

CULTURE OF CLAY

Contemporary Ceramics by Graduates of the Ceramics Design Department
at Limerick School of Art and Design (LIT)

Curated by **Mandy Parslow**

Selected by **Grellan Rourke, Aidan Quinn, Mandy Parslow**

Hunt Museum
Rutland St, Limerick

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CERAMICS

Museums and galleries internationally, if not in all countries, are increasingly facing questions of relevance and vitality. The norms and standards of one age dissolve ever daily and certainties of one generation evaporate before our eyes. The corridors of Antique statuary in great museums of Italy and Germany no longer speak with the authority they once did. Who knows the stories? Who can quote the language? And so too with the Christian tradition. Even within Ireland the cultural legacy which informed a ready understanding of a particular iconography has largely waned. And the same applies to other art forms too. In the days of a Modernist or even an IKEA aesthetic it can be a challenge to engage a viewer with the refined and complex curlicues of early eighteenth-century Rococo.

Ceramics I place in another category. True we cannot open our hearts to prancing nymphs and shepherdesses of Meissen. But ceramics in whatever form we chose to relate to are still with us in some form or other – cheap and cheerful, or a Bernard Leach aesthetic, the country life style of our imagination and dreams, to perhaps some delicate, but smart, porcelain dinner ware. Ceramics too transcend cultural traditions and class boundaries perhaps more than any other art form. From the gruelling long-distance walk to a well to a dinner with Nigella Lawson ceramics may be used to contain everything from the necessities of life to the refined fripperies of an indulgent age.

While not a comprehensive collection the Hunt Museum is rich in some fine examples of the ceramic tradition; it is probably one of the best collections on view in the country. From our Bronze Age funerary pottery, sixteenth-century majolica, to oriental porcelain and some fine examples of Meissen there is much to admire. A few years ago now we engaged very fruitfully with a group of recent graduates from Limerick School of Art & Design all of whom responded to the collection in a display which went on view for many months. With great imagination, and of course skill, ceramic artists responded to a combination of individual works in the museum and indeed to the whole concept of a museum and a sense of place. One of the preparatory workshops where ideas and concepts were explored was one of the more engaging events (for me) of my time at the Museum. I suppose this exhibition has emerged from that initial project. On the one hand it affords the Museum an opportunity to showcase the creativity and ability of a neighbouring institution with whom we work closely. In addition the display also allows us to draw links with our own collection as amassed by those avid collectors John & Gertrude Hunt. We can not only take stock of what LSAD graduates have been up to but we can locate their work in dialogue with earlier collections and collectors and also diverse materials, traditions and belief systems.

As part of a future development of this Museum it is a personal wish that the Museum would have a permanent gallery for contemporary ceramic practice – not only artists from Limerick but from across Ireland. To do this implies both structural intervention and organisational change but of course very significant cost. So it may remain a pipedream for some time! But it deserves to be addressed, not only as an enhancement to the Museum’s core collection but as a vehicle for engaging with new art practice. The ceramic tradition in Ireland is very dynamic and is developing strongly – at least it appears to me. Many artists have national and international reputations and this Museum wishes to be a venue where such work can be admired and cared for in the generations to come. In doing so we would be complementing the collecting of the Hunts but also linking into that never ending cultural phenomenon of transforming the earth itself into something that takes us to a better place, be it from necessity or a need to feed the imagination of the soul.

Dr. Hugh Maguire

Director, Hunt Museum

July 2014

CULTURE OF CLAY

From the beginning, 'Culture of Clay' was conceived and has evolved as a collaboration between the Ceramics Department at Limerick School of Art and Design (LIT) and the Hunt Museum. It seemed fitting that in the 40th year since the first intake into a ceramics course at LSAD that the occasion be marked. The fact that it coincides with Limerick's designation as National City of Culture and the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC) general assembly taking place in Ireland for the first time adds further weight to the occasion.

At its core, this exhibition celebrates the strength and diversity of contemporary ceramic making which began in the LSAD Ceramics Department. LSAD Ceramics graduates have continued to make and establish careers as independent artists, designers and makers, while others go on to work in a wide range of fields including arts administration, arts therapy and teaching, establishing strong reputations both nationally and internationally in the fields of Ceramics, Art and Design. The exceptional calibre of LSAD Ceramics graduates is frequently acknowledged by national and international awards such as Future Makers, the RDS Student Art Awards and Rising Stars and their inclusion in juried exhibitions at such prestigious venues as the Royal Hibernian Academy and the Royal College of Art. By its nature, makers at various stages of their professional careers are represented in 'Culture of Clay'. They are working with a wide variety of concerns and in diverse ways; the commonality is the medium of ceramics.

An exhibition such as this achieves a number of aims. For our current BA Honours Design Ceramics students it gives them an understanding of the range and quality of work possible and opens them to possible career paths. It reinforces the profile of Ceramics, LSAD, and the Hunt Museum within Limerick city in this important year and with the IAC events in September, it showcases Irish Ceramics, Ceramics at LSAD, Limerick and the Hunt Museum on an International stage.

LSAD and the Hunt Museum have many links, with ceramics and other departments regularly using the Hunt as an inspirational starting point for various projects. This exhibition further strengthens those ties and highlights LSAD's commitment to Ceramics nationally and internationally.

James Greenslade

Head of School, LSAD, LIT

July 2014

LIMERICK CERAMICS - A BRIEF HISTORY IN TIME

I was delighted to be invited to write an introductory essay for the catalogue accompanying the Culture of Clay exhibition. My pleasure springs not least from the fact that this essay gives me the opportunity to put on record my appreciation of so many people from Limerick and far beyond who helped to grow ceramics in Limerick, but also importantly, it enables me to celebrate the fact that 2014 is the fortieth anniversary of the advent of the present Ceramics course in Limerick.

In 1974 when I first came to Limerick from London as a Lecturer in Ceramics, there was no ceramics course as we now know it. Instead ceramics, or to be more precise, pottery was a subject covered as part of the old ATC or Art Teachers Certificate programme which meant that students following this course chose pottery as a craft subject amongst many others. One could not then specialise in an individual subject.

The room in which 'pottery' was taught was on the top floor of the School of Commerce on Mulgrave St. opposite Limerick Prison. The only equipment that I can recall from that time was an old 'Alsager' throwing wheel and two old electric kilns, plus a couple of tons of Japanese ceramic materials - things like 'Petuntse Stone' and a peculiar Kaolin powder, all apparently purchased second hand from a potter in West Cork who had woken up one morning to see "Get out! IRA" scrawled on his cottage wall and had taken fright and skedaddled.

By September I had drafted a Ceramics programme and recruited the first full-time students (5 in all, the majority being mature students) and began the course. This was to be a three year specialist programme which included a general ceramics first year, a drawing programme and a History of Art component. At the end of year three, students would present a personal body of work that would be assessed through exhibition together with a thesis. At this time the course had no external validation but we envisaged that over the duration of the three year programme, validation would be readily forthcoming. How wrong we were!

With such limited equipment and a small budget, I then set about buying what equipment we could, often second hand, sometimes scavenging and more often than not building equipment from cannibalised scrap with the students.

I will always remember Mike Boland a sombre faced, long haired mature student on the course who had been railroaded into becoming the first president of the fledgling student union, being inveigled to go downstairs to present a series of demands for more resources to the then principal of the School of Commerce who was also principal of the School of Art, Mick Ryan. Mike Boland returned after 10 minutes with the message: "You can tell those sh**ts from shantytown upstairs that they're not getting anything more!! Such was life in those heady early days.

The next job then was to secure a budget to recruit more part-time specialist staff to the course. Within a year or so Mike Dawson who came from Kilkenny Design Studios and Val Dennison who transferred from the new Foundation course, became members of the Ceramics Team.

In 1976, the School relocated to George's quay with ceramics located in a large draughty shed at the rear, which gave us great scope nonetheless for experimental kiln building. In fact it was during this period when we had no kilns other than the two old electric ones transferred from Mulgrave St. that I incessantly pestered J.P.McDonagh the new Principal of what was now the College of Art, Commerce and Technology, (CoACT) for a gas kiln which would enable us to carry out 'reduction' firing and thereby widen the ceramic possibilities for our course. He was not convinced..... but one day he arrived in the studio to tell me that he had been watching a series of programmes that RTE were showing called 'Craft of the Potter', a Crafts Council of Great Britain series which was popularly received at the time. One of the programmes featured Michael Casson, then the doyen of British craft pottery who enthusiastically showed work produced in his gas kiln. This then convinced J.P McDonagh that what was good enough for Michael Casson would be good enough for us! We got our gas kiln.

1977 was a seminal year. It was the first graduation of specialist ceramic students and whilst we still had not received external validation from 'The National Council for Educational Awards' (NCEA) for the course, it ironically made National Diploma Awards to the individual students. Not being sure at the time what the standard a National Award was, as none had been awarded yet, we also, as a means of ensuring what we thought ought to be a standard for a National Diploma, offered our own College Diploma as well, with our own external examiners.

The exhibition itself in June 1977 was ground-breaking and a watershed for what was commonly perceived at the time as ceramics, not only in Limerick but in the Republic. Heretofore Ceramics was always considered to be only Pottery and this exhibition presented five students who for the most part produced a body of work that was not produced on the potter's wheel. To these five students, an enormous amount of credit must go. Not only did they break the mould as to what clay could translate into as ceramics, (whilst pottery is ceramic, ceramic is not necessarily pottery) but they did it in a vacuum so to speak, with no precedent, either local or national to give them a context of standard.

Jumping forward to the 'eighties and 'nineties, the course was in the ludicrous situation of awarding a College Diploma after three years of study whilst only being nationally validated to award a National Certificate in Design, as it was still considered by the NCEA that whilst Fine Art courses throughout the country could award National Diplomas, Design as a discipline, which included all craft, was still sufficiently immature and could only award two Year National Certificates! This

eventually changed after long and protracted arguments with the NCEA and Limerick, along with other Colleges was eventually allowed to award National Diplomas and then in the early 'nineties, a Bachelor of Design Degree in Ceramics. Later the ceramics course produced the first MA student to graduate from LSAD. In the nineties also, the course along with the rest of the School moved from George's Quay to Clare St. where a custom built ceramic studio was provided.

Apart then from the improving ceramic facilities which we had now acquired in Clare St., how did the course grow in terms of creative standards?

Four factors underpinned this growth.

1. External examiners

From the mid-seventies we had always believed in the importance of attracting the 'right' people to Limerick. By 'right' people I mean those ceramic educators whose courses we admired and whose judgements we valued. We came to see them as 'critical friends' who would not hesitate to tell us exactly what our standards were but would also advise us on how improvements could be made. I can honestly say that without such a dedicated, caring and giving group of people the course could not have developed the way it did. Our students were never given an easy ride- neither were the staff. I remember one year, sitting in the ceramic office in Georges Quay with Val Dennison and Kieran Whitelaw who had joined the staff in the early 'eighties, arguing with an external examiner until 1.00 am in the morning, neither side willing to capitulate on what should be the final pecking order of student grades. Or of another extern who told me many years later after his stint with us had finished, how his heart used to sink when he entered our ceramic exhibition, being immediately struck by the quality of work and inevitably and unnervingly (for him) comparing the standards he saw with those of his own course.

2. External Visitors.

These were the invaluable and critical infusions of fresh ideas and professional standards of working that it was imperative to bring into the course from the 'professional world'. In fact throughout the 'eighties' and the recessionary times when budgets were always being squeezed, I always argued that it was imperative that we maintain our budget for such people, as for us, being on the western edge of Europe it was absolutely essential that we had contact with what was happening further towards the centre.

All of these 'professional' visitors gave so much. However I would have to name the first visitor we brought to the course who became a regular over the early years and who made an immense contribution in both time and goodwill, and that was Nicky Mosse. His enthusiasm and energy were boundless to the point that at one stage in the early '80's he badgered me continually that we should start our very own 'Harrow' type course in Limerick based on a pioneer pottery approach.

He even got so far as to drawing up an outline course document. This was an immensely appealing project but unfortunately we had neither the space nor resources to follow it through.

The second person I would have to name, purely through the force of his personality was Petrus Spronk, a Dutch Australian who looked like a cross between Willie Nelson, the American folk singer and a leprechaun! He came to us in the 'seventies when he was undertaking a tour of Europe. Apart from being a first rate potter, he was also a genuine eccentric. One day in the studio in Georges Quay, he instructed all of the students to arrive the next morning and to bring a personal contribution, a poem, a drawing, a song etc. as we were going to have a celebratory breakfast to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Michelangelo and he (Petrus) was going to bake bread in one of the electric kilns. Apparently he had been a baker in a previous life! The aroma of baking bread is hard to resist anyway, but in the ceramic studio that morning with all of the students seated at the long worktable with cornflakes, marmalade, boiled eggs, and Petrus's bread - it was indeed magical.

Many years later Val and I received a letter from him from Australia where he was touring the outback in an old VW camper van (with a kiln in the back,) teaching pottery to settlements of Aboriginal People that he came across. In the letter he said that he was writing it lying in the desert looking up at the myriad of stars and thinking of Limerick. Co-incidently, when Val pulled the letter out of the envelope - out tumbled hundreds of tiny flower petals - Petrus had written that he had sent us some 'stardust' He was that kind of man!

3. Technical Support

In my many years both as a ceramic student and then as college lecturer it was always recognised wherever I was that the most important person on any ceramics course was the technician. So it came to be at Limerick!

After a succession of excellent technicians, all who stayed a short while before moving on, we finally recruited Jason McCarthy, an ex-student who is still in situ. Jason quickly assumed the mantle of authority for the day to day running of the course from a resources and logistical point of view. From the ordering and management of materials to the incredibly stressful task of organising the final few weeks of the academic years firing schedules, including dealing with irate and tearful students who thought they were being treated unfairly. Jason developed the knack of soothing ruffled feathers and still managing to accommodate everyone. The secret of handling Jason, for both staff and students was not to get on the 'wrong' side of him if at all possible.....It wasn't! He has always been the unsung hero at every end of year exhibition and graduation.

4. The course staff.

Finally, any course is only as good as the staff who teach on it. The best facilities in the world could only deliver mediocrity if the staff were not up to it. Conversely the poorest facilities would not

militerate against quality student performance if the staff were first class. This is where Limerick's strength lay. In the early years, Val Dennison, Kieran Whitelaw and Mike Dawson were the custodians of quality and to them must go a very special commendation for laying the substantial foundations in ceramics that exist today They all gave of themselves selflessly- too much I would now say, for it was always at the expense of their own creative practice.

In the past decade Fiona Burke, another past student, became a staff member and in the recent past Philip Kenny contributed to the course for a short while and now Mandy Parslow has joined the course team. Of course how fitting that 40 years ago the first student to graduate from the course should now be its present Course Leader, Mike Byrne.

May the cycle continue.

Jim Dennison

June 2014

THE SHAPE OF DESIRE

Vona Groarke

*Grant this vase, between us both,
the shape of all desire. Have it stand
so light discloses every nerve
and membrane of its being.*

'It's lovely,' said the woman in the gallery, dubiously inspecting a large ceramic form. 'But what is it for?'

The function of the piece, possibly, was to invite such a question. While some ceramics wear their function on their sleeve, others have different reasons for being. Every ceramic object was made to meet a need, but such needs are specific to time and place, and only some of them are utilitarian. On another level, each one is an expression of desire, and by digging around the roots of that desire, we find its purpose.

Ceramic as core material is one of the factors that unite the exhibitors in Culture of Clay; another is that all are graduates of the course in ceramics at Limerick School of Art and Design (LSAD). From these two points of commonality their work has emerged in wild diversity. Many things can be done with clay. The wide scope of their making reflects a measure of sensitivity within the course, especially over decades where the understanding of ceramics, both utilitarian and expressive, has been in constant flux.

In 1970s Ireland, ceramics was widely understood as crockery, which assumption was immediately challenged when the ceramics course at LSAD came into being. 'I loved that you didn't have to make just cups and plates,' says Mike Byrne (grad. 1977). 'You could make all kinds of yokes and there was this huge debate about whether ceramics was art or not – that was a howler!' Almost forty years later, his work explores the complex relationship between domesticity and ceramics. His pieces are too big to be used: they come from the domestic tradition but do not belong to it. In one jug, the lip and handle are made of metal and attached with cable ties. Another piece is studded with tiny pieces of porcelain standing proud from the surface like so many little white mushrooms. 'I'm referencing ceramics,' he says, 'with a nod to Josiah Wedgewood and the sprigs on his jasper ware.' Byrne's deep and vibrant blues reference the same tradition, without Wedgewood's stillness of colour. His blues are moody. Marcus O'Mahony's (grad. 1977) work is thrown and altered, travel-stained with making. 'A lot of people don't get this stuff,' he says. 'It's a bit lumpy. It shows evidence of process.' For this reason, his work is probably better known internationally than it is in Ireland,

where its rough complexities are often overlooked. The current body of work comes from a wood-fired kiln which may be fired continuously for days at a stretch, the length of the firing and the ash deposits contributing to the surface qualities of the finished work. 'For most people, a teapot is a teapot,' says Maria Connolly (grad. 1987), 'but I might have made it because I enjoy lids and spouts and handles. My work does pour, but that's not the point.' Although her pieces are not utensils, she makes objects that have a place in utilitarian history. Her bottle forms are graceful and bright, their colours confidently built with layers of slip. Some are arranged in groupings or, like milk-bottles, in crates, but their circular surface patterns are drawn from memories of portholes on the ship that brought her to and from Scotland as a child. Her memories of her years at LSAD are focused on the city itself. 'It had a good energy,' she says. 'A bit rougher, maybe, than other parts of Ireland, but I was comfortable with that. I come from Glasgow.'

As the reputation of the ceramics course at LSAD grew, and the demographic of Ireland changed, it began to attract student from across Europe, bringing new sensibilities and reactions to working in clay. Eva Farkasova's (grad. 2013) work evolved in response to moving to Limerick from a Slovakian mountain village. 'Everywhere was built-up,' she says. 'There was no nature in the city. Even the river was surrounded by straight lines and hard angles. In Slovakia I was surrounded by trees and there is no private land. You can walk everywhere. In Ireland you can only explore certain places and without a car you are totally lost. I felt like there was nowhere to go.' Her work seeks to restore freedom of movement and its curves are an antidote to the straight lines of the city. Its purpose is to restore balance. The pieces are abstract, simultaneously dynamic and grounded, their muted colours amplifying the strength of the forms. Other makers respond to the natural world as it appears in the hidden spaces within the city. 'I've seen otters in the lock under Sarsfield Bridge,' says Mary Conroy (grad 2004). 'The first time I saw one I thought it was a dog!' In response to this, and other urban wildlife, she made drawings which are printed as decals on white industrial tiles. Other pieces, which have the appearance of abstract sculptures, have a hidden purpose. 'They are insect hotels,' she explains. 'The cubes are hollow and there are small holes, big enough to accommodate insects and solitary bees, possibly even mice. I like the juxtaposition of the angular man-made geometric space and the idea of natural creatures living inside it.' 'In my final year I was making pieces that looked like insects,' says Laura MacNamara (grad 2010). 'Then I realised that I could make pieces that were based on biological forms without having to look like them. I could take a tiny detail and use it stylistically.' Her wall-mounted installations are reminiscent of sea urchins, their surface patterns based on varied abstractions of microscopic forms. There is something almost Victorian about them, their display like the pinned insects or carefully collected fossils of the nineteenth century. For some makers, ceramic is a vehicle for social commentary. 'My work is about what I think is

wrong with the world,' says Clara Ryan (grad. 2013). 'The course at LSAD taught me that I have a voice through my work.' Her installation, *Medicated*, is a pile of giant pills in pastel colours, each meticulously made in slip-cast clay. 'They look like sweets – easy to pick up and eat. I wanted it to have a meaning that everyone can understand, but there are also different ways that you can understand it.' Aidan Power (grad. 2011) has made a body of wall-hung pieces that acknowledge a debt to, and are also a comment on, street art. He feels that graffiti is seen as a low type of art, while pointing out that ceramics has often been considered a low type of art too. 'Graffiti is often made by people at a low point in their lives. I'm interested from the point of view of the people who are making it. They are the people who should be making art.' This concept has been taken a step further in the work of Margaret Walsh (grad. 1999), showing the potential of ceramics as a powerful tool within the community. Her installation, *A Pitch for Shane* was made in response to the death of her nephew, Shane Geoghegan in 2008. 'I was the facilitator and the instigator,' she explains. 'I brought the clay to the people and each of them made a piece in memory of someone that they loved. It was made against violence and in memory of Shane. For me, it was a distraction and it was done out of pure sorrow. Limerick was going through a dreadful time.'

Fifteen years ago it was relatively unusual to return to study as a mature student. Noreen Ramsay (grad. 2001) was the first of the Access students and completed the final degree year over a two-year period. She works in mixed media: ceramics, metal, glass and wire. 'I'm a collage person,' she says. 'I like building things up in layers.' Jodi Coyne (grad. 2007), also works with layers. Her pieces made from leaves of clay, perforated in patterns that look a little like the traces of a bookworm on pages; they encourage the viewer to move around them, to see them from other angles. 'When I was at college I lived with sculptors and painters,' she says. 'Their experience of college was totally different to mine. They came and went as they pleased, but ceramics was disciplined. Val Dennison was in charge and you had to sign in by ten o'clock.' The discipline of throwing is clearly evident in the forms of Nicole Portlock (grad. 2007), who has developed an expertise in the subtle and tricky business of smoke firing. 'I love the process – it's so unpredictable. You start off with a few intentions but you never really know what you're going to get. It's like having a collaboration with an amazing abstract painter.' During her time at LSAD, she was a frequent visitor of the Hunt Museum and the influence of the collection still runs through her work which, depending on the light, has the qualities of ancient polished stone. Jackie Maurer (grad 2012), who worked as a production potter before embarking on her studies, feels that studying at LSAD gave her space to consider her work. 'It was three years of not thinking about jugs or bowls! But it is still really important that my work has a function.' Her thrown and altered pieces are made in response to the human body but, when worn, also dictate the way that the body moves. To that end, she has worked with dancers who wear her work, allowing the pieces to play their part in the choreography of the dance. For Evelyn

Kelly (grad. 2003) clay provides a way to capture the movement and balance in the human body in a static form. 'My work began as line drawings and then it became three dimensional,' she explains. 'The thing that I miss most about college is the life drawing classes.' The ability to translate human poses into clay has stayed with her. 'For the most recent series, I asked some of the members of my gym to pose for me.'

For some of LSAD's graduates, design for industry offers a way forward. Anthony Horrigan (grad. 2011) works as an in-house designer for Belleek Pottery. His Deco range of tableware, produced by Marks and Spencer has the appearance of op art, its surface evolved through the use of computer aided design (CAD) tools through which he has evolved a pattern that bends itself around a variety of forms without losing its geometric sharpness. Technology also plays its part in the work of Gemma Dardis (grad. 2006) who uses wet plate collodion photography to project versions of her own image onto ceramic surfaces. Conceptually, she is exploring the anticipation of loss, but does so using technologies that originate in different time and different disciplines. This, she says, was something that she learnt in LSAD: ceramics is a medium in itself but can also relate to other disciplines. She recalls the story of the Corinthian Maid as told by Pliny the Elder in which a potter's daughter, whose lover is about to embark on a journey, traces his profile onto the wall. This, on a mythic level, is the story of the birth of painting, photography and print. When the potter returns he fills in the outline of the young man with clay, thus giving birth to sculpture. It is no accident that the legendary origins of so many art forms begin in the potter's house. Clay is a means to make something permanent in an impermanent world.

Dr Eleanor Flegg

July 2014

'The Yellow Vase' by Vona Groarke, was published in What we Found There: poets respond to the National Museum of Ireland, edited by Theo Dorgan, The Dedalus Press, Dublin, 2013

MIKE BYRNE

MARIA CONNOLLY

MARY CONROY

JODI COYNE

GEMMA DARDIS

EVA FARKASOVA

ANTHONY HORRIGAN

EVELYN KELLY

JACKIE MAURER

LAURA MCNAMARA

MARCUS O'MAHONY

NICOLE PORTLOCK

AIDAN POWER

NOREEN RAMSAY

CLARA RYAN

MARGARET WALSH



MIKE BYRNE

Born in Dublin in 1951

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 1977

Lives in Limerick where he has a studio and is current Course Leader on the BA (Hons) Design Ceramics programme.

www.mikebyrneartist.com

In my current work I am exploring the edges of, and the divisions between the decorative arts, design, function, craft and art.



Main image
Allogamy
2014
42 x 32 x 16 cms
Fired clay, metal, plastic

This page, far left
Shrine
2014
42 x 32 x 16 cms
Fired clay, plaster

This page, right
Object with sharp protrusions
2014
43 x 26 x 13 cms
Fired clay





MARIA CONNOLLY

Born in Glasgow in 1963

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 1987

Lives in Donegal where she has a studio and is a single parent with 2 teenage boys.

mariaconnollyceramics.com

Form, texture and surface decoration are the primary foundation for my work, as well as making objects that can provoke association and play with utilitarian objects as sculptural forms as well as functional objects. The process of making is core, working with slabs and then applying layers of imagery, pattern and colour allowing me to build up texture.

I draw inspiration from the farming landscape that surrounds my home as well as visual memory allowing the subconscious to make it way through. This challenges me to question the overall visual impact of my work and what is its primary concern, is it that of aesthetic? Am I willing to make objects that may not in my mind please me?, but makes more of a statement based on concept and sculptural objects.

Previously I based my work on decorative ceramics designed for the craft market, in my studio and shop 'Hidden Earth', [1996-2001].

My return to clay in September 2012 has been an explorational journey ...a journey that challenges me to push myself further to discover new techniques and explore ideas as well as connecting with creative issues and my journey through life.



Main Image

Open Vessel

2014

Handbuilt earthenware

12 x 35 x 33 cms

This page, far left

Bottles on stand

2014

Handbuilt earthenware

28 x 13 x 11 cms

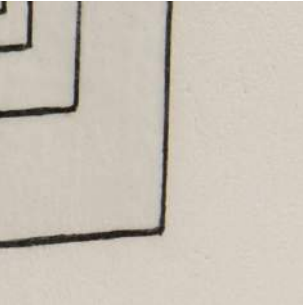
This page, right

Bottles in Crate

2014

Handbuilt earthenware





MARY CONROY

Born in Kilkenny in 1980

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2004

Lives in Limerick where she works as a multidisciplinary artist.

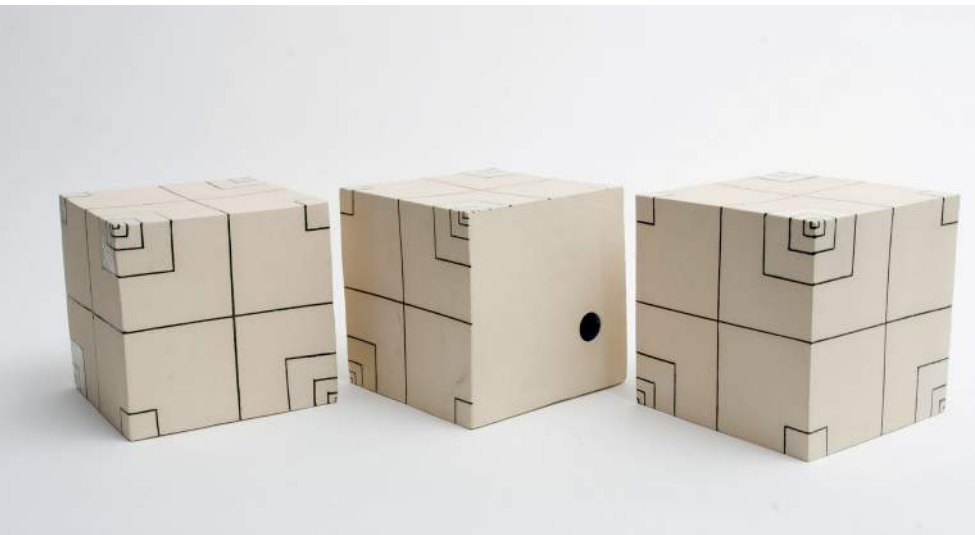
www.wildroutes.weebly.com

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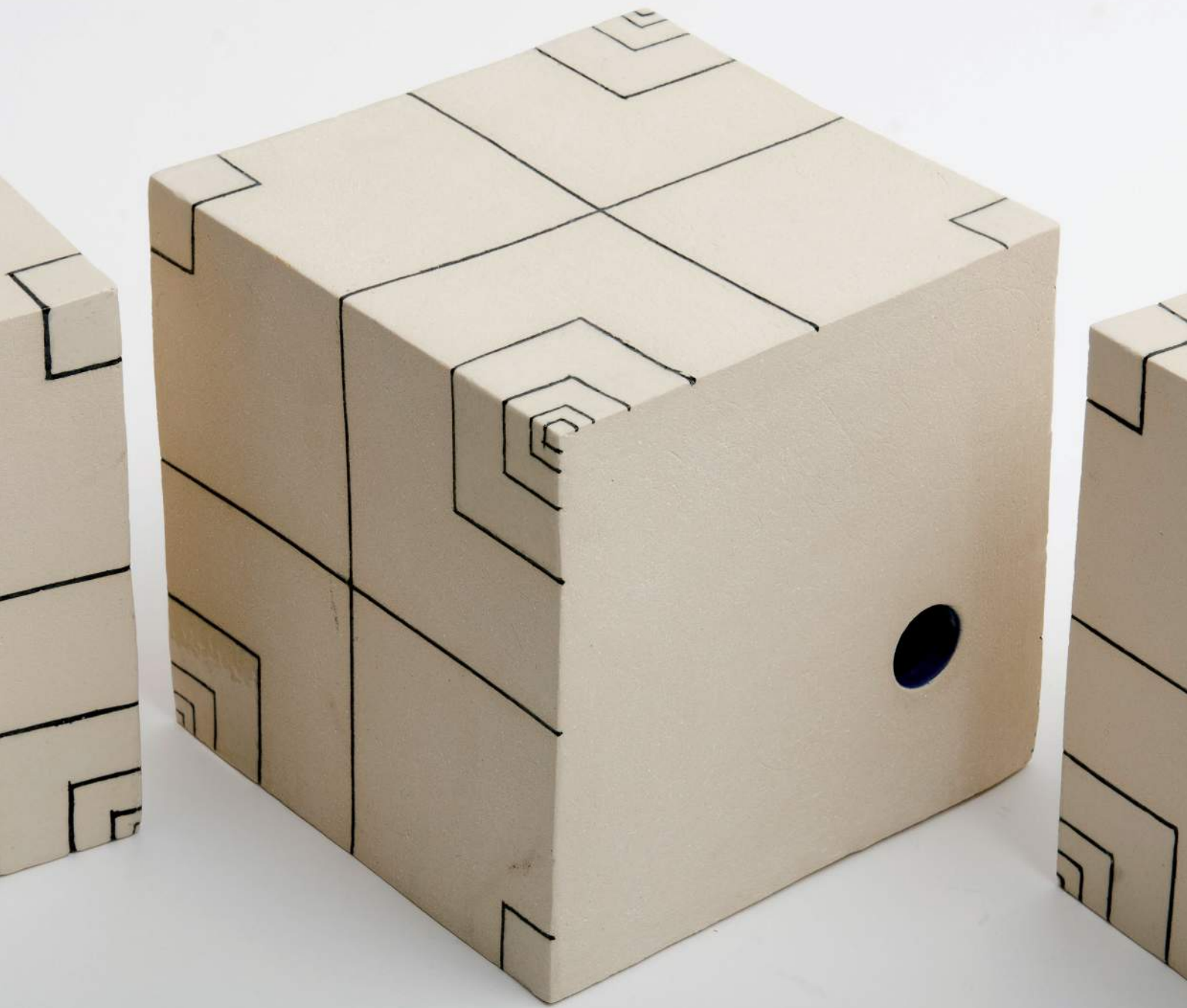
Mary Conroy is a cross-disciplinary artist with a strong environmental ethos. Her current practice involves the exploration, documentation and modification of urban space through drawing, photography, intervention and dialogue. Her on-going project Wildroutes is an investigation into the relationship between humans and non-humans in an urban environment.

Along with traditional drawing, her current body of outdoor ceramic work is a continuing exploration of the concept of 'Space' and an attempt to integrate traditional craft concerns such as material, surface and form with environmental concerns, in particular the global loss of biodiversity. This work aspires to become more than autonomous art objects. It can function as a space for endangered and beneficial animals such as wild bees to inhabit and thrive.

These functional sculptures should be placed in a green space such as a garden. This contrast between a manmade, geometrical form positioned in the context of the natural world echo the division between the self and the other, where we, as humans, are part of nature but often find ourselves disconnected from it.



A different Perspective (Bug Blocks) set of 3
2014
18 x18 x18 cms
Stoneware with sgraffito, glaze





JODI COYNE

Born in Galway in 1985

Graduated LSAD Ceramics department in 2007

Lives in Cong, Co. Mayo where she has a studio and is arts facilitator in the Linenhall Arts Centre.

jodicoyne.com

The hidden, a gap in the trees, shadows and light.

My work is inspired by nature. I find interest in the tiny details often overlooked within it.

Have you ever noticed the light that bounces through a gap in the trees?

Shapes formed in an instant, gone in the next.

Take focus on the diffraction of light, patterns that float, shadows framed, the fragility of it all: repeat.

Weather, wind, light; clouds pass, a gust of wind breezes through, gone in a moment.

Porcelain paper-clay is used to bring coherence to the work. The delicacy and translucence of the medium compliments the theme. The sculptures ground something that is temporary, draws you in and encourages you take focus.



Main Image

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

20.5 x 12.5 x 9 cms

This page, far left

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

15 x 9 x 6 cms

This page, right

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

13.5 x 9 x 5cms





GEMMA DARDIS

Born in Westmeath in 1981

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2006

Lives in Limerick where she has a studio in ARC and is a full-time member of Limerick Printmakers

gemmadardis@yahoo.ie

My current work is related to an ongoing exploration into the relationship between the image and the ceramic surface. This work takes its basis from Pliny the elder's account of the myth of the Corinthian Maid, a myth which describes the birth of painting and sculpture in a potter's studio. The myth involves an attempt to retain a trace or memorial of a person in anticipation of their loss, this act of tracing the outline is cited as the first act of representation and so regarded as the birth of both drawing and painting. The origin of sculpture or the "plastic arts" as they are referred to by Pliny, occurs when the potter, "charmed" by the outline traced by his daughter, presses clay into this outline and so attempts to give material form back to what has gone. I work with various clay bodies, print and photography processes and more recently the adaptation of wet plate collodion photography to ceramic surfaces. This work deals with themes of memory, remembering, loss and the act of making visible and physical that which language cannot.



Main Image

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

20.5 x 12.5 x 9 cms

This page, far left

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

15 x 9 x 6 cms

This page, right

Untitled

Glacier porcelain paper-clay

13.5 x 9 x 5cms





EVA FARKASOVA

Born in Slovakia in 1980

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2013

Lives in Limerick where she has a studio. Starting an MFA in Gothenburg, Sweden in Autumn 2014.

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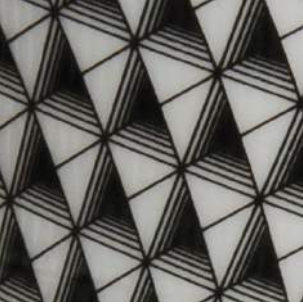
Nature and the shapes found within it are my primary inspiration. Through my work I aim to remind the viewer of the feelings experienced when out in nature: the sense of fresh air, peace and freedom. These feelings are calming, comforting and relaxing. We live in a busy highly technological world where nature is often forgotten. Through my ceramic forms I intend to evoke and restore feelings experienced in a natural environment that may be missing in everyday life. I aim to recreate objects that have visual harmony and tactile seduction, qualities that impact positively on our psychological and emotional well-being.



Main Image
Bloom
2014
21 x 21 x 31 cms
Stoneware, Resin

The 3 pieces in the other image are all separate pieces – not sure how this should be labelled...





ANTHONY HORRIGAN

Born in Terryglass, Co. Tipperary in 1988

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2011

Lives in Donegal working as an in-house designer for Belleek Pottery.

horrigan101@gmail.com

“Deco” fine china tableware range was launched in November 2013 as part of Marks & Spencers Christmas campaign in the UK. The opportunity to design for M&S came about whilst completing my MA in Ceramic Design at Staffordshire University. The project evolved over a number of months, working directly with the design team at M&S and was marked along with other work as my final MA project.

The pattern was achieved by the use of Computer Aided Design tools specifically tailored for the ceramic industry, an existing architectural detail from a Romanesque column has been warped and revolved to fit a variety of forms. The pattern is also in part a personal homage to the great Italian engraver and designer Piero Fornasetti.

Main Image
“Deco” tableware
Marks & Spencers
2013
Various dimensions
Fine China





EVELYN KELLY

Born in Limerick in 1971
Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department 2003
Lives in Limerick with a studio in Birdhill

evelyn.kelly@online.ie

My work places emphasis on a sculptural way of working with clay. Each piece is individually made using slab or coiling techniques. The sculptures are fired twice and finished with oxides and sometimes sgraffito. The finished pieces are similar to a line drawing, portraying a summary or a glimpse of a fleeting moment.

This body of work is inspired by the biblical story of Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul). St. Paul was known as Saul before his conversion. He was dedicated to the persecution of the early disciples of Jesus in the area of Jerusalem. While traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him in a great light. He was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by Ananias of Damascus, and Paul was transformed.

The theme of transformation and the exploration of the human form is central to this body of work. The figures represent a departure from self-conflict to the feeling of being at a crossroads, to a place of transformation.



Main Image
Seated Figure 2
2014

35 x 25 x 20 cms
Materials Earthenware clay, Manganese
dioxide and clear glaze

Left
Emerging Figure
2014

15 x 41 x 15 cms
Materials Earthenware clay, Manganese
dioxide and clear glaze





JACKIE MAURER

Born in Ennis Co. Clare in 1982
Graduated LSAD Ceramics department in 2012
Lives in Ballyvaughan Co. Clare where she has a studio.

jackiemaurerceramics@gmail.com

My practice is centered on one main tool, the potter's wheel. The fundamental qualities of that tool are captured within the objects I produce. I make a diverse range of both functional and sculptural pieces which express a dialogue around the functionality of objects.

The inspiration for the ceramic neck pieces were drawn from the natural, fabricated and choreographed movements of the human body. I'm excited by its gestural and rhythmical movements and how we use objects (e.g. jewellery, clothes, fashion) to adorn and embellish the body. The work in this series is based on the idea of wearable art. I was interested in using the medium in a non-traditional way, searching for alternative outcomes that would lead to the unfamiliar. This happened through collaboration; the pieces were worn by models, performance artist and dancers. By placing the ceramic neck pieces in relationship to the body, I captured and communicated the essence of movement and stillness in both.



Main Image
Adorn
Marbled Sepia, Mild Grey
Porcelain clay
44 x 40 cms
Pg 34:

Left
Adorn
Mild Grey with pink Infused lines
Porcelain Clay
38 x 29 cms





LAURA MCNAMARA

Born in Ireland in 1985

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2010

Lives in Mahon Bridge Co. Waterford where she has a shared studio

www.lauramcnamara.ie

hello@lauramcnamara.ie

I am inspired by what we cannot see, the need to explore and categorize.

Classify life to make order out of persistent randomness



Main image
Auctus (detail)

Left
Auctus
2013/2014
11 pieces
9 x 9 x 4 to 7 x 7 x 3 cms (Approx.)
Porcelain, clear glaze, fired to 1260 Degrees





MARCUS O'MAHONY

Born in London in 1952

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 1977

Lives in Glencairn, Lismore, Co. Waterford where he has a studio

moceramics@eircom.net

I work in stoneware and porcelain clays. The work is wheel-thrown and often altered. The forms are often functional but are aesthetically led. To this end I use and think of the wheel as an expressive tool rather than a means of production. The forms are often squared, faceted, beaten and drawn on to achieve the harmonious composition that I search for. My influences are closely linked to the Leach Hamada tradition.

I fire the work in a traditional-style Far Eastern wood-fired tunnel kiln. I find this process engaging, challenging but ultimately satisfying in that it maintains the creative connection with the work in this very hands-on firing process.



Main image

Lidded Jar

2012

25 x 25 cms

Stoneware with slips and shino glazed, woodfired

This page, far Left

Porcelain Vase

2012

17 x 15 cms

Porcelain clay with feldspar inclusions,
celadon glaze, woodfired

This page, right

Squared Bottle

2012.

15 x 10 cms

Stoneware clay with slips and ash glaze, woodfired





NICOLE PORTLOCK

Born in Essex in 1975

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2007

Lives in Tournafulla, Co. Limerick where she has a studio.

www.nicoleportlock.com

My work is inspired by the Japanese aesthetic of Wabi-Sabi and the use of nature as a style of form in Japanese ceramics. Nature is always my starting point, as it produces some of the most interesting vessels. I have embraced the Wabi-Sabi idea of imperfection by allowing my porcelain clay to become slightly uncentered on the potters wheel during the throwing process. This creates more of an organic growth within the piece, which is seen in the natural asymmetry of forming fruit. Smoke firing gives a dynamic and multi-layered surface. The flame and smoke often hit the work in unexpected ways, which keeps me engaged with the process.



Main Image
*The Obovoid Pome,
"Patience is bitter, but bears sweet fruit"*
2014
17 x 20.5 x 20.5 cms
Smoke Fired Porcelain

Left
*The Obovoid Pome,
"Patience is bitter, but bears sweet fruit"*
2014
Various Dimensions
Smoke Fired Porcelain





AIDAN POWER

Born in Waterford in 1985

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2011

Lives in Askeaton, Co. Limerick where he has a studio. He is a member of Design and Crafts Council of Ireland's Craft Education Panel and an Arts and Crafts Tutor/Facilitator

aidan.power@hotmail.com

Never being fully accepted by artisan authorities, graffiti is considered by most as a form of vandalism that should be covered up and hidden away.

However, who could be more suited to comment on the changing social, economic and intellectual conditions than the people who are on the street, who live the rawness of its reality? The alleyway and toilet cubical door are gallery walls of contemporary visual expression.

There is a corresponding debate that occurs within our own conscious. It is a debate that considers the aesthetic beauty of happiness, love, generosity, self-confidence etc. to be the high art of the human soul, and the emotions of revulsion, sorrow, fear, anger etc. the low anti-social vandalism.

These lower emotions were created with the same amount of power and intensity as the upper tier, but still we try to block them out, pretend they are not there. Along with the graffiti of our streets should these sentiments not be brought to the fore so that they can educate and aid in the comprehension of ourselves?

"Subversive Sentiments" juxtaposes the three subjects of repressed emotions, graffiti and ceramics in an attempt to make commentary on our often misplaced mind-sets.



Main Image
"Subversive Sentiments" (triptych)
"The Loathing"
21 x 16.5 x 1.5 cms
2013/14
Stoneware, Coloured Slip,
Transparent glaze, bronze glaze

Left
"Subversive Sentiments" (triptych)
"The Fear"
15.5 x 28 x 1 cms
2013/14
Stoneware, Coloured Slip,
transparent glaze, bronze glaze



NOREEN RAMSAY

Born in Galway in 1956
Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2001
Lives in Co. Clare where she has a studio
www.noreenramsay.com

noreenramsay@eircom.net

Using layers of glass, ceramic or textile Noreen creates three dimensional images.

Flat sheets of plain glass are enamelled, etched, sandblasted, painted and fired. Pure white porcelain is textured and stained and combined with fine textile into multi-layered collages. She is concerned with creating a whole from fragments, an image from many layers. Using the fragility and transparency of her materials she creates contemplative work that quietly draws the viewer into a reflective space.

The work in this exhibition uses imagery from St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. The creatures depicted can be found carved onto the Medieval Misericord pews in the cathedral. Monoprinted onto porcelain they are mounted on enamelled glass which reflects the nearby river Shannon.

In an increasingly demanding and frenetic world, Noreen's subtle, serene work, offers a focus for quiet contemplation.



Main Image
Winged beings (detail)

Left
Winged beings
2014
66 x 34 cms
Porcelain, Glass





CLARA RYAN

Born in Limerick in 1989

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 2013

Lives in Limerick where she is setting up a studio and teaching ceramic classes in a nursing home.

claramaria.net

My work is influenced by modern life and the nature of the world we live in. I explore themes of capitalism, consumerism, materialism, and pop culture. I work primarily in the medium of ceramics.

Main Image

Medicated

2013

Dimensions: Various

Slip Cast Earthenware, Coloured Stain,

Rubber Stamps





MARGARET WALSH

Born in Limerick in 1948

Graduated LSAD Ceramics Department in 1999

Lives in Limerick where she has a studio working to commission

www.pitchforshane.com

walshmaggie13@gmail.com

At eight thirty p.m. on Sunday, 9th November 2008, I am asked to identify the body of my nephew, Shane Geoghegan, aged 28, at the Regional Hospital Morgue, Dooradoyle, Limerick. He was murdered in a gangland shooting in the early hours of the morning, in a case of mistaken identity.

This art work is part of a 20,000 piece installation first exhibited in Isabraq Hall, Limerick on the third anniversary of Shane's death. The intention is to replicate a notional sports pitch as a ceramic art installation reminiscent of the Chinese Terracotta Army. Each piece has been individually created, the majority by the many thousands of visitors to the famous Milk Market in Limerick, with numerous contributions from communities in Ireland and beyond, in memory of Shane and all innocent victims of violence.



Main Image and left
Pitch for Shane
Various Dimensions
Earthenware Clay



AIR ATLANTA

LOVE

BIOGRAPHIES

Jim Dennison

Jim has been involved in the visual arts since his childhood, winning a scholarship to Portland House for artistically gifted children at 12. He went on to specialise in painting and pottery at Stoke-on-Trent College of Art under the tutelage of Derek Emms. This was followed by a spell teaching before undertaking a postgraduate qualification at Hornsey College of Art, London University specialising in design and design education. He taught in a north London college before arriving in Limerick in 1974 as teacher of ceramics – the first third level appointment in the School. Jim became Head of Design in the early eighties, doubling this role with Acting Head of School from 1988 to 1993. He retired from LSAD in 2010

Eleanor Flegg

Dr. Eleanor Flegg is a design journalist, craft historian, and writer of speculative fiction.

Mandy Parslow

Mandy Parslow has lectured on the Ceramics Design course at LSAD since 2011. Her own ceramic practice specializes in wood-fired salt-glazed stoneware through the exploration of the vessel. Her work is represented in public and private collections in Ireland, the UK and Europe including the Department of Foreign Affairs, Dublin, the Ulster Museum, Belfast and the Consulate General of Ireland, Shanghai, China. She exhibits on a regular basis both in Ireland and abroad.

www.parslowpottery.com

Grellan Rourke

Grellan Rourke has an extensive background in Ireland's material heritage. As Senior Conservation Architect with the Office of Public Works (OPW) he has an extensive reputation as a leading archaeologist, in particular for work carried out on the UNESCO designated Skellig Michael (Sceilig Mhíicil). He has acted as President of ICOMOS Ireland (International Council on Monuments and Sites) as well as being Chair of the newly formed ICRI (Institute of Conservators - Restorers in Ireland: www.conservationireland.org). In a personal capacity and as collector, Grellan is a keen ceramics enthusiast.

Aidan Quinn

Aidan Quinn is the Director of Beaux Arts gallery in Bath, South-west England. Beaux Arts is one of the UK's leading Contemporary galleries which specialises in studio ceramics. Over the last 35 years Beaux Arts has exhibited many of the twentieth centuries most renowned ceramicists, and continues to promote aspiring makers from the UK, Ireland and beyond.

www.beauxartsbath.co.uk



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Naomi O'Nolan, Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Hunt Museum
Mike Byrne, Course Leader, Ceramics, LSAD
Mandy Parslow, Lecturer, Ceramics, LSAD

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some image for last page