DEIRDRE MCLOUGHLIN SHAPING THE VOID

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



Empty form III, 2002

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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

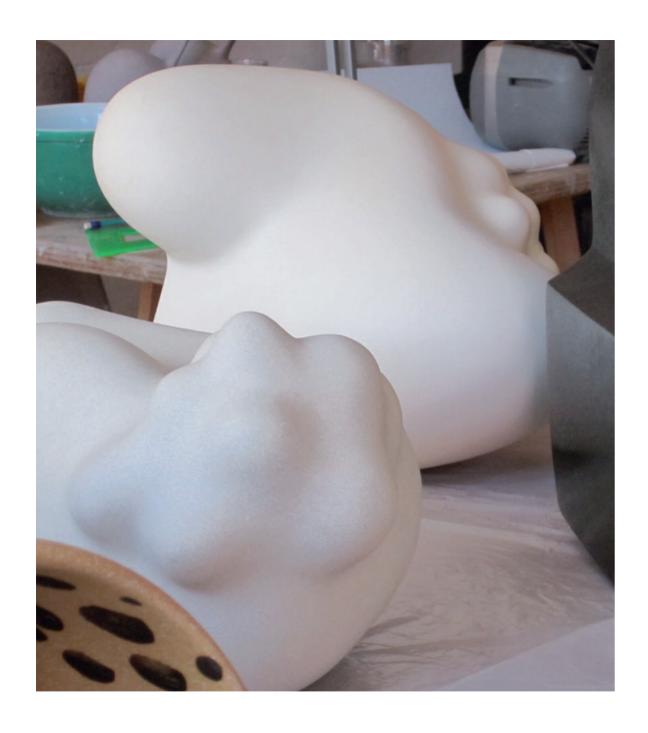
medium. She set up a studio and found great freedom and stimulation in working amongst these artists. She was above all drawn to the "sublime geometry" in the sculptures of Yasuo Hayashi whose work was later to influence her own. She had a solo show to great success in Gallery Beni where the Sodiesha 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 Esctasy' 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.

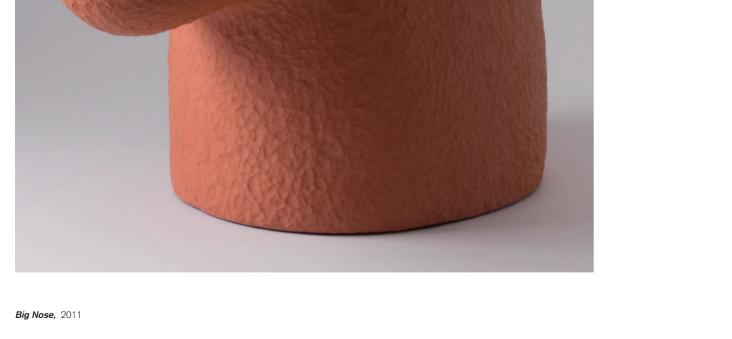
Dr. Patrick J. Murphy 27th November 2011



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.

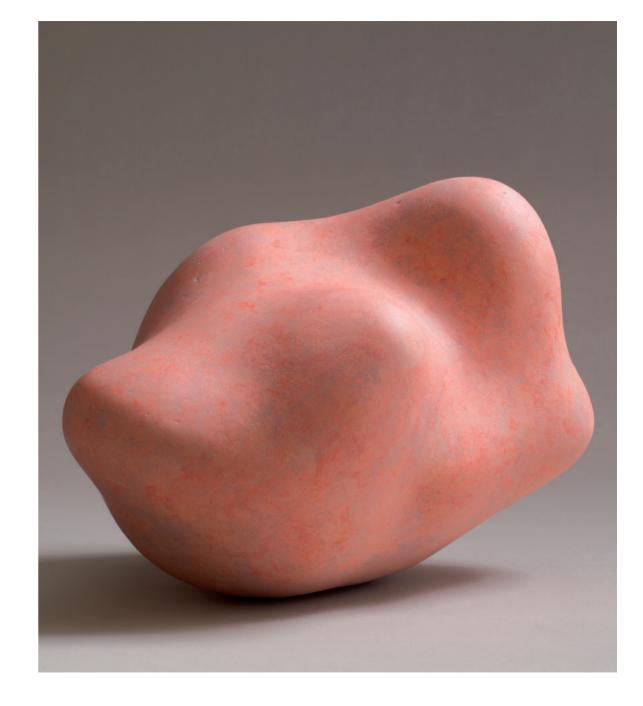






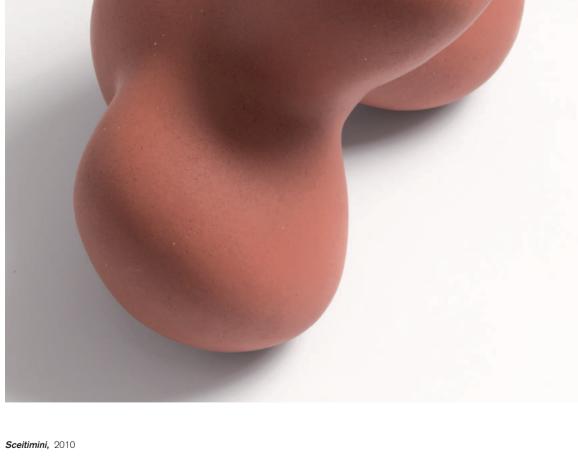
Little Bear, 2011





Silver, 2011







White Life III, 2008





Red Life, 2007





I am – too, gray and black, 2011



DEIRDRE McLOUGHLIN

Dubilii boiii	
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 Benji Kvoto

Selected Group

2011	VUE, Royal Hibernian Academy with Peppercanister Gallery Dublin Kunst is Kunst Amsterdam (also 2010) 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) Select, Peppercanister Gallery. Dublin Affordable Art Fair Amsterdam, with Kunst is Kunst	cat
2009	Keramik Europas Westerwaldpreis, Germany (also 2004) Eenvoud Museum Nagele, Kunst & Architectuur Cultural Influence: from Traditional Expression to Modern Context, Indiana State University, USA	cat
2008	VII Ceramic Congress & Exhibition, Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey Wall & Plinth, Peppercanister Gallery, Dublin	cat cat
2007	4th World Ceramic Biennale, Korea Irish Contemporary Ceramics, National Museum of Ireland Deirdre McLoughlin - Mieke Mens - Marian Smit, Galerie De Kapberg, Egmond aan den Hoef	cat
2006	European Ceramic Context, Bornholm, Denmark East –West Ceramics Collaboration IV, University of Hawaii at Manoa Ten years in the Making, Art from State Buildings, Farmleigh Gallery, Dublin	cat
2005	SIAR 50, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin Irish Ceramics of the 21st Century, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin Ruth Duckworth Homage, Garth Clark Gallery, New York	cat
2002	20 jaar Amsterdams Beeldhouwers Kollectief, Kasteel Museum Sypesteyn	cat
2000	Artists' Century, Irish Self-Portraits and Selected Works 1900-2000, RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin Irish Contemporary Ceramics 2000, Ulster Museum Belfast, toured DRIE BEELDHOUWER Anneke de Witte – Marianne van der Kooij – Deirdre McLoughlin, Fort Rammekens, Stedelijk Museum Vlissingen	cat
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 ESPACE '91, RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin	cat cat

DEIRDRE McLOUGHLIN

1990 Contemporary Artists from Ireland, Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London 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

cat.

Public Collections

Icheon World Ceramic Center, Korea

National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

Ulster Museum, Belfast

Keramikmuseum Westerwald, Höhr-Grenzhausen, DE

Museum het Princessehof, 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

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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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