

## 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, Fuping . . . .no 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 XIII 31x28x18cm

Photography: Rory Moore

