouldings, the actual modelling of the original is very important. It's in this that I capture the essence of the entire form and the subtleties of curves and edges. For me, the challenge is to discover the body of the form that I want to make. And I know it's in there. I just have to find it. And what I do is that I start deconstructing it in a particular way. And, as I take pieces away, I think that it is important that I use those pieces again, but in a slightly different context. So although the elements of the form are there, they're not necessarily put back together in exactly the same way. And I think this is an opportunity for me to take what is quite a traditional form and change the context of it, and make it meaningful for myself".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 10 September 2011







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

This body of work develops themes initially explored during the residency in Fuping, specifically the various contexts of everyday objects from historical artefacts in museums to functional led adaptations of once precious objects. Disparate visual references range from the resplendent but now silent iconic Western Zhou Dynasty bronze ceremonial bells in Xian museum, to informal furniture such as the broken or discarded chairs sitting peculiarly in the middle of a fruit market. This dislocation formed a new meaning in both the object and its user.

These concerns have led to a fascination with the depiction of an inherent personality and cultural identity within the objects themselves, and the tension between their previous use and current uselessness or reinvention. The factory was a changing visual stimulus where multiple items made were packed, wrapped or crated for distribution. The work is a discourse in function past and present.

From a technical point of view the studio facility opened up the possibility of using unglazed clays. The subtlety within the tonal range of red clay and the use of black clay allows me to continue to exploit and describe the story of process and the making evident in the final form.

Opposite page: Zhou Form, (Black) H 35cm x W 35cm x D 24cm.

This page: Encounter No4, H 55cm x W 15cm x D 20cm

Photography: Rory Moore



Kathleen Standen 斯丹登 卡瑟琳

"I had some interesting, one could say disastrous, results with an earlier project where I put soya beans into clay. And they swelled, but I put too many in and the whole thing swelled apart. I'd patched it up a little with some white paper clay, which has good bonding qualities, on the basis of let's just wait and see. But overnight they started germinating and when I saw that this morning I just thought – wow, this is so exciting! So I've been running along with a theme of nature, flowers, and leaves. And the idea started to grow on me (a bit of a pun) that I would put soft clay, possibly white porcelain clay, onto these large red slabs and I will plant the seeds in the clay. I have them soaking at the moment. I've got sunflower seeds and soya beans. So when they've swelled a bit – I don't want the whole thing falling apart this time – I'm going to let them germinate. And when they've grown enough, so that they've made pathways and little snail trails, I will let it dry off so they will shrivel up. And then hopefully I will have some interesting patterns. It will then be fired in the kiln, which will burn all the organic matter. The seeds and the little shoots will all be burnt off – and I'll have the holes and the little tendrils where they started to grow, which I can pick out in a contrasting colour. I'm really excited and I just thought – on the spur of the moment – it's a living wall! And I like that".

- Extract from interview with Eleanor Flegg, 10 September 2011







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Statement for Bricks in the Rain

My new work is 'Untitled'. Not an oversight, but a deliberate choice and the first time I have used this nomenclature. But a five week residency in a museum in China was also a first for me and conveyed such a myriad of experiences and outcomes that I felt an untitled moment required an untitled response!

The work is a far cry from the creations I usually do: coloured sculptural forms, inspired by the unspoilt coast of West Cork and issues of conservation, and economic activity. But there are similarities. Texture is a recurring theme, achieved by loading the clay with grog and adding material that burns out leaving holes. There is a fragile quality to the clay after this treatment.

The porcelain shards are just that, bits of something that used to be whole. I frequently break my work into fragments although they are usually much bigger. Contrast is there too: shiny shards and crumbly bricks.

But this explanation does not really tell the story behind this work. Amongst the many things I gleaned during my sojourn was the Chinese passion for collecting shards in the form of fragments of old pottery which, once collected, need to be dated and classified to mean anything to them. My installation is a personal interpretation of this activity.

Opposite page: Untitled, detail smoked fired terracotta bricks and porcelain shards

This page: Untitled, detail

Photography: Kathleen Standen



Eva Vogelsang 佛葛衫 伊娃

The three-minute film is a response to the overwhelming impressions of Chinese life and how the perception of privacy differs between our countries. The idea is to create a sense of isolation in a crowded space.

The resulting work is based on the notion of play. Starting to build a wall of clay around myself, I separate from the outside to keep an isolated room. I worked for as long as the clay was malleable, documenting the progress as it evolved using Stop-Motion Film. With the film it becomes visible, that the wall is not real but exists in the imagination as a familiar place.

Parts of “My Wall” are present in the installation as fragments in the permanent exhibition “Moon Exhibition Hall FLICAM” Fule (International Ceramic Art Museum, Fuping, China), together with the film.







Statement for Bricks in the Rain

Time is the most elementary constant of our lives. It is ceaselessly running forward in its inexorable pace. Does it go by because we do things, or are things happening because time is passing?

However, often we waste our time and we believe that nothing is happening. But what is nothing? Whether there is much, not so much or even nothing happening is a question of definition. Our perspective on life is fundamental, metaphorically as well as literally.

The title of my current work is "wasting time". I looked for moments of "nothing" and captured them in a series of sketchy drawings. Employing the principles of Stop-Motion-animations, each drawing varies only slightly to the one before. As animation or hanging side by side, the drawings imply action and stagnancy, activity and uselessness, at the same time.

My raw materials are white dinner plates that I print on. They are speedily produced in China at a low price. I use them as I would use cheap paper. They are plates that do their work – or just nothing.

Opposite page: Balloon each plate 25cm diameter

This page: Hamster, plate 30.5cm diameter

Photography: Eva Vogelsang





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I'm from a lovely village called An Cheathrú Rua in the Connemara Gaeltacht. I moved home 5 years ago and rediscovered a passion for the area, the language and music. It was while I was on the Access Music Project in Galway 2008/2009 that I was bitten by the sound engineering bug and I absolutely love anything with wires that makes a sound. At the moment I am recording a cd "as gaeilge" with friends and hope to have it finished early next year. It has been great to be creatively involved with a project such as 'Bricks in the Rain'



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Della Sainty Assistant editor

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1.150 upstairs (top shelf)
 downstairs (bottom shelf)

right window

4 BURNERS lit
 temp just dropped
 19° ↑ OK.
 door closed

Time	Temp	Comments	Time	Temp	Comments
4:45	145°		12-15	242	
5:00	150°		12-30	246	
5:15	153°		12-45	250	
5:30	154°		1-00	253	
5:45	157°		1-15	257	
6:00	160°		1-30	260	10"
6:15	162°		1-45	264	
6:30	162°		2-00	267	
6:45	164°		2-15	275	↑
7:00	156°		2-30	278	up in!
7:15	171°		2-45	282	
7:30	176°		3-00	-	
7:45	180°		3-15	285	increase of
8:00 AM	184		3-30	289	
8:25	190		3-45	293	
8:45	195		4-00	296	
9:00	198		4-15	299	increase highest
9:15	201		4-30	304	
9:30	205		4-45	308	4-50
			5-00	312	0-3
			5-15	317	5-00
			5-30	330	5-15
			5-45	338	5-30
			6-00	350	5-45
				350	5-50
				350	6-00

Treated gas ↑

Treated gas ↓

Kiln door opened
 to left other 2 burners

increase highest

4-50
 0-3
 5-00
 5-15
 5-30
 5-45
 5-50
 6-00

