

**DEIRDRE
MCLOUGHLIN
SHAPING THE VOID**



Empty form III, 2002

INTRODUCTION

I remember my first encounter with a piece of work by Deirdre McLoughlin, being struck by its charged intensity; my response hasn't changed in the years since - her work continues to have a physical presence that is disproportionately greater than its scale. This is perhaps partly to do with the perfection of her forms and surfaces, a perfectionism that seems almost obsessive in its seeking and which finds close kin in Japanese tradition, where the connection between beauty and skill is understood more subtly than in the West - it is no surprise that she was drawn there, to the avant-garde Sodeisha group of ceramic sculptors.

The intensity of her work seems imbued through the making process, an extraordinary and gravity-defying activity that displays precise mastery of her chosen medium. The process is slow, both because of the demands of the material and hand-building technique, but also because McLoughlin is exacting, perhaps more so than any artist I have worked with to date. She spends time with each element of the work – as much as is necessary - and the end result is work of extraordinary power and purity. It is a great pleasure to be able to bring this work to Ireland; I would like to thank those who have helped to make this possible – Pat Murphy and Frank Buckley for the generosity of their contributions to this publication, Mike Robinson for his support, and of course Deirdre McLoughlin herself, for entrusting us with the outcome of three years of work.

Ann Mulrooney
National Craft Gallery
December 2011

DEIRDRE MCLOUGHLIN - MAKER OF SHAPES

Fired clay has been used by artisans and artists since Neolithic times to make functional pottery and art objects. Deirdre McLoughlin's passionate engagement with the medium began in Amsterdam in 1972 in the studio of the Welsh ceramic sculptor Rosemary Andrews. In the manipulation of the material, she found strange surprising shapes and slowly realized that this was what she had instinctively been looking for - "the adventure of finding and discovering form". She had always been an avid reader, questioning her Catholic education and discovering "other minds and lives" in literature. She felt a compulsion to express and thought that might be as a writer. Alas, on completion of her studies at Trinity she wrote, "I could write alright but the words fell out like dead things". With clarity of vision and single-minded determination she left for Amsterdam even before the actual graduation ceremony, there finding Andrews and what was to be her path. She spent two years in Andrews's studio developing abstract sculptural forms that could be classified as biomorphic and sometimes zoomorphic.

On her return to Dublin she continued to work on her sculptures in the clay studio of Anthony O'Brien and Jim Galligan. She pursued this path for eight years, supporting herself with street trading at fairs and festivals and some film acting. She read the works of Jung, Gurdjieff, Reich, Blavatsky, but the book that most helped her see her way forward in her practise was Herrigel's 'Zen in the Art of Archery'. In this time she had a fortuitous encounter with eminent Dutch born ceramic artist Sonja Landweer, who immediately realised that McLoughlin was a gifted and original artist and encouraged her to persevere. It must have been 1981/82 that she sent out her "Nightsailing" series to EVA in Limerick and to the now defunct Lincoln Gallery. The series was a triumph of achievement, though its artistic significance seems to have escaped critical attention at that time. The highlight was a medium-large soft pink skinned ovoid form with a raised fin-like ridge and partial brown underside on a black plinth. It was a masterpiece of abstract modern art, original and beautiful, manifesting just the slightest nod to the great master of minimal sculpture, Constantin Brancusi. One other memorable work from this period was a smaller flame-like upright creation with mottled brown glazing that resembled the speckled breast of a song thrush.

In 1982 McLoughlin travelled to Japan, lured there by the Sodeisha group who had been inspired by the clay sculptures of Isamu Noguchi to push clay as a sculptural

medium. She set up a studio and found great freedom and stimulation in working amongst these artists. She was above all drawn to the "sublime geometry" in the sculptures of Yasuo Hayashi whose work was later to influence her own. She had a solo show to great success in Gallery Beni where the Sodiesha artists were often to be found in that time. Before returning to Ireland she visited the Xi'an excavations in the Shaanxi province of China in 1985. The serrated masses of terracotta warriors impressed her deeply and were an inspiration to her later in exhibiting her celebrated series of 'I am – too' small vessel sculptures arranged together in rows and groups. These were to win her the prestigious Westerwald Prize for European Ceramics in Germany in 2004. This wonderful series of saucepan-like shapes in different earth colours with tails instead of handles was the nearest McLoughlin has ever come to making functional-seeming vessels.

Affairs of the heart brought her back to Amsterdam in 1988 and soon afterwards she married her Dutch partner Henk Brouwer. She still resides there, working in a solitary city-centre studio and producing outstanding work which has gained a world wide reputation. In recent years she has shown not only in mainland Europe but also in New York, Oahu, Indiana, Korea and Turkey. She is a frequent exhibitor in the Royal Hibernian Academy and the Peppercanister Gallery in Dublin.

McLoughlin's art featured prominently in Betty Blandino's scholarly book '*The Figure in Fired Clay*' 2001. Her red stoneware sculpture titled 'Old Ecstasy' is illustrated and the author pointed out that although it was abstract in form, it had somehow a subtle allusion to a head resting on a pillow and was created by the artist in the time her father was dying. 'Old Ecstasy' was selected for the 'SIAR 50' exhibition in IMMA.

Deirdre McLoughlin is one of the finest sculptors to emerge from Ireland in the 20th century. The Irish Post Office celebrated her by featuring one of her works on a postage stamp in 2011. The National Craft Gallery now honours her great achievement with this exhibition.

Dr. Patrick J. Murphy

27th November 2011



FRANK BUCKLEY: COLLECTOR

Sculpture offers double pleasure, visual and tactile, seeing and feeling. The advantage of owning a piece is that one may touch, handle, fondle it without incurring the wrath of a gallery invigilator, enjoying the hard, the soft, the rough, the smooth. This is especially true of Deirdre McLoughlin's wonderful ceramics. They allude to the human form, even if they appear abstract, the breast, the buttock, the thigh, the waist and the smooth silkiness of skin, the taut hardness of muscle. They are sensuous, certainly! They are erotic too, a pleasure to behold, sheer delight to touch, to handle, to cradle.



Big Nose, 2011



Little Bear, 2011



Silver, 2011



Burstingness, 2009



Scetimini, 2010



White Life III, 2008



Black Life, 2007



Red Life, 2010



O II, 2006 – 2011



I am – too, gray and black, 2011



Everything I know is in my work.
I don't always understand what I know.

DEIRDRE M'CLOUGHLIN

DEIRDRE McLOUGHLIN

Dublin born

1968-1972 Trinity College Dublin, Eng. Lit, History & Philosophy.
Acted in film for Joe Comerford and Cathal Black.

1972-1982 Shared studios with Rosemary Andrews, Amsterdam, Anthony O'Brien and Jim Galligan, Dublin.
Mentor: Sonja Landweer. Studied free dance with Kalichi and more recently Or Bagim.

1982-1985 Kyoto. Attracted there by Sodeisha Group. Set up studio and took classes with Sawamura Sensei,
a master in Kiyomizu porcelain, first solo show Gallery Beni.

1985 China - Jingdezhen, Liling, Xian, Dunhuang, Kashgar.

1988- Amsterdam, studio on Prinseneiland.

Solo Exhibitions

2012 Shaping the Void, National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny

2008 Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin

2005 Frank Steyaert Gallery, Ghent

2004 DUET10, Deirdre McLoughlin, Wicher Meursing, SBK, Amsterdam

2003 Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin

1999 Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin

1997 Sonja Landweer, Deirdre McLoughlin, Galerie Amphora, Oosterbeek

1996 Galerie Maas, Rotterdam

1994 Deirdre McLoughlin Recent Works, Green on Red Gallery, Dublin

1993 Deirdre McLoughlin Recent Works, Ulster Museum Belfast, Limerick City Gallery of Art

1992 Galerie Maas, Rotterdam

1990 Galerie Ram, Arnhem

1984 Gallery Beni, Kyoto

Selected Group

2011 *VUE*, Royal Hibernian Academy with Peppercanister Gallery Dublin
Kunst is Kunst Amsterdam (also 2010) cat.
15a Galerie en Beeldentuin, Lochem, NL (also 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007)
Art & Antiques Fair 's-Hertogenbosch, with Bruijstens Modern Art
Transform, Farmleigh Gallery, Dublin, toured cat.

2010 *Royal Hibernian Academy Annual* (also 2008, 2006, 2005, 2000, 1996, 1992) cat.
Select, Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin
Affordable Art Fair Amsterdam, with Kunst is Kunst

2009 *Keramik Europas Westerwaldpreis*, Germany (also 2004) cat.
Eenvoud Museum Nagele, Kunst & Architectuur
Cultural Influence: from Traditional Expression to Modern Context, Indiana State University, USA

2008 *VII Ceramic Congress & Exhibition*, Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey cat.
Wall & Plinth, Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin cat.

2007 *4th World Ceramic Biennale*, Korea cat.
Irish Contemporary Ceramics, National Museum of Ireland
Deirdre McLoughlin - Mieke Mens - Marian Smit, Galerie De Kapberg,
Egmond aan den Hoef

2006 *European Ceramic Context*, Bornholm, Denmark cat.
East –West Ceramics Collaboration IV, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Ten years in the Making, Art from State Buildings, Farmleigh Gallery, Dublin

2005 *SIAR 50*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin cat.
Irish Ceramics of the 21st Century, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
Ruth Duckworth Homage, Garth Clark Gallery, New York

2002 *20 jaar Amsterdams Beeldhouwers Kollektief*, Kasteel Museum Sypsteyn cat.

2000 *Artists' Century, Irish Self-Portraits and Selected Works 1900-2000*,
RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin cat.
Irish Contemporary Ceramics 2000, Ulster Museum Belfast, toured
*DRIE BEELDHOEWER Anneke de Witte – Marianne van der Kooij –
Deirdre McLoughlin*, Fort Rammekens, Stedelijk Museum Vlissingen

1998 *de Hortus als Lusthof, Amsterdams Beeldhouwers Kollektief*, Hortus, Amsterdam cat.

1997 *Showcase*, London, Crafts Council UK

1996 *Innovation from Tradition - Irish Art*, EU Buildings, Brussels cat.

1993 *CIAS Members' Collections*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

1992 *New Acquisitions*, The National Self- Portrait Collection of Ireland, University of Limerick cat.

1991 *CONFIGURA 1, Kunst in Europa*, Erfurt, Germany cat.
ESPACE '91, RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin cat.

DEIRDRE McLOUGHLIN

- 1990 *Contemporary Artists from Ireland*, Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London cat.
- 1987 *Four Ceramic Artists*, Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast cat.
- 1986 *Sweeney Astray*, Kenmare
OB'ART, Paris
- 1984 *Independent Artists*, Municipal Museum Kyoto
- 1982 *EVA*, Limerick cat.
- 1974 *Living Elements -Galligan -Lee -O'Brien -McLoughlin*, Neptune Gallery, Dublin

Public Collections

- Icheon World Ceramic Center, Korea
- National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
- Ulster Museum, Belfast
- Keramikmuseum Westerwald, Höhr-Grenzhausen, DE
- Museum het Prinsessehof, Leeuwarden, NL
- Frank Steyaert Museum, Gent, BE
- Arts Council of Ireland, Dublin
- Limerick City Gallery of Art
- St. Patrick's Seminary, Carlow
- Allied Irish Bank
- Farmleigh House, Dublin
- Office of Public Works, Ireland
- National Self-Portrait Collection of Ireland, University of Limerick

Awards

- 1991 *National Self Portrait Collection*
- 2004 *Keramik Europas Westerwaldpreis 2004*, First Prize
- 2007 *4th World Ceramic Biennale 2007 Korea*, Certificate of Honour
- 2011 An Post - postage stamp

Selected Bibliography

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- Dunne, Aidan, *A Sculptor of Top Rank*, Review, Ire: The Sunday Tribune 3/4/1994
- McCrum, Sean, *Ceramics as Sculpture*, Ire: The GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook 1988

National Craft Gallery

Established by the Crafts Council of Ireland in December 2000, the National Craft Gallery exhibits a programme of groundbreaking national and international contemporary craft.

Activities include profiling the work of Irish makers in Ireland and abroad, developing relationships with Irish and international galleries and collectors, and inspiring appreciation, creativity and innovation through the gallery exhibition and education programmes.

The Crafts Council of Ireland is the champion of the craft industry in Ireland, representing all craft disciplines. It strives to foster the commercial strength and unique identity of the craft sector, and to stimulate quality, design and competitiveness. It is funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation through Enterprise Ireland.

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